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Factors Causing Commercial Leaders in U.S. Multinational Pharmaceutical Businesses to Change Companies

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

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MBA, LaSalle University, 2007

BS, Gwynedd Mercy University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

Employee turnover in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies remains high, even though U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies offer competitive salaries and benefits compared to other large industries. A recent survey found that 67% of 2,400 pharmaceutical leaders would be looking for a new job within 12 months and that general employee turnover costs organizations 70% to 300% of each employee's salary. The purpose of this case study was to explore the factors that cause commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to seek employment outside of their organization. Lewin's three-stage model of unfreezing, moving, and refreezing, along with the psychology related to the concept of groupthink, served as the conceptual framework for the study design. Constant comparative analysis of interview data from 10 middle to executive level commercial leaders selected from multinational U.S. pharmaceutical companies yielded seven reasons why commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies leave their companies: a highly political and non-collaborative company culture, a negative relationship with management, an undefined career path, reaching a career growth plateau, lack of respect for higher-level leadership, company focused on cost cutting versus supporting people, and lack of stability due to constant reorganizations. This study could contribute to positive social change if U.S. commercial pharmaceutical leaders implement strategies based on the study findings that may improve retention rates of leaders whose teams create strategies for developing and commercializing medicines to enhance people's health and well-being.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the patients who rely on the pharmaceutical industry to create a world in which people live happier, longer, and more productive lives. Building trust is a crucial issue for the pharmaceutical industry and patients. Developing trust starts within the business walls and is between the people responsible for driving the strategy that ensures the proper medication gets to the right patient. I also dedicate this dissertation to the hard-working people of these companies who tirelessly serve large multinational pharmaceutical organizations and are the main reason medical innovations get into the hands of people who need life-saving treatments. Through this study, I am hopeful to help create a more consistent workplace for important decision-makers of pharmaceutical manufacturers. This would lead to more influential cultures that help maintain an efficient and productive workforce whose efforts ultimately allow patients to stay alive longer and live healthier lives.

Acknowledgments

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. Getting to this point was a challenging task for me. Over the past decade, I have gone through significant changes in my life, forcing my attention in many different directions, limiting the amount of time I could allocate to pursue this degree. My family, including my wife, my two children, and my parents, have been the most exceptional support. It is because of them I persisted and ultimately was able to study this subject and make a difference in a way most dear to my heart.

I also want to take a moment to thank Dr. Levasseur, as he is my champion and supported me since day one. Time after time, Dr. Levasseur steered me in the right direction. I will be forever grateful. Dr. McAllister has been a guiding light and a real example of an academic leader. I consider both committee members as mentors, and I hope whoever is reading this has the opportunity to work with them in some way in the future.

Finally, I want to thank Walden University for supporting me since day one. They did not have to. It took me longer to complete this degree than I initially anticipated due to unforeseen circumstances that made it necessary to prioritize my life in other ways. Walden University allowed me to do that. I will always be grateful for their support, and I will always be an advocate for Walden.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Much like other prominent and profitable business ecosystems, the pharmaceutical industry faces great scrutiny as it is at the center of many political and personal debates (Gerry, 2019). Pressure to get the job done is significant for people in this business (Lipworth et al., 2013). Due to the complex nature of the external political, social, and economic ecosystem, leaders need to understand the implications of their decisions. Employee turnover within the pharmaceutical business, including leadership turnover, remains high, regardless of the excellent benefits and salaries (Chamberlain & Tian, 2016). A recent survey showed that 67% of 2,400 pharmaceutical leaders would be looking for a new job within 12 months. The same study showed that general employee turnover costs organizations 70% to 300% of the employee's salary (Terry, 2019). This research was necessary because the costs of high turnover to organizations, and ultimately to the consumer, are high. Furthermore, researchers have not explored the principal factors that influence leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to seek employment outside of their organization.

Chapter 1 consists of a discussion of the unique nature of the study and a social problem that significantly affects the industry. Background information includes why some leaders in the pharmaceutical industry consider leaving their companies and the frequency at which they leave. The chapter also includes discussion of the purpose, research question, conceptual framework, and social change implications of the research.

