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## Expectation Setting as a Retention Strategy to Improve Military Veterans' Transition into Civilian Organizations

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Sarah Bashorun

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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Expectation Setting: Retention Strategy to Improve Military Veterans'

Transition into Civilian Organizations

by

Sarah Bashorun

MS, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 2007

BS, Morgan State University, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Industrial-Organizational Psychology

Walden University

November 2021

## Abstract

Military veterans entering the civilian job market have experienced challenges adapting to the civilian work place culture, which poses undesirable retention rates. This qualitative study addressed the research gap in understanding contextually the lived experiences with setting expectations and its impact on veterans withdrawing from the organization from the perspectives of veterans, HR, and hiring managers. This study was based on the met expectation theory that posits that an employee's incoming expectation needs to match their expectation while on the job to avoid withdrawal behaviors. To confirm the theory and address the purpose two research questions were used: (a) addressed HR/hiring managers' experiences with setting expectations and its impact, and (b) explored the veterans' experiences with setting expectations within the military and the civilian organization. Ten participants were enrolled from one veteran ready civilian organization to answer semi-structured interview questions, which generated a novel veteran expectation setting checklist from the study themes (eight from RQ1 and seven from RQ2). The checklist is recommended to be used by employers to assess the fit between veterans and the workplace environment. In addition to the checklist, the positive social change implications of this study conveyed the need for organizations to be ready to provide accurate intel about the workplace setting to incoming veteran employees to ensure they transition successfully into their jobs. This encourages organizations to tap into veterans as an advantageous human capital resource to improve diversity and inclusion practices and stabilize the retention of veteran employees.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my personal inspiration, my heavenly father, the Almighty God, who is my silent cheerleader to carry on even when resistances appear bigger than they really are. I would like to thank you God for telling me to take time out and rethink a concept when it was not originally accepted, and then you inspired me with something much better that surprised them all. It wasn't me; it was the higher power within me. To all the future doctoral students that may read my small contribution to I/O psychology, please don't give up, your work is still needed to complete the big puzzle of life.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand why some civilian organizations were more successful than others in retaining military veterans for 12 months or more and describe the context for which they were successful. Data showed that 65% of veterans left their civilian jobs within 2 years post-military, and more than 43% left after the first year (Ford, 2017; Maury & Stone, 2014). Specifically, the purpose of this study was to fulfil a gap in literature highlighted by Cooper et al. (2018), Orazem et al., (2017), Rose et al. (2017), and Ferri-Reed (2013), who indicated that there was a need to explore contextually from the perspectives of veterans and managers how organizations set expectations about the organizational practices, values, and norms to assure that a new veteran had a successful transition into the organization.

Rose et al. (2017) stated that setting expectations about the organization to the veteran employee had positive outcomes such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction, which could be conducted through a variety of socialization practices such as realistic job previews (RJP). There was no evidence that such research had occurred with RJP. Nevertheless, there was a call for more research in setting expectations for veteran hires by using realistic information about the organizational culture during onboarding and socialization practices, so that the veteran can positively identify with the organization and adjust successfully to their new work place (Cooper et al., 2018; Mutch, 2006; Rose et al., 2017).

This study aimed to highlight the use of expectation lowering procedures (ELPs) or its equivalent practice as a form of a realistic socialization practice for new veteran

employees, which reveals to the veterans what to expect from the culture of the organization and to dispel any unrealistic high expectations they may have (Shibly, 2019; Stern, 2017). Jacquet and Hermon (2018) said that veterans generally had unrealistic high expectations of the civilian organization because of their high self-efficacy as a result of their experiences and skills.

The research approach for this study was a qualitative method and used a single case study design with embedded units (Baxter & Jack, 2010; Yin, 2003). The power of using the qualitative method and single case design with embedded units was to describe the phenomenon within one organization (single case) by interviewing veteran employees and hiring managers and/or HR personnel within the various units i.e. departments and/or functional areas. This study included the individual perspectives of both the veterans who were current employees and their hiring managers and/or HR personnel about their experiences with expectation management best practices for new veteran employees.

Maury and Stone (2014) asserted that the issue of retaining military veterans in the civilian workplace is a common problem that needs more attention, because if not adequately resolved, it creates a continuous lack of return on investment of time and financial investment on both the veteran employee and the organization itself. Moreover, organizations have been keen on hiring veterans, as they have proved to be a valuable source of human capital to meet the needs of an organization (Maury & Stone, 2014). The unit of analysis for this study was one organization and its onboarding processes that facilitate setting expectations for new veteran employees.



There were a few reasons why civilian organizations were successful in retaining military veterans, such as being veteran ready and offering various benefits such as educational assistance, pay differentials, and housing benefits (Yanchus et al., 2018). Yet, there were other organizations that were veteran ready, but their retention rates of veterans were low (Ford, 2017; Maury & Stone, 2014). From an organizational development (OD) perspective, it is worthwhile to explore the communication and behavioral strategies of an organization that has successfully set expectations and retained employees to help other organizations that are experiencing low retention rates (Maden et al., 2016).

Pleitz et al. (2015) discussed that lowering the unrealistic expectations of employees upon entry into an organization by informing them about what to expect from the organizational practices, culture, norms, and values contributed to job satisfaction and retention. This is because if an employee receives what they were told they would receive from the organization during onboarding for instance, then their expectations will be met (Pleitz et al., 2015). Gibson et al. (2015) asserted the usefulness of ELPs in a study concerning U.S. expatriates transitioning to overseas work locations, and Buckley et al., (2002) used ELPs to attain new customers. To expand on the body of knowledge of ELPs, we now needed to know what ELP-type information was provided to veterans that might have a behavioral influence on lowering their unrealistic high expectations of a new organization.

The potential social implication of this study was to contextually understand the experiences of both the veteran employees and hiring managers and/or HR personnel

regarding their viewpoint about the best strategies on setting expectations upon entry for new veteran employees to regulate unrealistic high expectations. By reducing unrealistic high expectations, organizations are better able to meet the expectations of the veterans, and HR personnel and hiring managers will be empowered to improve hiring and retention practices of veteran employees (Stern, 2017). Furthermore, this study has contributed to the development of a non-existent formal ELP-type checklist that describes what information should be presented and discussed to new veteran employees during socialization practices to ensure that their expectations are realistic and they have an accurate picture of the new organization (Maden et al., 2016).

### **Background of the Study**

In recent years, there has been an influx of military veterans that have transitioned from their military posts and have been seeking or found a civilian job in the public and private sector industries, but with some difficulty (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014; Ford, 2017). The rise in the number of military veterans was due to the U.S. Department of Defense's plan to withdraw more active military workers from the front lines (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018). This is in direct response to former President Obama's executive order to reduce budget spending on the military and return the military veterans to their families (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018). As a result, military veterans have flooded the job market and were ready to occupy civilian job positions (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014; Ford, 2017).

Keeling et al. (2018) argued that the successful adaptation of the military veterans for civilian work environments has been questionable and received a lot of attention in

research. Keeling et al. noted that military veterans do not receive adequate transparency of the realities of civilian life post-deployment. For instance, veterans have been told that it would not be difficult to gain access to employment, and that they would be prioritized for housing; however, veterans have faced challenges in this area (Keeling et al., 2018). Perkins et al. (2019) said that civilian organizations were not adequately prepared to meet the expectations of the veterans likely due to the unrealistic expectations set by misinformation given to the veterans as they transitioned out of the military.

According to Rose et al. (2017) and Ferri-Reed (2013), socialization practices or onboarding practices were essential to setting expectations for a new veteran employee to ensure a successful transition into the new organization. The authors highlighted various methods to ensure a smooth transition into a new organization, such as assigning a veteran peer mentor or a coach to conduct various assessments for the new veteran employee to examine their cultural competency of the new organization (Rose et al., 2017). Additionally, Rose et al. agreed with Mutch (2006) in not assuming that individual veterans can adjust successfully to a new organization, and thus recommended employing realistic job expectations to evaluate the veteran's value system versus the organization's value system.

Rose et al. (2017) mentioned the negative consequences of cognitive dissonance and conflicting expectations when there was no transparency of values and norms; such consequences include organizational commitment issues and retention. Moreover, Orazem et al. (2017) discussed veteran transition issues as they relate to the military identity adjustment issue faced by the veterans as they transitioned into the civilian

organization. The authors asserted that there was a desire for veterans to remain with their familiar identity that could clash with the needs of the civilian organizational identity (Orazem et al., 2017). Therefore, Orazem et al. recommended that organizations can help with veteran employment transition by being more transparent about the cultural norms of the work environment with the hope that the veteran can build a connection with organization, and thus identify themselves with the organization.

Cooper et al. (2018) were also pro-transparency of the organizational cultural norms and values with veterans upon entry by suggesting that veterans be trained in the cultural competency of the new organization to ease with transition as well as employers having cultural competency training about veterans. Stern (2017) discussed the need for more veteran research in understanding what has been working so far in organizations to ensure successful transition of veterans into the civilian workplace and to empower the human resource professional to improve hiring and retention practices. Therefore, from the above research, there is a consensus that setting expectations about the culture of the organization leads to positive outcomes for the veteran such as organizational commitment.

Rose et al. (2017) and Mutch (2006) suggested using RJPs in setting expectations for veterans upon entry into a new organization, but there is no evidence from the literature that this has been done. Therefore, literature still calls for understanding how to set expectations of new veterans to dispel unrealistic expectations. This study aimed to fill in the gap in literature by exploring a different form of RJP known as the ELP or its equivalent practice (Chehade & El Hajjar, 2016; Pleitz et al., 2015). The equivalent

practice of ELP is important because ELP is not a common term used in organizations, and in general there were various socialization tactics used to help adjust a new employee to an organization's culture, which is likely more related to an ELP-type structure. Furthermore, ELP or its equivalent practices were often more integrated than RJPs because of its focus on the organizational values, practices, and norms, which was more consistent overtime and cost-effective (Chehade & El Hajjar, 2016; Pleitz et al., 2015). On the other hand, RJPs were focused on the job tasks only, which can change over-time (Chehade & El Hajjar, 2016; Pleitz et al., 2015).

The perspectives of both veteran employees and hiring managers and/or HR personnel about their experiences with setting expectations best practices within their organization was vital in answering the research questions and narrowing the gap in research. Additionally, this study has contributed to the development of a non-existent formal ELP-type checklist that describes what information should be presented and discussed to incoming veterans to ensure they have an accurate picture of the new organization (Maden et al., 2016). The findings of existing research results with regards to the use of RJPs and ELPs are discussed in in Chapter 2.

### **Problem Statement**

The difficulty of transitioning military veterans into civilian employment has been well documented, which has led to retention issues amongst this group (Blackburn, 2017; Greer, 2017; MacLean et al., 2018; Prokos & Cabage, 2017; Rogers-Brodersen & Bailie, 2014; Rose et al., 2017). Blackburn (2017), Greer (2017), and MacLean et al. (2018) have noted the need to focus on improving retention amongst the military veterans, as

they have proved they are a viable source of human capital as a result of their various skills and experiences.

Recent studies have shown that 65% of newly hired veterans left their civilian jobs within the 2 years of hire (Ford, 2017), and similar results were found from a veteran job retention survey through a joint effort between Vetadvisor and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University (Maury & Stone, 2014). The suggested reasons for the turnover have been well documented, such as unrealistic expectations that the veterans had about the transference of their skills into the civilian workforce (Sreenivasan et al., 2018), a clash in culture between the veterans and their civilian counterparts (Ford, 2017), and emotional issues due to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and physical disabilities post deployment, which could have a negative impact in reintegrating back into the civilian workforce despite transferrable skills (Mobbs & Bonanno, 2017). Sreenivasan et al. (2018) argued that the transition issue was due to the veteran's lack of preparation for the civilian workforce, and thus built unmet expectations.

MacLean et al. (2018), Rose et al. (2017), and Ford (2017) agreed that there was a need for more research into the best practices of setting expectations for veterans upon entry into an organization to manage unrealistic expectations about the cultural aspects of an organization and improving retention. Setting expectations has been a socialization tactic used during onboarding to facilitate the transition of veterans into the civilian work life. However, per MacLean et al., Rose et al., and Ford, there is little evidence, if any, in understanding the influence of setting expectations on retention amongst veterans. This

represented a gap in literature, as there are substantial practical reasons for veteran turnover in civilian organizations, but little understanding of the influence of setting expectations on the behavior of veteran employees to improve retention. Understanding the motivation of military veterans to remain in a civilian organization by contextualizing their individual experiences with setting expectations and validation of these experiences with contextualizing the experiences of their HR and hiring managers within a veteran ready organization will offer additional contributions to the scholarly research community and social policy makers to improve hiring and retention needs of veterans. This knowledge will help organizations who are focused on hiring and retaining veterans to develop veteran specific recruitment and socialization procedures.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate a civilian organization's best practices of setting realistic expectations for new veteran employees upon entry, which could help HR and managers better understand the needs of veterans who entered the workforce post military service. The results could help recruiters assess the fit between the organization's culture and the individual veteran's expectations. The ELP or its equivalent was known to be a source of an intrinsic motivation tool for the employee to better adapt to the workplace environment (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Randhawa & Kaur, 2015). Additionally, this study contributes to developing a non-existent formal ELP checklist for setting expectations for veterans that could empower HR professionals and hiring managers to improve hiring and retention practices.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: From the perspective of the hiring manager and/or HR personnel, how are veteran ready civilian organizations able to lower the expectations of the veterans during the initial stages of employment and how does it contribute to veteran retention in the workplace?

RQ2: From the perspective of the veteran employee, how do veterans view the management of expectations approach between the military and the veteran ready civilian organization?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical framework of this research study was built on the met expectation theory (Porters & Steers, 1973) to understand the complexity behind motivating military veterans to unlearn their previous military workplace environment and learn and embody their new civilian workplace environment by lowering their expectations through ELP. The met expectation theory, or better known as the met expectation hypothesis, emerged within the realistic recruitment field research (Porters & Steers, 1973). This theory has been the explanation for realistic recruiting tools such as the RJP and the ELP with the purposes of giving employees the true picture of the job and the organization (Porters & Steers, 1973). For this study, the ELP was ideal as a socialization tactic to set the expectations of the cultural norms, values, and practices of the organization to help a veteran adjust to the organization (Shibly, 2019). This is opposed to an RJP that provided information on both the positive and negatives of a job, which leads the individual to opt



out of the job sooner without being given an opportunity for their expectations to be managed as with the ELP (Shibly, 2019).

The met expectation theory describes the extent to which an employee's pre-employment expectations were met on the job, which was directly related to job satisfaction and inversely related to the likelihood that the employee will leave the job (Porters & Steers, 1973). The met-expectation theory was a modification of the Vroom's expectancy theory, which was one of the most used workplace motivation theories to predict a specific action following a desired outcome (Purvis et al., 2015). Vroom's theory has helped to predict job satisfaction, occupational preference, the valence of good performance, and the valence of an outcome (Nebeker & Mitchell, 1974). The met-expectation component of Vroom's theory was appropriate for this study because it considered the withdrawal behavior of individuals as a result of their initial expectations whatever they were before they started their jobs and assessed whether the pre-expectations matched the post- expectations while on the job (Beijer et al., 2019; Wong & Kuvaas, 2018). To get a good assessment of whether employee's expectations were met, a comparison would be made between the employee's recollection of expectations with current experiences (Beijer et al., 2019; Wong & Kuvaas, 2018).

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, the met expectations theory was of importance and described the three pillars of motivation including (1) what energizes human behavior; (2) what directs or channels such behavior; and (3) how this behavior was maintained and sustained (Porter & Steers 1973). Moreover, Porter and Steers have focused on the role that met expectations has on withdrawal behavior and concluded that

whatever the individual expectations were, and if they are not substantially met, the propensity to withdraw would increase.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study proceeded with a qualitative research method using a single case study design with embedded unit analysis. Purposeful sampling was used to focus on the perspectives of the veteran employees and hiring managers and/or HR personnel within the organization regarding the successful strategies to set expectations of new veteran employees. As part of the method, a single case design with embedded units was selected because it allowed an opportunity to look at the same issue, but from different perspectives, including hiring managers, HR personnel, and current military veteran workers, while engaging in analytical measures to determine common themes (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, this case design allowed data analysis within subunits (within case analysis), between the different subunits (between case analysis), or across all of the subunits (cross-case analysis; Baxter & Jack, 2010; Yin, 2013). The unit of analysis for this study was the organization with the individual veteran employees and hiring managers and/or HR personnel across different divisions. To increase the trustworthiness of the data, triangulation of data included reviewing responses from the interviews with the recruited participants and multiple other data sources for data analysis to improve the understanding of the case (Baxter & Jack, 2010; Yin, 2013).

Purposeful sampling of companies was the method used to select an organization that actively supported hiring of military veterans, as this method provided participants that would provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences to ensure the richness of

the findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The phenomenological qualitative approach was ruled out for this study because the focus was on looking at the participants' experiences of a specific event and how they felt about it, and thus outcomes of the research would be on fitting personality types, which was not the focus of this present study (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). Likewise, ethnography was ruled out because of its focus on immersing participants in a culture that was unfamiliar to them; although this study looked at aspects of the organization's culture, the culture was already familiar to the participants because the participants were current employees (Meyer, 2013). Moreover, the ethnography approach immerses the researcher into the culture for long periods of time to understand the participants, which was not feasible, especially because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Meyer, 2013). The case design approach was more appropriate, as it allows the researcher to observe a case, which can be a person or family, business or organization, or town or city, and collect data from multiple sources to create a bigger conclusion about the case and demonstrate solutions for the participants (Yin, 2014).

The qualitative method was appropriate for this study because the goal was to explore the point of view of hiring managers and HR personnel recruiting and retaining veterans in the civilian workplace as well as the perspective of the veteran employees. A quantitative study would not have been appropriate because the aim of the quantitative method is to test the hypotheses developed from qualitative research (Hartas, 2015). The goal of this study was not to examine relationships among variables, but to develop a social constructivist worldview to observe how best to set expectations for new veteran employees and thus help them to transition successfully into an organization from the

perspectives of current veteran employees and hiring managers and/or HR personnel (Bailey, 2014; Mertens, 2014). Qualitative researchers are interested in complex concerns that might have differing responses and need exploration through theoretical lenses (Ragin, 2014). This study implemented a qualitative research approach in the hopes of exploring the phenomenon understudy, that is, understanding whether ELP or its equivalent could facilitate in improving the transition of veterans into organizations, and thus increase retention rates.

### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the terms listed below were defined as follows:

*ELP*: An expectation lowering procedure is a set of informational based tools to inform a new employee of the general information about the organization (Baur et al., 2014).

*Job satisfaction*: Job satisfaction is defined with Porters and Steers's (1973) four factor conceptual model including organizational wide factors, work environment factors, job-related factors, and personal factors.

*Military veteran*: A military veteran is defined as one who was formerly employed in one of the five branches of the military including the Air Force, National Guard, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy (U.S. Department of Defense, 2019).

*Psychological contract*: A psychological contract is the unwritten agreement between the employer and employee that is discussed before the employee begins to set employer and employee expectations (van den Heuvel et al., 2017).

*Retention:* Retention refers to the length of time an organization can successfully keep an employee working within the organization (Davis & Minnis, 2017).

*RJP:* A realistic job preview is a lowering expectation tool that provides job specific information to the new employee about both the negative and positive aspects of the job (Baur et al., 2014).

*Socialization:* Socialization is an organizational onboarding practice to facilitate new members' familiarity with the organizational vision, mission, values, norms, training, and expectations of the job role (Hatmaker, 2015).

*Transition:* Transition is the process of military veterans changing from their former military work life to civilian work life (Ford, 2017).

*Turnover:* This is defined as the employee voluntarily leaving their place of employment (Porter & Steers, 1973).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions made within the study were (a) military veterans have difficulty in conforming to non-military work environment, which thus resulted in early departure from their civilian jobs, (b) military veterans were not effectively prepared to enter or re-enter the civilian workforce, (c) there were difficulties in changing military veteran workers into civilian employees, and (d) and civilian organizations were not agile enough to socialize military employees into their organization, and lacked resources to accommodate their unique needs. That military veterans have difficulties in conforming to a non-military work environment was assumed to be true as research has shown veterans complaining about cultural differences in the civilian work environment as

compared to the military environment (Rose et al., 2017). Assumptions b, c, and d were based on data that civilian employers were not culturally competent in the needs of veterans and there were insufficient effective transitional programs from the military (Blackburn, 2017; Rose et al., 2017). Another assumption made within the study was that organizations that had successfully retained veterans for more than 1 year must have met most of the expectations of their veteran employees, and thus, there was a likelihood of elements of the ELP model or its equivalent implemented in the organization's socialization procedures (Yang et al., 2018).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this study was to explore what socialization strategies an organization used to successfully set expectations of veteran employees upon entry through the perspectives of veterans who were current employees and current hiring managers and/or HR personnel. Specifically, this study investigated the use of ELPs or its equivalent since ELP was not a common term used within organizations to set expectations about an organization's cultural practices, norms, and values. This study investigated whether ELPs had been a valuable retention strategy for an organization that had successfully retained veteran employees for 1 year or more. This scope was important to the study since we know from literature that setting expectations for a new employee and helping them understand the culture of the organization was essential for a successful transition and adaptation. Moreover, veteran research was calling for more understanding on best practices to help veterans adjust to a civilian work life because of

the acknowledgement of the differences experienced from the military work life to a civilian work life.

This study was confined to interviewing males and females of various racial and ethnic backgrounds who were current hiring managers and/or human resources personnel of a veteran ready organization within New Jersey. The organization chosen needed to confirm that they had a history of hiring and retaining military veterans for 1 year or more. Moreover, this study also interviewed male and female military veterans from the different branches of the military and all races and ethnicities that were currently employed by the organization. The participants that were excluded from the study were those who were unavailable for an interview over the phone or through video conference and did not wish for their de-identified data to be published in the study. The potential transferability of this study included understanding key components of an ELP or its equivalent practices in setting expectations so that employees who were veterans could successfully transition into a civilian organization and show organizational commitment to improve retention. Likewise, more details on how to lower the unrealistic expectations of veteran employees would empower human resource personnel and hiring managers to improve hiring and retention strategies.

### **Limitations**

Most qualitative research is very time-consuming, and often investigators tend to choose a smaller sample size. However, this brings up issues with the transferability of the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To avoid minimal transferability, the study recruited a total bound sample of 10 participants of hiring managers and/or HR personnel and

veterans who were employees (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Of importance, Darlington and Scott (2003) stated that if a study considered the unit of attention as the phenomenon under study instead of the number of individuals involved, then the sample size would be larger. For instance, if the researcher considered the number of interactions or contacts investigated instead of the actual number of participants involved, then the sample size would be much larger.

Moreover, qualitative case studies are limited to the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator, and thus, require the investigator to provide an unbiased approach (Devotta et al., 2016). One way to minimize bias was to have the interviewee's quality check their responses recorded by the investigator for accuracy (Devotta et al., 2016). Another limitation of the study was its focus on private sector companies who have hired veterans. This might not be transferable to non-private organizations that might offer a different perspective in hiring or retaining military veterans but could be studied in future research.

### **Significance of the Study**

In FY2017, the U.S. Department of Defense invested \$606 billion into military education and training to develop and sustain a skilled workforce to not only meet its military strategic objectives, but also to meet civilian workforce needs (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018). Based on the Department of Defense's plan to withdraw military forces by 2019 (Lytell et al., 2015), this resulted on average 300,000 skilled veterans who departed military services each year and would be actively looking for civilian employment (Faurer et al., 2014). Therefore, it was of utmost importance that organizations were prepared to take advantage of the human capital resource of incoming



veterans and not underuse them, which might lead to unwanted unemployment rates (O'Neil & Drillings, 2012). Moreover, the assurance of skilled veterans could contribute to a growing U.S. economy that depended on a growing and knowledgeable labor force.

With the data showing that 65% of hired veterans leave their civilian jobs within 2 years of employment and 43% after 1 year of employment (Ford, 2017), this study would give I/O psychologists an opportunity to influence the socialization practices of organizations that desired to hire veterans. Furthermore, the more data on how to set expectations during socialization practices, the higher likelihood of retention (Stern, 2017). What research had not yet made clear was the contextual documentation of the perspectives of veterans who were employees and hiring managers and/or HR personnel about their feelings and experiences with the best practices to set expectations for new employees that facilitated a smooth adjustment into the organization. More research was needed to understand what was being discussed and provided during recruitment, interviews, and onboarding to foster better adaptation to veteran employees that provided an accurate picture of what it was like to be an employee within the organization and what they can do to be successful (Aronson et al., 2019; MacLean et al., 2018; Shepherd et al., 2019).

The use of the ELP or its equivalent to set expectations was essential to convey a message to the employee about what to expect while working in the organization (Baur et al., 2014) and to help socialize them into the norms, values, and practices of the new environment (Stone & Stone, 2015). With the aid of this realistic recruitment tool, studies within non-veteran populations such as telemarketers and U.S. expatriates have shown an

improvement in job satisfaction and retention (Baur et al., 2014; Gibson et al. 2015).

There was recognition in veteran research that setting expectations about the new organization with realistic socialization tools such as RJP was needed for positive adjustments, but there was no evidence from research that this has been done (Rose et al., 2017).

As a result of a need in the literature for more guidance on setting expectations with realistic socialization tools for veterans, the significance of this study was to explore the structure and components of an ELP-type model or its equivalent in nature to lower unrealistic expectations as an added value to aid organizations to improve retention of veterans. Furthermore, this study demonstrated the motivating factors that would be important to military veterans to commit to an organization for more than 1 year and less than 1 year. This study contributed to a positive social change because it brought awareness to human resource professionals and hiring managers to better understand the needs of veterans who entered the workforce post service. The results could help recruiters assess the fit between the organization's culture and the individual veteran's expectations, and thus improve retention. Moreover, by empowering human resource personnel and hiring managers with a successful realistic socialization tool, one might improve an organization's inclusion and diversification within organizations and add value to sustainable business practices, such as productivity of all human capital.

