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Job Demands that Influence Organizational Commitment of Public Safety Telecommunicators

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Walden University

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Andre V. Jones

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Walden University
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Abstract

Job Demands that Influence Organizational Commitment of Public Safety

Telecommunicators

by

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MPA, Jacksonville State University, 2013

MS, Jacksonville State University, 2009

BS, Jacksonville State University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

High job demands mean high turnover for public safety telecommunicators (also known as “9-1-1 call operators” or “emergency dispatch”). Personnel turnover place 9-1-1 call centers in an understaffed situation, which reduces operational effectiveness and increases risk to communities. Though public safety telecommunicators experience work-related stress due to job demands, organizational commitment, and operational impacts, the impact of job demands and its influence on organizational commitment is under-researched. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand job demands and the resources that influence organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators. The classical organizational theory of scientific management, or Taylorism, was theoretical framework. As such, the research questions emphasized perceptions of job demands and the organizational commitment experienced by public safety telecommunicators. Individual interviews served as the data source from participants in New Orleans, Louisiana. Purposeful sampling resulted in 13 individual interviews. The participant interview transcript data were coded and led the themes of (a) emotional demands, (b) mental demands, (c) physical demands, (d) work overloads, (e) bureaucracy, (f) team atmosphere, (g) person–job fit, and (h) availability of tools, which influence mostly the affective commitment of public safety telecommunicators. With these perspectives that further describe the life-or-death protective nature of the work, the implications for positive social change include understanding the reasons for turnover, which can lead to improved retention and operations as well as support for reclassification and innovation of the profession.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all the “heroes behind the headset.” These relentless and resilient gladiators are 9-1-1 career professionals who selflessly serve their public safety colleagues and communities. It is an honor having this platform to bring to light our great work. I am but a steward, using my God given gifts to serve.

I also dedicate my work in memory of my grandfather, Virgil Jones Jr., and his legacy to pursue education, knowledge, and wisdom above all. I wholeheartedly thank my parents for their understanding as well as my extended family and friends for their support during this doctoral journey. I also thank my faculty and committee for their direction.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The public safety telecommunicator is essentially the “first” first responder who is responsible for 9-1-1 call-taking and emergency dispatch. Thus, the job demands are high, which means psychological, physical, social, and organizational pressures (Schaufeli, 2017). These pressures cause stress and ultimately high turnover in 9-1-1 centers (Turner, 2015). With the inability of 9-1-1 center managers and directors to effectively manage the turnover rate, 9-1-1 centers become understaffed. As a result, the emergency telephone number meant to render help immediately has longer wait times for callers, delayed dispatches, and extended response times, putting the community and responders at risk. This study addressed how job demands influence organizational commitment in the under-researched field of public safety telecommunications.

This chapter will provide an introductory background of job demands and organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators. I will describe the problem as well as discuss the purpose of this study. I will then discuss the theories associated with this study, including classical organizational theory alongside the job demands-resources model and organizational commitment model, which served as the theoretical framework for the research. After discussing the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, I will discuss the nature of the study, followed by assumptions and limitations. Finally, I will discuss the significance of the study.

Background

Public safety telecommunicators are highly skilled and trained personnel who work in 9-1-1 centers where they receive via advanced telephony equipment requests for

help and then, using computer-aided dispatch and radio systems, activate and coordinate responders (Association of Public Safety Communication Officials [APCO] International, 2018). But high job demands mean high turnover for public safety telecommunicators. Turnover leaves 9-1-1 centers understaffed, which reduces their operational effectiveness and puts the community and responders at risk. Though it is known that work-related stress is due to job demands (Lu et al., 2017) and has a clear relationship with organizational commitment and turnover (Turner, 2015), the meaning of how job demands influence organizational commitment in this field is under-researched.

Pressures to perform and meet deadlines, a lack of autonomy, call center environmental conditions, leadership support and secrecy, and a division between dispatchers and responders have been sources of stress in emergency dispatch call centers (Gurevich et al., 2018). In addition, like commercial call centers, work-related stress increases turnover, reducing operational effectiveness (Jain et al., 2013). However, job stress is an outcome of job demands, making it important to determine potential influencing factors (Lu et al., 2017) in order to prevent exhaustion and subsequent turnover (Huynh et al., 2014). For instance, there is both a health and safety risk working as a public safety telecommunicator (Baseman et al., 2018).

Further, organizational commitment influences turnover, meaning organizational commitment must be improved (Ahn et al., 2015). To make this improvement, there is a need to understand the different types of organizational commitment to determine which one (or combination) can be most influential to creating the desired change in the organization (Geneviciute-Janoniene & Endruilaitiene, 2014). Organizational

commitment can be described in terms of desire-based (affective commitment), obligation-based (normative commitment), and cost-based (continuance commitment; Bon & Shire, 2017). To improve organizational commitment, organizations must understand the factors that influence them in the workplace (Yildirim et al., 2015). Therefore, this study was conducted to understand job demands and the resources that influence organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators.

Problem Statement

According to the Police Executive Research Forum (2017), 9-1-1 is the most significant social contract between local governments and its citizens in the history of the United States. Countless lives have been saved, criminal offenders apprehended, crimes solved, and crimes prevented because of the availability and reliability of 9-1-1 (p. 16).

However, with high turnover rates, understaffed 9-1-1 centers mean people cannot effectively access police, fire, or emergency medical service assistance when they need it. Not only is the community affected, but responders are also impacted as the ratio of public safety telecommunicators to service providers is too high, delayed, or low quality, which puts responder's lives at risk (Police Executive Research Forum, 2017). To improve recruitment and retention, 9-1-1 center managers and directors should understand how their public safety telecommunicators' job demands influence their organizational commitment for optimal service delivery. Relevant to their problem in 9-1-1 centers, job demands are defined as the psychological aspects of their job and the physical and social or organizational aspects that public safety telecommunicators endure

(Schaufeli, 2017). Job demands of the public safety telecommunicators are changing to enhance the mission of the public's ability to access 9-1-1 services (Baseman et al., 2018). These job demands increase work-related stress and turnover, which reduce operational effectiveness (Jain et al., 2013) as well as organizational commitment in terms of an employee's level of contribution, engagement, and satisfaction (Mercurio, 2015). Though it is known that there is a relationship between job demands and organizational commitment (Bon & Shire, 2017), it is unknown how job demands among public safety telecommunicators influence their organizational commitment. Therefore, this study extends the current literature regarding the impact of understaffed 9-1-1 centers by viewing the problem from a qualitative perspective through the experiences of public safety telecommunicators.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand job demands that influence the organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators in New Orleans, Louisiana. The study provides an understanding of the hidden problems in the emergency dispatch center, which further describes the protective life-or-death nature of the occupation and supports reclassification (Turner, 2015). Reclassifying the public safety telecommunicator into a protective service occupation under the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System is a policy change that echoes the desired sentiments of recognition and respect (APCO International, 2018). Furthermore, it is essential to be aware of the public safety telecommunicators' experiences and to what

extent they influence turnover. Awareness of the impact of job demands change on organizational commitment could improve retention.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the job demands of the public safety telecommunicator?

Research Question 2: What is organizational commitment according to the public safety telecommunicator's experience?

Research Question 3: How do the job demands of the public safety telecommunicator influence their organizational commitment?

Theoretical Framework

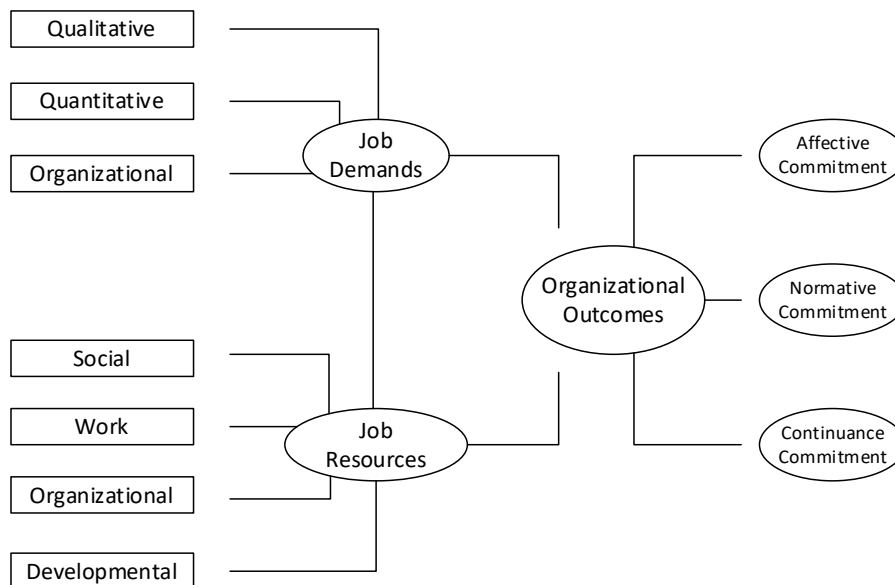
The classical organizational theory of scientific management, or Taylorism, is the theoretical framework of this study (Khorasani & Almasifard, 2017; Shafritz et al., 2016; Su, 2017). Taylorism provided a reference point to explain the relationship between job demands and organizational commitment (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Taylorism in 9-1-1 call-taking and emergency dispatch is a review of processes related to performing the various job functions, which are pretty routine and centralized around time, speed of answer, and speed of dispatch (Clark et al., 2019). The theory suggests that workplace effectiveness is based on workplace efficiency. When employees are skilled in their jobs and demands are standardized (in high output low-cost operations), the organizational objectives are met, and employees will be content (Shafritz et al., 2016). The review of literature related to Taylorism will be presented in Chapter 2.

Conceptual Framework

To understand job demands, the job demands-resources model was used as a framework to evaluate public safety telecommunicator job characteristics (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Additionally, to understand organizational commitment, the Allen and Meyer (1990) three-component model of organizational commitment was used to create a commitment profile for public safety telecommunicators within the desire-based (affective commitment), obligation-based (normative commitment), and cost-based (continuance commitment) scales (Bon & Shire, 2017). Figure 1 depicts the high-level job characteristics as they relate to the various levels of commitment. A more detailed view of the job demands-resources model is explored in Chapter 2.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



It is important to understand organizational commitment, instead of job commitment, as public safety telecommunicators are likely to go to another agency before leaving the profession. So, in the spirit of improving turnover and retention in individual agencies, it is helpful to ask “Why are you here?” to understand organizational commitment. The job demands-resources model and the organizational commitment model will be explained further in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

Because it is known that there is a relationship between job demands and organizational commitment (Bon & Shire, 2017), a qualitative study examining public safety telecommunicator’s experiences helped establish the meaning of how job demands influence organizational commitment. Qualitative research is designed for an in-depth exploration, which helped to understand job demands that influence the organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators. Participants were sought from a 9-1-1 agency via an email announcement explaining the research topic, methodology, anonymity, and confidentiality intentions. Using purposeful sampling, I then selected participants who have worked no less than 5 years in a consolidated emergency dispatch center (law enforcement, fire department, and emergency medical service). It is important to note that different agencies dispatch different things, so I needed to maintain some baseline characteristics. This sampling method therefore provides consistency of the data for addressing the research questions. As the purpose was to acquire descriptions of job demands and organizational commitment concepts regardless of whether the participant left the agency and went to another one, 5 years suggests enough tenure to have been

exposed to job demands and organizational commitment. This is a good use of purposive or purposeful sampling, including criteria relative to the topic of interest (Palinkas et al., 2013).

Initially, there was a desire to have only participants who left their organization for the data within this study. It was believed that they could provide better insight into the themes of organizational commitment and turnover. Additionally, it was thought that participants would be more open to speaking freely as they had separated from their employer, and there would be no fear of retaliation about speaking on working conditions, etc. However, after further scrutiny, it was realized that there are different types of organizational commitment, and some people can still talk about their feelings, desires, or intentions regardless of whether they are still public safety telecommunicators.

Definitions

To further introduce the topic, some key terms necessitate specialized definitions. This is so that the reader may become orientated with the field of emergency dispatch. This list is not all-inclusive but rather clarifies reoccurring words and language.

9-1-1: The three-digit national emergency number used by the public to access public safety agencies (National Emergency Number Association, 2018).

Job commitment: The level of involvement, attachment, and dedication individuals have to their job and job tasks (Coetzee et al., 2014).

Job demands-resources model: A job stress model that classifies positive and negative job characteristics (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Organizational commitment: The link between the employee and organization—an attitude that impacts turnover and performance (Mercurio, 2015). The concept proposes that people will remain with an organization because they want to, because they need to or because they have to (Bon & Shire, 2017). The concept then asks whether the employee is engaged and whether they want to leave (Ćulibrk et al., 2018).

Public safety answering point: Also known as the PSAP or 9-1-1 Center, it is emergency dispatch center, or agency call center where 9-1-1 calls are received and processed (National Emergency Number Association, 2018).

Public safety telecommunicator: The personnel known as 9-1-1 operators or emergency dispatchers that receive calls (requests) for law enforcement, fire/rescue, or emergency medical services which they subsequently process and send (dispatch) responders (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Office of Emergency Medical Services, 2016).