Background of the Study

In the pharmaceutical business, managers and directors (also known as commercial leaders) can develop and change a culture and motivate or demotivate people to stay or leave their current organization. For this study, commercial leaders were senior leadership on the pharmaceutical business's commercial side. Leadership roles that met the participant selection criteria for this study were associate director, director, senior director, executive director, vice president, executive vice president, chief innovation officer, chief operating officer, and chief executive officer.

Directly related to leadership power, one perspective suggests that people do not have authority over another as every individual is ultimately in control of their situation (Schein, 1992). Specific to that statement, Schein studied workforce dynamics and indicated that people are not driven or demotivated by leaders. That is a challenging perspective to support. Contrary to Schein, Jensen (2018) claimed that leaders in organizations are responsible for determining what motivates each employee, as motivation is different for different people. Though these perspectives represent opposite ends of the spectrum, they offer insight into the value of understanding why motivation, based on leadership, is vital for an employee. Concerning that point, Cunningham et al. (2015) researched preferred leadership styles in the U.S. pharmaceutical business but only focused on employees in tactical roles (e.g., project managers versus decision-makers). The amalgamation of prior research does not define their motivations, nor does the research establish factors specific to this segment.

Sarmad (2016) focused on retention in large-market organizations needing a shift in mindset to ensure top talent stayed in their current role. Sarmad studied the retention of employees in Pakistan in public sector oil and gas selling organizations. The oil and pharmaceutical industries are unique, but both significantly influence the surrounding economy. Sarmad analyzed the data from 112 employees quantitatively and used multiple regression analysis. Sarmad found that extreme enhancements were needed to engage and motivate employees and required to include practical compensation practices.

How employees are treated based on culture is a significant issue in the pharmaceutical business. Khoele and Daya (2014) studied employee retention in South Africa and focused on how a systemic discriminatory culture affects specific populations' retention and turnover. Employee turnover rate was 22% from 2007 to 2010, with white employees retained at a much greater rate than their black colleagues (Khoele & Daya, 2014). The focus of my study was on the factors that influence retention in the U.S. pharmaceutical business.

Specific to the United States, Randstad (2014) found that financial compensation was not a significant factor in causing employee turnover in the pharmaceutical business from a leader's perspective. Randstad's finding that monetary compensation was not a factor further supports Khoele and Daya's (2014) research that transformational leadership and business acumen skills are determinants of retention and employee satisfaction. As employees in the U.S. pharmaceutical business earn high salaries, it is crucial to discover through interviews with the participants whether compensation plays a role in either their staying or leaving their current organization. Cunningham et al. (2015)

reduced a gap directly related to my study topic, as they studied the factors that led team members to respond to one project management leadership style over another. Their research focused on both leaders and employees in the commercial U.S. pharmaceutical business and two other sectors, healthcare and finance. According to Cunningham et al., team members in the pharmaceutical industry preferred strategic, coaching, and democratic (i.e., transformational) styles.

Johnson (2016) studied how people in U.S. manufacturing and commercial industries responded to significant change events. Johnson's study focused on the influence that mergers and acquisitions had on the pharmaceutical business system. Johnson's study referenced O'Connell and Kung (2007), who found that 24% of employees voluntarily resigned from their organizations. Furthermore, directly related to this dynamic, Kaiser (2018) established that the current factors motivating change are alarming as spending attenuation is projected. Based on this economic expectation, impressions of leaders' initial reaction to change, identified by Johnson, indicated a preference for corporate communication related to change, involvement in change development, and perceived change success.

Uitzinger et al. (2018) focused on generating insight on the leadership and performance management practices of top- and middle-level managers in multiple MNCs located in South Africa. They made it abundantly clear that there were gaps in their research, as other areas of the world provide more insight. Moreover, they stated that the participant pool should be unique to the population under investigation as they focused solely on human resource professionals. They found a greater statistical significance for

middle-level managers and highlighted the need for additional focus on top-level managers/leaders.