### **Summary and Transition**

This study highlighted a gap in literature regarding the need to understand contextually what information was being provided to veterans during recruitment,

interviews, and onboarding through the perspectives of veterans who were current employees and hiring managers and/or HR personnel who facilitated new veterans to have an accurate picture of the cultural norms, values, and practices of the organization (Aronson et al., 2019; MacLean et al., 2018; Shepherd et al., 2019). This chapter highlighted the need to address the concern of high turnover amongst military veterans' post-military transition, and how not addressing this could pose risks to the stability in veteran employment, and other organizational risks such as low job satisfaction and low organizational commitment. Chapter 2 will go into depth describing studies that have used expectation lowering tools to provide positive outcomes for organizations such as job satisfaction and thus reduce turnover. Moreover, Chapter 2 will discuss research results relevant to use of the ELP in research and the theoretical framework.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In the contemporary workplace, the concern over whether a newcomer was satisfied with their job and the organization, and how their satisfaction affected their intent to leave, has become increasingly important. Findings from former research including longitudinal studies have shown that newcomers' job satisfaction considerably changes with increase tenure, demonstrating that job satisfaction was not a fixed variable but a changeable status. Moreover, the flexibility of job satisfaction and other desirable organizational outcomes could be adjusted by socialization practices during the pre-hire, interviewing, and post-hire stages of employment by setting the expectations of candidates to better prepare and acclimate them to their job and organization successfully.

The literature review that proceeds highlights the challenges of military veterans as they transitioned from the comrade dynamics of the military work life to the more individualistic approach of the civilian workplace. Also, the review touches on understanding the influence of the perceptions of the organization and the veteran in promoting a positive transition or antagonizing a smooth transition. Furthermore, the literature review walks through the various dynamics of the socialization process and demonstrated the effectiveness of using a socialization tool such as the ELP to facilitate a successful adaptation into a new work environment.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

A search for literature involved access to Walden University and government research databases and libraries. The research databases included Thoreau Multi-Database Search, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Research Gate, Business Source Complete-Premier, Google Scholar, PsycARTICLES, and government labor data. The verification of peer-reviewed literature occurred using the Ulrich's Periodical Directory on the Walden University Library database. The combination of keywords used in the search for literature included terms such as *veteran transition*, *military veteran transitioning*, *civilian workplace transitioning for veterans*, *socialization practices*, *newcomer adjustment*, *onboarding practices*, *managing expectations*, *expectation lowering procedures*, *realistic job preview*, and *veteran job dissatisfaction*, *veteran workplace turnover*, and *met expectations theory*. As a result of the infrequent mentioning of ELPs and RJPs in recent research and the need to recognize seminal authors, the literature searched included articles between the years of around 1974 to the present. The present study also included more relevant research within the past 5 years. The sequence of the literature review was performed to have a better understanding of the context provoking the need for the research problem and to provide an overview to create the research instruments, methodology, and data analysis.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical framework of this research study was built on the met-expectation theory (Porters & Steers, 1973) to understand the complexity behind motivating military veterans to unlearn their previous military workplace environment and learn and adjust to

their new civilian workplace environment by setting their expectations through ELP. The met expectation theory, better known as the met expectation hypothesis, emerged within the realistic recruitment field research (Porters & Steers, 1973). This theory has been the explanation for realistic recruiting tools such as the RJP and the ELP with the purposes of giving employees the true picture of the job and the organization, respectively (Porters & Steers, 1973).

The met expectation theory refers to the extent to which one's expectations prior to organizational entry (person factor) was compatible to what was experienced in the organizational environment (situation factor) at a given point in time (Ok & Park, 2018). The met-expectation theory was a modification of Vroom's expectancy theory, which was one of the most used workplace motivation theories to predict a specific action following a desired outcome (Purvis et al., 2015). Vroom's theory has helped to predict job satisfaction, occupational preference, the valence of good performance, and the valence of an outcome (Nebeker & Mitchell, 1974). The met-expectation component of Vroom's theory was appropriate for this study because it considered the withdrawal behavior of individuals as a result of their initial expectations, whatever they were before they started their jobs, in comparison to what their expectations were while on the job (Beijer et al., 2019; Wong & Kuvaas, 2018). To get a good assessment of whether an employee's expectations were met, a comparison would be made between the employee's recollection of expectations prior to entering the organization with current experiences within the organization (Beijer et al., 2019; Wong & Kuvaas, 2018). A meta-analysis based on 31 studies determined empirical data to support the met expectation theory (Ok

& Park, 2018). Additionally, many of the studies were based on whether expectations were met as a result of extrinsic factors, such as work environment (Ababneh, 2016; Ok & Park, 2018).

For the purposes of this study, the met expectations theory was of importance and described three pillars of motivation, including (1) what energizes human behavior; (2) what directs or channels such behavior; and (3) how this behavior maintained and sustained (Steers & Porter, 1979). It was implied from this theory that a means to reduce dissatisfaction amongst new employees was to bring their expectations to align with the reality of the actual job and job environment (Saiyadain, 2003). Likewise, the idea of the met expectations theory suggested that the processes undergoing within the person influenced job dissatisfaction (Saiyadain, 2003); in other words, the intrinsic values of the person would be at play.

### **Met Expectation Methodologies**

Ok and Park (2018) conducted a longitudinal study to analyze how and when new employees' tenure and unmet expectations were related to low satisfaction when the age effect was being controlled. The researchers used a data set from the Korean Youth Panel employment survey data set, which was collected via face to face interviews and paper and pencil questionnaires (Ok & Park, 2018). The sample size was based on 1,150 individuals with a total of 2,693 observations with age controlled for, the results showed that job satisfaction decreased as tenure increased  $b=-.011$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $t=-2.518$  with 95% confidence level (Ok & Park, 2018). Likewise, a study by Ababneh (2016) explored met expectations with faculty members in different universities in the United Arab Emirates

(UA) and found that job satisfaction, trust, and commitment mediated the effects of met expectations on faculty to stay in their jobs. In other words, by meeting the expectations of the faculty, the perception of job satisfaction and other positive outcomes improved, which helped to reduce turnover intentions (Ababneh, 2016).

The findings of the study by Ok & Park (2018) highlighted the violation of a psychological contract, which meant that the employee's initial expectations did not match their actual expectations on the job; this was also echoed by van den Heuvel et al. (2017) and Delobbe et al. (2016). Similarly, Vander Elst et al. (2016) offered this viewpoint that it was imperative that new employee expectations were matched while on the job with accurate information given to them, otherwise they would feel that their psychological contract was violated, and job dissatisfaction would be imminent. Both Vander Elst et al. and Delobbe et al. agreed on constant communication while on the job between the employer and employee about potential gaps in expectations before any undesirable outcomes emerged.

Research has shown that the early phases of a new employee's experience were essential to the overall positive outcomes of organizational life (Wang et al., 2016). Liu et al. (2017) noted the importance of socialization during the initial weeks of employment, which was described as the process of the new employee to effectively become a participative insider of their new work environment, because it has a significant impact on the different phases of the employee from newly hired to promotion. The socialization phase as discussed by Wang et al. (2016) allowed the new employee to determine whether they would fit into their job and the organization, which later could affect their



attitudes about their satisfaction with their job and the organization. Naseem et al. (2016) explained that a new employee's positive experience during socialization affected their well-being, which was correlated with a high degree of job satisfaction, which inevitably works out well for both the employee and the organization.

Likewise, Liu et al. (2017) and Smith et al. (2017) agreed that the outcome of job satisfaction generated positive feelings, and thus created positive performance by the employee. In contrast, studies have shown that job dissatisfaction in new employees has resulted in a high degree of turnover (Chen et al., 2014). This early turnover has proven to be costly to the employer, because of the employer's investments in recruitment, selection, and training before truly gaining a high degree of return on investment through performance (Wang et al., 2016).

An important concept of socialization was the pre-entry expectations as described earlier in this section by the employees, which could also be explained as expectations about the employees work and other aspects of the business before entry (Naseem et al., 2016). Also mentioned before, Porters and Steers (1973) first proposed the concept of met expectations from the viewpoint of the discrepancy between the employee's expectations and their actual experiences whether positive or negative. Of interest, extensive research on met or unmet expectations by focusing on the person-organizational fit outcome has demonstrated that a better fit with low discrepancies between the person (e.g. expectations and values) and job characteristics (e.g. job rewards and demands) resulted in predictive job satisfaction, organizational commitment,

turnover intentions with some variations across subpopulations (Porfeli & Mortimer, 2010; Wanous et al., 1992).

If, however, new employees have a negative reality shock when they realize there were inconsistencies between their expectations and what the organization could provide, this then leads to job dissatisfaction as described by Porfeli & Mortimer (2010), which could be experienced by different employees. Wang et al. (2016) argued that with the different expectations from individual workers on different variables such as salary in a given work environment, it was unlikely that an organization could meet the needs of all its employees, which influenced job attitudes during the early phases of employment.

An empirical study by Maden et al. (2016) analyzed the moderating role of future job expectations and efficacy beliefs in employee's responses to unmet expectations. The researchers' data were collected from 227 employees from a wide range of sectors, and the results of the study illustrated that when expectations were not met, those employees with a positive image of future expectations experienced less emotional exhaustion and less dissatisfaction than employees with less positive future expectations (Maden et al., 2016). Interestingly, Ababneh's (2016) and Maden et al.'s hypothesis on future job expectation as a moderator to unmet expectations and turnover as an outcome was declined by the results. Instead, the authors believed that other factors were likely affecting turnover such as availability of other jobs on the market as echoed by the research (Ababneh, 2016; Maden et al., 2016).

The results by Maden et al. (2016) also demonstrated that employees who had high self-efficacy and longer worker experience responded strongly to unmet expectations

with emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and turnover intention, which was also demonstrated by results in research by Proost et al. (2012). The researchers contributed to job expectation research by highlighting the differing individual level responses to unmet job expectations, as opposed to former research that focused on work outcomes (Proost et al., 2012). Furthermore, the results of these studies indicate a need to manage an employee's expectations, especially if they have high self-efficacy and work experience.

As noted earlier, high turnover, typically with employee tenure of 12 months or less (Valle et al., 2015), is costly to any organization because of the investments made to the posting of the job, interview processes, and ongoing training and induction. Besides the pressures of the managers having to incur costs of re-training and re-supervising, they do realize that not meeting the expectations of new entrants could lead to turnover intentions (Valle et al., 2015). According to Huang and Su (2016), turnover is related to new employees when they conclude that the nature of their job was not suitable for them. The distance between an employee's expectations and experiences creates feelings of dissatisfaction, which in turn results in turnover (Huang & Su, 2016). There were studies by Holtom & Burch (2016), Kundu & Gahlawat (2016), and Valle et al. (2015) that investigated operational performance measures to predict turnover; however, few models have explained turnover.

Met expectations research has been highly searched as an organizational behavioral variable because of the absence of met expectations could lead to undesirable post- adjustment issues such as low job satisfaction and withdrawal intentions (Valle et al., 2015). This then opens important discussions on an organizations priority to meet the

needs of an employee or a job candidate and the needs of the organization (Wanous et al., 1992; Wong & Kuvaas, 2018). Recently, investigations into met expectation research and the effect on work outcomes has included additional elements such as meeting employees needs of work values, supplies offered by the organization (Wong & Kuvaas, 2018), and the type of recruitment source (internal versus external) (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016). However, it was still worth mentioning that the function of unmet needs differs across different dimensions of the job depending on the individual's needs, as confirmed by Wang et al. (2016).

The theory of met expectations as a relates to this study was essential to explaining the reasons for the success of specific private organizations adequately retaining veteran employees for 12 months or more, because it could map out the balancing act between the needs of the employee and the employer to assure retention. Moreover, this theory was integral to answering this study's research questions to understand the perspectives of veteran employees and hiring managers and/or HR personnel with regards to ELPs or its equivalent in nature to set expectations of new veterans that could be met. Therefore, the response to the research questions will enhance the use of the met expectations theory to solve the new veteran adjustment issues as they transition from the military way of working to the civilian way of working.

## **Literature Review**

### **Military Veteran Transition Research**

Research has shown that the U.S. military was the largest employer of young American men, employing between 10% to 12% of the U.S. population, and a growing

number of women (Teachman & Tedrow, 2016). This population of young adults was significant to the American workforce, and thus there was continuous interest in researching this source of human capital (Teachman & Tedrow, 2016). Moreover, per the recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in 2018, the military veterans, specifically Gulf-war era II (GWII) veterans who served since September 2011, age range between 25-44 years of age, made up most of the unemployment rate in the U.S (BLS, 2018).

The BLS (2018) data showed that GWII veterans were hired more by private industries (70.5%) than the government (26%) (BLS, 2018), which has improved slightly from 2017 BLS results where the private sector hired at a 69.9% (BLS, 2017). Other industries that the GWII were hired by, but not limited to, were professional and business services (12.8%), educational and health services (8.3%), manufacturing (10.8%), retail trade (8.3%), and construction (6.6%), (BLS, 2018). Besides, professional and business services that increased in 2018 from 2017, the other mentioned sectors were slightly lower in 2017(BLS, 2017). Therefore, this present study targeted the GWII veterans within the private industries because there was more notable progress in recruiting veterans in this industry according to the BLS data.

Researchers interested in the military, were often focused on investigating military veteran transitions into civilian life, and their lived experiences in their local community, workplaces, and educational settings (Cooper et al., 2018; Herman & Yarwood, 2014). Other research has been involved in examining family members of veterans (Park, 2011; Segal et al., 2015) and the life course outcomes of military service

members (Lee et al.,2017). Likewise, some authors have addressed the enhancement of education and skills that promote employability (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014; Osborne, 2014).

### **Military Veteran Employability**

Job openings for veterans were essential for their successful reintegration into their communities. In an empirical study about the lived experiences of veterans, it was revealed that veterans with different levels of challenges or trauma reported that having a job was vital for their lives (Sayer et al.,2014). To facilitate the mission of hiring veteran's post-deployment, a collective effort by private companies that represent industries in the U.S. came together hosted by the Veteran Job Mission in 2011, and initially targeted to hire 100, 000 veterans by 2020 (Veteran Job Mission, 2018). Today, this organization has reported that private sectors within its mission have collectively hired 450,000 veterans in the U.S. (Veteran Job Mission, 2018). Likewise, the federal government and state government were continuously partnering with public and private industries to improve veteran transition with employment (Perkins et al., 2019).

Veterans were noted for their leadership, loyalty, perseverance, commitment, flexibility, integrity, initiative (Sayer et al., 2014). Similarly, military values such as accountability, strong work ethic, consistency, and respect for authority makes veterans attractive candidates for private sector employers (Sayer et al., 2014). Moreover, a developed skill such as resilience and the skills already mentioned were often desirable to private sector employers (Perkins et al., 2019). Interestingly, Fisher et al. (2015) reported that the Gulf War II veterans who served in the military after September 2011 might have

preconceived notions of civilian employer management, leadership, and teamwork, which may seem to them as not aligning with their familiar military culture. This preconception might cause issues with positive adaptation to the civilian culture. Nonetheless, an effective process to accelerate the learning and adaptation of the veterans to the civilian workplace was to clearly articulate the organizations culture into a concrete meaning (Fisher et al., 2015)

Perkins et al. (2019) noted that military veterans have experience in changing identities and acclimatization from serving in the military, which was different from individual values. Furthermore, Perkins et al. (2019) posited that the veterans were apt to discuss their perceptions of the civilian organization with their civilian employers to better understand the organizational culture and different cultural milestones to improve integration into the new work environment. Despite the military experiences of the veterans and their positive contribution to the civilian organization, reintegration has a learning curve that requires continuous and open communication between the employer and the veteran (Fisher et al., 2015).

Kirchner and Akdere (2017) stated that veterans have demonstrated that they were trainable. Allen et al. (2014) discussed the education and training that veterans receive during military service helped veterans qualify for employment opportunities in the private and public sectors. Likewise, veterans have proved their ability to learn and apply their new knowledge to varying circumstances to facilitate their adaptability and flexibility in situations (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017). Furthermore, Davis & Minnis (2017); Allen et al., (2014) argued that newly hired employees should be provided with training

to acquire knowledge to conform to the organizations culture, values, and norms, and the grooming to maintain their new job positions.

The nature of the military provides service members with experiences in different countries to allow them to be culturally sensitive with diverse groups and settings (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017). The nature of the military service also provides veterans with the ability to collaborate and become leadership orientated, and to convey accountability in different work environments (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Furthermore, private and public sector industries could benefit from the competencies of veterans in the area of cultural competency, ethical compliance, mental agility, and physical requirements that were needed to fulfil military tasks, and which could be transferrable to the mission of the private and public industries (Davis & Minnis, 2017; Allen et al., 2014).

The theoretical and practical training and the skills developed by military service members pre-service and while in-service could affect the type of jobs and incomes that the current job market will accept. The military training was specialized training and education that generally focuses on the mission and job requirements such as missile systems (Davis & Minnis, 2017), which of course contributes to the success of the mission. Despite the specialized training, Delbourg-Dephis (2014) argued that this type of training was especially useful in technology-intensive industries, such as information technology, engineering and manufacturing, and security and intelligence fields. Similarly, Allen et al. (2014) posited that regardless of the unpredictable nature of the military work life, veterans could still pull in their professional skills gained through the military to equal or beyond the professional potential of civilian workers. Of note,



Kirchner and Akdere (2017) studied the professional aptitude of military personnel to civilian personnel and found that the military personnel performed better than their civilian counterparts based on physical, cognitive, and intellectual capabilities which were desired by private industries.

### **Military Transition**

Despite the relief that some military veterans might face with the preparation of returning to their civilian way of life including returning to their families, this was not always the case of most military veterans. The majority of military transition research has described the challenges experienced by veterans such as physical injuries, awkward social interactions, mental health problems such as PTSD, traumatic brain injury, combat stress, substance abuse, and financial distress (Fisher et al., 2015; Pease et al., 2015). These issues have given cause to barriers to veteran employability and retention of veterans in some civilian work environments. It was desirable that when veterans were transitioning back to their civilian lives, they would have the opportunity to integrate their personal identities with their professional identities, which might lead to positive job attitudes, job related mental health, and overall life satisfaction (Davis & Minnis, 2017). However, research has suggested that many veterans in transition were unable to identify with the civilian society, and do not possess the necessary soft skills such as cultural awareness and civilian interpersonal skills essential for adapting to civilian employment (Cooper et al., 2018).

Veteran gender differences have also demonstrated a barrier to effective transition.

Szelwach et al. (2011) said in their research that there has been an increasing number of women serving in combat roles or combat-related positions that resulted in unpredictable side-effects to their mental health after deployment to civilian life. Furthermore, veteran women have reported that they experienced the same challenges similar to military men in the civilian workplace, but with added challenges of misconceptions by the employer and issues with settling back with family life with their spouses and children (Fisher et al., 2015; Szelwach et al., 2011). Additionally, Sayer et al., (2014) addressed that the veteran women experienced additional challenges in the workplace because of the lack of respect and recognition for their service in comparison to their male counterparts.

The awareness of the difficulty in veteran transition into the civilian workplace has compelled military leaders to focus on the development of required skills that could be used once the military apply for jobs, thus increase their employability when they were deployed (Herman & Yarwood, 2014). Osborne (2014) argued that the development of community and government-based transitional programs might be helpful to promote positive reintegration of veterans into civilian work life. The types of transitional programs and supportive services include, but not limited to educational services, psycho-social support, house and welfare services, and employment assistance with the goal of identifying essential experiences, skills, and knowledge that were preferred by different industries and businesses (Perkins et al., 2019). Additionally, the Department of Defense supports the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) that assists veterans to develop job-seeking tools, such as resumes and interview skills, and helps organizations in the recruitment process to hire paid workers and interns (Faurer et al., 2014).

## **Career Transition Issues**

There were government and non-government organizations that work with employers to hire veterans, but some employers still encounter challenges to identify and recruit suitable veterans before the transition to the civilian job market (Faurer et al., 2014). Even though military veterans have desirable skills and abilities, employers have voiced that they need employees that they could depend on and could work effectively with the rest of the civilian team (Ford, 2017). Employers have said that they were concerned with the performance potential of combat veterans, for instance, who may experience transition challenges, and because of the sensitivity towards the veteran population asking certain questions could violate their rights within the workplace (Ford, 2017). Additionally, employers have discussed their concerns with veterans adapting to the civilian work environment in an acceptable timeframe as to not disrupt organizational missions (Greer, 2017; Keeling et al., 2018). Employers have also showed concern with veterans needing to take time off work for mental and medical appointments, cognitive disabilities as a result of military service, potential issues with forming bonds with civilian co-workers, and issues with anger or violence (Keeling et al., 2018).

Gulf War II veterans who participated in operation enduring freedom, operation Iraqi freedom, and operation new dawn as a result of terrorist attacks on the U.S. post 9/11 asserted that their military career was beneficial to them with favorable outcomes, such as collaborating with others as a team, and building self-confidence, yet, they also reported unfavorable outcomes as it relates to their civilian work transition (Davis & Minnis, 2017; Pease et al., 2015). For example, 49% reported PTSD, 47% reported

outbursts of anger, 44% reported adjustment difficulties, and 32% reported periodic loss of interest in daily duties (Mobbs & Bonanno, 2017). The U.S. Department of Labor reported that veterans with a service –connected disability had an unemployment rate of 5.2% in August 2018, which was higher than for veterans with no disability 3.5% (BLS, 2018). The purpose of this study provided opportunities to improve current strategies used by hiring managers and HR personnel to better handle unrealistic high expectations of veterans, and for incoming veterans to improve adjustments to their new civilian work life with ELP to facilitate setting expectations about the organization.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Maclean et al. (2018) reported that veterans who return to work after military deployment have a better life satisfaction and adjust better to their civilian surroundings than veterans who do not have any job. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reported that the veterans often change job twice within the first three years of civilian employment (Maclean et al., 2018). Likewise, Ford (2017) reported that at least 65% of veterans left their first jobs post-deployment from the military, which was the reason for this study to explore how might setting expectations for veterans upon entry could improve retention rates. Moreover, Huang and Su (2016) said that newly hired veterans generally leave their new job within the first eighteen months, and the veterans reported on exit interviews that it was generally related to lack of fit.

Some of the underlying issues with the feelings of lack of fit by the veterans emerged from the challenges in adapting or transitioning from the military culture to the civilian work style, especially since Ford said that the military spend ample time

conforming from the civilian life to a military service member, and not enough time to unlearn the military member status back into the civilian life style. Duffy et al., (2015) stated that work decisions made by veterans strongly correlate with self-evaluations, work meaning, job satisfaction, and optimism. Moreover, it was reported that it could take three employment opportunities to find the right job that fits (Duffy et al., 2015; Maclean et al., 2018). Interestingly, research showed that the first two jobs that the veterans have focus on meeting the immediate needs such as income and/or location, and the third position tends to meet the professional goals and there were opportunities for professional growth (Maclean et al., 2018). A survey reported by McAllister et al., (2015) showed a few reasons for dissatisfaction amongst the veterans which included: (a) their position did not take advantage of their current skills and abilities; (b) their job paid less than what they believed they should be earning; (c) their job did not match the experience level; and (d) the job was not meaningful.

Sustained hiring goals and employment retention were essential to maintain a low unemployment rate for Gulf War era II veterans who were returning from active duty (McAllister et al., 2015). The current unemployment rate has declined to 3.1% in 2019 (BLS, 2019) from 3.8% in 2018 (BLS, 2018), and 4.5% in 2017 (BLS, 2017). This decline in unemployment was impressive and should continue decrease if the retention rate increases and the hiring increases. Although the unemployment rate for veterans has decreased, there were still gaps in job satisfaction amongst veterans reporting not finding jobs that could connect relationships and motivation (Davis & Minnis, 2017; Faurer et al., 2014). Consequently, veterans preferred a job that has a sense of purpose just like their

military service, which was not always the case in their civilian employment (Greer, 2017). Veterans have also reported that they do see some differences in the culture of civilian workers to military workers such as, devaluing teamwork, commitment, and loyalty (Greer, 2017). This apparent gap in potential employment retention served as a reason to help employers to think about appropriate changes, problem solving, and seeking guidance from military related resources (Davis & Minnis, 2017; Faurer et al., 2014).

The employment transition could be challenging for someone moving from one civilian job to another civilian job, let alone from the military work life to the civilian work life. A study by Keeling et al., (2018) indicated why 49% of veterans experienced obstacles to assimilate into their civilian work roles because of assumptions made by their civilian colleagues: (a) veterans tend to be violent; (b) veterans were pro-gun carriers; (c) veterans have PTSD; and (d) veterans have killed someone while in service. These assumptions made by the civilian colleagues were stigmas, which might provoke veterans to feel isolated and not be able to integrate positively with their colleagues, which needs to be overcome and addressed by the employers. Of note, what also might affect reintegration of veterans is that if they leave the military during a period of high unemployment, the civilian worker earns substantially less than usual (Duffy et al., 2015). Likewise, research has shown that both active duty military members and veterans earn more than demographically compared civilians in long-term positions (Greer, 2017; Duffy et al., 2015). To minimize turnover, employers should do their best to inform them

of these economic challenges or economic benefits as they arise to help manage their expectations.

### **Socialization**

Socialization or onboarding was the process of moving new employees into becoming immersed members of an organization (Delobbe et al.,2016; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). This was of importance to employers as it influences the new employee's perception, retention, job satisfaction, and job performance (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Delobbe et al.,2016; Hatmaker, 2015). Through this process the new employee learns the skills, knowledge, expected behaviors needed to succeed in their new role (Hatmaker, 2015). Employers know socialization efforts were essential to avoid premature turnover by employees as it relates to undesirable costs, time, and human resources to begin the recruiting and hiring cycle again (Ellis et al.,2017). Likewise, as employees change jobs, socialization adds to the value and meaning of the job, which makes a difference between committing and leaving the organization (Allen et al.,2017; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). Moreover, research has revealed that socialization within organizations could have a positive influence on person-organization fit, role clarity, job embeddedness, task mastery, value congruence between the employee and organization, and adoption of the culture by the employee (Allen et al., 2017; Meyer & Bartels, 2017).

Research has offered insight into the importance of organizational socialization, it does not provide enough insight on effective behavioral socialization practices for military veterans who were transitioning to the civilian work life (Rabel & Stefaniak, 2018). Effective socialization practices could increase the motivation of new employees

to engage more in the organization, and thus have more of a vested interest in the organization (Rabel & Stefaniak, 2018). However, research still needs to explain what methods were used to set expectations about the organization for new veterans that could help to generate a motivation to accept the civilian work life culture, improve adaptation to the new work life, and thus positively impact the organization (Rabel & Stefaniak, 2018; Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2018).