Retention: The ability of an organization to retain employees, thereby reducing turnover (Nasir & Mahmood 2018).

Turnover intention: The likelihood that an individual will decide to leave an organization in the future, a predictor of actual turnover (Hussain et al., 2015).

Turnover: The voluntary or involuntary departure of an employee from an organization and whereby that vacancy is replaced with another employee (Arokiasamy, 2013).

Understaffed: This is when there is not an optimal number of employees to do the essential job tasks assigned (Wendsche et al., 2017). This workforce imbalance increases

job demands across the group and affects members both cognitively and emotionally (Hudson & Shen, 2015).

Assumptions

Based on the definition of job commitment and organizational commitment, the most significant assumption was that public safety telecommunicators do not initially quit the job but instead merely leave the organization (APCO International, 2018). This is in line with the belief that job demands do not impact job commitment but rather organizational commitment. With potential fear of retribution due to sharing latent issues about the “behind the scenes” nature of emergency dispatch, the assumption was that participants would be open and honest. It was therefore an assumption that individual interviews were the best method to understanding the research questions. In addition, it was also an assumption that the participants would understand the interview questions well enough to provide insight that is information rich. Finally, based on the definition of turnover and understaffing, the assumption was that all 9-1-1 centers experience this phenomenon. These are necessary assumptions, given that the study was conducted at a single agency.

Scope and Delimitations

I was not interested in investigating the actual retention rate, turnover rate, or turnover intention of the agency or its staff but rather in understanding the participants’ perceived impact of their job demand’s influence on their organizational commitment that can be transferable to other agencies. Though the job demands-resources model is used as a conceptual framework, the study focused on the job demands. However,

participants named resources that otherwise combated job demands that subsequently impact their organizational commitment.

To understand what organizational commitment is, I asked the participants why they were in the workplace as opposed to in the job, which addresses job commitment. Job demands do not impact job commitment (Ahn et al., 2015) because public safety telecommunicators are more likely to leave the organization than leave the job itself (Bon & Shire, 2017; Turner, 2015). This is because job performance and job satisfaction are evidence of job commitment, and the study was designed to improve turnover and retention at the organization level not the profession level, hence the need to understand why public safety telecommunicators stay at the organization (Geneviciute-Janoniene & Endruilaitiene, 2014). Therefore, the study identified job demands-resources characteristics and an organizational commitment profile for the single agency.

Limitations

A potential barrier to the study was obtaining approval from officials to work with their agency as the study involves individual interviews that could expose agency shortcomings. As the focus was on improving retention, participants were frontline, non-supervisory staff within the agency, which accounts for the predominant turnover rates (APCO International, 2018). Due to such a small sample size, the findings may not extend to the larger field of public safety telecommunicators particularly as other levels of staff experience job demands and organizational commitment differently.

Additionally, a limitation was finding participants who worked no less than 5 years within the consolidated emergency dispatch center (law enforcement, fire

department, and emergency medical service). Another challenge was to account for selection bias by choosing who participates in the study. Finally, accounting for confirmation bias, I was subjected to accepting evidence that supports prior belief and hypothesis rather than appropriately challenging them.

Significance

According to the literature, high job demands mean high turnover for public safety telecommunicators (Turner, 2015). Organizational commitment mediates turnover, but more specifically, it is the exposure and reactions to job demands that fuel organizational commitment (Brunetto et al., 2012). Therefore, it is known that there is a relationship between job demands and organizational commitment (Bon & Shire, 2017). Furthermore, they will not leave when an employee is committed (Bhatti et al., 2016). This research fills a gap in understanding job demands within public safety telecommunications and their influence on organizational commitment. This information could help 9-1-1 center managers and directors understand the underlying reasons for turnover to reduce the ramifications and improve retention, which is positive social change (Bhatti et al., 2016). Additionally, recognition of social, organizational, developmental, and technological resource recommendations could mitigate the impact of job demands (Kotze, 2018). A result of such effective initiatives could have budget implications, serve as a catalyst for training mandates, improve community and responder safety, and further support reclassification of the profession as a protective service. This unique project addresses an under-researched area of emergency dispatch through qualitative interviews to explore diverse perspectives and increase depth (Mandal, 2018).

Summary

This chapter summarized the study's intent, which is to understand the job demands that influence organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators. The implication for positive social change is transformation within the discipline of public safety telecommunications that would keep 9-1-1 centers adequately staffed so they may effectively and continuously answer the public's call for help. This study fills the gap in literature where it is unknown how job demands among public safety telecommunicators influence their organizational commitment.

I will provide a more thorough explanation in Chapter 2 of the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework. The literature review will include a description of the public safety telecommunications discipline, further framing the problem and purpose of the study. In Chapter 3, the research method will examine how the research objectives will be conceptualized. Finally, Chapter 4 will provide the study results with Chapter 5 interpreting the findings with conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Public safety telecommunicators may be satisfied with the job but not where they are performing the job (Turner, 2015). They leave the job because of their exposure and reactions to job demands fueled by their organizational commitment (Brunetto et al., 2012). However, there is no national reporting statistic and no clear way to review exit interviews to validate this, so the details are imprecise (APCO International, 2018). But it is understood that regardless of how demanding a job can be, people will not leave if they are committed to the organization (Bhatti et al., 2016). Studying the public safety telecommunicators' experience could establish the meaning of how job demands influence organizational commitment, thereby reducing turnover and improving retention in 9-1-1 centers.

This chapter will serve as a literature review using the scientific management, or Taylorism, theoretical framework. This chapter will also provide an overview of the job demands-resources model and the organizational commitment model, which are the conceptual frameworks for the study. I will then describe the nature of the work of the public safety telecommunicator, including contributors to their job stress. It was challenging to find relevant literature on the field in which public safety telecommunicators operate. The closest thing to the public safety answering point where public safety telecommunicators work is the commercial or private sector call centers. As such, in this chapter, I will use private-sector call centers as a reference when discussing the chosen theoretical framework and the conceptual framework selected.

Literature Search Strategy

Selected articles relating to job demands and organizational commitment are described here. The keywords searched were *job demands*, *organizational commitment*, “*Taylorism*”, *scientific management*, *turnover*, *turnover intention*, *emergency dispatch*, *public safety telecommunicator*, and *9-1-1* through Google Scholar as well as in a Thoreau multi-database search, which focused on ProQuest Central, SAGE, and EBSCOhost. Most of the peer-reviewed articles used were dated from 2015 to 2020. Utilizing the references of many of these peer-reviewed articles, I was able to find additional literature.

Theoretical Foundation

The classical organizational theory of scientific management, or Taylorism (Shafritz et al., 2016), was an efficiency management system used in factories (Aitkin, 2014; Witzel & Warner, 2015). Scientifically speaking, Taylorism was designed to reduce the level of skills required to complete job tasks so that unskilled workers could be easily trained and supervised to do that job (Khorasani & Almasifard, 2017; Parikh, 2016; Shafritz et al., 2016; Su, 2017). Taylorism created a culture of metrics with an emphasis on quantity by scientifically designing work activity, measuring that activity, and monitoring activity to improve productivity (Clark et al., 2019; Villagomez, 2018). First, worker’s rudimental job tasks were outlined in workflows with time completion parameters to manage expected performance (Urlick et al., 2017). Second, with an understanding of these job tasks, specific workers were selected to do a particular job then trained to do that specific job task (Ndaguba et al., 2018). Finally, supervisors were

expected to analyze efficiency based on the job tasks and how long it took to complete them (Parikh, 2016). This systematic way of doing things was pragmatic, though there was emphasis on measuring performance in a mechanistic way (Ndaguba et al., 2018). Quality improvement in Taylorism was not about the effectiveness of the work but the consistency of the work (Brooks & Spillane, 2016). This became the basis for the principles of key performance indicators: balanced scorecard, lean manufacturing, and even six sigma (Schein, 2017).

According to the available literature, private sector call center work is a form of advanced Taylorism with regard to the division of labor, task simplification, and time requirements of jobs (Zito et al., 2018). For example, Woodcock (2017) observed scripts and guides used by the call center agents to manage caller interactions and how coercive the management was in evaluating agent performance. Taylorism also puts pressure on call center agents to continually meet targets. The Automatic Call Distribution system is a Tayloristic workforce management tool used to assign calls to agents, monitor the status of those calls, and prompt agents when there are waiting calls adding to the pressure to perform (Villagomez, 2018). But agent performance must try to balance being courteous with being expeditious, which does not facilitate call center effectiveness (Clark et al., 2019), as the number of phone calls each agent is expected to answer and close the sale make the work environment unpleasant (Crowley, 2018). Workload is disproportionate at the expense of expected service delivery outcomes (Pigman, 2017). Agents also have no control over their job tasks, and they are in constant contact with customers who can be quite demanding while agents must maintain composure and control the call (Zito et al.,

2018). This limited scope of work for agents is continually scrutinized against organizational customer service standards (Ceblano et al., 2019). Supervisors are charged with ensuring that call center agents adhere to job task times and often do so in an intimidating way (Sallaz, 2018).

These private sector processes have been adopted by public agencies (Villagomez, 2018). Essentially, this theory of scientific management, when operationalized in 9-1-1 call centers, requires only that public safety telecommunicators have skills to perform scripted, routinized, and standardized tasks integrated with technology to maximize efficiency (Parikh, 2016). But the public safety answer point operates as a team with primarily interdependent interactions. There are criteria for answering calls, completing calls, and dispatching calls; however, it is not always an individual worker's task to complete a call for service. This dynamic relationship between the social aspects of job task completion and the continuous, routinized, and standardized activity suggests how Taylorism contributes to the job being so demanding (Urlick et al., 2017). However, efficient Taylorism may be the ability to be effective and deliver on quality service is challenged when the public safety telecommunicator may suffer from high blood pressure, heart disease, chronic pain, morbid obesity, and even a toxic work environment (Turner, 2015). These examples of the fundamental results of the imbalance between job demands and job resources will be explained in the next section.

Conceptual Framework

Though Taylorism provides a reference point to explain the relationship between job demands and organizational commitment (Grant & Osanloo, 2014), the concepts

themselves must be described. To understand the job demands, the job demands-resources model was used as a framework to evaluate public safety telecommunicator job characteristics (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). To understand organizational commitment, the Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-component model of organizational commitment was used to create a commitment profile for public safety telecommunicators in the desire-based (affective commitment), obligation-based (normative commitment), and cost-based (continuance commitment) scales (Bon & Shire, 2017).

Job Demands-Resources Model

To begin to understand the job demands of the public safety telecommunicator, I used the foundations of the job demands-resources model (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Schaufeli and Taris (2014) established that there was a relationship between job demands and job resources, leading to the job demands-resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli, 2017; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Classified into physiological and psychological pressures, job demands lead to exhaustion and burnout, whereas job resources provide empowerment and support (Wingerden et al., 2016). And though not unique to the work environment of the public safety telecommunicator (Bakker et al., 2014), employee engagement, when combined with personal resources, mediates employee burnout (Wingerden et al., 2016).

To further explain, job demands equate to the amount of effort necessary to do the job (Schaufeli, 2015). These often physical, cognitive, and emotional efforts are associated with harmful job conditions (Yoo & Arnold, 2016). As is the case of the public safety telecommunicator who performs repetitive and complex tasks, these cause

burnout (Hidayah Ibrahim et al., 2019). Thus, job demands predict burnout over time because of persistent effort, which contributes to exhaustion (Hart, 2014). This work overload can lead to absence or even turnover intention (Schaufeli, 2015).

Job resources can be described as wellness-promoting (Yoo & Arnold, 2016). Job resources predict motivation and work engagement (Ter Hoeven et al., 2016). Work engagement may mediate the relationship between job resources and turnover intention (Hart, 2014). As is the case of the public safety telecommunicator, technology has transformed the work environment, which means positive outcomes (Hidayah Ibrahim et al., 2019). Leadership support and personal resources also stimulate employees' level of engagement (Schaufeli, 2015). When work engagement is good, job performance will also be good (Kim, 2017).

Since all organizations are different, job demands and job resources experienced while performing the same job will be different (Bakker, 2015). The daily strain of job demands harm employee well-being, whereas job resources positively impact employee well-being (Bakker, 2015). In addition, the ability to be resilient with something as simple as hope and initiative decreases burnout (Van Steenbergen et al., 2018). Therefore, job demands can be positive when the work is challenging and acts as a catalyst for employee engagement (Tadić et al., 2014). Further, when employees feel valued, the high demands are of no perceived consequence because they feel the job is significant (Shinan-Altman et al., 2018). This has more to do with the impact of their job on other people, like the jobs found in public service (Shinan-Altman et al., 2018). Public service jobs such as police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and even public safety

telecommunicators seemingly have a behavioral response where personal motivation to do good combats job demands (Tadić et al., 2014). Notwithstanding, even working overtime for the greater good can lead to fatigue and burnout (Wingerden et al., 2016).