The current scholarly literature does not articulate the internal and external factors that cause leaders to move from one company to another in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry. As the pharmaceutical business is always changing, and leaders move from job to job within their current company, additional research on the subject was necessary to provide the industry with more insight into why people leave their organization. Any influences on stabilizing work environments and employee work-life balance may allow companies to support robust growth and development programs, with the hope of creating a more efficient and productive environment for leaders and employees to commercialize a product. Additional research on the subject would provide the industry with more insight into why people leave their organization.

Problem Statement

Frequent and large-scale change events have influenced U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies, and uncomfortable and unstable working environments for employees have resulted in mass voluntary resignations due to fear of the unknown (Johnson, 2016). General employee resignations have stemmed from pressures related to the increase of globalization and deregulation, the result of large-scale mergers and acquisitions (M&A), restructuring or downsizing, and corporate desire to gain a competitive edge in challenging markets (Bordia et al., 2011; Jaros, 2010). Leadership turnover in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies remains high, regardless of high salaries and excellent benefits. Leadership turnover may affect the problem of employee

turnover (deBruyn, 2014). This problem was evident as far back as 2014 (Randstad, 2014) even though U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies offer competitive salaries and benefits compared to other large industries (Chamberlain & Tian, 2016). Specific to leaders, almost 67% will look for a job outside of their current organization (Terry, 2019). As important and as influential, general turnover costs pharmaceutical organizations more than the yearly salary of an employee (Terry, 2019)

This economic conundrum creates a problem for U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies. However, while research on this topic exists, the focus has been on general reasons for why employees and leaders either leave or consider leaving, but has not explicitly covered why commercial leaders plan to leave or leave high paying, bonus heavy, high profile, secure jobs for potentially more risky situations. As a result, there is a gap in knowledge and understanding of why U.S. pharmaceutical companies' commercial leaders leave their organizations and what behavior may or may not motivate the mindset change. This lack of understanding causes companies to lose valuable leaders and employees and can negatively influence the patients served by these companies (Terry, 2019). Uitzinger et al. (2018) highlighted the need for additional research on this subject from the commercial leaders' perspective at the middle and executive levels. Research on the factors affecting commercial leaders working in mid- and large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies who have decided to change companies could address this gap in research, knowledge, and understanding. My results could lead to an evolution of leadership styles, internal processes for training and cultivating leaders, identifying

behaviors that motivate a leader to leave, human resource policies, and an analysis of leader and employee benefits within the industry.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore factors that influence commercial leaders to seek employment outside of their organization. Many studies on this subject exist; however, they focus on emerging economies outside of the United States (Tannoury & Attieh, 2017). I explored the factors that cause commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to change companies.

Research Question

What are the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies?

Conceptual Framework

Several ideas that underlie organizational development and change were crucial to my study, as they address why and how people react to changes in their organizational environment. These concepts provided a framework to explore the most relevant factors influencing leaders to either stay or leave their current company. Terry (2019) and Uitzinger et al.'s (2018) research into leadership and performance management practices of top- and middle-level managers, along with Lewin's (1997) work, served as the conceptual framework for my study. This framework provided a unique perspective on the topic. Researchers previously found insight into how the midlevel, pharmaceutical, and commercial workers feel and react to certain leadership types, but their research did

not explain why leaders leave their organizations. My intent in approaching the topic from this point of view was to gain insight into the mindset of the people most responsible for leading and creating the culture.

The combination of Lewin (1997), Terry (2019), and Uitzinger et al. (2018) constituted the conceptual framework of my study. Of the many existing organizational development theories, Lewin's three-stage model of change—the unfreezing, moving, and refreezing model—is a strategic and straightforward view of evolution that includes psychology and groupthink elements that are vital to my study. The elements of psychology and group think encapsulate many of Lewin's ideas on how social structures can evolve into a system designed to allow personal development versus only a results-driven environment. The Lewin model served as the principal element of the conceptual framework for this study. The stage set by Lewin's theoretical model was crucial because Terry found that a majority of pharmaceutical leaders will be seeking employment elsewhere within a year and losing them will cost the business two to three times their annual salary.