Socialization generally begins the first day the new employee joins the organization. If employers were prepared, this initial phase offered them an opportunity to influence the employee's values and motives at a point they were likely more receptive to change and new ideas (Ellis et al., 2017; Meyer & Bartels, 2017). Additionally, since the prime focus of socialization was the adoption of the organizational culture by the employee, employers could influence the employees to adopt the organizational values and service identity (Ellis et al., 2017; Malik & Manroop, 2017). Likewise, the focus of this present study was to explore the nature of a private sector organization's socialization practices to facilitate in setting expectations for a successful adjustment to the workplace practices, norms, and values.

Personalities of the new employees were said to affect the socialization experience. Proactive personalities were individuals that take more control over their environment and take an active role in socializing instead of a passive or reactive role (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). A person with a proactive personality forges their own relationships with key players in the organization, and thus generates resources that often results on job satisfaction and success in their job roles (Chung, 2018; Nifadkar & Bauer,



2016). People who were proactive ask a lot of clarifying questions that shows that they desire solutions to move forward in the organization, they were well-adjusted in group settings; they have role clarity, and task mastery (Chung, 2018; Benzinger, 2016).

Individuals who were more passive or reactive often feel less integrated in the organization (Benzinger, 2016; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). However, to avoid the passive or reactive personality trait, employees must be encouraged to be more proactive and seek out information to build their network of resources to increase their sense-making of their role and organization (Enneking & Kleiner, 2017). For this research, personality profiles were not observed.

From the onset it would be ideal for new employees to exhibit behaviors that positively influence their integration into their new work environment. Although, it was the responsibility for the organization to create an environment for new employees to quickly adjust and understand the culture, new employees could also exhibit behaviors to convey their desire to adapt to the organization's culture, norms and values (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016; Rabel & Stefaniak, 2018). Some ideal new employee behaviors were as follows:

**Information seeking:** Information seeking was a behavior that allowed new employees to ask questions about their jobs, company policies, and prioritizing their tasks, which helps them take an active role in making sense of their environment (Rabel & Stefaniak, 2018). New employees might seek information through passive methods such as the company website, employee handbook, and other written material, but those methods maybe limited in information regarding the unwritten rules of the culture

(Benzinger,2016; Wang et al., 2015). Therefore, it would be more beneficial for new employees to engage in conversations with their co-workers and supervisors (Chung, 2018). Research showed that frequent active information seeking was correlated to new employee adjustment and essential to work attitudes and behaviors (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016).

**Feedback seeking:** Feedback seeking was important to help new employees know that they were aligning to the expectations of their employer and meeting desired milestones (Saks & Gruman, 2018). Without periodic feedback new employees might not accurately interpret whether they were meeting the requirements of their role (Song et al.,2017). By initiating feedback from their supervisor or co-workers the new employee will improve their adaptation by modifying their behavior with the company culture and expectations (Song et al., 2017).

**Relationship building:** Relationship building, or networking was an important characteristic of the success of a new employee to enhance their learning and integration (Saks & Gruman, 2018). The process of relationship building has been discussed amongst researchers as proactive behaviors focused on developing workplace networks (Saks & Gruman, 2018; Wang et al.,2017). Former research on relationship building have found that the increase in social capital that a new employee has, relates to an increase in job satisfaction, job performance, better understanding of their job and responsibilities, and improved integration in the company (Enneking, & Kleiner, 2017; Wang et al., 2017).

Besides individual factors such as the proactivity of new employees influencing socialization, organizational factors could also influence the relative ease in which

employees could adapt (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). For instance, an organization with geographic boundaries or other proximity issues might be challenging to forge relationships especially if those persons have the knowledge that the new employee needs (Kowtha, 2018; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). Similarly, if an organization has different functional divisions that were in silos where there was limited interaction, this might pose some engagement issues for new employees (Kowtha, 2018). Research tells us that an organization's culture encompasses values, basic shared beliefs, and assumptions that facilitate organizational operations and daily behaviors of employees (DeBode, Mossholder, & Walker, 2017). Therefore, a culture that was primed to reach out, share information, and was receptive to new employees could help with relationship-building such as lighthearted humorous conversations (DeBode et al., 2017; Gkorezis et al., 2016). Likewise, a company with a culture with more experienced employees who were encouraged or even rewarded to collaborate and share knowledge will help promote the adaptation of new employees (DeBode et al., 2017).

### **Organizational Socialization Tactics**

A company's socialization tactics were used to facilitate the experiences for new employees. The socialization tactics help the new employee to learn required knowledge, skills, and expectations related with their job role (Kowtha, 2018; Benzinger, 2016). Moreover, the socialization tactics used by the company should be tailored to control the transition of the new employee into the organization (Kowtha, 2018). Ellis et al. (2017) said that companies that employ institutionalized tactics use a step-by-step approach for new employees detailing their roles, the norms of the company, and how they were to

behave, and were isolated from current workers. Abu-Doleh and Obeidat (2018) reported about the benefit of onboarding programs with pre-determined activities with specific times that the new employees need to participate in, and in some instances current employees participate as role models.

Literature has shown that some companies may use individualized socialization tactics where the new employee was left to take a proactive approach to understand their new position, and tries to figure out the norms, values, and expectations (Ślebarska et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2016). With individualized socialization tactics, new employees were free to forge their own relationships and take a proactive role to understand the company expectations (Ślebarska et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2016). In contrast, the institutionalized tactic, the new employee goes through a deliberate sequence of activities to facilitate adjustment (Abu-Doleh and Obeidat, 2018). DeBode et al., (2017) discussed examples of organizations that undergo institutionalized social tactics where new employees have long orientation sessions and initiation activities. Likewise, within the military, cohorts undergo extensive training and socialization activities (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017).

Research has shown that when institutionalized social tactics were implemented, new employees often experience more positive job attitudes, higher levels of fit and minimal turnover than individualized social tactics (Gkorezis et al., 2016; Naseem et al., 2016). However, this desirable outcome was stronger for new graduates taking their first job, and not for employees changing jobs, or for new employees that have demonstrated proactive behaviors (Naseem et al., 2016). On a different note, research has shown that

institutionalized tactics limit the role innovation creativity of new employees as they were trained to fit with the status quo and may not be able to express their own personality that may help with creativity within the role (Liu et al., 2017).

Even with the different socialization tactics, research has shown that companies that have a formal orientation program assist with teaching the new employee about the goals, company's history, and conveying the organizational power structure (Coldwell, Williamson & Talbot, 2019). Large companies may have formal orientation programs that consist of lectures, videotapes, and written materials, whereas other companies may use other platforms (Coldwell et al., 2019; Manata et al., 2016). The duration of time for orientation programs could be a few hours to several months with formal training (Manata et al., 2016). Companies that employed shorter orientations might have computer-based orientations and intranets to support new employees, which helps with consistency among different geographical locations (Coldwell et al., 2019; Vandenberghe et al., 2019).

Orientation programs could help with team integration, but less with computer-based orientation programs (Manata et al., 2016). Research by Smith et al. (2017) demonstrated that computerized orientations as compared to face-to-face orientations resulted with employees with less understanding of their job, which indicates the effect of the different methods for orientation. Nevertheless, the most effective onboarding programs were documented, communicated to all employees, consistently implemented, and tracked over time (Smith et al., 2017).

Socialization of new employees could happen as early as the recruiting phase, especially if social events were part of the recruitment. Companies that develop recruiting events could provide the prospective job candidate about life within the company (Meyer & Bartels, 2017). Allen et al. (2017) asserted that recruiting events and associated activities might have helped new employees already form a realistic expectation and the ability to anticipate the company requirements. Furthermore, the quality of recruitment activities has been linked to positive socialization outcomes such as organizational commitment (Vandenberghe et al., 2019).

The use of realistic job previews (RJPs) was another strategy to socialize new employees to the company culture (Enneking & Kleiner, 2017). Proost et al, 2012). Providing new employees with as much accurate information about the company upfront including both positives and negatives have some advantages (Enneking & Kleiner, 2017; Proost et al., 2012). An advantage for the company that provides realistic job previews was that employers could easily identify employees that were not satisfied and weed them out instead of having to replace them after a short tenure because of their dissatisfaction (Abu-Doleh & Obeidat, 2018; Debode et al., 2017). For example, if a new employee was told that she would be making her own decisions in the beginning, and then later she finds out the company has a hierarchal structure with little autonomy; she might have plans to quit soon (Baur et al., 2014). However, if she had been informed upfront that she would have little autonomy then she would have made a faster decision to either leave or be better prepared to adjust to the culture (Baur et al., 2014). Research has shown that new employees that receive substantial amount of accurate information

about the company and the job upfront generally conform to the company better (Kowtha, 2018). Nevertheless, RJPs were not appropriate for this present study because the purpose of this study was to interview employees that were currently working for 12 months or more, and have not opted out of the job, which tends to be a characteristic of RJPs, and not favorable for expectation setting research (Abu-Doleh & Obeidat, 2018; Debode et al., 2017).

The influence of mentors has an active effect on new employee's socialization. The mentor could assist in teaching the new employee about the way things were done within the organization, provide advice, assist with job tasks, and offer social support (Allen et al., 2017). Mentors could also answer questions, especially if the new employee was not yet comfortable with asking their direct managers. Mentors help the new employee feel welcome and they act as a facilitator to promote effective engagement between current employees and new employees (Gkorezis et al., 2016; Ślebarska et al., 2018). Moreover, research has shown that when new employees engage with mentors and attend social events, they were more amenable to internalize the company's values and culture much faster (Gkorezis et al., 2016; Ślebarska et al., 2018;). Additionally, mentors help new employees positively manage their expectations, and embrace organizational events and practices more effectively (Allen et al., 2017).

### **Measures of Socialization**

Measures of socialization have been focused on empirical data from surveys that have either been longitudinal, multisource, and conducted within the first year of employment (Saks & Gruman, 2018). Bauer et al. (2011) wanted to know whether

longitudinal studies had a moderating influence on the relationship between adjustment (e.g. self-efficacy and role clarity) of employees and outcomes such as turnover, organizational commitment. Bauer et al. (2011) also asserted that cross-functional studies had a higher moderating effect, but with no evidence of change of the sign of the relationships. Research has examined different measures of socialization:

- a) With adjustment and outcome factors including role conflict with a sample item “I received incompatible requests from two or more people”;
- b) Acceptance by others with a sample item “people in this organization seem to like me”;
- c) Examining the information that the employee learned while new on the job, an example of an item is “I know how things ‘really work’ on the inside of the organization” (Schaubroeck, Peng, & Hannah, 2016; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). Socialization could also be measured with four domains that included training received, understanding of the job and organization, coworker support, and future goals of the employer (Klein, Polin, & Leigh Sutton, 2015).

Subsequent research has also been interested in predicting new employee adjustment time periods to understand the dynamics of socialization. For instance, it has been posited that socialization was an active process and one should expect it to change overtime for both the individual and the organization (Coldwell et al., 2019). Wang et al. (2017) asked the question about whether new employees encounter a honeymoon period when they first enter a new job. The authors reported that initially new employees will enjoy early positive experiences, but this was often short lived by a shock of reality



(Wang et al., 2017). This was likely because learning the inner workings of a new organization takes time, and the negative aspects of an organization become more obvious over time (van der Werff & Buckley, 2017; Wang et al., 2017).

An empirical study by Ellis et al. (2017) analyzed the average time for each new employment adjustment variable to change over time (i.e. one to twelve months post-entry of the new job). The specific adjustment variables were self-efficacy, which refers to how confident employees were conducting their work; role clarity refers to how well the employee understands their job; acceptance by organizational insiders refers to the perception of the new employees on whether they feel socially comfortable and accepted by their colleagues; and knowledge of organizational culture refers to understanding the culture and how things work in the organization (Ellis et al., 2017). The variables noted have been related to organizational outcomes such as commitment, satisfaction, turnover, and performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2016).

The results following the empirical study by Ellis et al. (2017) showed the average self-efficacy score increased during the initial months post-hire and then decreased steadily after three months. The average score for role clarity decreased in the initial few months post hire and then increase after the third month (Ellis et al., 2017). The average score for social acceptance decreased slowly during the first six months post-hire, and then gradually increased past that point over time (Ellis et al., 2017). Of interest, the results showed that role clarity, self-efficacy, and social acceptance were at similar levels above the midpoint of the scale, suggesting that new employees start off feeling confident

about themselves, their job role, and their colleagues (Ellis et al., 2017; van der Werff & Buckley, 2017).

This current study focused on filling in the gaps in historical and current military veteran retention research by exploring more contextual data about the conditions and strategies that veteran ready organizations use to manage expectations of veterans (Duel et al., 2019; Shepherd et al., 2019;). This qualitative research method within this study organized experiences from hiring managers, HR personnel, and current veteran employees that could help define the best practice strategies for managing expectations of veteran employees. Recent studies have not spent enough time understanding what socialization techniques employers use to adjust veteran employees to produce desirable outcomes such as low turnover (MacLean et al., 2018; Yanchus et al., 2018).

### **Realistic Job Expectations**

Job expectations were beliefs held by applicants regarding the outcome of working for a company (Baur et al., 2014). Even though money was a vital form of compensation when working for a company, it was the not the sole reason why people stay at their job (Botek, 2018). Botek (2018) reported on a former study where the researchers reviewed 20,000 post-exit interview surveys, the number one reason why people left the company was that of unrealistic expectations. It was known that when new hires start their new job, they generally have illusions and unrealistic expectations that need to be managed if they were to have a long tenure at the company says Botek (2018) and Valle et al., (2015). Botek (2018) explained that an employee's unrealistic job expectation is aligned with the discussed psychological contract that was posited by John

Paul Kotter in 1973. A psychological contract was an unspoken contract between the employee and the employer that outlines what each one was to give and receive in the work relationship (Vander Elst et al., 2016). When an employee identifies that an element of the psychological contract has been breached, it results in feelings of betrayal and dissatisfaction (van den Heuvel, 2017; Vander Elst et al., 2016). However, a psychological contract could change over time as the employee or the organizational needs change, and thus, it was important for communication to be clear (van den Heuvel, 2017; Vander Elst et al., 2016).

Influential research by Kotter first helped to understand the different expectations both from the employee and the employer (van den Heuvel, 2017). Employees were said to have the following general expectations from a new job: a) job with a sense of purpose, b) interesting work, c) challenge in job tasks for growth, d) recognition, feedback, and security, e) positive relationships with colleagues, and f) professional advancement (van den Heuvel, 2017). Similarly, employers also have expectations from their new hire including a) acceptance of the organizations demands, b) ability to make independent responsible decisions, c) ability to articulate and present a point of view, and d) ability to absorb the different elements of the business (Wong & Kuvaas, 2018). Having an open and honest discussion of expectations between the job candidate and employer was crucial especially during the interview process as asserted by Gkorezis and Kastritsi (2017) because employees could either desire to not pursue the job or otherwise adjust to the job. If the candidate desires to not take the job it saves the company cost and time later if turnover or undesirable job attitudes surface Gkorezis and Kastritsi (2017).

### **The Emergence of Expectation Lowering Procedures**

Studies in realistic job information have demonstrated its important role in the socialization of new employees (O'Brien & Hebl, 2015). It was agreed that an organization's job hiring process could influence the attitudes and behaviors of new employees, which has impact on organizational outcomes such as commitment, satisfaction, and turnover (O'Brien & Hebl, 2015; Wang et al., 2016). It was vital that those organizations do not embellish about the attributes of their organizations as it sets up an expectation internalized by job applicants that if not fulfilled often results in dishonesty and dissatisfaction of new employees (O'Brien & Hebl, 2015). Often organizations do this to attract the best candidates and have a wide range of applicants to choose from, but ultimately if the realness of the organization was perceived by the new employees as not true this could pose a threat to the integrity of the organization and attitudes and behaviors of their new employees (Gkorezis & Kastritsi, 2017).

To help taper the overly positive content provided by organizations to attract the best candidates, research has showed that realistic job previews (RJP) were successful in balancing the reality of the positives and negatives of the job role for the employee (Ababneh, 2016; Wanous et al., 1992). Post 1956, when the first published paper regarding the effectiveness of RJP by J. Weitz, numerous other papers came out agreeing on the positive effects on turnover to having little effect on turnover depending on job role (Liu et al., 2018). Several meta-analyses were conducted on RJP on its influence on turnover especially if the RJP was given in the most effective format e.g.

paper or video; timing e.g. during recruitment or during the interview process; and research setting (Liu et al., 2018; Bilal & Bashir, 2016).

Baur et al. (2014) first asserted that RJPs were most effective when given to job applicants during the recruiting process. Furthermore, Proost et al. (2012) have demonstrated the psychological processes of RJP that make it effective including self-selection, met expectation, ability to cope, and the air of honesty. Likewise, Bilal and Bashir (2016); Maden et al. (2016) also emphasized the importance of providing RJPs before job acceptance to fully experience the benefits of the intervention. Despite the indirect approach of RJPs moderately lowering expectations by communicating more realistic information, its general effects have been challenged by research focusing on expectations (Bilal & Bashir, 2016; Maden et al., 2016). Studies focusing on expectations of new employees, instead of job content have offered an improved approach to target the overestimated expectations by focusing on general information about the organization and the job and less on specifics (Chehade & El Hajjar, 2016; Bilal & Bashir, 2016).

Baur et al. (2014) posited the idea of ELPs to lower expectations of new employees that were not in line with the reality of the organization, and therefore reduce the negative organizational outcomes such as turnover. The ELPs guides a more cautious examination of the job expectations and have a realistic evaluation of those expectations (Valle et al., 2015). Moreover, Buckley says that the ELP targets the job applicant's unrealistic high-expectation without focusing on job-content, and thus could be used for a wide range of job situations. Likewise, using ELPs was more cost-effective than RJPs that need to be customized for each job role (Jacquet & Hermon, 2018).

Jobs were becoming more dynamic and complex, and using RJPs would be time-consuming and not cost-effective with the likelihood of changes in job content, and thus, the likelihood of using ELPs to lower job expectations will increase (Jacquet & Hermon, 2018; Wang et al., 2016). The non-job –specific nature of ELPs to offer positive organizational outcomes for new employees has been noted in studies for U.S. expatriates and in general has more consistent influence over expectations of an employee than RJP (Gibson et al., 2015). For example, in a study by Buckley et al. (2002) that administered both RJPs and ELPs scripts alone and in combination before pre-hire to telemarketers who have a high-rate of turnover they found that ELPs have a greater influence on the tenure of employees that negatively skewed RJPs. The authors suggested that the reason for the greater influence over organizational commitment was because ELPs allow the job applicant to develop and adjust their personal goals, while RJPs were more helpful to develop and adjust organizationally relevant goals (Buckley et al., 2002).

The study by Buckley et al., (2002) as with Bilal and Bashir (2016) suggested that if employees already have an idea of job specifications and what to expect in a job as a telemarketer such as close supervision and limited mobility, administering an ELP may help with targeting high expectations to help the coping mechanisms of employees. However, the study did show that employees having high or low expectations stayed with the company a shorter period, whereas the employees with average expectation scores stayed longer with the organization (Buckley et al., 2002). As a result the authors suggested that perhaps employees with high expectations (e.g. “With my experience I should get promoted within a year”) or low expectations (e.g. “I don’t plan to be here

very long, it's just a stepping stone") do not develop effective coping skills until they set goals that were clear and achievable (Buckley et al., 2002). Therefore, in this present study the hope was to explore how expectation lowering procedures (ELP) or its equivalent in nature were implemented to sustain veterans in their civilian jobs since there may be varying levels of expectations that influence the outcome of the socialization process.

Research showed that the power behind ELPs and RJP could be found in proactive coping that was defined as any effort undertaken by an individual for a foreseeable stressful event and identify methods to prevent the stressful event (Ślebarska et al., 2018). ELPs do not focus on any specific job stressors such as job tasks. Instead ELPs focuses on the nature of the organization such as culture, values, and norms, which enables an employee to better prepare for the right coping skills for potential stressors in the work environment (Chehade & El Hajjar, 2016). The proactive coping ability of an ELP might be helpful in socialization and retention research as it promotes purposeful strategies to ensure new employees were well adjusted and adapted into their new workplace setting (Wang et al., 2017). Furthermore, RJPs have been successful in the industrial economy workplace, but ELPs might be better for this knowledge-based economy since generally workers could adapt to job tasks than their role in the organization (Shibly, 2019). Additionally, because of this web-based technology era with social media networks and other social networks ELPs will have more importance in organizations that depend on these networks and individuals need to know their roles within these networks as opposed assigned job tasks (Shibly, 2019).

## **ELP Model**

To date there was no universal model of the expectation lowering procedures just like there was no standard ELP format that could be applied to all organizations (Bilal & Bashir, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this present study was to attempt to create more structure around developing ELPs for organizations as they were more cost-effective and easier to construct because they were focused on the general characteristics of the organization and the expected experiences generally felt by employees, as opposed to RJPs that would need to be updated frequently because they were focused more on the job roles and tasks that could change over time (Chehade & El Hajjar, 2016; Pleitz et al.,2015). Nevertheless, in the research by Buckley et al. (2002) where the authors interviewed telemarketers that had high rates of turnover, they used scripts for both ELP and RJP. The scripts had the following features:

- a) Both the ELP and RJP script were about one page in length and were discussed with the interviewee face to face;
- b) The RJP script was very direct in describing the pros and cons of the nature of the job such as informing the candidates that they will often get a “no” from customers not buying the credit cards and that all their calls will be monitored;
- c) In the beginning of the RJP script, the candidate knows what position they were applying for and the size of their cubicle and then going straight into discussing the type of institution they would be working for and some company policies that were just related to job tasks; and



- d) Then the script talked about common complaints held by other employees of the position (Buckley et al., 2002).

It was important to mention that RJPs were often created from job analyses and interviewing other employees to map out a concise experience of the actual job (Liu et al., 2018; Chehade & El Hajjar, 2016).

The same study described the ELPs having a more personal tone that allowed the employer to connect with candidate, such as stating a commonality that employees typically have high unrealistic expectations when entering an organization to bring a general phenomenon to their awareness also asserted by Bilal and Bashir, 2016; Buckley et al., 2002; Pleitz et al., 2015). The features of the ELP included the following:

- a) There was a sense of empathy and potential for the candidate to re-assess their own expectations;
- b) The employer mentioned that candidates typically have high expectations of pay raises, working conditions, and future job assignments, and that organizations have expectations that were not always matched;
- c) Moreover, the script stated that in the beginning of a working relationship the employee and employer come into a psychological contract that describes the expectations, which were not always met. The script later had the employer being empathetic by stating they do not want the candidate to have a reality shock, and described the outcomes of mismatch in expectations such as low job performance and low job satisfaction;

- d) The researchers did highlight in the script the importance of the employer encouraging the candidate to develop realistic expectations, but did not mention how to do this; and
- e) Moreover, the script directed the employer to provide a fictional example to the candidate of a former employee's high expectations and explained the former employee's expectations such as their hope of dealing with nice people, good compensation, and working flexible hours, and that the employee eventually left the job because of unmet expectations; Lastly, the employer prompted the candidate to provide some similar experiences of their own with high expectations by asking a question (Buckley et al., 2002).

The ELP was structured in a way to not discuss the specifics of the actual job that the candidate's interviews for, to ensure it regulates expectations, and not encourage them to opt out of the position by providing both negatives and positives about the job as with RJP (Pleitz et al., 2015; Shibly, 2019). Instead, the ELP used subtle emotionally appealing strategies of acknowledging to the candidate the common mistakes employees have made that led them to unsuccessful outcomes, but with the goal of conveying that the candidate could be successful by following sound advice from the organization and manage their expectations (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017). However, the ELP script was not necessarily structured in a way that another organization could replicate, and this was the purpose of this study to explore a more structured format of including an ELP for a successful socialization experience for new veterans.

Gibson et al. (2015) administered ELPs to U.S. expatriates overseas. Gibson et al. (2015) asserted that expatriates generally enter their assignment with high expectations especially because of how some organizations glamorize it to get them to take the job, but there were eventual issues with traveling schedules and family conflicts and living conditions that produce negative outcomes with these employees. With that said, Gibson et al. (2015) evaluated the use of ELPs an active agent to calibrate the high expectations of the expatriates. The authors also asserted that in the event an organization had to choose between the ELP and RJP intervention, it should be ELP (Gibson et al., 2015). The reason being was that ELPs would be more effective to help expatriates adapt better with general information about the organization as opposed to assignment specific information contained in RJPs because of its acculturation effect (Chehade & El Hajjar, 2016; Gibson et al., 2015).

Gibson et al. (2015) did not disagree with the usefulness of RJPs focus on providing both positive and negative aspects of the job. Yet, they did see the need of understanding in future research what type of information was more effective in an ELP since this tool avoids the quick opt out option by employees as with RJPs because of the desirable and undesirable aspects of the job, and instead provides an opportunity for the organization to meet expectations of employees by providing general organizational expectations up front that was typically experienced by current employees (Chehade & El Hajjar, 2016; Gibson et al., 2015). The administration of ELPs was recommended through training as it was discovered in the study with expatriates because of its effectiveness (Gibson et al., 2015). This training emerged from a theoretical framework

that brings awareness of expectations that could be controlled and offer positive results for adjustments (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017; Gibson et al., 2015). Awareness in the framework comes with the understanding that expectations that could be controlled were often developing, unspoken, or unconscious (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017; Valle et al., 2015).

### **Veterans and Socialization Practices**

According to Rose et al. (2017) and Ferri-Reed (2013), socialization practices or onboarding practices were essential to setting expectations of a new employee to ensure a successful transition into the new organization. The authors examined various methods to ensure a smooth transition such as assigning a veteran peer mentor or a coach to conduct various assessments for the new veteran employee to examine their competency of the new organization. Additionally, Rose et al. (2017) agreed with Mutch (2006) in not assuming that individual veterans could adjust successfully to a new organization, and thus employ realistic job expectations to evaluate the veterans value system versus the organizations value system. Rose et al. (2017) mentioned the negative consequences of cognitive dissonance and conflicting expectations when there was no transparency of values and norms, such as organizational commitment issues and retention. Moreover, Orazem et al. (2017) discussed veteran transition issues as it related to the military identity adjustment issues faced by veterans as they transitioned into the civilian organization, there was a desire for them to maintain their familiar identity, which could clash with the needs of the civilian organization. Therefore, Orazem et al.(2017) recommended organizations help with veteran employment transition by being more

transparent about the cultural norms of the work environment with the hope that the veteran could build a connection with the organization, and thus identifying with the organization.