The questionnaires used to evaluate burnout and engagement include the Questionnaire on the Experience and Evaluation of Work (Van Veldhoven et al., 2002), the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (Kristensen et al., 2005), the Nordic Questionnaire for Psychosocial and Social Factors at Work (Elo et al., 2000), and the Health and Safety Executive's Management Standards Indicator Tool (Edwards & Webster, 2012). Schaufeli (2017) used these to develop a single-item tool called the Energy Compass. Using the Energy Compass, Schaufeli found job demands listed conceptually as they apply to the general work environment (see Table 1). Though this research will fill a gap in understanding job demands within public safety telecommunications that influence organizational commitment, concerning the job demands-resources model, Table 2 addresses the job resources concept of the Energy Compass (Schaufeli, 2017).

Table 1

Job Demands of the Energy Compass

Job demands high-order construct	Job Demands variables
Qualitative job demands	Emotional demands Mental demands Physical demands Work-home demands
Quantitative job demands	Work overloads Work underload Pace of change Negative change

	Bureaucracy
Organizational demands	Harassment Role conflict Interpersonal conflicts

Table 2*Job Resources of the Energy Compass*

Job resources high-order construct	Job resources variables
Social resources	Co-worker support Supervisor support Team atmosphere Team effectiveness Role clarity Fulfillment of expectations Recognition Job control
Work resources	Person-job fit Task variety Participation in decision making Use of skills Availability of tools Communication Alignment Trust in leadership
Organizational resources	Organizational justice Fair pay Value congruence Performance feedback
Developmental resources	Possibilities for learning and development Career perspective

Authors affirm that a range of job resources, much like those found in the Energy Compass, has buffered various job demands and keeps people from burning-out and leaving the organization (Hart, 2014 & Schaufeli, 2017). Therefore, the Energy Compass serves as a framework for those “job characteristics” that the public safety telecommunicator may perceive as their own and subsequently influence their organizational commitment (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Essentially, the job demands-resources model by way of the Energy Compass attempts to answer the question of ‘why

are you here in this job' when physiological and psychological demands are high relative to the low job resources that predict someone would otherwise leave the organization (Wingerden et al., 2016).

Organizational Commitment Model

Unlike the job demands-resources model, the organizational commitment model attempts to answer the question of 'why are you here in this job.' Authors argue that the definition of organizational commitment is the bond or attachment to the organization (Farooq et al., 2014; Mory et al., 2015; Song et al, 2015; Valaei & Rezaei, 2016). As the definition of organizational commitment originally lacked consensus, Allen and Meyer (1990) developed the model to fill the gap to ensure the success of an organization (Chordiya et al., 2020). However, researchers do agree that organizational commitment is multidimensional (Sheik, 2017).

All existing literature examining organizational commitment references the Allen and Meyer (1990) three-component model of affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment (Aban et al., 2019; Bahrami et al., 2016; Fu, & Deshpande, 2014). Scholars alike use this organizational commitment model to explore employee behavior within organizations to indicate job satisfaction, job embeddedness, and even turnover (Ghosh & Guruantahn, 2015). Hence, the organizational commitment model proposes that employees work where they work and stay because they want to, they need to, or they have to (Hwee & Sze, 2017; Komashie & Austin, 2019; Rajeshwari & Paramanandam, 2018).

Affective Commitment

When employees are emotionally connected to the organization, which essentially fulfills the employee's need, this is referred to as affective commitment (Chordiya et al., 2020). Therefore, it can be interpreted that affective commitment is when an employee remains with an organization because they want to (Bahrami et al., 2016). This desire to stay with the organization is because the employee feels supported with mostly positive experiences (Waheed & Zahra, 2017). In a study of 403 employees in firms across Spain, it was found that when employees' perception of their work's meaningfulness was positive, it impacted the want to stay with the firm (Fernández-Mesa et al., 2020). Hwee and Sze (2017) agree with this adding in their study of 400 executives and managers that this form of commitment is best because employees feel their contributions are meaningful all the while their performance improves operational effectiveness. With this regard, organizational commitment is perceived to be most effective when the employee's contributions are valued and the employee feels supported (Masilaca & Sili, 2019).

Sheik (2017) determined that highly committed employees are less likely to leave an organization. Outside of some personal and job-related factors, in general, employees are enthusiastic and perform more as an effective team when they understand the vision (Njoku et al., 2017). In their study of 200 public and private sector employees, Njoku et al. (2017) suggest that only those open to the vision and evaluation of progress towards that vision remain committed. In their study of 136 employees in the private sector on the effect of leadership styles on organizational commitment, Alemayehu and Batisa (2020)

found that transformational leaders' influential behavior affects affective commitment as the reiteration of a clear vision encourages employee's need to remain committed.

Normative Commitment

When employees have a sense of responsibility and loyalty to their organization, this is expressively normative commitment (Chordiya et al., 2020). Likewise, this commitment form is experienced when an employee stays because they feel they need to (Aban et al., 2019). To improve behavior, a study of 135 industrial workers concluded that a pay increase could increase the obligation to stay (Rajeshwari, & Paramanandam, 2018). Likewise, a survey of 320 teachers revealed that such a psychosocial aspect like pay could positively impact this form of organizational commitment and improve retention (Komashie & Austin, 2019).

This supports the idea that leadership is the mechanism of influence, which is also emphasized in the Hwee and Sze (2017) study. Therefore, researchers suggest that leadership style furthermore promotes the operational effectiveness of organizations as a result of normative commitment (Alemayehu & Batisa, 2020; Kim & Ryu, 2017).

Continuance Commitment

When an employee stays with the organization because they have to, this is continuance commitment (Chordiya et al., 2020). The significance of this is that there is an apparent cost to the employee for deciding to leave (Fu & Deshpande, 2014). This level of commitment fluctuates based on the employee's experiences (Waheed, & Zahra, 2017). Put another way, employees continue to work for the organization because they cannot afford not to leave (Rajeshwari & Paramanandam, 2018).

A study of 300 teachers found that demographic factors such as age or education influence an employee's ability to seek employment elsewhere (Komashie & Austin, 2019). Notwithstanding, scholars explain that this level of organizational commitment still predicts absence and turnover (Alemayehu & Batisa, 2020; Kim & Ryu, 2017). However, a survey of 80 teachers across three universities in Pakistan found that the turnover of employees does not impact the organizational commitment of the remaining employees (Waheed & Zahra, 2017). All of this extra work on the remaining employees does, however, come at another type of cost, job stress, which may subsequently reduce retention and further threaten operational effectiveness (Tikare, 2016).

In a survey of private sector service employees, Khurram, Khurram, Hassan, and Fatima (2020) claimed that emotional exhaustion negatively impacts organizational commitment. With this effect on employee well-being, Kim and Ryu (2017) investigated further and found that work-life balance is vital to organizational commitment. A study of 513 nurses in Turkey supports this notion that a quality work-life balance positively influences organizational commitment concluding that improving conditions will improve organizational commitment and control turnover (Karaaslan, & Aslan, 2019). This again highlights that there are mitigations for job demands but does not explore those job demands that influence organizational commitment.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

In this section, I will summarize the literature related to the job of the public safety telecommunicator. The discussion will include the connection of the job to the more extensive 9-1-1 system, history of the role, importance of position, and describe

specific roles/responsibilities. I will then discuss the choice to explore job demands instead of job stress. I will also provide a discussion on the concept of job commitment instead of organizational commitment. Finally, the section will conclude with some discussion on how job stress influences job commitment.

Public Safety Telecommunicators

When they answer the phone, the public safety telecommunicator is right there, right now. There is no mental preparation for handling the situation while on the way to the scene like their response agency colleagues because public safety telecommunicators have a zero-minute response (Haight, 2020). The first of the first responders, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018), describes public safety telecommunicators as those who:

Operate telephone, radio, or other communication systems to receive and communicate requests for emergency assistance at 911 public safety answering points and emergency operations centers. Take information from the public and other sources regarding crimes, threats, disturbances, acts of terrorism, fires, medical emergencies, and other public safety matters. May coordinate and provide information to law enforcement and emergency response personnel. May access sensitive databases and other information sources as needed. May provide additional instructions to callers based on knowledge of and certification in law enforcement, fire, or emergency medical procedures (p. 43-50).

Despite this description, the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system does not categorize this profession as a protective service (APCO International, 2018). The SOC is

technocratic and does not care about how important a job is, the interpretation not exemplifying the life-or-death guardianship of the work (Haight, 2020). The SOC instead refers to these professionals using the word ‘dispatcher,’ a label under describing and underrepresenting the scope of work performed by the public safety telecommunicators (Haight, 2020; Turner, 2015).

Back when the first 9-1-1 calls were taken circa 1968, the work of a ‘dispatcher’ was very much that of a clerk or secretary, if not that of a basic switchboard operator (Nussman, 2021). There was very little training outside of administrative duties like answering phones, data entry and the relay of information from the public to responders (Turner, 2015). However, today, the public safety telecommunicator is not equivalent to a clerk or secretary though they may do some similar tasks (Nussman, 2021). The SOC disagrees, further adding that the work of the public safety telecommunicator is not first responder work and they do not administer care (Haight, 2020). This could not be farther from the truth especially in 9-1-1 centers using protocols (Clawson et al., 2015; Clawson et al., 2018). And while it is universally accepted that police response, fire fighter fighting fires, and EMS rescuing people are first responder activities, a vital part of the chain of survival starts before any of these people arrive on the scene (Clawson et al., 2018). Just because public safety telecommunicators do not physically arrive does not mean they are not there and medically trained to provide assistance (Haight, 2020; Turner, 2015).

While police officers, firefighters, and EMS personnel have traditionally had higher levels of mandatory education compared to that of public safety

telecommunicators, to mitigate risk, states have instituted minimal training requirements (APCO International, 2018; National Emergency Number Association, 2019). As a standard of care, basic life support (CPR) and emergency medical dispatch (EMD) are among the certifications that public safety telecommunicators receive (Clawson & Murray, 2015; Clawson et al., 2018). Essentially, lifesaving begins with those charged with coordinating their response, the work of the public safety telecommunicator, the “first,” first responders.

It is therefore incumbent that the community of emergency communications officers, emergency dispatchers, emergency telecommunicators, emergency services dispatchers, and public safety dispatchers alike serve as advocates for the Supporting Accurate Views of Emergency Services Act of 2019 reclassification initiative (APCO International, 2018; Nussman, 2021). Introduced by Representative Norma Torres, the unsuccessful attempt at reclassification between 2014 and 2019 as H.R. 1629 (116th Congress, 2019) was again challenged under H.R. 2351 (117th Congress, 2021). Together, the public safety telecommunicator community as ambassadors of the profession continue elevate government officials’ understanding of the job to gain sponsors (Haight, 2020). This increased awareness at the policy level should bring about technological enhancements, training initiatives and the wellness support required for this profession to thrive, reducing turnover, and thereby improving retention.

The general understanding is that 9-1-1 provisions members of the public access to emergency services such as law enforcement, firefighting, rescue, emergency medical services, and animal control by way of the public safety telecommunicators (National

Emergency Number Association, 2019). However, public safety telecommunicators manage high-risk calls, including those in the realm of homeland security, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, hazardous materials, and even aircraft, rail, marine emergencies (Clawson et al., 2015). This emergency telephone number activates the effective and responsive public safety telecommunicators inside public safety answer points to provide situational awareness for responders (National Emergency Number Association, 2018).

The key to becoming public safety intelligence gatherers is a lot of specialized state-mandated training and international certifications that are aligned with local protocols and operating procedures designed to save lives and protect resources (Clawson et al., 2018; Haight, 2020). This training includes dealing with callers who are children, elderly, diverse, special needs, or speak English as a second language (Clawson et al., 2015). However, it is their interrogation, a combination of active listening, critical thinking, interpersonal and multi-tasking skills, that effectively meet the caller's needs to safely organize the right help to the right location within the right amount of time (Turner, 2015).

As public servants, they answer calls, receive requests, screen request via interrogation protocols and standards, categorize and prioritize the requests, assign resources to respond to the requests, and monitor the status of requests with the caller while simultaneously communicating with responders (APCO International, 2018). In addition, in many cases, the public safety telecommunicators provide instructions to the caller to prepare for the arrival of the responders, which may involve caller/scene safety

or dispatch assisted life support like telephonic CPR or childbirth delivery (Clawson et al., 2015).

What we have seen through the years are increasing demands of the public to get the right help to the right place within an expeditious amount of time (National Emergency Number Association, 2018). Therefore, public safety telecommunicators must adapt to everchanging circumstances, maintain composure, and retain a copious amount of information (Clawson et al, 2015). Even as “9-1-1” has become enhanced with automated location identification, there have been many cases of litigation where 9-1-1 failed to be responsive (Gibson, 2019, Baker, 2019; Green, 2019; Wisconsin State Journal, 2015). These pressures have transformed technology and training on how to process 9-1-1 calls effectively, however, have created job-related stress in due course (APCO International, 2018; Baseman et al, 2018; Gurevich et al., 2018).