Uitzinger et al. (2018) focused on generating insight on the leadership and performance management practices of top- and middle-level managers in multiple MNCs located in South Africa. Ultimately, they found that the well-being of employees, including leadership, drove retention or attrition. Moreover, they found that human resource professionals needed to incorporate a more empathetic mindset when engaging with middle managers and creating strategies to retain them. They found a greater

statistical significance for middle-level managers and highlighted the need for additional focus on top-level managers/leaders.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative inquiry was a case study of commercial leaders who had worked for one of 10 mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies. The constant comparative method of data collection and analysis was the chosen method to determine the findings. Primary data collection consisted of face-to-face interviews via Microsoft Teams software. The study participants were commercial leaders who have institutional knowledge of the internal and external factors that influence pharmaceutical leaders thought processes that motivate them to change companies.

Whereas grounded theory is a comprehensive qualitative approach designed to generate insight into a theory to explain the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014), a case study design would better answer the research question by focusing on the factors that led these participants to change companies, instead of developing a grounded theory about employee attrition in general. Another reason for using a case study design was that a case study design allowed me to build a concrete explanation of why a specific situation or set of circumstances exists (Andrade, 2009).

Yazan (2015) examined three significant case study theorists (e.g., Yin, Merriam, and Stake) and found that each had a similar but unique perspective on securing insight throughout the research process. Yazan found that regardless of when the researcher gathered data, which varies based on whose case study design a researcher uses, the general dynamic of a case study design forces the researcher to explore the data

consistently. The data collection phase for the study was fluid and based on the responses of selected participants who work in the pharmaceutical industry's commercial sector. The constant comparative method facilitated a flexible, data-driven approach for analyzing the interview data and determining the themes/factors. Triangulation of the themes from the interviews with information from corporate websites was planned to enhance the quality and trustworthiness of the findings.

Definitions

Active resistance: Opposing a change through clear and deliberate actions (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

Branded prescription businesses: Commercial entities that are innovation-based and discover novel treatments in the form of new molecular entities (NMEs), new indications (NIs), new drug delivery systems, or new dosage forms (NDF) for existing and emerging diseases (Naci et al., 2015).

Championing: An individual's intense enthusiasm for change and motivation to accomplish more than required to ensure the change is successful and promotes others' change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

Commercial leaders: Leaders and managers in the business side of a pharmaceutical company, which develops and executes the strategy to sell the product and ensure payers, healthcare professionals, hospital systems, and patients can access the medicine (Darino et al., 2018).

Complex systems: "A complex system is one that includes many other micro-systems, or a network of systems, thus forming a much larger and complex system." (Cordon, 2013, p. 13).

Compliance: An array of behavioral and attitude-based responses of people or organizations to regulations (Mendoza et al., 2016).

Generic prescription businesses: Commercial entities that operate by introducing previously commercialized products by formally commercializing products, and in some cases, conducting limited research and development (R&D) work to prove a generic formulation clinical equivalence to a respective brand medicine without performing any clinical trial (Xie & O'Neill, 2014).

Interaction: A dynamic packaging of interdependent relationships and behaviors leading to the emergence of unrecognizable subsets when perceived as a linear combination of the initial agents (Proches & Bodhanya, 2015).

Leadership: Transactional events between an authoritative figure and subordinates, or a process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Bass, 1990).

Management: Maximizing a person's skills to accomplish goals. It is "working with and through other people, in organizational settings, to accomplish the objectives of both the organization and its members" (Montana & Charnov, 2015, p. 1).

Market orientation: An organization's strategic orientation is its ability to provide superior customer value, based on insights derived from customers and competitors, disseminating knowledge throughout the company (Özturan et al., 2014).

Marketing strategy: The organization's integrated pattern of decisions that specify its crucial choices concerning products, markets, marketing activities, and marketing resources in the creation, communication, and delivery of products that offer value to customers in exchanges with the organization and thereby enables the organization to achieve specific objectives (Olson et al., 2018).

Pharmaceutical industry: A global system of companies, both large and small, specializing in finding medical treatments and solutions for patients through extensive research and development, with a significant period-of-time spent commercializing products (Schweitzer & Lu, 2018).