Cooper et al. (2018), was pro-transparency of the work cultural norms and values with veterans by suggesting that veterans be trained in the cultural competence of the new organization to ease with transition as well as employers having cultural competence training about veterans. Stern (2017) discussed the need for more veteran research in understanding what has been working to ensure successful transition of veterans into the civilian workplace to empower the human resource professional to improve hiring and retention practices. Therefore, from the research practices specifically for veteran socialization practices in the workplace, there was a consensus that setting expectations about the culture of the organization leads to positive outcomes for the veteran.

However, there was still a gap in understanding how to set expectations for veterans, although Rose et al. (2017) and Mutch (2006) suggested using RJPs, it was not evident in the literature that this has been done. Nevertheless, this study aimed to explore the use of ELPs or its equivalent. The equivalent practice of ELP was important because ELP was not a common term used in organizations, and in general there were various socialization tactics used to help adjust a new employee to an organization's culture which was likely more related to an ELP-type structure. Furthermore, ELP or its equivalent practices were often more integrated than RJPs because of its focus on the organizational values, practices, and norms, which was more consistent overtime than

RJPs that focus on the job tasks only that could change over-time (Abu-Doleh & Obeidat, 2018; Debode et al., 2017).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The literature review introduced the method of managing expectations with realistic job tools, specifically expectation lowering procedures (ELP) with the intent to explore whether this process could lower the expectations of military veterans as they transition into the civilian work environment, and by so doing meeting their expectations (Maden et al., 2016). This was a gap in the socialization and retention research that was purposed to fulfil by this current research by exploring ideas and concepts with civilian employers of veterans and currently employed veterans working in civilian companies. The literature review begun by conveying the need for veterans to be employed by civilian private companies as they were an added asset as a result of their military training such as their positive team work, attention to detail, and discipline (Duffy et al., 2015). Statistics showed that private companies hire more veterans than other sectors such as the government employees, but retention was often an issue (BLS, 2018). Former research claimed that military veterans were known to change jobs up to three times post-deployment from the military until they found the job that had meaning as well as other human needs (Duffy et al., 2015). Some of the reasons why veterans move around to different civilian jobs was because of their own perceptions of civilian employers not socializing with them adequately or companies having perceptions of veterans that might isolate them from their civilian colleagues such as PTSD or anger issues (Keeling et al., 2018).

Socialization or onboarding was heavily discussed as a segment of recruiting to focus on as its success or failure was related to organizational outcomes such as new employee behaviors, adjustments, adaptability, performance, satisfaction, and turnover (Liu et al. 2017). A few socialization techniques were discussed such as organizational structured orientation programs or individually initiated socialization where the new employee was left to initiate their own contacts and form their own network (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). The literature illustrated that the new employee personality characteristics such as being proactive influenced socialization and thus outcomes, and if the new employee was not proactive, they would likely feel disconnected from their colleagues and eventually leave the organization (Naseem, 2016).

The literature called for a deeper dive into the use of ELPs as a known socialization tool that had been previously used amongst telemarketers in combination with another socialization recruiting tool known as the realistic job previews (RJPs) on U.S. expatriates working overseas (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017). It was not as common to use ELPs on its own in former research, but a study by Gibson (2015) said if one had to choose a tool, it would be ELP because it targeted more the expectation factors to adjust behavior as opposed to RJPs that promoted self-selection of staying or leaving the job opportunity. The ELPs were known to provide a general overview of the nature of the organizational culture to the job applicant or employee, whereas the RJP that emerged before ELP focused on the negative and positives of the job tasks.

This section also introduced the met expectation theory to answer the research questions that pertained to the extent to which ELPs were an effective tool to lower

expectations of veterans and explore the socialization practices of the employers. The next section introduces how this present study answered the research questions with the methods section that outlined the justification of the participant selection, discussion of the qualitative study, review of interview and data collection instruments, and data analysis plan.



## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative method was to understand the individual perspectives of employers and veteran employees of a veteran ready organization. The method included the exploration of what an ELP looked like, and what were the behavioral aspects of ELPs that might facilitate lowering unrealistic expectations of new veterans to improve meeting their expectations. The target population included hiring managers and/or HR personnel (employers) and veteran employees within one veteran ready organization within New Jersey. It was desirable to target employers and employees from a private organization with multiple functional areas or departments because research showed they frequently hired veterans (Veteran Job Mission, 2018). However, this study includes the recruitment of public companies that have shown success in hiring and retaining veterans to minimize excluding valuable data. This chapter discusses the research plan and design, role of the researcher, and criteria of participants. Furthermore, this section discusses data collection methods, population and sampling, data collection tools, and the process of assuring ethical considerations.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The central phenomenon of this study was the observation of military veterans leaving their first civilian jobs within 2 years after leaving their military duties (Maclean et al., 2018). A single case design with embedded units was selected because it allowed the opportunity to look at the same issue but from different perspectives, including hiring managers, HR personnel, and current military veteran workers, while engaging in

analytical measures to determine common themes (Yin, 2014). Examples of subunits within the organization were different departments or functional teams within the organization. Furthermore, this case design provided the opportunity to consider data analysis within subunits (within case analysis), between the different subunits (between case analysis), or across all the subunits (cross-case analysis) (Baxter & Jack, 2010; Yin, 2006). The ability to engage in this rich data analysis served to improve the understanding of the case (Baxter & Jack, 2010; Yin, 2006).

This study provided an opportunity to gain more insight into the reasons behind the consequential behavior of the military veterans' early leave from their civilian jobs by understanding the successful strategies by an organization in retaining military veterans.

The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: From the perspective of the hiring manager and/or HR personnel, how are veteran ready civilian organizations able to lower the expectations of the veterans during the initial stages of employment and how does it contribute to veteran retention in the workplace?

RQ2: From the perspective of the veteran employee, how do veterans view the management of expectations approach between the military and the veteran ready civilian organization?

The purpose of these questions was to understand the quality and depth of information provided to the veterans upon entry into the organization that might influence their future fight or flight behavior.

Purposeful sampling of private and public companies that actively supported hiring of military veterans and sampling of current military veterans' workers because it would provide a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of the groups to ensure richness of the findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The phenomenological qualitative approach to this study was not appropriate, as it is more concerned with the participants' experiences of a specific event and how they felt about it, and thus outcomes of this approach are focused on fitting personality types, which was not the focus of this present study (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). Likewise, ethnography was ruled out because of its focus on immersing participants in a culture that is unfamiliar to them; although this study looked at aspects of the organizations culture, the culture was already familiar to the participants (Meyer, 2013). Moreover, the ethnography approach immerses the researcher into the culture for long periods of time to understand the participants, which was not feasible for the researcher (Meyer, 2013). The case study approach was more appropriate as it allowed the researcher to observe a case and collect data from multiple sources to create a bigger conclusion about the case and showcase solutions for the participants (Yin, 2014)

Furthermore, the qualitative design was appropriate for this study as the goal was to explore the point of view of hiring managers and/or HR personnel recruiting about retaining veterans in the civilian workplace as well as the perspective from employees who were veterans. A quantitative study would not be appropriate because the aim of the design is to test hypotheses developed from qualitative research (Hartas, 2015). The goal of the present study was not to examine relationships among variables, but to develop a

social constructivist worldview to observe how the different study variables might interact with each other through the interaction of the people involved (Bailey, 2014; Mertens, 2014). Qualitative researchers are interested in complex concerns that might have differing responses and need exploration through theoretical lenses (Ragin, 2014). This study implemented a qualitative research approach in the hopes of understanding what were the realistic socialization practices that help to set expectations for new veterans that has led organizations to retain veterans for more than 1 year.

The research method used for this study was qualitative. Qualitative research permits the development of ideas through the interaction with research participants, and it was essential to explore ideas, which was key to the chosen topic (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018). This study proceeded with a single case study qualitative design with purposive sampling. Case studies allow the researcher to discover the experiences of participants to understand whether there are similarities in meaning, the presence of patterns, and combined behaviors demonstrated in their responses (Yin 2014). This study did not opt for a phenomenological approach as it focuses only on capturing the lived experiences of the participants (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). Similarly, ethnography was ruled out because of its focus on the specific culture of the study, which limits the exploration of specific groups in the study (Myer, 2013). Moreover, using a qualitative approach was appealing since the goal was to identify the meaning of a specific experience (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018).

The quantitative tradition of research was not appropriate for this study because this type of research was not focused on measuring relationships amongst variables and

testing hypotheses (Hartas, 2015). Furthermore, the quantitative goal aims to find an objective truth and single reality and presenting statistics (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013), which was not relevant to this study because the study required a more in-depth exploration before a quantitative study could proceed. Interestingly, the mixed-method approach was helpful in building useful in-depth knowledge on a topic. Taheri et al. (2018) and Venkatesh et al. (2013) posited that a mixed-method approach could be appropriate when the data collection tools for the measurements were in alignment with the method of inquiry. The multi-purpose nature of the mixed-method approach was attractive, as it affords researchers to reap knowledge from a descriptive and numerical perspective (Taheri et al., 2018). Nonetheless, the quantitative approach was not aligned with this study's goal, and thus, the qualitative method was more suitable to explore the research questions.

### **Role of the Researcher**

During this study, my responsibilities included recruiting participants, organizing interviews, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data presented, and documenting the findings. Employers of the company that hire military veterans, specifically hiring managers and human resource personnel, as well as currently employed military veterans that were recruited from these companies, were asked to participate in open-ended interviews. Epoche, as described by Jorgensen and Brown-Rice (2018), is what a researcher should strive for, which was to abstain from judgement, presumptions, and preconceived ideas about the research topic. This was achieved when perceptions,

assumptions, and knowledge related to the topic during data collection and data analysis was put aside to assure unbiased data (Jorgensen & Brown-Rice, 2018).

Lopes De Leao Laguna et al. (2019) discussed the need of researchers to minimize the risk of backyard research. Backyard research presents itself when the researcher decreases the validity of the study by having a close relationship with the data that could skew the objectivity of the data (Lopes De Leao Laguna et al., 2019). In other words, the term backyard research loosely describes a researcher conducting research in their own backyard or an environment they are familiar with. To circumvent the possibility of background research, the researcher needed to practice the following: (a) practice thorough analysis by using multiple sources of data; (b) check with members to ensure data validity; (c) conduct peer debriefing for a neutral validity check; (d) reflect, note, and reduce possible biases; (e) provide rich descriptive research context; and (f) adequately communicate to participants their role in the study (Lopes De Leao Laguna et al., 2019).

The researcher was responsible to guide the interview process in such a way that they encourage fair exchange but being mindful to avoid overlooking the participant's response (Marshall & Edgley, 2015). This was so that, the researcher did not impact the true meaning of what the participant said and minimizing this could open up new concepts that were not in the original scope of the study but relevant in future studies. On a different note, the researcher should be mindful to adhere to the Belmont Report of 1979 that protects the rights of human participants who voluntarily enroll in biomedical and behavioral research (Brakewood & Poldrack, 2013). Brakewood and Poldrack (2013)

stated that the Belmont Report has three major principles to guide human related research: (a) *justice* and the equitable balance of benefit versus burden; (b) *respect* for the participants' decisions; and (c) *beneficence* to do no harm. This study adhered to the principles of the Belmont Report by obtaining informed consent from each participant that outlined the purpose of the study and the risks and benefits associated with the data, ensured fair treatment to the participants, and stated that their participation was voluntary.

The intent of this study was to explore the possible behavioral change effects of ELPs type content to produce positive organizational outcomes such as retention for military veterans transitioning into the civilian workforce. There was no military background or strong ties to the military force or organizational personnel who were interviewed. Nevertheless, by interviewing both military veteran employees and cross checking their experiences with employers and HR personnel, this study provided a well-rounded understanding of the topic. Moreover, the researcher had previous experience in conducting human subject research and auditing experience to gather and analyze relevant data.

This study used a qualitative methodology with a single case design with embedded units in order to recruit individual hiring managers and/or HR personnel within a public company that was veteran ready. The public company needed to have multiple departments within the organization to choose participants from, and the company needed to confirm that they retain military veterans as employees for more than 1 year. An internet search of organizations that have an established veteran program and/or have received awards for hiring veterans was the method of choice for identifying a veteran

ready organization. The assumption was made that organizations that have successfully retained military veterans have successfully met some expectations of their employees (Yang et al., 2018).

Using a qualitative method with a single-case design with embedded units allowed the opportunity to understand a phenomenon from different perspectives, and thus demonstrate a balanced overall viewpoint (De Boeck et al., 2018). Moreover, a single case design was described as a unit of analysis within boundaries, therefore justifying the reason for a definition of the cases from the start of the research viewpoint (De Boeck et al., 2018). Additionally, a qualitative method not only gave detailed narratives of participants' experiences, but also the significance behind the experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

This study required the selection of one organization that was veteran ready within the state of New Jersey. The criteria in choosing the organization was based on the criteria used by the Department of Labor Hire Vets program in awarding organizations for their positive impact in the recruitment and retention of hiring veterans (HireVets, Department of Labor, 2019). This included recruiting participants from a small to large veteran-ready organization (1-500 plus employees; HireVets, Department of Labor, 2021). Furthermore, the organization needed to be affiliated with or have a type of veteran integration assistant program such as a veteran organization or resource social group for veterans; human resource professionals; and/or pay differential program; and/or



tuition assistance program (HireVets, Department of Labor, 2021). The organization selected should have more than one functional department to assess embedded units. This study required two types of participants: hiring managers and/or human resource personnel who were known to retain military veterans for more than 1 year and veteran employees with varying job roles within the same organization. The purpose of the study was to target U.S. veteran military members who served since September 2011, which was better known as Gulf-war era II (GWII) veterans (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2017). The age range for this target population was between 25 and 54 years of age because they make up the majority (70%) of this GWII group according to the BLS (2018), plus this was the group that had the highest unemployment.

Both men and women of all races and ethnicities who work in a leadership (e.g. manager) or non-leadership (e.g. administrative assistant) role were included in the study, and all persons with disabilities were included in the study. The veteran employees needed to have been working at the organization for at least 1 to 2 years and be willing to participate in the study. The hiring managers and HR personnel were included in the study if they met the following criteria: worked for the organization for at least 1 to 2 years, and specifically familiar with hiring veterans. Hiring managers and HR personnel age of 25 and above were included in the study, both men and women were included in the study, all races and ethnicities were included in the study, and all persons with disabilities were included in the study. To select the actual organization, a web search of organizations within New Jersey was conducted that were veteran ready. Also, by reaching out to the NJ Department of Labor Veteran program that was familiar with such

organizations. Before enrollment, the organizational representative or gatekeeper was initially screened for suitability into the study and signed the letter of cooperation to participate in the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The intent of this qualitative study was to use open-ended semi-structured questionnaires to answer the research questions. The research interview questions were based on literature review that have used the present study's theoretical foundation that included the Met Expectation theory as well as research studies based on military veteran transition, socialization, ELPs, and employee retention research (Ellis et al., 2017; Fisher et al., 2015; Fugate & Soenen, 2018; Grimolizzi-Jensen et al., 2018; Kumarika Perera et al., 2017; Maden et al., 2016; Malik & Manroop, 2017; Saks & Gruman, 2018; Sreenivasan et al., 2018; Wojciechowski et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2018). To assure consistency and guidance for each interview, this study used an interview protocol that was typical for qualitative studies (Bailey, 2014; Baxter et al., 2010; Owen, 2014; see Appendix A).

The purpose of the interview protocol was to provide structure and reliability (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). There were three types of questionnaires used: a screening questionnaire to ensure inclusion into the study (see Appendix B) and two different questionnaires for the veteran employers and veteran employees (see Appendix C) to gain a deeper understanding of their knowledge and experiences with veteran onboarding and retention strategies. The content validity of the questionnaires was based on theoretical foundations of the study and the gaps during the literature review that conveyed that

researchers still needed to understand the context in which military veterans could get ready for transitioning into the civilian workplace (Choi & Ruona, 2011; Duel et al., 2019; Shepherd et al, 2019). The interviews took up to one hour and were recorded and simultaneously electronically transcribed, as well as, hand-written notes were taken.

Source documents that were related to socialization practices and understanding the culture of the organization with the intent of setting expectations (see Appendix D). According to Owen (2014), an analysis of the source documentations is critical to enhance the understanding of the information and its relevance to answer the research questions.

### **Sampling**

Purposeful sampling was used in this study to best align with the targeted characteristics for the participants. Palinkas et al. (2015) said that purposeful sampling was useful when selecting participants who were knowledgeable and/or experienced with the phenomenon under study. The authors further said that purposeful sampling was beneficial when the amount of resources was limited, but the topic of information was relatively abundant (Palinkas et al., 2015). Likewise, it was the participant's willingness to participate and their availability to speak expressively on their lived experiences that contributed to the selection of purposeful sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Castillo-Montoya (2016) and Leedy and Ormrod (2013) agreed that purposeful sampling facilitated in reaching data saturation. However, according to Yin (2006), it was important to bear in mind that case studies were not primarily concerned with meeting data saturation, but instead ensuring a bound sample. The bound sample for this study

was 10 NJ veterans and 10 HR and hiring managers. The bound sample of participants included military veterans that have served since 2001, both male and female, ages 25 and 54, working in leadership or non-leadership role as HR and hiring managers, worked in the organization for at least one year, all race, ethnicities included, and anyone with disabilities. Additionally, the available source documents were reviewed, such as employee interview scripts and responses, data on retention of veteran employees, company website pages for relevant information, and company's code of conduct.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Prior to recruitment, written approval was obtained from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study. Written approval was not needed from the organization's ethics committee, however, notable leadership needed to sign off to the study including labor relations. Along with the IRB approval, a signed a letter of cooperation was obtained from the organization that gave permission to conduct the study at the site and described the expectations of the researcher and the participants who were enrolled and consented into the study. The expectations in the letter of cooperation informed the participants that their identification was anonymous via zoom or over the phone, documents would be reviewed that were relevant to answer the research questions, and any other items as agreed upon with the site.

The participants were made aware of the study with a recruitment flyer (see Appendix D) and Survey Monkey® screening checklist (Appendix B) via email. The researcher identified a contact within the organization through the NJ Department of Labor Veteran Program to facilitate the dissemination of the flyer. Once the participants

have shown interest via email they were contacted either by phone, or email to review the project and email the screening checklist survey (Appendix B) to assure study participation and availability. Once the participant accepted to participate in the study, they were asked to sign and return the signed consent form via email. Then, the interviews were scheduled with the participant that was convenient for the participant. Interview questions were used from the questionnaires for both the employers and employees using Appendix C and recorded, electronically transcribed, and with handwritten notes.

In the event there was insufficient participation, the plan would be to extend participation from another site within New Jersey that had similar characteristics as the original site including being veteran ready with veteran resources and embedded units to comply with the research method of a single case study with embedded units. For this study, there was sufficient participation. When no new themes emerged amongst the data that was collected, interviews stopped, and at the same time confirmed with the dissertation committee of the decision. After data collection requirements were met, there was no need for additional participants.

Written permission from the organization's representative was obtained to recruit participants from multiple units, for the purpose of this study this meant multiple departments, functional areas, or groups within the organization. The enrolled organization for the research study and Walden University will not have permission to access the identity of the participants e.g. the full name of the participants. The researcher was the only person that has access to the identity of the research participants. The

participants that were enrolled into the study were identified with number codes to protect their identities. The anonymity for the participants assured them that their involvement would not jeopardize their current employment, so that they were more inclined to be open and honest for a richer discussion during the interviews (Creswell, 2009).

All participants received the informed consent form via email detailing the study purpose, time frame needs for study participation and length of time of the entire study, the risks and benefits of the study, study methods, and the methods in place to protect the privacy of each participant's data. The participants sent the signed original copy of the consent form to the researcher via email. The participants had up to five business days to ask any questions about the research and the consent process before sending the original copy of the consent form to the researcher. The researcher sent a copy of the consent form with the researcher's signature to each participant for their records.

To ensure continuous retention of the study participants, participants were informed to contact the researcher via phone or email to answer any additional questions or concerns. A reminder email about the interviews was sent at least one week before the interview confirming the method of interview (i.e., via Zoom conference call), and stating that the interview may take up to one hour. The Zoom platform recorded the interviews and the interviews were transcribed via Otter application that has privacy features for data storage and security. Additionally, the written notes were recorded from the interviews. A follow-up call and/or email to all participants was made after the interviews to clarify participant's responses. A final email was sent to participants to confirm the

study's data collection and data analysis was completed, and that the study was closed with appreciation for their participation.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

As part of data analysis, emerging patterns were identified from the data collected to answer the research questions. This was a qualitative study using the single case design with embedded units, and thus the interviews from participants were analyzed separately and then analyzed altogether to describe the organization as a single case (Yin,2013). The analytical approach was from the ground up, in other words using inductive thematic analysis to observe emerging patterns in the data across the different participants and then describing overall themes as whole unit (Yin,2013). The mode of analysis incorporated into this study was based on Yin (2013, 2014) to achieve replication of data, which involved using the data collected from one participant to create overarching themes to compare with other participants to observe replication of themes, and thus document generalizations to the theory being used in the study i.e. met expectation theory.

Prior to analysis, to facilitate internal validity of the study, predicted themes from literature review were identified to compare with the observed emerging themes (Yin, 2013). This was in alignment with the coding strategy as described in detail below.

According to Chowdhury (2015), the important segments of data analysis were (a) organization, (b) familiarization, (c) classifying, (d) coding and interpretation, and writing up and presenting the data. The coding strategy included identifying initial codes from the literature review as predictable variables written up as a code list that facilitated internal validity, but the research stayed open to create new codes from the interview

transcripts, document reviews, and other information (Chowdhury, 2015). Then new codes were revealed from the data by identifying thoughts, concepts, and ideas that were in alignment with the research questions and the phenomenon of the study (Yin, 2013, 2014).

The codes were sorted into a table for each data set and were grouped into similar codes to create overarching thematic categories, which were then sorted into a table format (Chowdhury, 2015; Yin, 2014). The method of coding involved observing links between the thematic categories that could be grouped together to help zone in on the perceptions of the participants and source document data to help answer the research questions (Yin, 2014). If this study generated large amounts of the data to analyze, studies recommend using a computer-assisted tool to analyze the data known as Nvivo (Maher et al., 2018). The Nvivo software helps to organize the researcher's data into categories to observe patterns and themes (Maher et al., 2018). This study did not require the use of Nvivo software, but instead used manual data analysis with excel files.

Gibson (2017) stated that some researchers used triangulation to cross-check the same topic from different perspectives to increase the trustworthiness of data by reviewing multiple sources of available data. In this study, responses from the participants, review of the company website, company code of conduct, and a list of company tenure of veterans in the past five years were used for triangulation.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Qualitative studies use credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to establish the trustworthiness of the study results. This was done not to



necessarily replicate the study, but to assure that based on the methodology the results were reliable and trustworthy (Mandal, 2018). The following section illustrated how the trustworthiness was established in this qualitative study, including the use of triangulation.

### **Credibility**

To establish credibility in this study, it was essential to enroll participants who were knowledgeable and had experience with the study topic, and available and open to express their views on the topic. Moreover, this study used multiple data sources to conduct a thorough data analysis and used triangulation to understand the phenomenon under study Sripada et al., (2018). The triangulation method consisted of analyzing for convergence or divergence of data (Gibson, 2017; Yin, 2013) from the responses from multiple sources such as interviews from both the veterans and HR/hiring managers, company website, code of conduct, and veteran employee tenure (see Table 2). This case study was bound to one organization within New Jersey, which was veteran ready, and had embedded units to recruit different employers and employees. The participants conducted a member check role to review their responses to assure the accuracy of the data collected (Mandal, 2018).

### **Transferability**

Transferability was established when the findings could be applied to a broader audience (Yang et al., 2018). Qualitative research assumes that there was more than one reality, and it was subjective in nature with a purpose of observing participants varying in interactions and perceptions (Yang et al., 2018). The reliability of the data collected in

this study relied on the participants objective feedback through their eyes with their interaction of onboarding information provided by the employers, met expectations, change in behavior, and organizational outcomes. This study could be replicated in similar studies that a change was observed when members have transitioned from one workplace environment to another, and meeting their expectations was a need for their commitment to the new work environment.

### **Dependability**

To establish dependability of the data, participants were asked to provide source documentation to verify their responses, and/or to direct the researcher to other sources of data to verify their statements. It was also essential that participants could check their responses to the interviews for clarification and accuracy (Mandal, 2018). This study used negative case study analysis, which was to ask questions to unanticipated answers to recheck data and compare patterns for verification (Bengtsson, 2016). Lastly, multiple data sources were used to ensure a proper analysis of the study.

### **Confirmability**

To establish confirmability, member checking by the participants was implemented to reassess, restate, and summarize the responses of the participant for the purpose of objective data collection (Mandal, 2018). The need for member checking was to reduce the occurrence of inaccurate data collection, and/or interpretation of data to produce genuine trustworthy data (Mandal, 2018). Moreover, when using source documentation, it was essential to confirm with participants whether the documents were current and relevant to the organization to assure confirmability and reliability.

To establish intra-coder reliability, a broad coding scheme with the use of codes from the literature and codes emerged from the data was used to organize the data (Chowdhury, 2015). An audit trail was kept of the various codes that emerged from the literature and interviews and other sources of data.

### **Ethical Procedures**

To comply with the ethical principles of human subject research, this study was approved and monitored by Walden University IRB ethical principles that protected the rights and welfare of the research participants (Walden, 2019). The researcher provided a certificate of completion record to the IRB on the CITI online training sponsored by Walden University on research compliance and protections of human research participants that confirmed compliance with ethical and moral practices. Prior to conducting the research, written IRB approval was obtained to begin recruiting the participants for the study activities and had the organizational representative sign the letter of cooperation to allow access to participants and other sources of documentation (Appendix H). Once the study was approved, each participant received a copy of the informed consent form via email and requested that the participants ask any questions via email or over the phone to clarify and concerns. Any questions or concerns were documented with the responses and filed.

Each participant signed the consent form before interviews began. In the event any participant wanted to withdraw from the study before any study activity commenced, this request would be complied with and documented. If any participant asked to withdraw from the study during the interviews or after the interviews, the researcher

complied with their request and documented this. The data from study participants who wished to withdraw would be discarded, and not used in the study. During the research, if there were any ethical concerns related to the recruitment materials and data collection the participants will be informed as well as informing the IRB.