Next Generation 9-1-1 has introduced more resilient wireless and IP-Based voice services as well as video, text, and personal data (Corral-De Witt et al, 2018; National Emergency Number Association, 2019). These job-related aspects alone create job stress contributing to attrition at 25-30% (Gibson, 2020; Wahlgren et al., 2020). Subsequently, the profession is plagued by 9-1-1 centers that are understaffed (Kelley, 2020) because job resources have not evolved as diligently as job demands (Alterio, 2020).

Additionally, training develops skills to be responsive to crisis, not address the impact of handling crisis (Clawson et al., 2018; Haight, 2020).

Job Stress

Job stress is primarily psychological, a response often to job demands that lead someone to withdraw emotionally from the job (Lu et al., 2017; Lambert et al., 2018). Causes of job stress in the emergency dispatch center include pressures to perform and meet deadlines, a lack of autonomy, call center environmental conditions, leadership, support and secrecy, and a division between dispatchers and responders (Gurevich et al., 2018). Additionally, public safety telecommunicators work not only 8-hour shifts but also 10 and sometimes 12 or more hours; research indicating that the longer the shift, the more progressively performance deteriorates (Furgani et al., 2021). During these long shifts, viewing multiple screens, dealing with multiple callers of different ages and cultures, the workflow is fast paced, technologically intensive and under continuous supervision (Ferro Dos Santos, 2016).

Constantly being exposed to the traumatic situations involved in 9-1-1 call-taking and dispatch, burnout, and compassion fatigue are symptoms of public safety telecommunicator distress (Gilligan, 2020; Trachik et al., 2015). Without job resource interventions, public safety telecommunicators lose their affective commitment (Chae and Meischke, 2021). This suggests that job demands cause exhaustion and, in turn, turnover (Huynh et al., 2014), which is why this study focuses on the underlying reasons for job stress. Therefore, as job stress is the effect of job tasks whereas job demands is the impact of job tasks (Gunawardena, 2019), this study focuses on the underlying reasons for job stress that affect commitment.

Job Commitment

Scholars have long since confused job commitment with organizational commitment (Aruldoss et al., 2021; Eskandari & Gorji, 2018; Raharjo et al., 2018). Simply put, job commitment asks ‘why are you here’ in this job, while organizational commitment asks ‘why are you here’ in this workplace (Farokhi & Farahbakhsh, 2020). Within the community of emergency dispatch, public safety telecommunicators rarely quit the job when they find the job demanding; they quit the organization (Bon & Shire, 2017; Turner, 2015). This suggests that job demands do not impact job commitment but rather organizational commitment (Ahn, Lee et al., 2015), hence the focus of this study.

It is important to understand organizational commitment instead of job commitment as public safety telecommunicators are likely to go to another agency before leaving the profession (APCO International, 2018). In addition, Bhatti et al. (2016) found that people will stay even in very demanding jobs if they have high levels of affective commitment. Mercurio (2015) adds to this, further suggesting that job performance and job satisfaction as evidence of job commitment only mediates for operational effectiveness when there is also organizational commitment. Therefore, to improve turnover and retention in individual agencies, we need to understand the job demands that influence the organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators (Ahn, Lee et al., 2015; Geneviciute-Janoniene & Endruilaitiene, 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

It is known that public safety telecommunicator work-related stress is due to job demands (Lu et al., 2017), and the job demands-resources model will evaluate the “job

characteristics” which have a clear relationship with organizational commitment (Turner, 2015). This effect on operational effectiveness and, subsequently, turnover should create a “commitment profile” (Bon & Shire, 2017). This chapter reviewed the literature associated with the theories and models to be used in the study. This chapter has furthermore described the importance of the lifesaving education, training, and technology utilized by the public safety telecommunicators as the work is currently under-emphasized. That is where this research will help to establish “job characteristics” as described by the public safety telecommunicators themselves. Nationwide, public safety agencies must update their job descriptions to accurately reflect the job of the public safety telecommunicators, thereby differentiating it from the job of a dispatcher. While they could discourage future applicants, these keywords could improve the quality of talent successfully assessed and recruited. And as these candidates would have a pragmatic view of the job at the onset of their career, they are more likely to be retained. The next chapter will address how this study was designed to understand and reduce turnover and improve retention.

Chapter 3: Research Method

There is a relationship between job demands and organizational commitment (Bon & Shire, 2017); however, it is unknown how job demands among public safety telecommunicators influence their organizational commitment. This qualitative study aimed to address this gap. The research methodology was designed to answer the research questions. This chapter will explain the rationale behind the research design and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. This chapter will also discuss the data analysis plan and address issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions fit with the basic qualitative research approach, which allowed the best opportunity to uncover the job demands characteristics and organizational commitment profile for the profession against the existing conceptual frameworks:

- Research Question 1: What are the job demands of the public safety telecommunicator?
- Research Question 2: What is organizational commitment according to the public safety telecommunicator's experience?
- Research Question 3: How do the job demands of the public safety telecommunicator influence their organizational commitment?

This approach was the most specific in systematically describing the processes, views, and interactions of the public safety telecommunicator (Creswell, 2014). The basic

qualitative research approach comes from analyzing data from more manageable pieces by creating codes and categories to make the invisible more obvious from stage to stage (Charmaz, 2014). This qualitative research approach as a strategy is systematic, rigorous, and immersive (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

In this study, I was a researcher, principal investigator, and interviewer as well as a data collection and data analyst. Furthermore, I am a subject matter expert as an executive leader in the field of study, which could add value to the participants' legitimate audience. I have 25 years' experience providing communications, customer service, and coordinated support services to various police, fire, EMS, other public safety agencies, private ambulance services, health care systems, and transfer centers with an average of 1,500 employees. I have extensive hours in processing emergency requests for service, fielding public complaints, training new recruits, ensuring standards of performance through continuous quality improvement, and maintaining records and reports for in upwards of 1.5 million calls annually. Ten of my 25 years in the field of 9-1-1 have been in a senior management role ensuring maximum unit utilization, equitable work distribution, process improvement, and efficient use of as many as 250 resources who responded to 240,000 calls annually. A member of APCO, National Emergency Number Association, International Academies of Emergency Medical Dispatch, through the years I have been a master instructor, quality evaluator, conference speaker and writer of editorials. As I live and work outside of the United States, there is otherwise no conflict of interest with the participating agency.

My experience addresses natural bias as I knew what to look for and how to evaluate without preexisting assumptions. I also protected the identity of the research participants. A challenge I faced was to account for selection bias because I chose who participated in the study. Additionally, I had to account for confirmation bias as I could accept evidence that supports prior beliefs and hypotheses rather than appropriately challenging them. The Walden University Research Ethics Planning Worksheet helped mitigate these issues.

Methodology

Participant Selection

With permission to approach an agency in New Orleans, Louisiana, data for the study came from individual interviews. Participants were screened using inclusion criteria as well as those who would be the most information-rich, available, and willing (Etikan et al., 2016). In line with the aim of the study to understand issues impacting those most struggling with turnover and retention, frontline non-supervisor public safety telecommunicator were the focus. The limitations were surrounded by those who met specified criteria.

I intended to invite the agency participants via an email announcement to get those interested to contact me for further details. Upon explaining the research topic, methodology, and confidentiality intentions, using purposeful sampling, I selected participants who have worked no less than 5 years in a consolidated dispatch center (law enforcement, fire department, and emergency medical service). It is important to note that different agencies dispatch different things to maintain some baseline characteristics. As

the purpose was to acquire descriptions of job demands-resources and organizational commitment concepts, regardless of whether the participant left the agency and went to another one, at least 5 years tenure enabled respondents to have enough exposed to job demands and organizational commitment to form a credible dataset. This was a good use of purposive or purposeful sampling, including criteria relative to the topic of interest (Palinkas et al., 2013).

I originally wanted to do this at a conference on a national level, which included interviewing only participants who had left their organization because of their insight on the themes of organizational commitment and turnover. Additionally, I felt that they would be more apt to speak freely as they had separated from their employer. However, after further literature review, I discovered that there are different types of organizational commitment, and some people can still speak on their feelings, desires, or intentions, in a credible way. Most importantly, interviewing current employees helped answer the question “Why are you here?”

Once the participants were screened, I notified them of the dates and session schedules, allowing them to choose a first and second meeting on a first-come, first-served basis. Finally, the interviews were intended to be at a neutral location, recorded (audio), while I took reflective notes during the data collection sessions. As such, the sessions unfolded with each participants’ consent to participate, options to withdraw at any time, and provisions of consent to record. Of course, transcription was accomplished without disclosing personal information.

Instrumentation

Individual interviews were conducted for a public safety answering point in New Orleans, Louisiana. Purposeful sampling hoped to find ten participants who were front line, non-supervisory public safety telecommunicators. Given the number of emergency communications specialists available at this single agency, it would allow for data saturation (Creswell, 2014; Mandal, 2018). The sample population, albeit small, was pragmatic and highly specific with regard to the aim of the study to conceptualize the research questions and achieve thematic saturation. The emphasis was on the quality of data rather than the quantity of participants per se; however, if it was discovered that the study will benefit from more conversations, additional interviews could have been conducted. The interview transcript data would be coded, categorized, and summarized into interpretive themes. The development of an interview guide (Appendix) was to conceptualize both job demands and organizational commitment from the experience of the public safety telecommunicator. But ultimately, it was intended that the interview questions would determine how public safety telecommunicator job demands influence organizational commitment. As such, the interview questions were based on the conceptual frameworks of the job demands-resources model and Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-component model of organizational commitment.

Commonly, study participants are given transcripts from the narratives they contributed during interview sessions and are asked to verify their accuracy (Creswell, 2014). In addition, some researchers regularly provide participants with their interpretations of the narratives to ascertain plausibility and ask: Did I understand this in

the same way you meant it? The issue then is that participants may disagree with the researcher's interpretations (Carlson, 2010). Both researchers and members are stakeholders in the research process and have different stories to tell and agendas to promote (Creswell, 2014). However, as to not be a burden to participants who may otherwise be disinterested in academic writing, participants were instead provided a summary of findings instead of participating in a member-checking process.

Data Analysis Plan

Analyzing units of meaning was essential to answering the research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). With a deductive approach to qualitative data analysis, from the "bottom-up," descriptive codes were applied to the lowest level of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Typically, an interview transcript is an integral part of the quality data analysis process to describe the phenomenon with a word or phrase (Saldana, 2016). This word or phrase becomes a meaning unit which as a 'code' is very close to the language used by the participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, I manually coded the data to describe what was captured in the individual interview transcripts along with any observational notes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Similar codes were gathered into more conceptual categories or families (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Again, staying close to participants' language, abstract names were assigned to the categories to make them more inclusive (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Table 3 reveals an example of the plan for thematic analysis.

Table 3*Codes and Categories from a Mock Interview*

Categories	Codes
Demands	Prioritization Workload Stressful Transitions Have to be here Management
Resources	Education Hope Family
Level of commitment	Loyalty Want to be here Love for the job

As seen in Table 3, the code list can organize single words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs into more significant categories (Laureate Education, 2016). Finally, what has been categorized is summarized with a limited number of (often 3-5) interpretive themes centered on answering a research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These prominent, overarching themes should determine the public safety telecommunicator “job characteristics” aligned with those in the Energy Compass found in Table 1 and Table 2 (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014) as well as create a “commitment profile” for public safety telecommunicators (Bon & Shire, 2017). The findings will be discussed to ultimately understand how the job demands influence organizational commitment in the realm of emergency dispatch.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative studies, the researcher is obligated to maintain an ethical attitude toward the participants and confidentiality (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). But

researchers face ethical challenges in all stages of the study, from design to reporting, including anonymity, informed consent, and researchers' potential impact on the participants (Sanjari et al., 2014). Protecting participant confidentiality must be done by all means where I acted as the interviewer (Babbie, 2017). Essentially, when trying to understand more deeply people's social motivations, protecting the dignity of subjects and the publication of the information in the research is essential (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). Otherwise, it could be considered an invasion of privacy because private details such as beliefs, attitudes, and opinions are shared with others without their knowledge (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011).

In this study, I asked the participants to e-sign informed consent forms in pursuance of their agreement to voluntarily participate. The participants needed to review, sign, and verbally acknowledge her/his understanding of the depth and breadth of the questions before the interview and data are collected (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participants were informed via email, through their informed consent forms, and again, verbally, before the beginning of the interview, that their identities, linking any of them to any particular responses will be protected and remain anonymous. Participant details were not communicated to any organization, publication, or person, nor were any incentives or penalties that might affect their positions be attributed to their answers. In addition, every effort was made to ensure that the participants understood the study's intent and their role in providing the data and that their responses were only used in the context of this dissertation and remain anonymous.

I was keen to avoid misrepresentation by evaluating observations and interpreting them (Sanjari et al., 2014). In addition, these interviews created a relationship that was intimate with honest and open interactions that needed to be accurate (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, I shared conclusions with participants to enhance validity.