Relationship marketing: All marketing activities directed towards cultivating successful relational exchanges involving suppliers, providers of specific services, governments, external competitors, customer segments, and internal organizational structures (Payne & Frow, 2017).

Regulations: A variety of authoritative rules (e.g., government) designed to impact individuals and organizations (Baldwin et al., 2012), which these authorities implement to generate a balance between the benefit/risk of new products (Sorenson & Drummond, 2014).

Assumptions

One assumption was that the participants in the study had a genuine understanding of my study's purpose and value. Another important assumption was that the participants would provide honest feedback and insight based on their real-life experiences. Many pharmaceutical commercial leaders originated from countries in

Europe, South America, and Asia and now work within the U.S. pharmaceutical system. These countries produce a substantial amount of revenue for the overall business. Based on this, a final assumption was that the participants with a global background perceived the U.S. pharmaceutical industry as problematic, given that the European, Asian, and South American healthcare market systems are not reliant on the insurance industry and do not have high healthcare costs (Erlangga et al., 2019). Due to the complex nature of the U.S. pharmaceutical business ecosystem, participants who only had experience outside of the United States were assumed to not be generally comfortable with how U.S. pharmaceutical businesses implement their national strategies. Because of this assumed perspective, only people with U.S. commercial experience, who had better insight into the dynamics that directly influence the U.S. pharmaceutical business system, were included as participants in my study.

Scope and Delimitations

The study focused on U.S. commercial leaders who worked for mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies. A principal attribute that the participants shared was that they had left one of these organizations for another company. A delimiting factor was that many of the participants work in commercial leadership and had multiple experiences in leadership roles in various pharmaceutical companies. The focus of this study was on people in leadership roles versus lower manager levels. As noted in the background section, people who work in other industries may have similar experiences. However, due to the U.S. pharmaceutical industry's complexities, it is not likely that the study data is generalizable to other major business sectors. Therefore,

readers should interpret the results specifically in terms of the pharmaceutical business and cautiously project the findings to other industries.

Another significant delimiting factor was that though the pharmaceutical business is large, its network is relatively small. In many cases, people in the pharmaceutical industry not only have experience working in a major corporation, but they gain experience as their careers progress, working for vendors that service major companies and consultancy firms. These potentially personal experiences, along with a holistic knowledge of the business, were significant delimiting factors as they create a shared understanding of the industry's intricacies.

Limitations

There are inherent limitations to any qualitative study. For this study, the primary limitation might have been the participants' willingness to disclose their perspective on the industry, as the pharmaceutical business, even though substantial, is an insular and tightly-knit system of relationships. The distress of sharing a contrary view, if one exists, might have limited the study outcome as the fear of repercussions is a real challenge based on the industry’s social dynamics. This study might have had limitations in data collection and analysis efficiency, based on the data not being fully complete. Initially, it was thought that the interview process might present barriers due to the remote nature of business due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of that, live meetings did not occur, but the Microsoft Teams software allowed for seamless communication during the interviews.

In some cases, participants might not have provided accurate information or feel the need to protect themselves from sharing the truth they consider career limiting. The sources of data might also have presented a challenge. The primary data source was people who worked in various organizations and, in some cases, might have originated from an economy/culture outside the United States. This lack of U.S. business and cultural experience posed a challenging task for deciphering and analyzing responses. To mitigate this challenge, participants were required to have experience working in U.S. pharmaceutical business systems for at least a few years or have worked with or led U.S.-based teams in the past 5 years in the pharmaceutical industry.

The trustworthiness of the results might have limitations because the instrument used to determine the answers to the research question was the impression of a potentially highly politically motivated person responsible for delivering against a significant budget. The political drive a person can have may deter them from sharing the absolute truth, as the pharmaceutical industry is small. Based on my experience prior to the interview process, individuals have a general fear of sharing too much about their company or experiences in an organization. In my study, the participants openly shared their points of view.