Maintaining the confidentiality of each participant was critical to assure the integrity of the data was preserved and that the data did not fall into wrong hands (Helgesson, 2015). Furthermore, demonstrating to the participants that their data was kept confidential ensured that the participants would properly engage in the research process and provide substantial details to meet the study goals. During the interviews, participant's names were not recorded during the Zoom recorded platform, but instead the participants were introduced with an alphanumeric code to protect their identities such as P1 for participant 1.

The participants were informed that if any of their personal identifiers were inadvertently discussed during the recording those details would be excluded from data analysis. Similarly, to assure comfort during the study, and because they might be viewed as vulnerable population, they were provided the veteran employees the Veteran Crisis/Mental Health Hotline 1-800-273-8255 (US. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2015) in the event they experienced any emotional discomfort as result of the interview questions. Participants were given instructions on how to contact the researcher to answer any questions, and to allow open continuous communication as needed. To avoid any coercion, the study did not provide any monetary gift or make any inflammatory promises of the impact of the study so that participant responses were their actual

experiences and not distorted. Lastly, paper research data is stored in a secure location for 5 years and secure electronic data on an electronic device for 5 years that was only accessible by the researcher. Then after 5 years the data will be discarded.

### **Summary**

In summary, chapter three provided a detailed explanation of the critical components of the research method to assure similarity of data for future studies. This section detailed the importance of a qualitative single case study design with embedded units to explore narrative data from the participant's experiences, and to have the opportunity to have a holistic view of the organization setting expectation strategies. The study instruments were self-designed with a screening questionnaire to confirm that the participants meet the inclusion criteria for the study, and the questionnaires for both hiring managers/HR personnel, and currently working military veterans.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate a civilian organization's best practices of setting realistic expectations for new veteran employees upon entry, which can help HR and managers better understand the needs of veterans who enter the workforce post military service. The two research questions were

RQ1: From the perspective of the hiring manager and/or HR personnel, how are veteran ready civilian organizations able to lower the expectations of the veterans during the initial stages of employment and how does it contribute to veteran retention in the workplace?

RQ2: From the perspective of the veteran employee, how do veterans view the management of expectations approach between the military and the veteran ready civilian organization? The research questions were addressed by conducting a single case study with embedded units to assess the participants' perspectives and experiences with setting expectation practices within their organization.

A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was used during one-on-one interviews with a total of 10 military veteran employees, HR professionals, and hiring managers within New Jersey with different roles and departments within a governmental organization that provides transportation services. The results can help recruiters assess the fit between the organization's culture and the individual veteran's expectations. From literature, the use of an ELP or its equivalent was known to be a source of an intrinsic motivation tool for the employee to better adapt to the workplace

environment (Brandstätter et al.,2016; Randhawa & Kaur, 2015). Additionally, the results of this study can make a solid contribution to developing a non-existent formal ELP checklist for setting expectations for veterans that can empower HR professionals and hiring managers to improve hiring and retention practices.

This chapter describes the settings, participant selections, demographics related to this study, and the major themes and categories that emerged to describe the transitional experience and setting expectations practices of veterans during the data analysis process of statements and findings during interviews and additional source documentation. The following areas were included in this section: data collection, data analysis, description of trends, relationships, and the study results were summarized to address the research question and design.

The veteran participants in this study were (a) Gulf War -Era-II veterans, (b) current employees of the civilian organization enrolled in the study for 1 year or more, and (c) between the ages of 25 and 54. The HR and hiring manager participants (a) worked in the civilian organization for 1 year or more and (b) had experience with recruiting and hiring veterans. All the participants consented to participate in the study by signing the IRB approved consent form (Walden IRB approval #12-08-20-0368161).

To protect the identity of all the participants, participants were labeled with alphanumeric identifiers. For example, the veterans were labeled as P-Vet-1 for the first participant and P-Vet-2 for the second participant, and so on. For HR and hiring managers, they were labeled as P-HRHM-1 for the first participant and P-HRHM-2 for the second participant, and so on. A summary of the results indicated the presence of

critical factors that contribute to successful integration and retention of veterans in the civilian workplace including setting expectation practices, veteran competency awareness, job opportunities using military skills, and other benefits provided by the organization.

### **Setting**

There were two communications with the participants before the one-one-one zoom video conference interviews. The first was the initial interest email with the recruitment flyer (see Appendix D). Then the participants were asked to complete the screening questionnaire (see Appendix B) via Survey Monkey, and the consent form was provided for review and signature.

The interviews occurred at different times during the week including weekends over a period of 5 weeks to accommodate individual schedules. All interviews were conducted via the Zoom video conference platform; however, two out of 10 participants opted to not have their video camera on instead used audio. The privacy and confidentiality of the participants were maintained because their personal names were not mentioned during the call and the organizational employers were not privy to which employees decided to participate. Participants were informed during the interview that the study was voluntary, and they could opt out at any time as per the consent form. The participants were asked to ask any questions they may have about the consent form or study before beginning the interview. Only one participant had questions that were answered before the interview began.



### **Participant Selection**

A representative of the New Jersey Department of Labor facilitated the recruitment of the organization that was enrolled into this study. The IRB approved the Signed Letter of Cooperation (See Appendix H) that was signed by the representative of the veteran ready organization and email from the IRB and the Letter of Invitation (See Appendix I).

Once the letter of cooperation was signed, the organization's representative, the HR director, disseminated the recruitment flyer (see Appendix D) within the organization via email to hiring managers and HR professionals who had experience with veterans and to veteran employees. The total number of prospective participants who initially showed interest was eight HR/hiring managers and 11 veterans. In total, 10 participants (five veterans and five HR/hiring managers) were interviewed because the others either declined participation or they did not respond. The HR director who provided the list of interested employees was not informed of which employees accepted enrollment into the study, nor which participants did not enroll into the study. Additionally, one hiring manager participant decided to send an email to another list of employees who were veterans, and one employee showed interested, but the researcher was not able to confirm consent or participation. The purposeful sampling method was essential in targeting participants who were familiar with the study topic to aid in answering the research questions.

## **Demographics**

Of the total 18 prospective participants from the organization that included a mix of veterans and HR and hiring managers, 10 participants met the study criteria and contributed to the study via interviews. The veteran questionnaire produced five male participants, and the HR and hiring manager questionnaire produced two male participants and three female participants. The participants agreed to present their military transition experiences and their experiences with veteran transition within the NJ civilian organization where they were currently employed and reside. The participants were all full-time employees and had been working in the civilian organization for 1 year or more. The screening questionnaire only accounted for age range for vets between 25 and 54 and not for HR and hiring managers, as age was not a critical factor for the study. The industry sector for all the employees is transportation with varying roles (see Table 1).

All the veteran participants have had more than three civilian jobs since leaving the military in organizations that required technical type skills except for one participant that had more experience in more administrative type jobs (PVet-3). The veterans expressed they all participated in military exit classes but with a focus on resume preparation. The HR and hiring manager employees predominately started working with veterans within the study organization, except for two participants that had prior experience with working with veterans (PHRHM-1 and 4).

**Table 1***Research Study Demographics*

<b>Identifier</b>	<b>Interview time</b>	<b>Pages of transcript</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Job type</b>	<b>Tenure in organization (Yrs.)</b>
PVet-1	2/19/21 1:42pm	26	Male	Rail operator	2.5
PVet-2	2/20/21 5:57pm	27	Male	Rail operator	1.0
PVet-3	2/24/21 2:02pm	18	Male	Rail cashier	2.0
PVet-4	2/28/21 3:58pm	18	Male	Mechanic	1.5
PVet-5	3/11/21 4:56pm	23	Male	Mechanic	18
PHRHM-1	2/24/21 2:12pm	26	Male	General manager	5.0
PHRHM-2	3/7/21 10:52am	13	Male	Acting chief	23
PHRHM-3	3/4/21 2:44pm	22	Female	Director-HR	4.0
PHRHM-4	3/10/21 1:13pm	15	Female	Director - HR	2.5
PHRHM-5	3/12/21 5:12pm	17	Female	Director-HR	6.0
<b>Total</b>			<b>10</b>	-	-

### **Data Collection**

According to Yin (2006), it was important to bear in mind that case studies were not primarily concerned with meeting data saturation, but instead ensuring a bound sample. The bound sample for this study was 10 New Jersey veterans and HR and hiring managers who participated in semi-constructed interviews to collect data on their experiences with setting expectations and their assessment of the impact on a successful transition from the military work environment to a civilian work environment and retention. Before the interviews, communication was performed via email, and the participants completed the screening questionnaire via a Survey Monkey link that was provided to them via email and consent was signed on the consent form or in some cases participants decided to provide consent via email with a statement “I consent to participate in this study.” The researcher also signed the consent form and attached it via email for record keeping.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that was made known to the public in the early part of 2020, plans were made to conduct interviews via video conferences instead of in person and planned to request additional source documentation from employees since I am not able to conduct interviews on site. The interviews were recorded on the Zoom platform and ranged from about 40 mins to 1 hour, and the participants provided verbal and written consent to the recordings. Interviews were conducted on various days and times including weekends to accommodate the schedules of the participants. The total number of weeks to collect data from interviews was about 5 weeks. Interview reminders were provided via email or via automated calendar reminders. The participants

were not privy to the interview questions prior to the interview to ensure authentic and unscripted responses for the credibility of the data. To ensure efficient use of time during data analysis, The Otter transcribing platform was used to transcribe the recordings. In addition, written notes were taken in a journal book of the statements made by the participant to substitute for any inaccurate transcriptions made by the Otter platform, as it was not 100% perfect. The correction and verification process for the transcription included listening to the recordings more than once and allowing participants to check the transcription for accuracy.

The interview questions were created to demonstrate a qualitative study that would capture relevant data to answer the research questions with the aim of conveying patterns and themes that could tell a story about a public organization's best practices in setting expectations for veteran employees with desirable organizational outcomes (Creswell, 2009). As recommended by Creswell (2009), judgement was reserved until all data was analyzed by the researcher. It was also important to set aside any personal biases with the research topic and participant responses as to not interfere with the phenomenon under study as it relates to organizational setting expectation practices. Therefore, having member checking was valuable to the study (Mandal, 2018).

After the interviews were completed, within 2 days each interview transcript was re-written from the recordings and from my written notes and emailed a copy of the interview notes per interview question with additional follow-up questions to each participant. Each participant was asked to review the notes for validity and provide additional notes for accuracy. Each participant was requested that they reply to the email

within a week to ensure the interview was still fresh in their memory. Additionally, data were collected from the HR Director of a list of veteran employees with their job title and whether they were part-time or full-time employees who have a tenure of at least 5 years (see Table 2). Table two sources demonstrated the success of the organization to retain veterans for over 1 year. As part of the retrieving multiple sources of data to answer the research questions, the organizational representative was only able to provide a copy of the code of conduct as part of the process in setting expectation during onboarding for each employee. Observational data from the organization's website was also collected to validate some participant responses in how setting expectations might occur through posted job descriptions and a description of the veteran program on the website.

**Table 2**

*Source Documents from the NJ Company*

	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3	Observation 4
NJ company				
Company website (© 2021)	About the organization	Posted job descriptions	Veteran program description	Benefits offered
Code of conduct (given 3/31/21)	Written documentation	N/A	N/A	N/A
Table list of 472 veteran employees hired more than 5 yrs. (dated 1/29/21)	Dept/job title	Year hired past 5 years	Gender/ethnicity	Employment status

To ensure anonymity of the participants, they were given alpha numerical identifications, i.e., for the veterans (P-Vet-1 for the first participant and P-Vet-2 for the second participant, and so on) and hiring managers and HR professionals (P-HRHM-1 for the first participant and P-HRHM-2 for the second participant, and so on). Transcription notes, data collection tools such as excel files for coding, and company documents were kept in an electronic cloud-based system. Notes books with written notes as well as the electronic data were stored securely for 5 years according to the rules from Walden University's IRB.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis involved identify emerging patterns from the data collected to answer the research questions. This was a qualitative study using the single case design with embedded units, and thus the interviews from participants were analyzed separately, and then analyzed altogether to describe the organization as a single case (Yin,2013). The analytical approach was from the ground up using inductive thematic analysis to observe emerging patterns in the data across the different participants and then describing the overall themes as whole unit (Yin,2013). To achieve replication of data, data from the first participant of the veteran group and the first participant of the non-veteran group were used to create overarching themes and then compared with other participants within each group to document generalizations to the met expectation theory for this study (Yin, 2013, 2014).

The overall process of data analysis used in this study as dictated by Chowdhury (2015) was (a) organization, (b) familiarization, (c) classifying/coding, (d) themes and

interpretation and writing up and presenting the data. The organization phase began with compiling the data into a usable form, which meant transcribing the interview data from the transcripts into an excel table format. The table included columns labeled with the interview questions and populated with the participants responses (Chowdhury, 2015; Yin, 2013, 2014). The familiarization phase involved reading and re-reading the responses several times to become familiar with each participant's response, and observe whether or not they answered the specific interview questions label they were grouped under or whether they should be grouped under a different research question label or whether the response needed a different label to be used in the overall data analysis, or to be eliminated for the analysis (Chowdhury, 2015; Yin, 2013, 2014). During this phase the analysis of contextual data such as the organization's code of conduct document, the tenure of the veteran document, company website with description of the veteran program, and benefits offered (see Table 2) was conducted. It was critical to be familiar with the data to achieve a sense of entirety of the data, and greater understanding of the phrases and meaning of a term when viewed within the context of the whole data set (Chowdhury, 2015). The next phase was classification, which involved separating the data into meaningful groups with their definitions as defined by the participants and identifying similarities and differences between the groups of data. The groupings are labeled with a word, phrase, or sentence i.e. codes (Chowdhury, 2015; Yin, 2013, 2014) (See Tables 3 and 4). One example of how theme one for the veteran group, *personality and previous work experience* (Table 6) was derived with this method was as follows: a) reviewed the theme *career and transition issues* from the literature (Table 7); identified



the preliminary themes from the veteran interviews i.e. *previous work experience, skills that improved civilian transition* (Table 3), which were then grouped under the overarching theme *personality and previous work experience* as mentioned above. The same process was used to derive themes for hiring managers and HR managers. For example, theme two for the managerial group *internal veteran program* (Table 5) was derived as follows: a) reviewed the theme *socialization* from the literature (Table 7); identified the preliminary themes from the manager interviews i.e. *veteran hiring program, methods of setting expectations, social groups/benefits* (Table 4), which were then grouped under the overarching theme *internal veteran program* as mentioned above.

**Table 3**

*Preliminary Themes and Sample Meaning Based on Participant's Veteran Responses*

Themes	Words and phrases category
Current role	Operations, Engineer, Cashier, Mechanic
Tenure	1 year, 1.5 years, 2.5 years, 2 years,
Previous work experience	3 former jobs, 5 former jobs, 8 former jobs,
Military experience	1.5 years to adapt, 1 year to adapt, 5 months to adapt
Skills that improved civilian transition	Customer service skills, passenger transportation skills, positive people skills, mechanical skills, and construction skills
Setting expectations experience	General orientation, company website, company intranet, helpful HR personnel, policies and procedures, and training
Met expectations	Job offer, flexible work schedule, acceptable compensation

Unmet Expectations	Payroll issues and culture
Ease of Transition into Civilian Org	Challenging with deployment, need more structure like the military, insufficient feedback, and more individualized
Veteran Social Groups and Benefits	No specific social group, contribute military time to retirement, veteran's day recognition
Opportunities to improve transition	Civilian cultural awareness training, Veteran specific HR orientation, improve compensation, veteran peer support groups, and improve military transition classes post deployment

**Table 4**

*Preliminary Themes and Sample Meaning Based on Participant's HR/Hiring Manager Responses*

Themes	Words and phrases category
Current role	General Manager, Acting Chief of Contract Services, HR Manager, Director of Talent Acquisition, Director of HR Administration
Tenure	2.5 years, 4 years, 5 years, 6 years, 23 years
Veteran hiring experience	Hiring experience, hiring and recruiting experience
Veteran hiring program	HR Outreach program to recruit, job preparedness program, HR training to understand veteran resumes
Social groups/benefits	No specific veteran social groups, veteran's day recognition, excellent benefit package for all employees, working to create veteran resource group
Meaning of setting expectations	Explain goals of the job, big part of the interview process, helps inform the candidate of what the employer expects, ensures hiring the best candidate, helps to adapt to the job, improves onboarding success

Methods of setting expectations	General orientation, company website, company intranet, policies and procedures, performance reviews, regular employee feedback, training, buddy system, preparing a mentoring program for veterans
Experience with transition issues	Not observed transitional issues, employee assistance services are available assist with issues, quasi military structure makes transition easier,
Strategies to motivate veteran transition	Same treatment to all employees, accurate expectations by manager, comradery team environment, Operators are familiar with military style structure, attractive benefits, opportunities for career growth, stable government organization
Opportunities to improve veteran transition	Civilian cultural awareness training for managers, toolkit for setting expectations, designated veteran recruiter, have meetings with veterans, improve compensation, conduct an internal study about barriers to recruit veterans, improve socializing remotely due to pandemic, training to understand the military transition process

The next phase, themes and interpretation began with identifying patterns amongst the codes to generate overarching themes to (Chowdhury, 2015; Yin, 2013, 2014) capture a meaningful interpretation of the coded data as it related to the research question or other important data to contribute to the gap in research (Chowdhury, 2015; Yin, 2013, 2014). Each theme was given a higher order code label to describe the meaning of the data (Tables 5 and 6). The following codes emerged to answer the research questions one and two below:

Research Q1: From the perspective of the hiring manager and/or HR personnel, how are veteran ready civilian organizations able to lower the expectations of the veterans during the initial stages of employment and how does it contribute to veteran retention in the workplace?

**Table 5***Overarching Themes for HR/Hiring Managers*

Themes
Theme 1: Tenure hiring/recruiting veterans
Theme 2: Internal veteran program
Theme 3: Setting expectations workplace practices
Theme 4: Impact of setting expectations
Theme 5: No Transitional issues with veterans
Theme 6: Veteran cultural competency training;
Theme 7: Organizational attributes that attract and retain veterans
Theme 8: Opportunities to improve transitional practices

RQ2: From the perspective of the veteran employee, how do veterans view the management of expectations approach between the military and the veteran ready civilian organization?

**Table 6***Overarching Themes for Veterans*

Themes
Theme 1: Personality and previous work experience
Theme 2: Setting expectations workplace practices
Theme 3: Unmet expectations
Theme 4: Met expectations
Theme 5: Military exit transition experience
Theme 6: Civilian entrance transition experience

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Theme 7: Opportunities to improve transitional practices

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The coding strategy included deciding on initial codes from the literature review as predictable variables written up as a code list that facilitated internal validity (Table 7), but it was critical to remain open to create new codes from the interview transcripts, company documents, and other sources of information. It was important to compare electronically generated transcripts from Otter with the audio recording from the Zoom platform for accuracy. Then also allowing participants to review their transcripts for additional credibility and validity of the data (Mandal, 2018). The analysis method also included reviewing the company documents as well as the company's website to generate applicable data to confirm the participant's responses or highlight new significant information such as the posted job descriptions that can aid in setting expectations, and the description of the veteran program (See Table 2).

**Table 7**

*Code List from Literature*

Themes	Phrases from literature
Met expectations theory	Initial expectations match current expectations, bringing expectations of employees in alignment to the reality of the work environment
Expectation lowering procedures	The method used to align employee expectations with the employer expectations
Military transition issues	Preconceived ideas about civilian work environments, Preparedness for the civilian culture, unlearning military culture, and civilian interpersonal skills for improved adaptability
Career transition issues	Job skill match, employers' concerns about veteran dependability if needed to be deployed, and assumptions made by civilian workers about veterans

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Socialization	Institutionalized socialization tactics (preprogrammed socialization program), individualized socialization tactics (employees are left to initiate interactions), relationship building opportunities, feedback, and mentorship program
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Gibson (2017) stated that some researchers used triangulation to cross check the same topic from different perspectives to increase the trustworthiness of data by reviewing multiple sources of available data. In this study, responses from the participants, review of the company website, company code of conduct, and a list of company tenure of veterans in the past five years were used for triangulation.

There were no discrepant cases that were not in alignment with the codes, instead the data revealed minor contrasting views amongst participants that helped to provide different perspectives for the emerging themes. This study did not generate large amounts of data that would need the computer assisted program known as Nvivo to organize and facilitate the analysis of data (Maher et al., 2018). Instead, the researcher manually organized the data on excel files and word files and categorize data observe patterns and themes (Maher et al., 2018).

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Qualitative studies use credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to establish the trustworthiness of the study results. This was done not necessarily replicate the study although sometimes researchers do replicate qualitative studies, to assure that based on the methodology the results were reliable and trustworthy (Mandal, 2018). The following section illustrated how trustworthiness of the data was established for this qualitative study.

**Credibility**

To establish credibility in this study, it was essential to enroll participants who were knowledgeable and had experience with the study topic, and available and open to express their views on the topic, and this was achieved by enrolling 10 participants who were either veteran employees or have worked with veterans to recruit or hire them. Moreover, this study used multiple data sources to conduct a thorough data analysis to understand the phenomenon under study (Sripada et al., 2018). The analysis consisted of comparing data from the responses from multiple sources such as interviews, company code of conduct to confirm a method of setting expectations, and a list of veterans that have tenure of five years (see Table 2). In person observations were not able to be made due to the Covid-19 pandemic precautions. This case study was bound to one organization within New Jersey, which was veteran ready, and had embedded units to recruit different employers and employees. The participants conducted member checks after the completion of each interview to assure accuracy of the data collected (Mandal, 2018).

**Transferability**

Transferability was established when the findings could be applied to a broader audience (Yang et al., 2018). Transferability of the data is feasible especially because data from the interviews with confirmed that setting expectation strategies was not specific to just veterans but also non-veterans. Qualitative research assumes that there was more than one reality, and it is subjective in nature with a purpose of observing participants varying in interactions and perceptions (Yang et al., 2018). The reliability of

the data collected in this study relied on the participants objective feedback through their eyes with their interaction of onboarding information provided by the employers, met expectations, change in behavior, and organizational outcomes. This study could be replicated in similar studies that a change was observed when members have transitioned from one workplace environment to another, and meeting their expectations was a need for their commitment to the new work environment.

### **Dependability**

To establish dependability of the data, the participants were asked to participants to provide any source documentation to verify their responses, and/or direct the researcher to appropriate sources to verify their statements. An analysis of the company website confirmed the participants discussions of job description postings, the veteran program, and benefits. An analysis of the company's code of conduct, and a list of veterans that have worked in the company for five years or more was conducted. The sources of data were used to triangulate with the responses from the HR and hiring managers to validate the responses from the veterans. It was also essential that participants could check their responses of the interviews for clarification and accuracy (Mandal, 2018). This study used negative case study analysis, which was to ask questions to unanticipated answers to recheck data and compare patterns for verification (Bengtsson, 2016).

### **Confirmability**

To establish confirmability, member checking was implemented to reassess, restate, and summarize the responses of the participant for the purpose of objective data



collection (Mandal, 2018). The need for member checking was to reduce the occurrence of inaccurate data collection, and/or interpretation of data to produce genuine trustworthy data (Mandal, 2018). Moreover, using triangulation with participant responses and source documentation was essential to confirm with participants whether the documents were current and relevant to the organization to assure confirmability and reliability.

To establish intra-coder reliability, which was the consistent coding method used in this study, a broad coding scheme was established from the literature to organize the data (Chowdhury, 2015). The researcher then kept an audit trail of the various codes that emerged from the interviews and other sources of data and compared with relevant literature resources that were applicable to the emerging data from the research. The Nvivo software was not needed for organizing the data, instead using excel and color labeling, and conditional formatting was an efficient controlled method to organize the data.

### **Study Results**

The results of this single case study with embedded units produced 10 interview transcripts from 10 participants who either represented the veteran group or non-veteran group (HR/hiring manager) that allowed the uncovering of significant useful themes. The single case study with embedded units method was most appropriate as it added in depth insight to the study of human experiences within the workplace through qualitative research (Baxter & Jack, 2010; Yin, 2003). The scientific investigation of the workplace experiences of veterans and HR and hiring managers within a civilian organization provided an opportunity to understand the perceptions of both groups on the impact of

setting expectations for veteran employees and the desired outcome of retention and other desired individual and organizational outcomes.

### **Research Questions**

The theoretical foundation of this study was based on the met expectation theory that says a person's initial expectations prior to organizational entry and a person's later expectations once in the organization, if similar, was able to reduce job dissatisfaction since the person was able to hold an accurate image of what to expect within the organization (Ok & Park, 2018). The research questions below were set to understand the point of view of veterans and HR and hiring managers on how they perceive the impact of individual expectations from the veterans and the expectations processes from the civilian organization, and the influence on the behaviors of the veterans:

RQ1: From the perspective of the hiring manager and/or HR personnel, how are veteran ready civilian organizations able to lower the expectations of the veterans during the initial stages of employment and how does it contribute to veteran retention in the workplace?

RQ2: From the perspective of the veteran employee, how do veterans view the management of expectations approach between the military and the veteran ready civilian organization?

The met expectations theory helped to limit the scope of the data collected to answer the research questions. The research questions guided the interview questions that were asked (see Appendix E). The data that emerged from the interviews helped to identify concepts and trends that helped to explain key themes in the data. This helped to understand the

processes of meeting the expectations of incoming veterans in a civilian workplace and the impact on retention, which corroborated with the theoretical assumptions of this study that an employee's withdrawal behavior can be observed from the employees recollection of their expectations prior to organizational entry and their current experiences while on the job (Beijer et al., 2019; Wong & Kuvaas, 2018).

Research questions RQ1 and RQ2 generated 15 themes in total to describe the phenomenon understudy from both the veteran and non-veteran group, which was to understand the impact of setting expectations on retaining veteran employees (Rose et al., 2017; Ferri-Reed, 2013), for one year or more to provide insight to the possibility of improving general veteran employee retention issues within civilian organizations by studying an organization that demonstrated success of retaining veterans for one year or more (Blackburn, 2017; Greer, 2017; MacLean et al., 2018). As previously stated in Table 5, eight themes emerged to answer RQ1 that related to the perspectives of the HR and hiring managers. All five HR/hiring managers responses below were recorded during data analysis phase, and the responses have been included in this report that either emerged as a repeated response and/or was deemed a significance response to provide a balanced perspective to the research questions.