Credibility establishes that the results of qualitative research are credible and whether it is representative of the participants' views (Anney, 2014). Thus, credibility is the most crucial aspect of determining the trustworthiness of data and its interpretation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Essentially, the study participants are the only ones who decide if the results reflect the phenomena being studied. Therefore, it is important that participants feel the findings are credible and accurate (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The focus group I originally planned to do was at a national conference where many different people will be from many various agencies at a single location. I thought it was the perfect opportunity because the interactions add to the interview experience and the ability to observe better intonation, pauses, and body language. This opportunity to get quality and immersive data with attention to subjectivity and reflexivity is paramount (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Due to COVID-19, with health restrictions surrounding travel and social distancing, I decided to facilitate virtual individual interviews via Microsoft Teams using the audio features/recording only. Additionally, due to the highly personal and sensitive nature of what is being asked, many of the questions could not be asked in a focus group setting because the study would be conducted with participants from the same agency.

Proceeding with individual interviews, to enhance credibility, I first ensured that each person who was approached was given opportunities to refuse to participate in the project. This precaution ensured that the data collection sessions involved only those who were genuinely willing/voluntarily to take part and prepared to offer data freely (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Furthermore, having individual interviews off-site, away from the 9-1-1 center, and not in conjunction with the agency would allow participants to contribute ideas and talk of their experiences without fear of losing credibility in the eyes of managers of the organization (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

Upon receiving Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, initial communications to select the participants was be done through the 9-1-1 agency administration (Approval Number 10-07-21-0799381). The agency received an announcement via email explaining the research topic, methodology, and confidentiality intentions, inviting their employees to participate. However, those who wanted to participate communicated directly with me via Walden University email. Those selected received a consent form via email that described the interview procedures, voluntary nature of the interview, risks, and benefits of being interviewed along with the privacy statement. Notwithstanding, I informed the participants in the consent form of my obligation to report any criminal activity or implications of child/elder abuse mentioned during the interview to the Executive Director of the 9-1-1 agency.

I requested consent to conduct an audio-recorded interview. The individual interviews were to be conducted within 30-days of consent. Participants were notified

that if they decided to take part in the study at the time of initial consent, they could still change their mind later, and participation was strictly voluntary. In addition, the participants were advised that being in the individual interview should not pose any risks beyond those of typical daily life. Sharing experiences, however, could bring forward latent emotional/psychological issues. The 9-1-1 agency agreed to provide a support resource for anyone who wanted further assistance.

Interview recordings and full transcripts were not used for any other purposes other than research/data for this study. I advised the participants that transcriptions of interviews would be analyzed as part of my research. I agreed to share conclusions with participants to enhance validity. Transcripts with identifiers redacted could be shared with my university faculty as requested along with my analysis. Participants would otherwise be referred to as PST1, PST2, PST3, etc., whereas 'PST' stands for 'public safety telecommunicator'. The interview recording and transcripts would be destroyed within five years. Participants who wanted to talk privately about their rights as an interviewee were given the contact details for the Walden University advocate.

If I were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, I would remove all names and identifying details before sharing. Data is kept secure in my password-protected computer and backed up on a password-protected cloud drive. Data will be kept for a period of at least five years, as required by the university, and then deleted.

Summary

This chapter presented the intent to do a qualitative study within the field of 9-1-1 call-taking and emergency dispatch as there are no studies that provide insights on the underlying reasons responsible for the high turnover rate. Individual interviews are an excellent qualitative instrument for the study to address the research questions. Individual interviews are influential with a good moderator as the dispatchers are removed from their workspace and can more openly voice their opinions hence diverse perspectives to increase depth (Mandal, 2018). This chapter served as the basis for the research design, research instrument, and procedures for recruitment, participation selection, and data analysis plan. I was also able to address issues of trustworthiness, reliability, validity, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 4: Results

I conducted this study to understand how job demands among public safety telecommunicators influence their organizational commitment, answering the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: What are the job demands of the public safety telecommunicator?
- Research Question 2: What is organizational commitment according to the public safety telecommunicator's experience?
- Research Question 3: How do the demands of the public safety telecommunicator influence their organizational commitment?

Chapter 4 will describe the setting, demographics and data collection completed for the purpose of this qualitative study. This chapter will also provide the interview results of 13 participant public safety telecommunicators—their qualitative data analyzed with evidenced trustworthiness.

Setting

With research proposal delays lasting nearly a year longer than planned, the proposal defense and subsequent Walden University IRB approval aligned with my trip to the United States after 2 years of being banned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of my family and friends' journey included a leadership conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, which was cancelled due to the impact of Hurricane Ida just weeks before my arrival. Nevertheless, I decided to continue my stay in New Orleans with the intent to complete the individual interviews, but since the Walden University IRB approval was to

do virtual audio recorded interviews, I opted to uphold that data collection methodology as to not further delay the research study. I contacted the 9-1-1 agency executive director to set up a face-to-face meeting upon my arrival in New Orleans.

My presence in New Orleans, Louisiana and at the 9-1-1 agency of study was only known to the command staff, whom I met with at the beginning of the week. We discussed the added value of having the prospective participants interview during their shift. It was agreed that we would allow the prospective participants to do the interviews while they were on duty because they would still be connected to the work and the best opportunity for them to be able to describe what they were doing was while they were in the middle of the activity either at beginning of the shift or before their meal breaks. Furthermore, it was felt that speaking off duty and off site would have digressed and disconnected the prospective participants from the job and the workplace, less likely to be able to explain what they do or otherwise may not want to talk about work.

The command staff sent out the flyers and coordinated the interview times with the shift managers to allow them to take one hour off the floor in a private office to interview with me via Microsoft Teams. I conducted the individual interviews of 13 consenting participants as scheduled over the course of the week from my private hotel room in New Orleans, Louisiana in accordance with the interview guide (Appendix).

Demographics

The only inclusion requirements of prospective participants were that they be 18 years of age or older, non-supervisor staff who worked for the 9-1-1 agency for 5 years or more. None of my questions in the screening process or interview asked for specifics on

age, job (call-taking or dispatching) or longevity. But although it was not formally an interview question, in most of the individual interviews to get the participants to open up about their roles, they themselves informed me about their call-taking or dispatching assignments as well as on occasion, their tenure with the 9-1-1 agency. See Table 4 for a list of participant demographics.

Table 4

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Call taker	Police dispatcher	Fire dispatcher	EMS dispatcher
PST1	Female	Yes	Yes	No	No
PST2	Female	Yes	No	No	No
PST3	Female	Yes	No	No	No
PST4	Female	Yes	No	No	Yes
PST5	Female	Yes	No	No	Yes
PST6	Female	Yes	Yes	No	No
PST7	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
PST8	Female	Yes	No	No	Yes
PST9	Female	Yes	No	No	No
PST10	Female	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
PST11	Female	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
PST12	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
PST13	Female	Yes	No	No	Yes

Part of the narrative presented by the participants was their insight that 9-1-1 agencies smaller than theirs have public safety telecommunicators that do call-taking and dispatching simultaneously whereas in their agency or those similar in size have their roles determined daily, which could be either call-taking or dispatching. Additionally, in large 9-1-1 agencies such as this one in New Orleans, Louisiana, all public safety telecommunicators are call takers and/or dedicated dispatchers for their partner agency disciplines of police (law enforcement), fire and EMS, most often specializing in one or more dispatch discipline as they advance in their respective careers. This is a relevant

aspect as the perception of job demands differ in the role of call-taking versus dispatching and respectively, between the dispatch disciplines. And though all the participants have been there at least 5 years, there were two that have been there 12 years, one that has been there 15 years and another who has been there 25 years.

Data Collection

With approval to proceed with the interview from the 9-1-1 agency executive director as well as Walden University IRB, the interviews were planned for 45 minutes and scheduled in 1-hour increments. This allowed time for late arrivals, introductions, closing, and reflective note taking. All the individual interviews lasted less than 25 each. As per the flyer, when the prospective participants contacted me to advise they wanted to participate, I confirmed they met the inclusion criteria and I emailed them a consent form. Though my goal was to complete 10 individual interviews, I received 14 responses of interest from prospective participants of which only one did not meet the inclusion criteria. When the 13 prospective participants replied, "I CONSENT," I scheduled the individual interviews in Microsoft Teams at the agreed time.

Over the course of several days, I interviewed the participants individually via Microsoft Teams from my private hotel room using the interview questions, which were designed to answer the research questions (Appendix). The nine interview questions in the interview guide were open ended and included rationale and subquestions to further draw out latent content behind the concepts. During the individual interviews, I informed the participants again that the individual interviews would be recorded to capture the thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences I heard; that I would keep the information

they provided confidential; and that they could refuse to answer my questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

During the individual interview sessions, audio-recorded with Microsoft Teams, I listened to the participants describe their job demands and perceptions of organization commitment while writing reflective notes. One of my observations was that as I did not do a soft opening at the beginning of the interview to share my experiences or otherwise broach the topic is because I wanted the participants to speak to me as if I knew nothing about the field of 9-1-1 call-taking and emergency dispatch. Therefore, the participants' understanding of the concepts was challenging, which meant I found myself asking a significant amount of clarifying questions, going beyond the subquestions I had previously prepared. Asking follow-up questions using the participants own words and language helped. One of the interview sessions was intermittently interrupted by a bandwidth issue, so I emailed the two questions to the participant that had the most difficulty transmitting, and they quickly replied back with the responses.

At the end of the interview, I provided a brief summary of my professional qualifications which the participants found promising. I also thanked the participants for sharing their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences. The 13 individual interviews were listened to retrospectively and transcribed word-for-word by me.

Data Analysis

Listening to the recordings again as well as rereading the 13 transcripts and reflective notes, I began to code the individual interviews manually, without software. The codes came from the thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences shared by each

participant identified as PST1, PST2, PST3, etc. These codes aligned with deductive themes, reflective of the job demands characteristics based on the Energy Compass and the three-component organizational commitment theory model. For example, terms like “busy” and “short staffed” were captured under “work overloads.” It was evident, as all the participants did call-taking at the 9-1-1 agency and though they dispatched for different disciplines, that they experienced similar job demands. The job characteristics themes for the public safety telecommunicators are (a) emotional demands, (b) mental demands, (c) physical demands, (d) work overloads, (e) bureaucracy, (f) team atmosphere, (g) person–job fit, and (h) availability of tools. And though I was open to the emergence of new themes outside of the intent to use the Energy Compass as a deductive guide, there were no new themes. Essentially, the conceptual framework served its purpose of defining the job characteristics for this 9-1-1 agency and likewise, a commitment profile where affective commitment is the predominate organizational commitment theme.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were all achieved successfully during the individual interviews. During the recorded individual interviews, I took reflective notes. These notes provided direction from interview to interview on how the participants understood the questions and gave consideration to how to remove barriers with words of clarification to ensure information-rich responses. After the individual interviews, I listened to the interview recordings at least three times to make sure I transcribed them verbatim.

With a lot of experience in the field, trust was gained with the participants as they knew that the person they were speaking with both relayed to and appreciated their perspective. With assurances that their information would be confidential within the limits of the law, the participants were honest, albeit modest at times. As mentioned, this 9-1-1 agency is large with respect to its call volume and number of frontline non-supervisor public safety telecommunicators employed. Notwithstanding, the setting of the study is transferrable to other agencies of all sizes.

The findings are consistent with the conceptual framework, utilizing a mostly deductive coding and thematic analysis method. I remained objective by putting my personal bias aside and analyzing the data based solely on the thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences provided. I used no software or systems to personally review, organize the data into codes and connect them to the previously identified themes.

Results

This qualitative study was conducted to understand the job demands that influence the organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators in New Orleans, Louisiana. Using the interview guide, I evaluated public safety telecommunicator job characteristics and their relationship with organizational commitment (Turner, 2015) through the establishment of a commitment profile. When the coding was completed, job characteristics themes for the public safety telecommunicators emerged as are (a) emotional demands, (b) mental demands, (c) physical demands, (d) work overloads, (e) bureaucracy, (f) team atmosphere, (g) person–job fit, and (h) availability of tools (see Table 5). As it relates to the organization

commitment profile (see Table 6), although all three components were present, affective commitment was the most prevalent.

Table 5*Summary of Job Characteristics*

Themes	Theme Definition	Participants	Codes
Emotional demands	The participants description of their emotional effects and coping skills experienced in their job.	PST1, PST4, PST5, PST6, PST7, PST9, PST12, PST13	Stays with you Take a loss Suicidal callers Child callers Need compassion Composure Disappointment Wind down Thinking of home Self-conscious Dissociation Compartmentalize Complacency
Mental demands	The participants description of their psychological impact of the job.	PST1, PST2, PST3, PST4, PST5, PST6, PST7, PST9, PST10, PST11 PST12, PST13	Do everything right No mistakes Mentally draining In your mind Mentally not here Won't save them all No closure Could I have done more Headache Impatient Anxiety
Physical demands	The participants description of the physiological effects of the job.	PST2, PST7, PST9, PST12,	Neck pain Exhaustion 12-hour shifts Back pain Carpal tunnel
Work overloads	The participants description of their work pressure due to heavy call volume relative to inadequate staffing levels.	PST1, PST2, PST5, PST6, PST8, PST9, PST10, PST11 PST13	Busy Short staffed Phone just rings nonstop No breaks Very fast paced Need extra help Overworked, underpaid

(table continues)

Themes	Theme Definition	Participants	Codes
Bureaucracy	The participants description of their frustration with the organization.	PST4, PST6, PST7, PST13	Don't always agree Unfair promotions Lack of engagement No empathy No kudos Don't know how to supervise Don't know procedures
Team atmosphere	The participants description of their interpersonal connection to other members of the organization.	PST4, PST6, PST7, PST8, PST9, PST13	Family Dinner Good friends Cheer you up Team building
Person-job fit	The participants description of their job satisfaction and job embeddedness due to high degree of emotional intelligence.	PST1, PST3 PST4, PST5, PST9, PST10, PST11, PST12, PST13	Love for the job My heart Help people
Availability of tools	The participants description of technological and mental health tools provided by the agency.	PST2, PST4, PST5, PST12, PST13	Carbyne Wellness days Massages Therapy Grief counseling

Table 6

Summary of Commitment

Themes	Theme Definition	Participants	Codes
Affective commitment	Desire based commitment.	PST1, PTS2, PTS8, PTS9, PTS10, PTS11, PTS12	Want to be here Love it here
Normative commitment	Obligation based commitment.	PST3, PST5, PST13	Need to be done It's duty City needs me
Continuance commitment	Cost based commitment.	PST4, PST6, PTS7	Something that is constant Can't afford to leave

Most of the individual interviews were information-rich while a few participants provided short answers. And though the relative short answers were answers to the questions, they lacked depth and there was little I could do to pull out any further thoughts from the participants respectively. This could be in part because of my initial observation that many of the participants did not understand the concepts of job demands and organizational commitment. Additionally, many of the participant answers to some of the same questions were quite modest, the participants unable to truly describe the life-and-death nature of their work. Therefore, from interview to interview, while I did ask the initial question as written, I used clarifiers to further explain the questions without changing the question's intent. In most cases, the participants opened up more.

I believe that instead of using such high-level words and language, I should have used lower-level language that informed the answers to the research questions. Additionally, I believe I could have gotten more content if I had done an icebreaker at the beginning, just to get the participants more comfortable with talking, perhaps leading with discussing day-to-day tasks and observations, etc., instead of going right in with the detailed questions.

The reoccurring themes suggests that the job is demanding mentally and emotionally, but it is understood by all of the participants that this is just part of the job itself. All of the participants discussed how busy the 9-1-1 agency was and that they felt the workload was exacerbated by their perception that they were short staffed. Despite the demand, they all stated they loved the job and gave no indication that they wanted to

leave the job or the organization for that matter. All participants were able to describe their job demands when asked, but very few could describe their connection to the organization beyond the love of the job which speaks more to job commitment instead of organizational commitment. For those that could, the participants conveyed that their sense of connection to the organization centered around the feelings of community which included their fellow colleagues at the 9-1-1 agency, the public safety responders they serve and the citizens they help. The next sections provide further breakdown of the theme definitions and thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences provided directly by the participants that support the theme.

Job Characteristics

Using the job demand-resources Energy Compass as a guide (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014), participants were asked to share their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences about the job the job demands of the public safety telecommunicator. The interview guide (Appendix) includes open ended questions about job demands with the intent to answer the research questions. Clarifying questions were often asked to provide further understanding of the context of the question as well as increase depth in laymen terms.

Emotional Demands

The participants description of the emotional effects of their job was expressed in this theme. The participants also described their coping skills. Several of the participants indicated that suicidal callers and child callers are difficult to deal with. Through it all, they state that the need for compassion and composure helps with caller management, however dissociating and compartmentalizing helps with self-management. Participants

mentioned that they hear things that most people never experience and as a lifeline, there is a fear that they will do something wrong.

PST1: “The job is demanding; it demands a lot from us. Compassion because of the calls and the way the citizens may react and talk to us and speak to us. But we have to hold our composure.”

PST4: “It just stays with you knowing that some days you help people and some days you take a loss. Those are the days when it’s not so bad, I mean kind of bad. Some of the calls that we get, as far as infants and toddlers, those are the kind of calls that take a toll on me sometimes. Suicide calls. I have to take a mental break to come back from it. I mean losing a child, I can imagine the pain of someone losing a child or a family member to suicide. Or knowing that those people we lost to suicide, they weren’t able to get the help that they needed. They didn’t have someone talk to, to listen to. Within this parish, one of our things is a lack of mental health assistance in the city. So, when we get those suicide calls, it’s kind of rough to know that that someone actually took their own life.”

PST5: “It’s not safe out there. And you got to you got to really be self-conscious about getting the information making sure it goes through verifying, looking on your maps, making sure that the crew copies you, you check on them repeatedly. People call all the time talking like they shot the police are getting ready to shoot the police. It’s horrible people have too much time on your hands. And it’s and we have to treat every call as if it’s a true emergency whether or not we feel that it’s a legit or not. Um, yeah, the job can be rewarding, because you know, you’ve done your best. And then you disappoint

yourself, like you said, because you don't know if you if you did every possible thing you can do because you have everything in your mind of what it is that you're going to do for that call and you you're going to go out and you're going to do this, you're going to that but they don't always go as it's planned.”

PST6: “You're literally here hearing someone that just got shot on the phone and decides to hear them upset and cry. It's like, wow, this is what I'm doing every day. And I'm making sure that I can get the right help tool, police fire or medical. And it changed as becoming a dispatcher because being a dispatcher inside now I get to send those units to those calls. And know honestly, it makes me stress and overwhelmed at times, because I am a mom of one year old, no matter if you want to call me that. And basically, my main concern will always be my child. So come into work, I'm like, Okay, I have the city in my hands for 12 hours. But during those 12 hours, it's like you're still thinking of what you have to do at home or with the lower needs. I have had I can say good days and bad days even worse days.”

PTS7: “The emotional stress of dealing with things and sometimes, you know, you can't really control what's going on, and you're trying to do your best to help them but sometimes no matter what you do, the outcome is going to be the same. So now you have to, you know, do CPR calls. Those are the calls that make me most stressed is when I have like an EMS call. And I be afraid I'm not doing it right. Even though I've, I've trained, and I've done all the classes and everything in this in the system is still those calls make me the most nervous as the calls as you know, EMS calls. Okay, you, you are left wondering, oh, well, I wonder what happened to this person. Oh, I want you know, I've

been on the phone with this person for such a long time. I wonder what happened to this person? hope they are right, or I hope you know, whatever their situation was turned out okay, for it's, it can be hard. This job is not for everybody.

PST9: "Disassociation with the calls you take."

PST12: "I sleep so much that I just don't like think about it."

PST13: "When I first started, everything affected me. But with experience comes, I don't know, it's never complacency. Because if you become complacent in this career, you need to find another one. You should always be on your toes. It's never the same. It's constantly moving and changing. But for me, I don't know. I guess I figured out how to separate it. In my head. You have to address it, deal with it, and move on. And that's I compartmentalize. Now, I'm not going to tell you there aren't some days. And the kids affect a lot of, for me, it's children and elderly people."

Mental Demands

Participants shared the psychological impact of doing the job in this theme. Several participants felt that the life-saving work can be mentally draining because there is no room for error in the race to save them all. The constant pulling of information out of the callers made some participants impatient. Some participants mention the increased anxiety surrounding the need to do everything right, and with no closure, they often wonder if they could have done more.

PTS1: "It's demanding that we get them to the right place (the first responders) albeit EMS, PD and fire department to wherever the citizens need it."

PST2: “After the first 2-3 years I did not feel that much of an impact, but over time, I noticed the stressors like home just being impatient like getting off work, like I really don’t like to talk to anyone. I always need a wind down time like right after work. And I value my off days because like there’s no noise or phones ringing. Has gotten stressful over the years and definitely affected my patients and my will to communicate outside of work.”

PST3: “It’s more of a mental type situation. You might get a call for someone, the call may mentally affect you in some way and you mentally carry that around sometimes and it’s mentally draining.”

PST4: “I’m here, but I’m not mentally hear, and the only way that you would know I was not mentally here is if you know me you work with me on a daily basis.”

PST5: “It only takes one mess up. Because if you get the wrong address in your street crew, the police the firemen, they go to the wrong area, you're putting their lives in danger. So this job can be very stressful, because you're not going to save them all. You're not going to get to them all in time, you know, and you try to leave that at work. But you don't always leave that at work because we're all parents. We're all brothers. We're all sisters. We're all aunts, uncles. Regardless if it's our family or not that affects you That affects you and it stays on your mind. You're always thinking, Is there something I could have gotten went back and done different? Is there something more than I could any more information than I could have gotten?”

PSTS6: “The difficult part of my job when I hear somebody yelling over the radio, and I'm not certain what's going on because I unit supposed to be in one certain

area. And last time I checked when I checked on this status, he was supposed to be on this street, but he wasn't on that street and all of a sudden he's screaming that he's running after somebody and it's like, okay, but you were right here. So, where are you? Are you okay?"

PTS7: "Well, some calls are harder than others. I've been on the phone with people who were begging for help because the person quit wasn't breathing or whatever, or whatever I've dispatched on officers needing assistance. I've dispatched on you know, terrible accidents, I've dispatched on a lot of stuff. And sometimes distress does get to you. And you say yes, you try to separate your home life from your work life. But even while you're at work, you're still you know, your home life is always in the background. it's like the call, particular call might stick in your mind for a while, or it might, you know, you might be playing, or how could I have done this differently that might have worked out a little bit better or something like that?"

PST10: "Honestly, I can see that it is draining. It can be a headache sometimes, especially if you work in a city where is constant, you know, activity going on as opposed. So, example me hearing warnings, but overall, is still I still love to do it and get excitement, joy from it."

PST11: "Sometimes brings my anxiety up."

PST12: "And then I don't talk as much when of all so we've been having like issues with him like speaking and stuff and I feel like he does have a lot to do with me not wanting to talk and stuff after talking for 12 hours. It physically tires you out Something I know everybody says you have to leave it at the door. But that is not

something that we can do. Really? Like it's not reality like, this job does come home with.”

PST13: “To get this stuff out, because you do whether you want to believe it or not, or whether you think you focus on it or not, it goes with you. Those are the things that I'm afraid when I get older. And I'm a little senile, yeah, those are the things, those are the things I'm going to remember the bad things, I want to remember the good things, the baby that are brought into the world, or, you know, the little girl that wasn't breathing, but she is now she is now you know, those are the things you want to remember, but they're probably not going to be in, that's probably one of my worst fears. So, I try to take care of myself mentally now. I've always been an anxious person, or anxiety. My anxiety, noticed, I noticed it that it just got so much worse when I got into this business. Because you start to think, you know, you start to see things that people aren't supposed to see, let's just be honest. You hear things people aren't supposed to hear. Crazy for the amount of people that are calling 911. It's shorthand that that is what burns people out and makes them be like, I can't do this anymore. I'm, I'm giving my whole life, I get half of my life to this place. I'm at home 12 hours, I'm here 12 hours, but half of my life is spent here. And it can burn you out quick and people that would stay forever. Don't stay very long.”

Physical Demands

Participants experienced mild health and safety issues. While not mentioning any chronic diseases attributed to their job, some did state they had either neck pain, back pain, or carpal tunnel (hand/wrist pain). These pains are associated mostly with sitting at

a workstation and being subjected to typing for extended amounts of time. Most of the participants state that the twelve-hour shifts can be exhausting.

PST2: “My neck. I’m always tense. Every time my massage person comes, they always tell me, I am very very tense I the shoulder area.”

PTS7: “But also, you know, you have because of where we are, how we are, sometimes you do get, you know, like carpal tunnel, a lot of people have carpal tunnel from the tight end and things like that. And, you know, sitting in some of these uncomfortable chairs for hours at a time you start getting, you know, leg pain, back pain, things like that. Because I know I have carpal tunnel right now.”

PTS9: “I’m tired. and intellectually exhausted because this is like drains on you, health issues.”

PST12: “This job is very demanding. We are on 12-hour shifts.”

Work Overloads

Outside of the emotional and mental demands experienced by the participants, work overloads was found to be a predominate theme. Participants reported that the 9-1-1 agency was short staffed. With the ever-increasing call volume, the lack of optimal staffing to keep up with the call volume has made it seem even busier, all participants referencing that the phones ring nonstop. As such, the participants stated they do not get adequate breaks which precipitates emotional and mental demands.

PST1: “We are in demand for extra help, We're very short. We don't have a full-on staff here on the floor. It puts more pressure on us. On the other side, with the dispatchers, be it EMS, fire or PD, we may be short so when I get breaks when we need

as far as sitting there all the time, but with the calls coming in constantly, then it's all over. It makes us have pressure to do what we need to do and do the right thing making sure it's correct.”

PST2: “The workload, we don’t get paid enough for the amount of work we have to do here.”

PST5: “It's when there's not enough people at work, and the phone just rings nonstop. And you're trying to keep up with everything.”

PTS6: “They (trainee who resigned) realized that it was too overwhelming for them. And they couldn't, because it was like too much coming at him at one time as far as you have too many units talking and they're not able to kind of calm themselves, so talk to them. So many hurricanes.”