### **Theme 1: Hiring/Recruiting Veterans**

By answering the interview questions (see Appendix C) all the participants in the non-veteran group shared their tenure of working with the civilian organization with results showing tenure of more than one year. Their job titles were leadership titles ranging from chief to director to manager. There was a total of two hiring managers

participants who had experience hiring veterans with tenure ranging from five years (P-HRHM-1) and 23 years (P-HRHM-2). Participant P-HRHM-1 said “I have been working as a general manager for five years. I have been part of the interview process for hiring veterans. About two years ago, I did hire a superintendent and I was impressed by his military background”.

Of the five non-veteran group, there were three HR participants with director roles with tenures ranging from two and half (P-HRHM-4) years to six years (P-HRHM-5). They all had experience with hiring and recruiting veterans. Participant P-HRHM-4 said “I have had direct experience with recruiting and hiring veterans in (civilian organization)”. Participant P-HRHM-5 said “Yes, I have direct experience with hiring and recruiting veterans”.

## **Theme 2: Internal Veteran Program**

By answering interview questions two and three (see Appendix C) of the HR participants referenced a new job preparedness initiative for veterans that was planned to roll-out in April 2021. The components of the job preparedness program was to assist incoming veterans to write up their resumes in civilian terms to ensure that their skills were transferrable to civilian jobs; also the program assisted professionals who recruit and hire veterans to understand the military terminology as they reviewed resumes and create job descriptions to ensure they have the best opportunity to communicate effectively to veterans, and through job descriptions and interviews.

Participant P-HRHM-3 said “The company has been targeting to hire veterans for 20 plus years. We have partnered with a job preparedness and resiliency program that

helps veterans to communicate and write their resumes in civilian terms. The military have a lot of jargon and it doesn't resonate well with the HR and hiring managers, and they (HR/hiring managers) don't know what they (veterans) are talking about, really. They (veterans) may be a great fit for the position that's vacant, but you (HR/hiring manager) may end up losing the talent just because you don't know what they (veterans) are talking about. The veterans themselves are unable to communicate their resumes in layman's terms because they have been trained and are highly skilled in what they are doing". In addition, Participant P-HRHM-4 said "we've recently been working with a job preparedness program. They are a program to assist vets in making a match between them and the company. The program started developing the end of last year".

The participants noted that there were recruitment outreach efforts to recruit veterans such as job fairs at military bases. For instance, Participant P-HRHM-3 said "part of (HR colleague) outreach team, is they do go to the bases, sometimes to hold career fairs and things like that". Likewise, Participant P-HRHM-4 stated "I've been to veteran career fairs to try to attract veterans and other types of alternate methods, because I know that they make good workers". The other two participants (P-HRHM-1 and 2) who were hiring managers and not HR professionals were not aware of any specific veteran program but cited that the company offered an employee assistant program, but that was not specific to veterans.

### **Theme 3: Setting Expectations Workplace Practices**

By participants answering interview questions five, six, eight, and 10 (see Appendix C) they were able to provide their experiences and perspectives on the

organizational procedures for setting expectations in the workplace for incoming veterans. All participants agreed that incoming veterans just as with non-veteran employees underwent an onboarding process including orientation and training where they were socialized into the organization and expectations of the company were communicated (DeBode et al., 2017; Hatmaker, 2015).

Participants pointed out that job fairs and other outreach events were opportunities for prospective veteran candidates to meet with representatives of the organization and learn about the organization's culture and job opportunity (Allen et al., 2017; Vandenberghe et al., 2019). Participants also highlighted the significance of job descriptions, and the interviews provided an opportunity for prospective employees to compare and understand their needs and the needs of the company (Ashraf, 2017). To provide examples for the points above, Participant P-HRHM-1 stated "In any job posting, the description of the job, the duties and responsibilities were clearly explained. I think the discipline that they received in the military is a big factor in their own personal self-discipline". Participant P-HRHM-2 said "I think that when I conduct my interviews, I try to get that out there what's expected. I know once we do our onboarding, and there's some, depending on the position, there may be training involved. You were made aware of company policies, which include a code of conduct for an employee (see Table 2). The onboarding was done previously face to face, but it's now done virtually" (as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic).

Participant P-HRHM-3 discussed in more detail about a former program that gave new employees a real-life snap shot of the work place environment and the new job, and other details for setting expectations. The participant added,

“I would have a meet and greet mock day, where the person before they accepted the position, they would come in for a mock day. The person got the chance to see what it would be like work at a specific job. It was unpaid, but mandatory for everyone who was interested in working within the agency. Some of the areas (within the organization) they do presentations during the recruitment process, that's all we can really do. But when they get into the company, at that point, they go through several different training sessions during orientation about what it's like to continue a career at (the organization). During orientation we do discuss several policies that are applicable for new people to know, such as, work conduct, workplace violence policy, or harassment policies. We encourage them to surf the intranet to read newsletters, to know what's happening with the agency, what we do, what we have accomplished, and what deals we have made etc. The job preparedness program as mentioned has an opportunity for current (company) leadership to be mentors for incoming new veterans. There is also an opportunity later for current veteran employees to also provide mentorship for incoming new veterans”. Participants P-HRHM-4 and P-HRHM-5 concurred with the statements above also acknowledging the inclusion of a general buddy system for new employees to help answers questions that new employees may be afraid to ask their superiors.

The non-veteran participants agreed that other avenues for setting expectations for veterans and all employees during onboarding and post onboarding were frequent feedback mechanisms between the manager for example and the employee. The participants mentioned performance reviews and frequent staff meetings. Participant PHRHM-1 said

“We have performance reviews that are done quarterly, and I meet with the superintendents/managers to discuss whether employees have met goals including internal goals created by the superintendent/manager. We review the activities of the previous 3 months and the next 3 months. We do set goals that are reachable, but we do interface and set goals that may not be reachable. But we do this to foster new ideas and creativity to solve problems. We want them to attempt the unreachable goals so that their routine job doesn’t become boring.”

Similarly, participant PHRHM-2 stated “The period between July 1 and I believe it's September 15 is your goal setting period. At that point, as a manager, you sit one on one with your direct reports to set goals, and those are your goals for the year. About halfway through the year, if goals change you can sit down and make that adjustment at any time during that period. The goals were reviewed with the employee whether or not there were changes to the goals. The employee may have feedback such as, the goal cannot be met because of changes to a project and then the specific goals were changed because of that project.

When asking HR and hiring managers the study interview question “As far as you know, is your approach to realistic setting of expectations based on any theory or



research background?” (see list of study interview questions on Appendix C) three participants were unsure. However, two participants from HR provided responses to the best of their knowledge:

Participant P-HRHM-4 said “I don't know that they base it on theory. Other than I mean, when you think about any organization, and organizational development, it's based on trying to do the best you can with what you have and be as efficient as you can and serve your clients and all those types of things. And I don't know that those are theories, but those are really good.” Participant P-HRHM-5 “I wouldn't be able to answer that. I'm sure that there is some rationale for everything they put in place in this organization. I know our organization is always evaluating programs and efforts.”

The results also showed that there was language used by HR and hiring managers during onboarding to veterans and company characteristics that have aided in developing an ideal image for veterans, which has positively motivated them to experience a successful transition. Participant HRHM-3 stated,

“I would say their military experience is very similar to what they do now, so we don't have to set up that much of an expectation. We just let them know that if you're familiar with getting up early, you're familiar with having different shifts, you're familiar with having to be on time, you're familiar with having to wear a uniform, you're familiar with looking the part, not having a consistent lunch hour, it depends on your schedule...you have to be flexible and willing to be flexible.

So, I kind of feel like because that's already established, when they're coming in for hire, they already know what it is. And they kind of adapt really quickly. We don't really have issues with any vets. With that, if anything, that's a civilian type problem. That's a problem that I have with someone who's not familiar with that type of structure. Because they feel that if you are two minutes late, they're not late, but if you are two minutes then you are late in our environment because we provide a transportation service.”

Similarly, participant PHRHM-5 said

“The fact that many employees have had long term, successful careers with us is indicative of job satisfaction. I think (company) is a good organization for veterans to matriculate into. One of the reasons I think that is because in transportation, there are a lot of attributes that we're looking that would mirror many of the qualities and attributes that we see in in veterans and those who have served in the military, such as punctuality, reliability, and related skillsets”.

Participant PHRHM-4 adds, “you can start off in one position, and we have a lot of people that grow. There's a lot of room for growth. So that's exciting. the benefits are exciting. They're top notch. It's a good company to get in, and you can get in as a union worker. There are pension programs. One of the biggest things was the benefits that they offer here”.

On a slightly different tone, participant P-HRHM-4 described the nature of a team bonding experience as a factor to assist in motivating the veterans to adapt successfully by saying “I have experienced comradery with the veterans”. Conversely, participant P-HRHM-5 mentioned that his method of helping employees to adapt was universal by saying “I don't think I've done anything special to veterans that I would not do to any other employee”.

#### **Theme 4: Impact of Setting Expectations**

In general, all the non-veteran participants agreed that providing the organization's expectations to veterans was crucial in ensuring that they understood what was expected of them for success in their roles (Vander Elst et al. (2016) and Delobbe et al., 2016). The participants agreed that there was a relationship between setting expectations and job satisfaction and retention and that without the conversations during onboarding the consequences would strain in the relationship between the veteran and the employer, fear within the employee, attrition, and not meeting the organizational needs (Valle et al., 2015 Wong & Kuvaas, 2018).

Participant PHRHM-1 stated “I think that anyone coming in, who wants a job has to understand that there are expectations, if they don't meet the expectations, they must also understand that maybe the job's not for them”. Participant PHRHM-2 added,

“Yes, I think when you're setting expectations, and they're clear, and they're, they're shared, it builds a bond of trust between the employee and the manager, and even the company and the employee. If the employee feels that they understand their goals, and they understand what's expected of them, and if they

stay within those parameters, or exceed them then they shouldn't have any fear of anything. I think setting expectations affects both retention and job satisfaction. If I was in a job where I didn't understand what my expectations were, and I had no trust of my superiors, I don't think I'd stay there.”

Participant PHRHM-3 felt that it was necessary to ensure employees who came from a private sector to a governmental run transportation company needed to know the differences during recruitment to minimize any undesirable unexpected surprises that could create withdrawal behavior (Wong & Kuvaas, 2018). This participant stated,

“I think during the recruitment process in general, recruiters do let people know what to expect at the (company). It's one thing to tell someone what it's like to work at an agency like this one, but it's another thing to work within it...it would probably be difficult for employees coming from like a private sector, to transition into a government entity like this one, because things don't happen overnight, and it can take you over a year for something to get done. It is very slow. And we don't have the greatest technology, because we don't have the funding for that. So, there's a lot of stuff that goes into play as to why people would feel like they were not set up for success when they first started, or they didn't expect, even though the recruiters might have told them ahead of time about the nature of our work environment.

Participant HRHM-3 went onto to discuss that result of informing veterans and other employees the nature of the organization, the company has experienced impressive tenure amongst its employees by adding,

“Overall, with the recruitment department, people typically know what they're getting into when they want to work for (company), if they want to work for a transportation agency, and they actually get in, many times, this is the career of choice. People just want to work at this agency, and they ride this out until they retire. We've had people who worked who started out when they were like 17 or 18 right out of high school, and they've retired from here. The average tenure is 10 plus years. Some even as high as 45 years of employment since they started, and they came right out of high school. The veteran's tenure's also fall in between the 10 plus years”.

Participant PHRHM-5 echoed some of the sentiments made by the other participants about the positive impact of setting expectations, and provided an example of the result of not setting specific expectations for a manager who was previously in the military, and how the company resolved the issues:

“I can appreciate a veteran coming from a different environment might need more direction to become fully acclimated into a new situation. Helping with that transition would come by way of dialoguing with the veteran during the pre-employment process. Setting some expectations at the beginning of the conversation very early on would help them see what they're walking towards, and to see if that would be a good fit. I did hear of a manager who was in the

military that was a bit too militant with his direct reports and bit heavy handed. There were two direct reports that left their job as a result of this. However, the (company) did provide him coaching to help him understand the nuances of the culture and the expectations since he struggled with this and didn't pick this up in the beginning. I don't think the issue is with the military across the board, I think this was just a personality issue. The manager is still working with us at the (company) as a result of the coaching".

### **Theme 5: No Transitional Issues With Veterans**

All five participants said that they did not have firsthand experience with veterans experiencing internal resistances to adapt to the civilian work environment or any other transitional issues. Yet, if a veteran had an issue, the company would offer an employee assistant program (EAP) to facilitate with any needs. However, participants P-HRHM1- and PHRHM-2 stated that if issues did arrive with transition it might be as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Pease et al., 2015; Fisher et al., 2015) or personality driven. Participant P-HRHM-1 stated,

"It would depend on the individual and the branch of service they were in, and maybe their experiences while they were in the service. You have individuals who may have had a battle experience, while not overly affecting their work may have other issues such as PTSD or something else. This is not reflected in the interview process, but it may manifest later itself on. Well (company) does have an EAP, which is an employee assistance program. Now, whether or not any individual chooses to use that is up to them. But my experience of having veterans work for

me over the years, those that are enrolled in programs through the Veterans Administration, they go for regular checkups”.

Participant P-HRHM-2 added,

I think there is opportunity if a veteran was to come to the company, and, ran into that situation of “I don't fit in”. But I think we have that because I think that already happens with certain people, just because of personalities. As an organization, we lend ourselves to opening up channels of communication for our employees. And I'm sure that if we don't already have something 100% in place, that if it's something that needs to be done for veterans, which I wholeheartedly agree, it would be something that we could get done”.

#### **Theme 6: Veteran Cultural Competency Training**

It was apparent from the participant responses that the two hiring managers thought it was a good idea for having veteran cultural competency training within the organization as this was not previously offered to them. On the other hand, the three human resource employees discussed recent veteran cultural competency training as a result of the newly initiated veteran job preparedness program that began April 2021. Participant P-HRHM-1 said “I don't believe that I was ever in a situation to receive any guidance on that topic. This is why I'm in this this interview. Because I find it intriguing that you're bringing up the topic. I've been saying it for years, to anyone who would listen, you really got to go down and hire veterans, because to me, they make the best employees from my experience”. Participant P-HRHM-2 said,

“Interestingly, enough, I have never received any. But this this invitation that you sent kind of opened my eyes a little bit to that fact. So, I'm hoping that the (company) offers a program to help us onboard and retain veterans. These are people that you know, have gone out of their way for people they don't even know. These folks have put their lives on the line, they put their lives on hold, to be part of the armed forces. I think giving them the ability and the support to reenter business society”.

The response from one of the HR participants P-HRHM-1 was,

Yeah, we haven't done that yet. That all falls in line with what I'm trying to do now. Once we get this going in terms of the veterans that are truly coming to us, that are going to have their resumes reviewed with the job preparedness partnership program, the next phase that I'm looking to do is to train the recruitment team on, like, what to look for, what does it mean? When someone has this particular military acronym. Like, what does the acronym stand for? Or what does it mean when this person says that they've done this thing in the service? You know, what does that mean in terms of what you're looking for, for the job?”

### **Theme 7: Organizational Attributes That Attract and Retain Veterans**

It was important to also ask what were the characteristics of the company that may lend itself to attract and retain veterans (see Appendix C) as they can contribute to the expectations of the incoming veterans to adapt successfully (Fisher et al., 2015). All the participants confidently spoke about the similarities of the military structure to their



company and other job-related attributes that has helped veterans assimilate well into the work environment. Participant HRHM-1 said

“I think a veteran would be comfortable working in this environment, because a there are a lot of veterans already at (company). The structure is quasi military structure as I tried to describe before. There’s no guesswork in the jobs. Someone is who is looking for structure, used to taking commands or orders or directions, or who would understand and accept the process would feel at ease here.”

Participant PHRHM-2 said,

“We're a government agency. I think that's an advantageous thing for us because it gives them that same experience. I think gives them that sense of job security. So, you end up building that kind of team bond. From knowing what I know, about veterans that’s part of what they look for, because that's kind of that structured world they came from”. Likewise, participant PHRHM-3 said “we let them know that it's very similar to what their experience in the military, when they come to transit. But it's also a good a great place to work in the sense that you can meet so many different people from so many different walks of life. You get to learn so many different things from people from different levels of education. You learn technical skills that you would never learn from a trade school”. Lastly, participant PHRHM-5 noted “we're providing a service, we have a lot of opportunities for anyone coming out of the military service such as whether they want hands on experience or technical. Whatever training and skills

they have received, there is a lot of opportunity for them. Whether it's within a corporate department or whether it's more of a craft being more technical in nature, so that might be appealing.”

### **Theme 8: Opportunities to Improve Transitional Practices**

It was essential that I asked a question on opportunities to improve their processes of setting expectations to ensure continuous evaluation and improvement of their current best practices. They all agreed that there were opportunities for improvement in regard to veteran cultural competency training for leadership, improve job advertisement for veterans, changes to HR strategies, and a more efficient way to access veterans to recruit. Participant HRHM-1 stated,

“I would suggest getting in touch with the Department of Defense to find out what's the process for folks when they transition out of the military service. I would like to know if the veterans are given opportunities to look at places like New Jersey Transit? I would like to know are we advertising to the military? We advertise all over the place, and I know this age of the internet, but what about printed ads? Are we sending people from (company) down there to talk the National Guardsmen or active military? I would be interested to find out if we go to Veterans Affairs to recruit”.

Participant HRHM-2 added “I think the hiring managers can be provided with a better toolset when they have knowledge that they're interviewing a veteran. And make sure that, the needs are met, the questions are answered, the expectations are laid out clear, so

that the veterans feel more comfortable with coming on board into the (company) as a as a corporation”. Participant P-HRHM-3 said,

“Having a designated veteran recruiter, I think having a person who can target and look for veterans, if we're trying to move in that direction, as an agency, get like a designated veteran team to keep the initiative going. But if we were to have like a designated veteran, such as head of veteran recruitment or something, I think that would be an improvement in what we're doing now, in terms of tracking and really targeting them. Because right now, it's piecemeal, I know a little piece, some of the recruiters may know a little piece. But if we had a person that could really speak for vets, that would be better, in my opinion”.

Lastly, participant HRHM-5 shed some light on the difficulty of accessing veteran databases to recruit from by saying,

“I guess we need to hear from the veterans personally. It would be interesting to do an internal study in this organization. I'm sure we could always do better in any area. I would like to share with you one frustration we have in talent acquisition which is not being able to readily access veterans seeking employment. There are no federal or state veteran databases for prospective employers. To the best of my knowledge, employers have to pay private companies to obtain access to veterans. There are private companies, started by enterprising veterans, now in the private sector, who work with veterans seeking employment. Sometimes the membership costs are high which can be a barrier. Even as recently as my conversation with the Department of Labor yesterday,

they cannot share veteran information because of privacy. If a veteran offers that information, and they team up with private companies that's the primary way to access them. More direct access to veterans looking for employment would be helpful for the veterans and employer”.

### **Summary of Themes – HR/Hiring Manager Group**

In conclusion, it was essential to hear the perspectives of the hiring managers and HR professionals to answer RQ1 that asked how they lower expectations of incoming veterans and the impact on veteran retention. From the data, the tenure and experience of participants might be a contributing factor to the success of retaining veterans as their knowledge on communicating the accurate information to the veterans is essential to preparing the veteran for their job and adapting to the workplace environment. Their responses also demonstrated that they have positioned themselves to be a veteran ready organization with quasi military structure to offer familiarity with the military work life. The hiring managers and HR professionals do their best to be upfront about what it's like to work within the organization and compare the organizational to other organizational structures that the candidate might be familiar with and highlight the similarities and differences. This group also highlighted that the posted job descriptions on the company's website and the description of the organization in the about us section lends to the process of setting expectations for incoming veteran candidates. Although, the overall setting expectation process is not necessarily geared towards veterans alone, the leadership was conscious of doing more when working with veteran employees. Therefore, the HR leadership discussed the launch of a veteran job preparedness program

that was described on the organization's website (see Table 2) to assist incoming veterans with customizing their resumes with non-military terms, matching them with a mentor within the organization, and training HR professionals on interpreting the resumes to ensure proper placement. Specifically, the mentorship side of the program is an important part of setting expectations for the veterans to adapt quicker to the work environment.

As previously stated in Table 6, seven themes below emerged to answer RQ2 that related to the perspectives of the veterans. All five veteran responses were recorded during data analysis and were in this report that either emerged as a repeated response and/or was deemed a significance response to provide a balanced perspective to the research questions.

The following seven themes below were generated from the veteran participants. All five veteran responses were included in the data analysis and were included in this report that either emerged as a repeated response and/or was deemed a significance response to provide a balanced perspective to the research questions.

### **Theme 1: Personality and Previous Work Experience**

All five veteran participants have been working at the civilian company for one year or more and were working in the area of operations within the transportation company, for example participant P-Vet 4 said "I have been working here for one and half years. My current role is a Building Bridge Mechanic." It was apparent that the veteran's previous work experience and personality traits contributed to their adaptability into their current job roles. Participant P-Vet 1 said "I have had customer service experience and my patience for different processes has helped me through transitions".

Participant P-Vet 2 added “I had three years rail experience in my previous job, so for me getting into the learning environment here wasn't bad at all. The transition was pretty easy. It's just a few things different than what I'm used to because they're passenger versus freight.” Lastly, Participant Vet-3 said “as veterans we have patience with one another unlike amongst non-veteran co-workers”.

## **Theme 2: Setting Expectations Workplace Practices**

The participants generally recalled the orientation experience as an opportunity where expectations were set by HR, as well as training opportunities, and there was an instance where the recruitment phase was an opportunity to know more about the organization. The veterans also shared their experiences of the feedback between themselves and their supervisors as an opportunity for setting expectations post orientation. Participant P-Vet 1 stated “I had a HR briefing meeting where the organization structure, departments, benefits, payroll, and retirement was discussed”.

Participant P-Vet 2 stated,

“Very open with how rigorous the training is, I guess people would call it a scare tactic. I was going through my orientation, it was retirement questions, pay questions, stupid things like that, but people don't realize this is an actual lifestyle. So, I think what they do during orientation, people might have a different viewpoint that they were trying to scare me not to take this job and ask why they would do that. It's because the job is truly your life, it's your job first, and then your family comes next. So, for me, I think that's actually a good thing for me that they were going out there and not beating around the bush just lay it all out. So,

they wouldn't hire people and spend time trying to train people who might eventually fail out or they quit, or they go to a different railroad. They are very transparent about what the culture is.”

Participant P-Vet 4 talked about the recruitment phase by stating

“well, they had my resume and compared my skills to the job and explained that it was like the military. Follow the rules, be on time. The labor workers were like the privates, the foreman was like the sergeants, the supervisors were like office managers”.

Participant P-Vet 5 talked about learning what to expect from colleagues by stating,

“I was introduced to a lot of policy and procedures, rules, and structure during orientation, which I was familiar with. In my initial role as a mechanic, you learn more about the job from your contemporaries than from corporate. You will learn from them what to expect.”

Lastly, some veterans recalled having received materials to review during onboarding to know more about the organization. For example, participant P-Vet 2 said “I had pamphlets given to me about the job. I did have to sign a code of conduct and mission statement, and that was put into our records. They do have an employee website with information. A copy of the code of conduct was provided during the study by a HR director (see Table 2).

### **Theme 3: Unmet Expectations**

Based Met Expectations theory veterans were asked if they experienced any unmet expectations after being hired. Participant P-Vet 1 talked about initial dissatisfaction with the workplace by saying

“I experienced payroll issues. I expected to get paid on time and I was frustrated with having to fight to get paid, complete time cards, and ensure union pays me. It made me feel like not working here”.

This participant went on to suggest that the company institute an electronic payroll system for union workers. Participant P-Vet 2 expressed some initial dissatisfaction because of what was described about the company from the internet. This participant said,

“I went on YouTube and their website to figure out who they were, but it's catered to getting people in. I think the real application of the lifestyle came from the people that were in there that experienced it. So, I think (company) did their best to try to recruit people using certain words and code phrases and things like that, you know, “come work for us”, “we're a great company”. But every company has a lot of nasty people in there. And unfortunately, there's a lot of backstabbing, and your superiors are very political.”

Participant P-Vet 3 had some expectations from previous employment when they said,

“I applied for a job that I realized during the interview did not match my skills, and I think HR needs to do a better job in analyzing the resume against the job description. But it made me realize that since I am being interviewed for a few



jobs with my past experience that I would get more opportunities if I went for a bachelor's degree, which I am in now. When I worked with (banking company) I was part of regular conference calls with branch managers, assistant managers, and the CEO where I heard briefings and I knew what was going on in the company. I felt a sense of ownership in the company, and I expected the same here”.

Participant P-Vet-4 talked about unmet expectations with the company's job descriptions and civilian colleagues. They stated,

“They have description of the jobs, but they don't go into enough details. When you apply for the army, the recruiter will show you a short video of the job that they think you might go into. The video is about 10 minutes and it explains to you what the job is about, which is exciting and very informative. The only thing I don't like on the civilian side, people that already work in (company), they haven't been through what I've been through, and they don't understand that I already know certain things. They sometimes try to belittle me a bit and I just let that slide, I just have to and ignore some things”.

#### **Theme 4: Met Expectations**

Based on the Met Expectations theory, it was also important that the veterans were asked if they experienced any met expectations to generate any variables that are related to retention. Participant P-Vet-1 said “they offered me a job and my expectation of hope was met. That made me happy and my wife happy. It was a big deal. Nowhere

else was offering to pay me what they started me out at (company). I was happy to just be at a decent starting pay level." Similarly, participant P-Vet 2 said,

"The (company) is the lowest paid passenger rail company in the country.

So, I mean, to me, it's not about the money. I've never made this type of money in my life, so I'm perfectly fine where I'm at, but for others it's a major factor. Well, I wouldn't say that I had any specific expectations because my viewpoint on that is, I'm coming to them for a job and I just have to adapt to how they run their organization".

Participant P-Vet 3 expectations on flexibility with outside endeavors was met and stated,

"I find that (company) accommodates my school schedule and they always have jobs available, which is a benefit to me." Participant P-Vet 4 experienced an unexpected positive compensation surprise by saying "In my previous job as a welder in (former employer) I got \$16 per hour and I compared this to my job at (present company) it was \$32 per hour and I was surprised. This was a good surprise. So far things are good."