PST8: “So a typical day in the dispatch center is very hectic, is constantly moving. And it's very busy.”

PST9: “Also the other very difficult part of the job is the call waiting ringer, constant additional tasks many without added compensation.”

PST10: “But some days I do feel I will, you know, I feel overwhelmed due to the calls that we get the many calls that come into our center. Keeping up for all my officers at one time here, we don't do just one district. So that's the most difficult part. But just making sure you know, all bodies are accounted for at all times.”

PST11: “Hectic and busy.”

PST13: “We're shorthanded. And within the three months, they're just like, it's the retention like nobody, some of you can't, most of them can't hack it. Let's just put it that

way. They can't hack it. I don't know if it's not because they're not being realistic about what they are about to embark on. To take 911 call, like, I don't know, we used to call 911 Call has expired, but I've never called 911 because I never had an emergency that was that bad. Right? Right. I know that people call 911 for nothing, and it can burn you out. It aggravates you, because it's like, look, we're already shorthanded and you're calling me for toe pain, or you're calling me because your daddy borrowed your car and he didn't bring it back. You know, real, those are not life-threatening emergencies. So, you have to take the ridiculous with the very, very serious and it can burn you out. Those calls have to be answered regardless of who answers and they have to be answered. That ding ding ding ding ding in the background is a form of torture. It's a Chinese to noise. The noise that dinging when we know there are calls holding you don't have to remind us by while we're trying to take call after call after call that there are calls holding we know this turn it down. It's a form of torture, it really is like I hear it in my sleep. Anytime I hear it, anytime I hear a ding like jerk, because not only do you hear the ding, ding, ding ding when the calls are holding, but when the call comes through, you hear the ding in your ear. It has just gotten so much busier. And it's not just COVID it was it was before COVID. You could see the rise in in taking calls and the amount of you know call the crew were running in the night. So it's very, very fast paced, you have to definitely be able to, you can't do one single thing at a time, you have to be able to do two to three things for me sometimes five or six things at a time. You're running multiple computer screens, multiple, you know, computer mouse's, you're just, it's just busy, busy, busy.”

Bureaucracy

During the individual interviews, several of the participants indicated that they were frustrated with the organization. Some of these participants stated that they felt the promotional practices was unfair leading to people who either did not know procedures or otherwise had no leadership skills to become a supervisor. Other participants that commented on this topic felt a disconnect from the command staff stating there was a lack of empathy for what they do and otherwise, inconsistent kudos to acknowledge what they do. The sentiments eluded that more engagement was necessary.

PST4: “To have that care from the higher ups to know that you’re doing they are able to do also. But to be here and not feel like nobody cares, if you’re there I don’t have to be there. To not show he same empathy we show, the same care we show the center, do not have the leaders have the same, the passion we have.”

PTS6: “Morale can be a little better as far as I guess. I get attaboy every once in a while. Because sometimes we don't get the kudos. We're good. Okay, y'all did this and they'll give us okay a clap. But sometimes the individual person wants that good pat on the back saying hey, you did a good job today. Because not every call is an easy call. And when you get those word phones you want like a debate or not to be there. I'm sorry I debriefing as they want to call that they want to talk about hey, what's going on? What happened? Okay, we sometimes don't get that. It's just like, Okay, go back to work. And we said, super stressful, like a five-minute walk, or you need a 10-minute walk, you need to know, okay, what's going on? To kind of check on us.”

PTS7: “So it's not like it's not like it was before. You know, like I say, I worked when it was, when you were a police dispatcher, you worked for police department, when you were fired, you worked, you were under the fire department, EMS was under EMS department. Then when they came and consolidated, now we're all together under OPCD. And a lot of the things have changed. You know, it's like now that we pause, your cross training, the call takers are answering the calls for all three agencies. You're no longer you know, it's like, so now, your supervisor is over you, but they may be a EMS dispatcher. So, when you ask them a question about fire, you know, they may not necessarily know, the fire procedures.”

PST13: “But what I don't love is sometimes the way I feel sometimes that people are promoted, that don't have the experience, or the wherewithal, or the time here, I've not put the time in to be in a position like that So we are overworked, underpaid, sometimes supervised by people that haven't been here very long and don't really know how to supervise without insulting.”

Team Atmosphere

One of the more positive resources described by the participants was the team atmosphere. While there may have been a disconnect from the command staff, the participants really felt connected with the other members of their team. The “family” environment they illustrated suggests a support system that aids in getting through the day-to-day demands of the job.

PST4: “It's like everybody is a family. We spend as much hours here as we spend at home. We have that family unity here. Holidays, we do thanksgiving dinner.

Everything we do we do, we do it as a family. People that care, and they care about you as well as their job and their service to the city.”

PTS6: “So my commitment is because the people here they push you but push you in a good way to better yourself, instead of stay on one side. So, for somebody that pushed me and pushed me for the better asked what has kept me here because it's not like they want me to stay in one spot. They're like, okay, let's continue. I want you to be a dispatcher. Now won't you be a trainer?”

PST7: “I've made some very good friends here. I'm connected to some other people here. Some of them I'm not too familiar with because there's a there's a high turnaround and I'm terrible with names sometimes. The camaraderie. You might be saying oh, well, you're having a tough day. We might could talk, you know, make it a little better see if, you know, we can try to cheer you up a little bit.”

PST8: “I like the people that I work with, they're, they're cool, they're like family.”

PST9: “Commitment to the people you work with to make it the best environment as possible.

PST13: “I love these people.”

Person–Job Fit

In this theme, participants discussed their strengths and soft skills alignment with the job. While most of the participants share their adoration and connection to the job in this theme, I believe this is a testament of emotional intelligence which is needed in high performance jobs such as this. It is an undeniable source of motivation and alleviates job

demands, as the participants describe. It is the love for the job and the desire to help people that has made all the difference to the participants.

PST1: "Us working together as an organization, togetherness., everybody putting their input would make it a great organization. I love what I do."

PST3: "Everybody, not doing the same thing but basically getting the job done. The correct way. Don't short cut it. Do it the right way so we don't get in trouble. I really love my job."

PST4: "Dispatching EMS is kind of my heart. Because of that medical background/field to help people to heal pain. It's kind of my passion. It's just one of the jobs where it just follows."

PST5: "I feel like this is my calling. This is what I was born to do. And each experience you have here each different call is a learning process. And you learn from that you grow from it, you become a better person of it. You dwell on it, sometimes more than you need to, but it's something that you can I feel like this is what I was made to do. I mean, I like helping people I like attempt knowing that I attempted to help people. Because like I said earlier, you're not you're not gonna be able to save them all."

PST9: "Grateful to be in a position to help others but also stressed and overwhelmed at times."

PST10: "It makes me feel good, especially on days or hey, the goal is to always make sure that you know what your units are at all times and most importantly, you know, make sure they get home back with their family."

PST11: “Because I'm a person who loves to help people. And more people person.”

PST12: “Because I enjoy helping people.”

PST13:” So I've always kind of been somebody that likes to help people. every day I walk out this door and I know I can look myself in the mirror every day and say you did the best thing you could just the best you could. And that's all you can do. And she did the best she could. So, I love it.”

Availability of Tools

Participants indicated that there several tools at their disposal to help them manage calls as well as manage themselves. Specifically, they mentioned an advanced call-handling technology called Carbyne which allows the participant public safety telecommunicators to not only hear what is going on with the callers but access to see what is going on with the callers. As a tool, the participants highlight that it can help reduce mental demands. Additionally, the participants mention having access to therapy and massages, also can help reduce emotional and physical demands.

PST2: “We have wellness week yearly, and I think wellness days should be more often than just a week out of a year. They give out healthy snacks, or lunches, a massage therapist and they will do a massage in the special ops room. We have a therapist we can go and see which is only 3 sessions we can get for free then you have to use your insurance. But I personally feel like therapy should automatically come with the job, whether you have insurance or not it should be covered because the job is so stressful. We spend so hours here (twelve-hour shifts), better chairs, more access to therapist,

outside of three sessions. More massages because sitting the chairs for twelve-hours, it changes our posture and how tense we are.”

PST4: “We have people we can talk to, we are offered assistance and counseling or grief or anything. We lost someone in the center last year, the center, they were there as much as they could be or as much as I let them be, because it was kind of hard times. Mentally, we have the resources that we need.”

PST5: “We have a wonderful system here. It's called Carbyne. In sometimes it gets up in an even if somebody is in a situation you click it on from their phone, you can look at them on FaceTime and see the surroundings if they're not able to talk and give a descriptive detail without even talking.”

PST12: “And even now, with a new Carbyne thing, we can actually physically see stuff now.”

PST13: “I have a therapist that I see once every two months. But it's not easy. You know, a lot of people, that doesn't bother me, you know, when they hang up the phone, but it does. But they've learned how to cope, they either they're either in denial, or they just they deal with it later. Everybody has their own way. For me, it's speaking to a therapist getting all of that what I call it just poison out of you. I you know, because we used to do like team building things for as squads we would go and do things. We don't do that anymore.”

Commitment Profile

Using the three-component organizational commitment framework, the overwhelming majority of public safety telecommunicators participants have affective

commitment toward their 9-1-1 agency. Essentially, they want to be there. There was an even split of participants who either felt a sense of obligation to stay or otherwise had no means to go anywhere else. Only one participant provided any indication that that had any intention of leaving and it was based on compensation feeling that they worked too much for what they were paid.

PST1: "I love it here. I may not agree with some things that go on but I am here because I love doing my job." (affective)

PST2: "Want to, started off... started off having to, because I live here, but then want to because I like working here." (affective)

PST3: "The job is mentally draining, but at the same time, it's something that needs to be done." (normative)

PST4: "Right now, I can't really afford to go anywhere else." (continuance)

PST5: "Because I feel like the city needs me. I feel like that if other people can see that you can work through struggles, that they can build some confidence and work right along with you and feel like did it. You don't have to give up do this." (normative)

PTS6: "sad to say right now it's like if I need to because I this is something that's a constant as far as income and it's helping me support my daughter, but yet I actually love my job." (continuance)

PTS7: "Well, right now is basically because I need to, I need to be able to pay my bills. So I'm almost to the point of hitting retirement, you know, my retirement time. So that's another factor in whether or not I say, Oh, I go that's a whole nother factor. Because

that will mean starting over from scratch somewhere else as opposed to here, I'm almost finished.” (continuance)

PST8: “Because I want to.” (affective)

PST9: “Wanting to help people from my community and visitors.” (affective)

PST10: “I'm at the agency because I love to help others help others. I'm here because I want to be. So I will want to, you know, be somewhere in my city to help give back and try to keep things you know, I would dedicate I will much rather dedicated my own city and, you know, try to help out as opposed to going somewhere else.” (affective)

PST11: “Want to.” (affective)

PST12: “Because I love it. I love it here.” (affective)

PST13: “But for me, it's duty.” (normative)

Why Are You Here?

The participants unanimously stated that they work at the 9-1-1 agency because of their love for the community (coworkers, public safety partners, and citizens), regardless of how demanding the job can be. They add that the best place to be to help New Orleans, Louisiana, is from within the 9-1-1 agency. Participants explained that, as most of them lived in the parish, the commitment was not just to the career which they love, but the people they serve.

PST1: “I want to be here. my heart and love is in this parish. Being here now, I feel good about things that I do here.”

PST3: “To help the citizens. Sometimes you may need a little break from the job or whatever, but I still have to go back because there is more people that need to be helped from the city.”

PST4: “The need to help, not only the need to help the people in the city, the need to help my coworkers. We are a family. An Extended family.”

PST5: “There's a lot of history here. There's a lot of culture, you learn a lot of things you learn something new every day in New Orleans and you there's always opportunities in the 911 system.”

PST6: “I live in this parish, I rather try to fix something in my own parish, but instead of going someone else somewhere else and making it better, I rather make my own parish my own city better to improve. So, I want to actually come into my job, because I love helping, I love actually being here, helping the people, and listening to what's going on in the world.”

PST8: “I mean, I like it here. I like the people that I work with.”

PST10: “Something happened to me in my life in the past that mode it was the it was the I want to say the information at the operated her good job she did what taking the call and getting me the help that I needed that saved my life in a changing me and you want to come here and do the same. So that I'm here because I want to be where I love.”

PST12: “New Orleans has really helped you have to start (it's home).”

PST13: “This is a career. It's a choice you make for the rest of your life to me. And I don't think that that's the way that it is now. And it's easy for them to leave. It's easy for them to leave a path of destruction on their way out the door.”

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand job demands that influence the organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators in New Orleans, Louisiana. I have explained that there were three research questions that were developed to guide the individual interviews for this purpose. In Chapter 4, the thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences to understand the phenomenon have been provided by thirteen participants. This data, presented in the form of tables and direct quotes, details the public safety telecommunicator perspective of job demand and organizational commitment. The setting and demographics further contribute to the effectiveness of trustworthiness evidence as presented.