### **Theme 5: Military Transition Experience**

Three of the veterans agreed that transitioning into the military was easier than transitioning into the civilian work environment because they were given defined rules and regulations before they began duty. However, the other two veterans had some emotional difficulty transitioning into the military workforce than the civilian workforce as illustrated by veteran participant's one and two. Participant P-Vet 1 said "it was not easy because he was young when he started the military, and I joined the military because of personal issues and the military help me." Participant P-Vet 2 stated,

“The only transition issue was actually being away from my family. So, it wasn't difficult for me to transition into a military lifestyle. It was just the emotional side was that very difficult. The military still does not deal with mental health and emotional health very well. The military discipline, structure, and the schedule was good. You had a place to be all the time, and you knew what to wear all the time. You had standards to live up to, regulations to follow, so it was much easier for me to in the military than in the civilian world. “Participant P-Vet 3 added “there was a brotherhood in the military”.

#### **Theme 6: Civilian Transition Experience**

Participants agreed the civilian transition was influenced by the exit transition experience from the military. They also discussed the help from employees within the company being important for a smooth transition since they felt that the civilian workplace is more self-directed unlike the strict rules and regulations of the military work life. Participant P-Vet 1 stated,

“The military did not provide a program that told you what to expect in the civilian work life. But they had a debriefing process at the end with a slide show that was boring and not helpful. I know a lot of people who've gone out of the military, and they've been able to transition successfully without any issues. But I think it depends on your personality, your mentality. I had two HR ladies that made themselves available to help me schedule trainings during onboarding, which helped in my transition.”

Participant P-Vet – 2 viewpoints were,

“In the civilian work life there's nothing there. It's just you. And that is still hard for me. I like guidance in my life. I would like more structure and protocols. The rail road does have a similar lifestyle to the military that I like, but for others they may not like it because of the strict schedules. I do notice veterans have a high work ethic than some of the non- veteran counterparts.”

Likewise, participant P-Vet – 3 input was,

“Transitioning into the civilian work life it was not as easy because there are gray areas. Whereas, in the military things are pre-planned, organized, you know the processes and when things should happen. I experienced challenges with the (company). I didn't know that the onboarding they provided was onboarding. Luckily, as I said I had my mother who is an employee to provide guidance”.

Participant P-Vet – 5 adds “in the civilian work life, there is no one telling you what to do, no structure, and you make your own plan”. It was apparent that the veterans were not aware of any company specific social group or benefits for veterans (Shibly, 2019). Yet, they did mention some components that might be viewed as a benefit to the veterans. For instance, participant P-Vet 2 said “Your time in the military you can pay into your retirement”. Participant Vet- 5 said,

“I believe you can also transfer your time from the military to count towards your retirement. The company has a veteran acknowledgment program where they ask for our pictures and upload it to big monitors within the train station. Some of us have talked about this before, about having a paid day off for veteran's day. This

might not help retention, but it is a better acknowledgment of service than having our photo on the monitors”.

### **Theme 7: Opportunities to Improve Transition Practices**

It was important to gain the perspectives of the veterans on how they felt about the company they worked for could improve employment transition for the veterans, as well as, providing their perspective on how they think the military can facilitate transitioning into the civilian work life. All the participants expressed their recommendations of how they thought their employers could improve transition for veterans. Participant P-Vet 1 said “there should be classes to help union workers understand the contracts because there is so many different people telling you different things”. Participant P-Vet 2 viewpoint was more on how the company can change its expectations from a certain job role by stating “definitely needs to be to focus on retention of their engineers. We engineer’s hold a lot of responsibility. Keep the engineers happy with pay, work schedule, and ability to have a balanced work-to-home life and you'll have better retention”.

Participant P-Vet 3 recommends that the company help build bonds amongst veterans by saying “(company) needs a peer support group for veterans. Someone asked me if I was a veteran because of my army t-shirt. They need to provide instructions on how to unify people in (company). Participant P-Vet 4 said “I recommend that the (company) would advertise more that they are offering jobs for veterans, because if it wasn’t for my friends I wouldn’t have known about the job.” Participant P-Vet 5 stated “I would recommend to the (company) to have an active recruitment for the military such as

the program “transitioning to hard hats”. They should have specific veteran preferences on the job description such as if you have worked in the military police you would be given a veteran preference to work in (company) police.

Likewise, most of the participants provided their perspectives on how the military can improve transitioning veterans into the civilian workforce. Participant P-Vet 1 said the military transition program should include good contacts of companies that are hiring veterans and have classes on how your skills will translate in a corporate setting and, trainings on how to act in a corporate setting.” Participant P-Vet 3 opinion was “they should extend this two-week transitional class since it takes about six months to get a decent job with benefits and that you would enjoy. For example, to get this current job, it took about a year to get this job at (company) from the time of application”.

Conversely, participant P-Vet 5 praised the military transition exit experience by saying,

“When transitioning out of the military, they had a job training that was helpful. Also, we required to take courses on personal financing. They did a decent job on what to expect from the real world, but my parents helped a lot in that regard. The military also helped with your resume. They helped in transitioning the military skills into corporate America skills that would be marketable”.

There were no discrepant cases that were not in alignment with the codes, instead I observed minor contrasting views amongst participants that helped to provide different perspectives for the emerging themes.

### **Summary of Themes - Veterans**

In conclusion, it was essential to hear the setting expectation experience from the veterans to answer RQ2 that asked about the veteran's experiences with the management of setting expectation in the military and the civilian organization. The veteran's experiences as well as the HR/hiring manager experiences helped to validate the overall data. The veteran data demonstrated that the organization did provide an orientation phase as part of the onboarding phase and specific training was provided depending the job as discussed by the HR/hiring managers. Some veterans pointed out that going to the company website prior to entry did set up some expectations of the company with descriptions of what it was like to work there, and job descriptions were available to know what to expect while on the job (See Table 2). However, one participant did point out they would prefer short videos of current employees talking about their experiences.

The employees were orientated to various company documents such as the company code of conduct and had initial connections with HR personnel to ground them into the workforce. There were opportunities during performance reviews and meetings for the employers to also set expectations as discussed by the HR/hiring managers. While, these processes were common to employees who are non-veteran, what was significant about the data was that veterans voiced that the company was set up with a similar military structure which provided a sense of comfort. However, some of the veterans pointed out some structural elements that were missing that the military had, such as having more stricter rules to know what to expect.

Another significant outcome of the results was that veterans voiced that the company could do more to assist with transition. They agreed with the HR/hiring managers about implementing a cultural competency program to orientate them better into the workplace culture, which is now being enforced by the new job preparedness program mentioned by the HR professional group. The veterans also voiced the need for a specific social group for veterans to offer support, especially for new veteran employees, which one HR professional mentioned would be forthcoming. The veterans did note that the military experience provided more structure to the veterans, there was no guessing because of the strict protocols they facilitated a faster transition. Both the veteran and non-veteran participants in the study demonstrated that the military as well as civilian organizations still have room for improvement on preparing veterans for the civilian workplace environment, and to not work off on assumptions that the veterans would adapt to civilian work life like everybody else.

### **Triangulation of Data Sources to Evaluation Setting Expectation Practices**

To assure the trustworthiness of data for this study, participant responses, the company website, the company code of conduct, and the list of veteran's tenures at the company was analyzed. The data revealed that the process of setting expectations pre-interview included information on the company website about the nature of the organization and review of the job description, recruiting outreach activities, and word of mouth from employees already working within the company. This first level of data was confirmed by responses from the veterans, and the HR/hiring managers, and the company website. The next level of setting expectations included the interviews between the



veteran candidate, HR manager, and hiring manager where there were discussions regarding the employee experience, setting expectations about the job description, setting expectations about the company culture, and other questions that the veteran might have had. This second level was confirmed by analysis of the veteran's and HR/hiring managers interviews, code of conduct, and company website. The third level of setting expectations included general orientation, and onboarding activities including training depending on the job role. This third level was confirmed by the analysis of the interviews from the veteran's and HR/hiring managers. The fourth level of setting expectations included providing mentorship to veterans to socialize them into the work environment this was the direct supervisor, or other colleague, and exchange of feedback. This fourth level was confirmed by the analysis of the interviews from the veteran's and HR/hiring managers.

### **Summary**

This section discussed the settings, participant selections, demographics related to this study, and the major themes that emerged to describe the transitional experience and setting expectations practices of veterans during the data analysis process of triangulation of statements and findings during interviews and additional source documentation. The following areas were also included in this section: evidence of trustworthiness of the data and a discussion about the results as they related to the research questions. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate a civilian organization's best practices of setting realistic expectations for new veteran employees upon entry, which can help HR and managers better understand the needs of veterans who enter the workforce post

military service. There were two research questions posed to answer to address this purpose, RQ1 asked the perspective of HR and hiring managers about their experience with lowering veteran expectations and how this might influence retention, and RQ2 asked the perspective of the veteran's about their experience with the management of expectations settings while in the military and working in their current civilian job role.

The setting of the research was conducted via the Zoom video conferencing platform and recorded with the consent of the participants. The interviews were transcribed simultaneously with the Otter transcription online platform. The recordings were listened to a few times to ensure validity of the transcription notes. The transcription notes were emailed to each participant to review for accuracy of the data, which was also part of the credibility and the accuracy of the data to assure trustworthiness of the research. Each participant was provided a unique alpha-numeric identifier to protect the participant's identity. The participant selection was facilitated by a contact in the Department of Labor who was familiar with organizations that were successful in recruiting and retaining veterans, and that would be willing to participate. One such organization was willing to participate, and the organization's representative signed the letter of cooperation that was approved by Walden's IRB.

Out of 18 prospective participants who showed interest in participating, there were a total of 10 enrolled participants who signed the consent form and met the screening criteria (see Table 1 for demographics). Interviews were semi-structured with open ended questions, which allowed the participants freedom to answer the question with depth. Other data that was collected included two company documents: code of

conduct and tenure of veterans in the last five years. The company website was also reviewed to observe relevant data that can facilitate setting expectations such as posted job descriptions and the veteran program.

The results of the study demonstrated that the study interview questions were able to answer the two research questions with the result of eight overarching themes generated by the HR/hiring manager group and seven overarching themes generated by the veteran group. The HR/hiring manager group themes provided insight for the necessity of experiential knowledge of hiring and recruiting for veterans to set accurate expectations for veterans during interviews and onboarding, as well as providing a job preparedness program for incoming veterans. Similarly, the veteran group provided insight for the necessity of cultural competency training for what it's like to work in civilian organizations and feedback during performance reviews to set accurate expectations for veterans. Chapter 5 explores limitations of the study, recommendations for relevant future studies, and possible implications of the results with insight from literature.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative method with a single case with embedded units design was to understand the cognitive barriers for veterans transitioning from the military work life to the civilian work life from the perspective of the nature of setting expectations practices as a factor that influences the retention of veterans in the civilian workplace. Studies have revealed that veterans have had challenges in adapting to the civilian work life, although possessing the appropriate job skills and personnel traits, because of psychological issues such as PTSD, physical mobility issues, or cultural clashes (Greer, 2017; Mobbs & Bonanno, 2017). However, because veterans were desirable employees and they have good retention within the military, some scientists such as Landon (2017) argued that retention generally was not an issue for military workers, but there must be something else behaviorally that was causing retention issues amongst military veterans when they transition into the civilian workforce.

As a result of military troops returning from the front lines back to the United States as mandated by former President Barack Obama (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018), and now more recently by President Biden who spoke about soldiers returning from Afghanistan in September of 2021 (Thrush, 2021), there was an important call to action for organizations to prepare for the influx of veterans looking for jobs and to be culturally competent to ensure that they successfully gain the right job and transition effectively. Earlier research noted that 65% of veterans leave their civilian jobs within 2

years post deployment and more than 43% leave after the first year (Ford, 2017; Maury & Stone, 2014).

Specifically, the purpose of this study was to fill a gap in the literature highlighted by Cooper et al. (2018), Orazem et al. (2017), Rose et al. (2017), and Ferri-Reed (2013) that indicated there was a need to explore how organizations set expectations about the organizational practices, values, and norms to assure that a new veteran has a successful transition into the organization. Rose et al. (2017) stated that setting expectations about the organization to the veteran employee had positive outcomes such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction, which could be conducted through a variety of socialization practices such as RJPs. There was no evidence that suggested that such research had been conducted with RJPs.

It was clear that there was a need for research in setting expectations for veteran prospective employees by using realistic information about the organizational culture during onboarding and other socialization opportunities. This was needed so the veteran could positively identify with the organization and adjust successfully to their new work environment (Cooper et al., 2018; Mutch, 2006; Rose et al., 2017). This study aimed to highlight the use of ELPs or its equivalent practice as a form of a realistic socialization practice for new veteran employees, which reveals to the veterans what to expect from the culture of the organization, what it's like to work in the organization, and to dispel any unrealistic high expectations they may have (Shibly, 2019; Stern, 2017).

The results of this study can help recruiters assess the fit between the organization's culture and the individual veteran's expectations. Huang and Su (2016)

said that newly hired veterans generally leave their new job within the first 18 months, and the veterans reported on exit interviews that it was generally related to lack of fit, thus, the data collected was essential to avoid such withdrawal behaviors. The ELP or its equivalent was known to be a source of an intrinsic motivation tool for the employee to better adapt to the workplace environment (Brandstätter et al.,2016; Randhawa & Kaur, 2015), and this was the focus of this study to identify what the organization was using as its ELP tool. Additionally, this study has made a solid contribution to developing a non-existent formal ELP checklist for setting expectations for veterans that can empower HR professionals and hiring managers to improve hiring and retention practices that is presented in the implication section.

The results of this study generated eight overarching themes for the HR and hiring managers to address RQ1 regarding setting expectations and its impact, which included: theme 1- hiring/recruiting veterans; theme 2 - internal veteran program; theme 3 - setting expectations workplace practices; theme 4 - impact of setting expectations; theme 5- transitional issues with veterans; theme 6 -veteran cultural competency training; theme 7- organizational attributes that attract and retain veterans; and theme 8- opportunities to improve transitional practices. Seven overarching themes for the veteran group included: theme 1-personality and previous work experience; theme 2-setting expectations workplace practices; theme 3-unmet expectations; theme 4-met expectations; theme 5- military transition experience; theme 6-civilian transition experience; and theme 7- opportunities to improve transition practices to address RQ2 regarding the management of setting expectations within the military setting, and the civilian organization that will

be discussed in detail in the following interpretation of findings section. Some other key findings after interviewing both the HR professionals and hiring managers and veteran employees was that they do agree that understanding the expectations of the employer was essential in setting the veteran employee up for success and building trust between the employee and the employer. It was interesting to know that some veterans had no specific expectations prior to entering the organization because they relied on the employer to set the expectations for them, as opposed to some other veterans described that they had some basic expectations that they held onto from other organizational experiences.

The HR and hiring managers and some veterans discussed the importance of the structure and practices of the organization under study to demonstrate similar characteristics to the military lifestyle as a determinant for attracting veterans and overall retention of the veterans. Low compensation was acknowledged by HR and hiring managers for operational technical type jobs that the veterans entered, yet the veterans interviewed did not see that as a critical issue for retention or job satisfaction. There were some veterans who were just happy that they were able to get a stable job after military deployment that used their skills. The results also showed that setting expectations by the employer has four levels, including Level 1: the recruitment activities such as career fairs not just during interviews and continues during early socialization practices such as orientation sessions, trainings, and meeting with the employee's supervisor. It was apparent from interviews with the HR and hiring managers that more cultural competency training about veterans were desired to ensure successful transition of

veterans, and veterans voiced there was a need for more opportunities to prepare themselves for the civilian workplace culture and with civilian workplace cultural competency training.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

This section will highlight the themes from the results of this study and interpret how they answered the research questions and challenged or supported the literature review. The results of the study generated eight overarching themes to answer RQ1 that asked the HR and hiring managers their experiences with their organization's setting expectations procedures and how that might impact retention of veteran employees. The resulting themes included:

Theme 1) hiring/recruiting veterans, Theme 2) internal veteran program, Theme 3) setting expectation workplace practices, Theme 4) impact of setting expectations, Theme 5) transitional issues with veterans, Theme 6) veteran cultural competency training, Theme 7) organizational attributes that attract and retain veterans, Theme 8) opportunities to improve transitional practices.

Likewise, the results of the study generated seven overarching themes to answer RQ2 that asked the veterans about their experiences with setting expectations within the military and the civilian organization they currently worked in. The resulting themes included:

Theme 1) personality and previous work experience, Theme 2) setting expectations work place practices, Theme 3) unmet expectations, Theme 4) met



expectations, Theme 5) military transition experience, Theme 6) civilian transition experience, Theme 7) opportunities to improve transition practices.

Beginning with Theme 1 for RQ1, the results from former research demonstrated that newly hired veterans generally leave their new job within the first 18 months (Huang and Su, 2016); and 65% of veterans leave their civilian jobs within 2 years post-military, and more than 43% leave after the first year (Ford, 2017; Maury & Stone, 2014). Data from this current study were not able to support such data as the purpose of the data was to observe a successful organization that retains veterans for more than 1 year post military experience. Source documentation from this study showed that within the organization 472 veterans had been working in the transportation company for 5 years or more (See Table 2). Although it was not known how many veterans may have left the organization, it was likely to not be significant given the tenure of the veterans that were interviewed was between 1 and 18 years (See Table 1).

Theme 2 and Theme 6 for RQ1 discussed the organization's veteran program and need for a veteran cultural competency training for HR and hiring managers. The HR managers said the company recently launched a veteran job preparedness program in April 2021 whereby HR personnel and in the future hiring managers will be trained on interpreting a veteran resume to fulfil the needs of the company's job description (P-HRHM-3-5) and providing mentoring for incoming new veteran employees. Ford (2017) spoke about the cultural clashes between the military and their civilian colleagues as a reason for veteran turnover, such as veterans expect non-veterans to have more respect for authority and show more punctuality. Interestingly, one of the HR participants

discussed that veterans do not have an issue with showing up for work on time, as this was critical for a transportation service provider, but the issues with punctuality occurred more with non-veterans (P-HRHM-3). Two veterans mentioned that they thought veteran employees were better workers than their non-veteran colleagues and that they felt belittled from non-veteran colleagues because they had misconceptions about the job competency of the veterans (P-Vet-2, 4). This observation showed the lack of cultural competency on the part of some non-veterans that do not know the veteran's skills and experiences from the military and the value they bring to the civilian workplace.

The idea of cultural competency of veteran's was noted by Cooper et al. (2018) and Rose et. al (2017) to ensure that veterans were culturally competent of their organizational norms to ensure a smooth transition. On the other hand, Cooper et al. also voiced the need for employers to be culturally competent about veterans. Stern (2017) argued the need for more veteran research in understanding what has been working so far in organizations to ensure successful transition of veterans into the civilian workplace, and to empower the human resource professional to improve hiring and retention practices. The data from this study not only provided information of what organizations do for successful transition, but also demonstrated that both the hiring managers and HR personnel were aware of the need of veteran cultural competency for employers.

Theme 3 and Theme 4 for RQ1 focused on setting expectation practices in the workplace and its impact. During the interviews, it was clear that part of understanding the expectation of the company by the veterans was for employers to reiterate the requirements of the job from the job description, and to provide an opportunity for

employees to reveal their expectations whether realistic or unrealistic (Ashraf, 2017). The data from the study revealed that in most cases, there was a clear understanding between the employee and employer that from literature sets the psychological contract (DeBode et al., 2017; Kumarika Perera et al., 2017). If the psychological contract, i.e., verbal understanding, between the employee and employer was breached, there was a potential of unmet expectations and withdrawal behaviors can occur (DeBode et al., 2017; Kumarika Perera et al., 2017).

From earlier studies with the use of ELP with interviewing telemarketers, it was apparent that during the interviews the prospective telemarketer was asked what specific expectations they had, and the employer would provide guidance on how to reach that expectation or help the employee guard against that expectation as it may result in dissatisfaction (Baur et al., 2014; Gibson et al., 2015). Data from HR and hiring managers showed that opportunities for employees to provide their feedback or expectations was during interviews and meetings or if employers requested feedback. However, not all the veterans appeared to want to provide feedback or give their expectation to their employer, especially if not asked. It was more important to the veterans to know what the employer wanted and meet the employer's needs.

Theme 3 and Theme 4 of RQ1 for setting expectations was further highlighted by the organization's mentorship program. The HR managers highlighted during the interviews that they have initiated mentoring programs and an ombudsman to work with incoming new employees because they were aware that new employees do not always feel comfortable asking questions from their supervisors because of fear of appearing

incompetent. Rose et al. (2017) highlighted various methods of socialization practices for veterans to ensure a smooth transition such as assigning a veteran peer mentor or a coach to conduct various assessments for the new veteran employee to examine their cultural competency of the new organization, and to answer questions from veterans that they would not ask from their supervisor. Allen et al. (2017) posited that the influence of mentors has an active effect on new employees' socialization. The mentor can assist in teaching the new employee about the way things were done within the organization, provide advice, assist with job tasks, and offer social support. Mentors also help the new employees feel welcome, and they can act as a facilitator to promote effective engagement between current employees and new employees (Ślebarska et al., 2018; Gkorezis et al., 2016).

Feedback seeking as another component of Theme 3 and Theme 4 of RQ1 for setting expectations in the workplace and its impact was important to help new employees know that they were aligning to the expectations of their employer and meeting desired milestones (Saks & Gruman, 2018). Without periodic feedback, new employees might not accurately interpret whether they were meeting the requirements of their role (Song et al., 2017). By initiating feedback from their supervisor or co-workers, the new employee will improve their adaptation by modifying their behavior with the company's culture and expectations (Song et al., 2017). No transitional issues of veterans were highlighted in Theme 5 for RQ1; the HR and hiring managers were not aware of any internal resistances from veterans to adapt to the civilian work environment. This is

in alignment of what the literature said about veterans being able to adapt easily to new environment and overall valuable workers (Sayer et al., 2014).

Theme 7 RQ1 demonstrated the impact of a familiar organizational structure to aid in transition of veterans. It was apparent from the interviews from both veterans and HR and hiring managers that the organization was described as quasi-military organization that attracted veterans to matriculate into because of its hierarchal structure and offered jobs that required technical skills. The familiarity of the organization as compared to the military structure environment appeared to be valuable to the veterans as they often enjoyed their time in the military (Perkins et al., 2019; Sayer et al., 2014). From the data, the structure of the organization as mentioned above was important to the success of the veteran adapting to the environment.

Personality and previous work experience were presented as theme 1 for RQ2 for veterans, and it revealed that veterans are very resilient and patient which helps them transition to different work environments according to (Perkins et al., 2019). Having previous work experience that were transferrable to their present civilian job was an added asset to the organization. Theme 2 for RQ2 described the recruitment and onboarding process that the veterans experienced including vigorous training and the general orientation procedures that helped them to understand the culture of the workplace. According to Rabel and Stefaniak, (2018), the socialization of employees includes providing orientation procedures and associated training to help acculturate a new employee to the work environment to set them up for success with their jobs.

Themes 3 and theme 4 conveyed the met expectations theory, which delineates between unmet and met expectations, and if not aligned results in possible withdrawal behavior of the employee (Beijer, Peccei, Van Veldhoven, & Paauwe, 2019; Wong & Kuvaas, 2018). From the data, theme three unmet expectations was conveyed by veterans mentioning some unmet expectations for example, there was one veteran that shared his experiences with payroll and he expected to be paid on time when he first started the job, and he stated that he thought of leaving the company because of the initial issues of the not getting paid on time as expected (P-Vet-1). There were some veterans who noted that they did not have any expectations of the company before entrance (P-Vet-3, 4, 5), which would have challenged the met expectations theory of highlighting both met and unmet expectations while on the job (Beijer et al., 2019; Wong & Kuvaas, 2018). But, after asking additional probing questions, it was clear that they did have some expectations. For example, one veteran who previously worked in an investment bank and attends school expected to be part of formal corporate meetings to know about company activities as compared with his former job that made him feel that he has some ownership in the company (P-Vet-3). In this instance, the veteran was not aware he had any expectations, but when this expectation was not met, he was aware that this was important to him. A study by Jacquet and Hermon (2018) asserted that veterans generally have unrealistic high expectations of the civilian organization because of their high self-efficacy as a result of their experiences and skills.

More on theme 4 on met expectations, a veteran highlighted that the company was flexible in their schedule for military workers who had to leave work for military duty,

and on veterans' day they were acknowledged on a digital monitor screen. Of note, one veteran (P-Vet 3) said that instead of the acknowledgment on veteran's day, that a more impactful benefit would be to have a paid day off for veterans. Despite no specific benefits and social groups for veterans, it did not appear that this would cause withdrawal behaviors though they were nice to have, this gap was a known expectation. Moreover, veterans discussed that they learned about the organization's culture from initial recruiting procedures. Allen et al. (2017) asserted that recruiting events and associated activities have helped new employees form a realistic expectation, and the ability to anticipate the company requirements. Furthermore, the quality of recruitment activities has been linked to positive socialization outcomes such as organizational commitment (Vandenberghe et al., 2019). The data showed that the HR participants acknowledged that there were various career fairs conducted at various locations for veterans including the military bases.

Theme 5 shows the how the military transition experienced might have impacted the civilian transition experience for theme 6. Some veterans discussed how emotionally difficult it was for them for various reasons, and that the military needed to do more for mental health. From literature, it is well documented that veterans experience various emotional issues such as PTSD (Mobbs & Bonanno, 2017). Other veterans discussed that transitioning into the military was easier for them because of the strict protocols and structure as there was no guess work involved to understand what to do and when. Theme 6 civilian transition experience highlighted that some veterans experienced belittling from their civilian colleagues because of their misconceptions as discussed by Fisher et al.

(2015) and Szelwach et al. (2011). In the organization, it was the norm that veterans also provide feedback to ensure expectations were discussed and followed. However, data showed from the veterans that they were not providing regular feedback to their supervisors. As posited by Fisher et al. (2015), the lack of initiation of frequent feedback from the veteran to their supervisor might be as a result of their training in the military where the veterans have been socialized to take orders and not give orders (depending on their rank), and it's not the norm for them to speak up about what they need.