In this chapter, the data collection and data analysis method were discussed to understand how the results would be obtained and reviewed. In the end, individual interviews awarded the participants co-creation of their 9-1-1 agency “job characteristics” themes for the public safety telecommunicators as (a) emotional demands, (b) mental demands, (c) physical demands, (d) work overloads, (e) bureaucracy, (f) team atmosphere, (g) person-job fit, and (h) availability of tools. Additionally, the participants 9-1-1 agency commitment profile is predominantly affective. Answering the over-arching question all 9-1-1 center managers and directors need to understand to reduce turnover and improve retention, the participants unanimously stated that despite the imbalance of job demands and resources, they stay because of their love for the community (coworkers, public safety partners, and citizens).

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Public safety telecommunicators are reportedly leaving their 9-1-1 agencies not because of the job, but because they do not like where they are performing the job. I conducted this qualitative study to understand this phenomenon and improve turnover and retention within the profession. Understanding the job demands and job resources that influence public safety telecommunicator organizational commitment could more effectively provision the mission of 9-1-1 agencies to better help those who need help and safely serve those who serve. I completed individual interviews with 13 participants from a 9-1-1 agency in New Orleans, Louisiana to establish the meaning of how job demands influence the participants' organizational commitment. The study findings answered the research questions set to determine the job characteristics and commitment profile of public safety telecommunicators from New Orleans, Louisiana in hopes that their perspectives were transferable to other 9-1-1 agencies. Essentially, it was revealed by the participants that their love for the job mitigates psychological and physiological pressures, which positively influence their desire to stay. This is consistent with what is known about how job demands-resources influence organizational commitment (Kotze, 2018; Wang et al., 2020).

Interpretation of Findings

The findings suggest that to the greater extent, the public safety telecommunicators of New Orleans, Louisiana are committed to their 9-1-1 agency and will stay because they love the job and their community. This confirms the relationship between job demands and organization commitment (Bon & Shire, 2017) and answers

the question “How do the job demands of the public safety telecommunicator influence their organizational commitment?” This was evidenced by the categories and coding of thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences shared by the participants.

In essence, because they accept the physiological and psychological pressures of the job, these public safety telecommunicators have high levels of organizational commitment (Foertsch, 2021). Without this resilience, they may suffer from poor physical health which could lead to absenteeism or turnover (Ki et al., 2020). In addition, they could have poor mental health, which could lead to poor performance and decreased customer satisfaction (Wazir & Jan, 2020). Hence, without affective commitment, the majority of them could not combat the job demands as effectively with those things that appeal to them; family, caring, teamwork, therapy, and engagement (Ter Hoeven et al., 2016; Yoo & Arnol, 2016). The lack of commitment leads to decreased productivity and quality of work (Đorđević et al., 2020). The work performance of non-affective commitment staff who have seemingly quit the organization but otherwise stay on the job leads to less than desirable organizational outcomes as their ability to navigate job resources is diminished (Albrecht, & Marty, 2020). Therefore, the work pressures of those who feel they have to be there (obligation based—normative commitment) or need to be there (cost based—continuance commitment), will remain high (Brunetto et al., 2012).

The reason for turnover is a loss of the connection, engagement, and commitment that brought the public safety telecommunicator there in the first place (Borst et al., 2019; Othman et al., 2021). Their continued love for the job and the supportive work

environment co-created by their teammates means that the worst 9-1-1 calls or unsatisfactory leadership practices did not persuade these public safety telecommunicators to leave (Luo & Lei, 2021). These 9-1-1 agency staff are committed to an organic movement for which they feel very much a part of. These public safety telecommunicators are empowered to persist (Wingerden et al., 2016). As the literature suggests and the participants confirm, where support exists, commitment exists, and job demands are immaterial (Tadić et al., 2014).

Conceptual Framework

As far as the classical organizational theory of scientific management, or “Taylorism,” is concerned, the 9-1-1 call-taking and emergency dispatch processes were described by the participants, albeit it modestly (Khorasani & Almasifard, 2017; Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2016; Su, 2017). The participants respectfully indicated that they met day-to-day chaos with skills acquired to meet the job demands head on (Clark et al., 2019). The organizational outcomes, even during times of increased call volume and understaffing, are met efficiently though the measure of effectiveness is at a cost of health and well-being (Shafritz et al., 2016). The importance of physiological and psychological welfare is therefore critical in mitigating job demands and creating a healthy workforce that is not merely motivated, but engaged (Brooks, & Spillane, 2016). With more engagement, there is improved affective organizational commitment, improved retention and less burnout and absence (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Geneviciute-Janoniene & Endruilaitiene, 2014).

The participants expressed that the emotional demands, mental demands, and physical demands, of the job did not influence their intentions to leave as would be expected in other highly demanding jobs in public safety (Shinan-Altman et al, 2018). However, some of the participants stated that the work overloads and bureaucracy were concerning and could influence their organizational commitment. Unchecked, the more likelihood these public safety telecommunicators will want to leave (Bakker, 2015). These sentiments were among those participants who had non-affective commitment. And while other forms of organizational commitment should be accepted by the 9-1-1 agency, affective commitment was mostly influenced by team atmosphere, person-job fit, and the availability of tools (Hart, 2014).

Limitations of the Study

The research questions were surrounded around tenured staff who had been with the 9-1-1 agency in New Orleans, Louisiana, no less than five years to understand their organizational commitment and the reason why they remain there. The findings give the impression that the participants have been quite resilient in their ability to mitigate and self-manage demands. However, this criterion is a limitation as perhaps interviewing staff who were with the agency less than five years may have provided a different perspective on job demands and job resources.

As well, there was a limitation that the participants could only be non-supervisory staff as turnover and retention mostly impacted frontline public safety telecommunicators. Expanding this criterion to be all-inclusive and not limit the discussion to just non-supervisory staff could have provided additional insights on the

challenges, opportunities, and commitment experienced by supervisors or even other 9-1-1 agency personnel.

Lastly, there was a limitation regarding the completion of the study with a single 9-1-1 agency. Although the study is transferrable to other agencies, possibly doing open recruitment to allow people from multiple 9-1-1 agencies in the region, state, or national professional organization to participate would have increased depth and the sample size. With a variety of demographic viewpoints, the thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences of participants from multiple 9-1-1 agencies could have illuminated additional job demands and job resources as well as their contributing influences on organizational commitment.

Recommendations

This study focused on exploring the job demands, job resources, and organizational commitment of tenured public safety telecommunicators employed with a 9-1-1 agency in New Orleans, Louisiana. The motivation behind understanding these aspects of this workforce was to improve turnover and retention across the profession because 9-1-1 agencies struggle to retain skilled public safety telecommunicators which leaves the communities at risk. Although these perceptions were impactful, more needs to be done in the under researched areas of retention rate, turnover rate, and turnover intention within the profession to continue to discover what is needed to help this lifeline thrive. Therefore, to truly understand the reason for turnover it cannot be done without asking those who left, why they left.

Future study should include understanding actual turnover to provide insight on potential measures required to improve retention. This is not simply done by surveying exit interview data, but rather actually interviewing those who have left the organization to understand the reasons behind their departure. This future research could clarify if the profession is suffering from a perceived job commitment problem or organizational commitment issue with the goal of further enhancing organizational outcomes.

Implications

An implication of decreasing turnover and increasing retention within 9-1-1 agencies nationwide is an improvement to community and responder safety. The budget implications of this alone means diverting revolving payroll funds from lost training time and lost productivity, towards internal job resources like technological tools, personal development opportunities, and mental health and wellness support. Additionally, lost recruitment time could be positively impacted if the process is evolved beyond simple skills assessments to include emotional intelligence evaluations to augment person-job fit. Furthermore, the 9-1-1 center managers and directors providing a realistic and upfront view of the job and working conditions in the recruitment process could foster a more positive and resourceful work experience which will improve turnover and retention.

Another implication of understanding the job demands of the public safety telecommunicator is to further support reclassification of the profession as a protective service. The other public safety partners should not take advantage of their well adapting and resilient colleagues in 9-1-1 call-taking and emergency dispatch by further acknowledging the life-or-death protective nature of the work.

PST13: “Without us it stays falling apart. But we get it back in line. That's what we do.”

PST4: “Before anyone makes the scene in any emergency, whether it be police , fire or EMS, we are the ones providing assistance. We are the hands before their hands.”

PST1: “We are their eyes and ears to let them know what they are going to. We are directing them, we are guiding them, that we are here for them, we have their backs if anything is ongoing on in the streets and we are just making sure that everyone is safe.”

Irrespective of the job demands, none of the participants described being burned out or that they had any intention to leave. They communicated that they were otherwise still fully engaged in the work, despite how demanding the job can be simply because they are part of a meaningful organization. Therefore, the implication of this is that 9-1-1 center managers and directors be reminded that these ‘heroes behind the headset’ are there to help their community and essentially need vision, direction, and support, for affective organizational commitment.

Conclusion

The emergency number “9-1-1” is vital to keeping communities safe and must be available and reliable. Therefore, work needs to be done to improve turnover and retention of these “first”, first responder public safety telecommunicators. When job demands are highest, the ‘heroes behind the headset’ in New Orleans, Louisiana, SHOWUP for each other; their colleagues, their public safety partners, and their community. Accordingly, the team atmosphere, person-job fit, and availability of tools allay the emotional demands, mental demands, physical demands, work overloads, and

bureaucracy of their 9-1-1 agency. This is a testament that accentuating job resources and affective commitment improves organizational outcomes.

Sometimes, the help needs help. Sometimes those who serve need to be served. 9-1-1 center managers and directors nationwide would be wise to consider this when implementing initiatives related to improving turnover and retention. There is no silver bullet or quick fix to this widespread problem. Notwithstanding, through commitment from management to execute a respectable communication process with participation from stakeholders, a stepwise and holistic approach to change could create the desired organizational outcomes of a healthy workforce in addition to safer community and responders.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Interview Questions for Study: Job Demands that Influence the Organizational Commitment of Public Safety Telecommunicators

Introduction

Thank you all for agreeing to participate. I am very interested to hear your valuable opinion on job demands and organizational commitment in public safety telecommunications. The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand those job demands that influence the organizational commitment of public safety telecommunicators.

I hope to learn about the hidden issues and problems in the emergency dispatch center which further describes the protective life-or-death nature of the occupation which supports reclassification (of this job as a first responder). If the awareness of the job demands change, the impact on organizational commitment could improve retention. As such, I would appreciate your open and honest reflections.

I understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential. So, as previously mentioned in the consent form, the information you give me is completely confidential. I will not associate your name with anything you say in the interview. Notwithstanding, I am obligated to report any criminal activity or implications of child/elder abuse mentioned during the interview to the Executive Director. As a reminder, I would like to record the interview so that I can make sure to capture the thoughts, opinions, and ideas I hear. The recording will be securely retained for five years and then destroyed. You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time. I will share with the participants and agency leadership the study summary. If you have any questions now or after you have completed the interview, you can always contact me, or Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210.

Interview Questions

- **1. Let's begin with a simple question... Why are you here?**
 - *The first question will be given as to allow each the participant to establish if their answer to the question is more JOB focused or ORGANIZATIONAL focused.*
 - *If not obvious, Did anyone come from another agency?*
 - *If not obvious, Was this a job out of necessity or a career decision?*
- **2. For those who answered JOB focused, reask... why are you here at this (specific) organization?**

- **3. Tell me about a typical day in a dispatch center – what do you do as a public safety telecommunicator?**
 - *This should be more job TASK oriented response as a prequestion / link to the COST of doing these job tasks? It also establishes if the participants can effectively communicate the importance of their job.*
- **4. Job demands (unlike job tasks) are the physical, psychological, physiological, social and organizational 'costs' of doing the job. What are the job demands you experience on a day to day basis as a public safety telecommunicator?**
 - *Repeat the definition of job demands if it's not clear... this will determine the prevalent job characteristics according to the energy compass (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).*
 - *Essentially asks, how does doing the job make you feel... what does it do you... what does it cost you?*
- **5. What is the most difficult part about your job as a public safety telecommunicator?**
 - *Will dig deeper into what they feel job demands are.*
- **6. In your own words, as a public safety telecommunicator, what is organizational commitment?**
 - *Provide definition if there seems to be confusion: Organizational commitment refers to your connection to the call center and may impact your embeddedness, engagement, performance and satisfaction with the job.*
- **7. As demanding as the job is, do you stay because you want to (desire - affective), you have to (obligation - normative), or you need to (cost - continuance)?**
 - *This will determine the commitment profile according to the Allen and Meyer model (Bon & Shire, 2017)... and in discussion, which one can be influenced.*
 - *The emphasis is understanding why this PLACE is important.*
- **8. How do the job demands influence your level of commitment to your organization?**

- *The emphasis is understanding that despite how the JOB makes you feel, why you stay at this PLACE*
- **9. Under the Standard Occupational Classification System, policy makers currently describe your job as that of a dispatcher, which many years ago was equivalent to the work of a clerk or secretary. How would you describe your profession TODAY, to provide policy makers a better description to change your occupation to a protective service?**
- **10. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?**

That concludes our interview. Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and opinions with me. If you have additional information that you did not get to say in the interview, please feel free to send it to me via email. If there were any latent issues that may have caused you any emotional or psychological duress, your organization has available to you a resource.