Some studies have noted some reasons for noticeable turnover for veterans in the civilian work place as it relates to theme 6. Sreenivasan et al., (2018) suggested that that the reason for noticeable turnover was due to the veteran's unrealistic expectations of how their skills will be transferred into the civilian workforce. From the interviews, there was no data that confirmed this observation, likely because the company observed in the study was a veteran ready organization that prides itself with offering suitable positions that veterans can easily matriculate into (P-HRHM-4). MacLean et al. (2018) stated that veterans experience unmet expectations that have to do with compensation because veterans have had issues of underpay that made them feel devalued. It was clear during the interviews that both the HR, hiring managers, and some veterans acknowledged the low pay for operational type jobs that veterans often accepted within the company, but HR discussed plans to provide more competitive compensation (P-HRHM-1,3). However, the low compensation did not appear to bother the veterans that were interviewed as one veteran said that money was not an issue for him (P-Vet-2), and the



other veterans were surprised about how much more they were getting than other jobs (P-Vet-1, 4).

The theme opportunities for improvement for the organization's transitional practices and military transitional practices to improve came up for both veterans and the non-veteran group, theme 8 RQ1 and theme seven RQ2 and are addressed here.

According to Ślebarska et al. (2018) and Gkorezis et al. (2016), social events for employees provide an opportunity to internalize the company's values and culture much faster, facilitate engagement between the current and new employees, and offer social support. The participants acknowledged that there was no specific veteran related social groups to provide additional support for the veterans, and the veterans did mention that this would be something they would like to see (P-Vet-1, 2). One of the HR participants (P-HRHM-3) did mention that in the future they plan to have a specific veteran resource group to allow social engagement amongst the veterans. One of the veteran participants (P-Vet 5) mentioned that there were a few of his colleagues who were from the military that formed their own social group within the company and celebrated birthdays.

One hiring manager (P-HRHM-1) stated that he would like to know the different locations veterans were hired from, and more work needed to be done to recruit veterans. Veteran participant (P-Vet 4) stated that more job fairs needed to be conducted because he only found out about the job through some friends. As studies have shown, having recruiting events provides an opportunity for prospective veteran employees to know what to expect from a company, and for veterans to assess if their needs will be met

before going through the process of applying for a job (Saks & Gruman, 2018). Song et al., 2017).

The data from the veterans conveyed a need for the military transition classes to go beyond teaching the veterans how to create a civilian resume post deployment. Most of the veterans voiced the need for preparation classes to be offered by the military for knowing what it would be like to work in corporate America and provide guidance on the behavioral norms (P-Vet-1). One of the veterans spoke about the need for the military to provide information during transition about where veterans should seek veteran ready private and governmental organizations, since most of the veterans did not know that the company observed in this study hired veterans (P-Vet 4). Research by Cooper et al., (2018) suggested that many veterans in transition were unable to identify with the civilian society, and do not possess the necessary soft skills such as cultural awareness and civilian interpersonal skills essential for adapting to civilian employment and thus need civilian cultural competency training.

To overcome the lack of cultural competency, Herman and Yarwood (2014) said the awareness of the difficulty in veteran transition into the civilian workplace has compelled military leaders to focus on the development of required skills that can be used once the veterans apply for jobs, thus increase their employability when they were deployed. Osborne (2014) argued that the development of community and government-based transitional programs might be helpful to promote positive reintegration of veterans into civilian work life. Since literature supports the need of transitional programs offered by the military to include cultural competency of civilian work life it is certainly a

worthwhile recommendation for more military bases to consider and more non-military organizations to emerge and partner with the military to provide such services. The Department of Defense supports the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) that assists veterans to develop job-seeking tools, such as resumes and interview skills, and helps organizations in the recruitment process to hire paid workers and interns (Faurer et al.,2014), but it was not known the extent, if any, of training in cultural competence of civilian organizations.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Three notable limitations of this study: (a) data was obtained from one organization within New Jersey, (b) the data was obtained at a one time period, and (c) data was obtained virtually rather than in person. Participants were enrolled in this study with a purposeful sampling method, and the gatekeeper of the organization was a HR director who helped to initially send out a mass email to groups of employees that were likely to participate in the study. Although, the enrolled participants were able to validate literature that described aspects of setting expectations and factors to improve retention for veterans, it also created some limitation for this study.

The findings applied to a governmental transportation company within New Jersey, and since the transportation company serves the whole of New Jersey this may not be generalizable to other states. Also, the industry sector of the organization was transportation that may not be applicable to all industry sectors, yet there were multiple departments within the organization that were known among other industry organizations. Nevertheless, the cohort of participants included both veteran employees

as well as non-veteran employees who the HR were and hiring managers from different areas within the organization, which could provide some generalizable data since the HR and hiring managers mentioned that there were no specific interview questions and onboarding practices for veterans, instead those practices were applied to all employees.

The second limitation of the study was the timing of the interviews. The interview questions for the veterans were focused on their recollection of onboarding practices when they first began their job at the organization, and the lowest tenure amongst the veterans was one year and the highest was 18 years. Therefore, remembering certain expectations or feelings may not be as clear to them sometime after the onboarding process, but they were given opportunities to check their transcript of their interviews to add any additional details, and for most cases no significant changes occurred. The final limitation of the study was that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that did not allow the opportunity to conduct interviews in person, instead they were conducted via Zoom video conference. Two out of the 10 participants opted to not show their faces during the video conference. It would have been ideal to be able to walk through the organization to get a glimpse of artifacts that might communicate the culture of the company, viewed other source documents, and document non-verbal cues from the participants.

### **Recommendations**

From the research data, it appeared that veterans job preparedness for civilian work, and understanding expectations of the civilian organization could potentially be set from the exit military transition courses. As a result of the study, it would be beneficial to

conduct a qualitative study to understand the cultural competency training about civilian work life offered to the veterans by the military and know what key elements were important to know about the civilian work life. This data could help to improve transitional procedures at the military and provide insight for civilian organizations to prepare for veterans. Another recommendation to further knowledge in this area would be to study what various job preparedness programs that private and public organizations offer to veterans about civilian workplace cultural competency. Moreover, it would be advantageous to know whether veterans believe cultural competency about civilian culture was necessary, and what type of training the trainers have taken to observe the elements that were important for effective transition into civilian organizations. Along with this, it would be good to know whether any of these cultural competency classes offered to veterans express the need for unlearning behaviors that were learned during the military, and the pros and consequence of this process.

To generate more generalizable data, a repeat of this present study should be conducted, using a quantitative method with surveys to answer questions where veterans were enrolled from various sources across multiple states and HR professionals enrolled from various sources across multiple states, which could answer more specific questions about setting expectations. This will allow a more refined ELP checklist for veterans to be created and used across different industries and populations since the study was driven by a call for setting realistic expectation procedures for veterans (Rose et al., 2017; Ferri-Reed, 2013; Mutch, 2006).

It would also be good to use the current generated veteran ELP checklist from this study to be distributed across organizations who were veteran ready and would like to make improvements, or for organizations that desire to become veteran ready. Then a future study could follow these organizations after implementation of this checklist to observe outcomes to managing expectations, retention, job satisfaction, and overall job preparedness.

Literature shows that job description helps to set expectations of the need of the company as well as the job itself (Ashraf, 2017). The present study highlighted the need for job descriptions to include key terms that show preferred military qualifications and at the same time translated to the civilian job qualifications to help prospective veteran candidates assess if there was a good fit before applying. An additional recommendation is to conduct a qualitative study to review job descriptions and resumes across organizations that were veteran ready and explore the jobs that veterans typically apply for and were offered the job to assess any key terms that were applicable to veterans. Compare this data with the jobs that veterans applied to and did not get the job offered to them. This data may demonstrate the veteran's misunderstanding of jobs posted and not qualified for, but also show the need for job descriptions to be military friendly. Similarly, the study may confirm the need for cultural competency courses to interpret veteran resumes as noted from interviews with HR participants, to ensure veterans were matched with the right jobs and the company does not miss out on suitable candidates.

The data from this study confirmed current literature assertions that interviews, and recruitment events were opportunities for the employer to set expectations and the

prospective employee to voice their expectations to assure alignment (Saks & Gruman, 2018). Song et al. (2017). I would recommend a study to explore what veterans wished they knew about their work environments before starting their jobs as this could provide insight on what employers and HR professionals should be saying to the veterans to ensure they have an accurate picture of what it's like to work in the organization. I also would recommend in that same study to explore the veteran's point of view on what they would have liked to be asked during recruitment and the hiring process that would have allowed them the opportunity to express themselves and allow the employer to take a deeper dive to assess if the candidate was a good fit. Studies have documented that feedback seeking is important to help new employees know that they were aligning to the expectations of their employer and meeting desired milestones (Saks & Gruman, 2018). Moreover, feedback between employee and employer will improve employee's adaptation by modifying their behavior with the company's culture and expectations (Song et al., 2017).

This study was focused on selecting an organization that was known to successfully retain veterans for more than one year and investigating the use of setting expectation practices as a catalyst for this outcome. However, an additional recommended study would be to extend the body of knowledge of why veterans leave their jobs by taking a deeper dive of whether the turnover was as a result of issues with the civilian organization such as needing a military style structure as was demonstrated in this present study, military specific transitional issues. The outcome of this study may demonstrate the pros and the cons of military style structure to be implemented in civilian

workplaces since the idea of more structure was a need from some of the veteran's interviewed in the study.

## **Implications**

### **Individual and Organizational Impact**

The implications of positive social change from this research was the applicability to both recruitment and retention of military veterans transitioning into the civilian workforce and the results could be extended to non-veteran employees transitioning into a new workplace environment. The results of this research provided a best practices framework for recruiters and employers to effectively provide an accurate description of what it was like to work in the organization by highlighting the needs of prospective veteran employees to successfully prepare to transition into a new workplace. Moreover, the results contributed knowledge to improve assessing how a veteran might fit into the new organization by understanding their workplace needs. We know from research, that employers do not want to experience wasted time and costs that is incurred when recruiting, hiring, and onboarding a new employee to later find out that the employee might fit for the job, but not so much in the work environment, and then leaves after a short time (Ellis et al., 2017). This research demonstrated that not only was it important that employers express what they expect from the new employees during recruitment, hiring, and onboarding, but also as important was for the employee to express their expectations to allow employers to confirm if they can meet the employee's needs, or if any adjustments could be made for a successful outcome.



This study focused on the key aspects of the workplace environment that was veteran ready or conducive for veteran employees, and not on the reality of the job itself. Therefore, the research data provided examples of what successful veteran ready organizations have implemented or aim to implement to recruit and retain new veteran employees that might find it challenging to transition to a civilian workplace. For instance, the study's key social impact was to generate the ELP type checklist to manage the expectations of veterans during the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding process. This was so that the veterans were prepared for their job by adapting effectively into the work environment, which was known to improve job satisfaction, and decrease withdrawal behaviors (Jacquet & Hermon, 2018; Sreenivasan et al., 2018).

#### **Proposed ELP Checklist from Data**

One of the outcomes of this research was to create a veteran ELP checklist to be used by recruiters and hiring professionals since its currently non-existent in the literature. Overall, from the data, elements to consider to include on an ELP to ensure veteran employee's initial expectations were not high and unrealistic, and that they align with the actual image of the organization while on the job include: (a) ensure company websites have testimonials either written or in video format from current employees on what it was like to work in the company; (b) ensure job descriptions can describe military qualifications and skills and apply them to the civilian requirements; (c) have recruitment events to provide information to prospective candidates about the company and allow candidates to also ask questions; (d) ensure HR and hiring managers receive cultural competency classes to interpret veteran resumes correctly and communicate the company

attributes and jobs in realistic terms that they can understand, and not just phrases to attract them into the company; (e) provide opportunities to veterans during interviews to discuss their expectations and discuss if they were aligned with what the company can offer; (g) create a veteran resource group to allow fellow veterans to socialize and learn from one another about how best to transition and adapt to the civilian organization; and (h) provide mentors to veterans as a source of social support and someone to ask questions if they were not comfortable to ask their supervisors.

These elements although may not be conclusive, provided a summary of what the organization observed in this study was doing well or wished to do better to ensure incoming veterans were culturally competent about the organization, and the leadership were culturally competent about the veterans. The importance of veteran cultural competency lends itself to ensure effective setting expectation practices, and a successful transition to contribute to positive outcomes such as retention and job satisfaction (Perkins et al., 2019; Orazem et al., 2017).

### **Societal and Policy Impact**

This research showed the value of having veterans as part of the work force with their various training they acquired in the military, and the sacrifice they made for our country. It is only right to ensure they can continue their career once they return to civilian life. Not having employable veterans employed causes strains on the economy, especially as more military workers were being deployed back home (BLS, 2018). To avoid these costs, it is beneficial to have as many organizations prepared to accommodate veterans. We know from data that the military partners with several public and private

organizations to promote veteran employment, and in turn organizations receive a tax benefit (Perkins et al., 2019). Although partnerships exist with various purposes such as job preparedness, there is still cause for concern of veteran turnover that needs to be addressed.

The results of this study highlighted that even before veterans begin work in civilian organizations, the military transition programs need to consider creating civilian workplace cultural competency training for veterans. It is essential that the military and associated governmental programs, such as the military transition assistant program (TAP) invest in resources to help veterans learn the skills that they would need to adapt to the civilian workplace culture. Moreover, this study conveyed the positive impact of the veteran ready transportation organization partnering with external organizations that have a purpose to prepare veterans for the civilian work life. For instance, the organization observed in this study had seen a gap in knowledge of understanding military terms on veterans resumes and decided to partner with an external organization to train their HR team in interpreting veteran resumes. In turn, leadership and HR can understand what skills the veteran offers in relation to the civilian job requirements to ensure the best fit between the employee and employer, and to not miss out on the qualified candidates.

### **Research Impact**

The use of the qualitative method was essential for the purpose of this study because setting expectations for the veteran population in the civilian workplace has yet to be documented until now. The contextual data that has emerged from the data demonstrated the positive impact of setting realistic expectations of the civilian

workplace for veterans as it highlighted the needs of the veterans, and demonstrated opportunities for improvement for organization who could be interested in hiring veterans or who may have been struggling with veterans, or organizations who may confirm they were on the right track with managing veterans. The contextual thematic data has brought meaning to the perspective of the veteran population within the workplace who were valuable, and now further research can be explored to gather more descriptive data or quantitative data to potentially deduce relationships among variables to impact overall veteran research, research in work place culture, setting expectations, recruitment, and socialization research.

The data from this research generated 15 themes or constructs that has helped to define setting expectations for the veteran population. With these constructs further research can take a deeper dive in providing detailed definitions per construct through qualitative research or use these constructs to develop a survey questionnaire to validate the construct that emerged in the data. The data also has contributed to the theoretical foundation of this study. The met expectations theory that stated that a person's expectations were met when the pre-job entry expectations were confirmed while the person is on the job (post-job entry expectations) by employers providing realistic information ahead of time to avoid withdrawal behaviors (Brandstätter et al.,2016; Randhawa & Kaur, 2015). The constructs generated in this study is hoped to have contributed to research surrounding the met expectation theory and provided meaning to what veterans expect pre and post job entry to ensure desirable retention rates.

### **Industrial/Organizational Practice**

Walden University teaches doctoral students to be scholar-practitioners in the work world. Therefore, as practicing I/O psychologists to ensure we provide accurate, credible, reliable data conducting due diligence by aligning our practical tools and strategies grounded in research and theory is imperative. Any I/O psychologist that wants to focus on recruitment and retention research could use the veteran ELP generated checklist to facilitate the stability of veterans, or other groups to assess any gaps in met expectations as a possible variable to retention or job dissatisfaction issues in the workplace. Likewise, the area of diversity and inclusion applies to veterans, and I/O psychologists could consider applying the knowledge from this research to evaluate barriers to veteran hiring or retention.

### **Conclusions**

The value of this dissertation is to convey the message that when employees are well informed from their employers about the reality of their work environment, they are better able to prepare for their job, transition effectively from a former work environment expectation, and adapt to the new work environment by internalizing the workplace norms and values. Transparency from the employer creates a level of trust between the employee and leadership and the employee the organization, which impacts job satisfaction and commitment from the employee (Orazem et al., 2017). It has proved invaluable to have investigated with a qualitative method and a single case design the perspectives of veteran's and non-veteran's experiences about their organization's best practices on setting expectations.

It was interesting to document ranges of expectations including some veteran participant's initially stating that they initially had no expectations, but later recommended what they would have liked to see. It could be argued that they in fact had underlying expectations that may have not been significant until they were asked. Therefore, studies have shown continuous feedback between the employee and employer is essential to align expectations and experience positive outcomes (Saks & Gruman, 2018; Song et al., 2017). It is essential to note that having a formal ELP or its equivalent can help to guide recruiters and hiring managers to assess the best fit between an organization and the employee (Sreenivasan et al., 2018). The use of the setting expectation procedure works to open a discussion between the prospective employee and employer to discuss realistic or unrealistic expectations. It is important that employers transfer accurate information to the prospective employee to manage unrealistic expectations, which can be confirmed by the employee over time while on the job to influence a positive outcome. Once an employee can confirm that what was discussed with them before they started their job was close to what they experience while on the job, they were likely to commit to the organization and trust the employer more as their expectation was met (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Ferri-Reed, 2013; Randhawa & Kaur, 2015; Rose et al., 2017).

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### Appendix A: Interview Protocol

The interview will begin with introductions, summarizing the scope of the research, and expectations of the interview. Additionally, the researcher will ask the participant if they have any questions or concerns before the interview begins.

- A. In the event that the interview is via phone or video conference, the researcher will review the signed consent form with the participant and ask if they have any questions.
- B. The researcher will remind the participant of the audio requirement of the interview and assure them of their confidentiality.
- C. The researcher will then turn on the audio device and introduce them with their identifier code, such as Participant 1, and include the date and time.
- D. The interview will last up to 1 hour to answer all the interview questions sequentially.
- E. During the interview, collect any source documentation offered, or if sent prior to the interview, review the documents with the participant.
- F. The researcher will discuss member checking and email the transcript of the interview to the participant so they can verify and validate their responses within 5 days of them receiving the transcript.
- G. Once the researcher has confirmed a successful interview, the researcher should thank the participant and conclude the interview. End protocol.

## Appendix B: Pre-Screening Questionnaires

## For Military Veterans:

1. Are you a military veteran of the Gulf War Era 2 (i.e. after September 2011 and forward)?
2. Are you between the ages of 25 and 54?
3. Are you currently employed and have worked in your current (full-time) civilian job for 1 year or more?
4. Would you be willing to participate in a study that asks about your opinion about your experience with recruitment and onboarding of military veterans?

## For Employers:

1. Does your organization hire and retain military veterans?
2. Are you hiring manager or human resource personnel in your organization?
3. On average, do your veteran employees stay on their job for more than 1 year?
4. Would you be willing to participate in a study that asks about your experience with recruiting and onboarding unidentified military veterans that you have successfully retained for more than 1 year?

## Appendix C: Interview Questionnaires

For Veterans:

1. How long have you worked on your current full-time job and what is your role?
2. What department do you work in?
3. How long on average did it take you to successfully adapt to the military work life versus your current civilian job, and what do you think contributed to a successful transition??
4. Can you describe any onboarding, orientation, or introductory procedures that have helped you to transition into your current civilian job?
5. Please can you describe any specific expectations you had before you started your current job and how were they met or not met?
6. If your most important expectations have been met, how has that affected your experience with your organization?
7. Was it easier to adapt to the military work life or the civilian work life, and can you describe what you experienced that made it easier to adapt?
8. Would you kindly share any material that describes what you received during recruitment and onboarding that told you what to expect about your company?

9. Do you have any recommendations for the military in preparing veterans for civilian work life or any recommendations for civilian organizations to improve veterans adapting to their organizations?

For Hiring Managers and/or HR personnel:

1. How many years have you worked in your current role and what is your current role?
2. How many years has your organization been recruiting military veterans, and is there a specific internal program that champions the hiring of veterans?
3. What is your viewpoint on the impact of setting realistic expectations for veterans as it relates to job satisfaction and overall retention?
4. From experience, what are some internal resistances that veterans face when adapting to the civilian environment, and how has your organization been able to overcome them?
5. Please can you describe your approach and strategy to successfully setting realistic expectations for incoming veterans during recruiting, hiring, and onboarding?
6. How do you think your organization's setting expectation strategy impacted the organizational human capital needs?
7. As far as you know, is your approach to realistic setting of expectations based on any theory or research background?

8. What type of training, if any, have you received or plan to receive to learn more about veterans and retaining them?
9. In your opinion, do you think the strategies you implement motivate veterans to quickly assimilate to the civilian work life?
10. What would you say is unique about your organization that attracts and retains military veteran employees?

## Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

**Calling Hiring Managers, HR professionals, and Military Veteran Employees for Civilian Organization Transition Study***Purpose of the Study*

- To explore your organization's successful strategies in providing realistic expectations about the organizational cultural practices, norms, and values upon entry, and to aid veterans towards a positive transition and adjustment into a new organization.

*Why Should I Participate in this study?*

- From your experience you can help identify the successful strategies that has helped you successfully adjust to your organization upon entry with the aid of realistic information given to you about the work culture.
- Your input will contribute to the body of veteran research that calls for more insight into improved socialization and retention practices for veterans within organizations.
- Your support will empower hiring managers and HR personnel with more data on how to improve hiring and retention practices for veterans, and thus improves veteran overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

*Other Information*

- There are two specific groups that will be enrolled in this study: a) If you are a former military veteran and a current employee of your organization for one year or more in New Jersey you are eligible to participate in this study. b) If you are a current hiring manager or a current HR professional in your organization for one year or more in New Jersey, you are eligible to participate in this study. Please note, as a hiring manager or HR professional it is not required that you have a military background.
- Interviews will be conducted over the phone or via zoom conference call.
- One time 30 mins to 1-hour interview, with one follow-up call or email.
- Confidential and private participation.
- Participation is completely voluntary, and you can cancel at any time.
- Digital audio recording for data analysis will be used during the interview and will be locked in a secure location and discarded after completion of the study.

If interested in participating in this study, please contact Sarah Bashorun, Industrial/Organizational Psychology PhD student, Walden University Email:; Cell:

## Appendix E: Interview Questions Matrix

Interview Questions for Hiring Managers/HR Personnel	RQ1. From the perspective of the hiring manager and/or HR personnel, how are veteran ready civilian organizations able to lower the expectations of the veterans during the initial stages of employment and how does it contribute to veteran retention in the workplace?
1.How many years have you worked in your current role and what is your current role?	
2.How many years has your organization been recruiting military veterans, and is there a specific internal program that champions the hiring of veterans? (Military Transition Research)	X
3.What is your viewpoint on the impact of setting realistic expectations for veterans as it relates to job satisfaction and overall retention (Met Expectations Theory/ELP)	X
4.From experience, what are some internal resistances that veterans face when adapting to the civilian environment, and how has your organization been able to overcome them? (ELP)	X
5. Please can you describe your approach and strategy to successfully setting realistic expectations for incoming veterans during recruiting, hiring, and onboarding? (ELP)	X
6. How do you think your organizations setting expectation strategy impacted the organizational human capital needs?	X
7. As far as you know, is your approach to realistic setting of expectations based on any theory or research background?	X

8.What type of training, if any, have you received or plan to receive to learn more about veterans and retaining them?	X
9.In your opinion, do you think the strategies you implement motivate veterans to quickly assimilate to the civilian work life (Met Expectations Theory/Socialization research)?	X
10.What would you say is unique about your organization that attracts and retains military veteran employees? (Retention Research)	X
<b>Interview Questions for Military Veterans</b>	<b>RQ2. From the perspective of the veteran employee, how do veterans view the management of expectations approach between the military and the veteran ready civilian organization?</b>
1.How long have you worked on your current job and what is your role?	
2.What department do you work in?	
3.How long on average did it take you to successfully adapt to the military work life versus your current civilian job, and what do you think contributed to a successful transition? (Met Expectation Theory/Socialization Practices)	X
4.Can you describe any onboarding, orientation, introductory procedures that have helped you to transition into your current civilian job? (Socialization research/ELP research)	X
6.Please can you describe any specific expectations you had before you started your current job and how were they met or not met?	X



(ELP/Met Expectations Theory)	
8.If your most important expectations have been met, how has that affected your experience with your organization? (Met Expectations Theory)	X
9.Was it easier to adapt to the military work life or the civilian work life, and can you describe what you experienced that made it easier to adapt? (ELP)	X
10.Would you kindly share any material that describes what you received during recruitment and onboarding that told you what to expect about your company?	X
11. Do you have any recommendations for employers in preparing veterans for civilian work life?	X

## Appendix F: Letter of Cooperation

### Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

Name of organization  
Name of Contact

January 20, 2021

Dear Sarah Bashorun,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Expectation Setting: Retention Strategy to Improve Military Veteran's Transition into Civilian Organizations within the organization. As part of this study, I authorize you to provide the recruitment flyer and screening check list that I will disseminate to the employees of this organization, conduct interviews and collect permitted source documentation that can help to answer your research questions, conduct member checking, and share a summary of the results with the participants. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: disseminate the recruitment flyer and screening checklist to the targeted participants and provide permitted source documentation. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,  
Name of Contact

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

## Appendix G: Letter of Invitation

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Sarah Bashorun and I am a Doctoral student in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from Walden University ([www.waldenu.edu](http://www.waldenu.edu)). I am very passionate about employers giving new employees accurate information about the workplace environment to assure that the prospective employee reduces any unrealistic expectations, which can successfully help the prospective employee integrate into the organization and increase their organizational commitment. Therefore, this is why I am conducting a qualitative research study to investigate the successful strategies used by organizations like yours that have successfully hired and retained military veterans in New Jersey for more than 12 months by conducting interviews for up to one hour over the phone/Zoom to explore the recruitment and onboarding experiences and procedures of hiring managers or HR manager, and military veterans who are currently working.

The title of my study is: Expectation Setting: Retention Strategy to Improve Military Veteran's Transition into Civilian Organizations. The outcome of my study is to empower more employers to have more knowledge about managing the expectations of veteran employees upon hire and thus improving veteran recruitment and retention practices. This study requires minimum of 10 participants from your organization, preferably 5 HR and/or Hiring Managers and 5 military veteran employees. During the interview process, the participants may be asked to provide help in accessing permissible documentation to confirm their interview responses.

Please see attached the recruitment flyer and screen checklists that I would like you to disseminate to the employees of your organization. If they are interested, they can contact me via my contact information on the recruitment flyer. Once a prospective participant contacts me they will be asked to complete a consent form and sent via email. At the end of the study, I will provide you and the participants a summary report of the results with no participant identifiers and no identification of your organization.

If you would like to read my proposal and/or would be interested in learning how to participate in my please contact me via email or cell# before (date).

I look forward to discussing with you.

Best regards,

Sarah Bashorun

Doctoral Candidate, I/O Psychology, PhD