Another potential limitation was the time constraints for the completion of the study. The participant pool has pharmaceutical industry experience. With that, many executive and director-level employees in the pharmaceutical business secured their current roles based on years of merit and job advancement. Furthermore, the industry mindset—that every 18-24 months, a commercial leader should grow into their next

job—is vital. This is a dynamic that is understood and expected in the pharmaceutical industry today. The reality is that people with 5 or fewer years and people 30 years or younger are less likely to be current commercial leaders.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

This study may ultimately benefit patients as the commercial leaders who participated are responsible for developing and executing strategies that ensure the right patient type receives the proper medication for the right reasons. Increasing awareness for the main reasons why U.S. commercial pharmaceutical leaders leave high-paying jobs for other companies or industries may help reduce resignations (Bordia et al., 2011; Jaros, 2010) and the high desire to leave their current organization in others (Randstad, 2014). A more stable work environment can allow for a more consistent strategy (Sreedharan et al., 2018). This study may also contribute to the limited research on this subject in the United States and help U.S. business leaders establish better strategies for retaining talented leaders (Tannoury & Attieh, 2017). The primary issue is the lack of research on this subject (Uitzinger et al., 2018). The problem may be severe for the pharmaceutical industry as well, as 56% of commercial pharmaceutical employees actively seek employment elsewhere (deBruyn, 2014), and 67% of leaders seek employment in the next 12 months (Terry, 2019). Addressing the gap in the research is essential to the industry's long-term value and economic outlook.

A pharmaceutical company's principal objective is to run a profitable business that allows for future research and development funding, better the lives of the current

patient population, and prolong generations' lives (Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, 2019). An example of the altruism of multinational pharmaceutical companies includes providing free healthcare and medication in developing countries. In general, the media and public groups scrutinize this altruism as they assume that the acts of altruism are financial posturing by large corporations (LaMattina, 2013). The scrutiny falls on the people who work for these organizations even though they may not have control of larger decisions made by the organization. The reality is that many non-politically motivated people work for these companies and care genuinely about the social environment outside of the four walls of their office. The constant barrage of criticism influences the direction of the work and projects, resulting in politically motivated initiatives, such as careerism or posturing against their colleagues, versus projects that positively impact the end consumer or healthcare providers.

To further demonstrate the gravity of the problem, my study focused on the participants' real-world leadership experiences and provided insight into the factors that influence commercial pharmaceutical leaders in the U.S. to seek employment elsewhere. One example highlights the severity of the issue. The costs associated with employee turnover and retention are significant as many pharmaceutical companies employ many people. O'Connell and Kung (2007) estimated, based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that, economy-wide, the general cost of employee turnover was approximately $14,000 per employee, based on 24% of people leaving their organization. In general

terms not specific to the pharmaceutical industry, that means the cost associated with turnover in a company with 1,000 employees is approximately 2 million dollars per year.

In comparison, Pfizer, a leading American pharmaceutical company, employed 90,200 people in 2018. If 24% of Pfizer's employees left the organization in 2018, that would account for approximately $303 million in losses due to turnover (Forbes, 2018). In that same year, Pfizer grossed $52.7 billion in revenue and maintained a market cap of $207.7 billion (Forbes, 2018). Though the number associated with turnover was much lower than the overall influx of revenue and total market value, the damage the losses place on the organization and its employees are significant. The company must balance its financials based on a multitude of factors, including revenue deductions. The losses would be staggering if applied to the entire pharmaceutical industry and the vast numbers of people serving the business. Creating awareness through a deeper understanding of the insight that motivates a person to leave their current organization is extremely important for the short and long-term success and viability of the pharmaceutical industry and for every patient each company serves.

Significance to Theory

The significance to theory of my study lies in the possibility that the findings may make an original contribution to the reason the pharmaceutical industry exists: to help the global society of people live longer and healthier lives. The study decreased a gap in the literature and provide insight into the factors that influence commercial leaders in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies to transition from their current organization. In addition, my study generated a perspective that extends beyond its intended purpose by

providing insight into the human capital component of a complex and rarely studied industry (Chamberlain & Tian, 2016) that is significant to the U.S. economy. Moreover, my study may enhance organizational leaders' understanding and implementation of Lewin's (1947) theory of quasi-stationary equilibrium. In previous years, many pharmaceutical companies operated consistently regardless of the situation. Currently, they think differently due to the multitude of dynamics that create immense pressure on a company's internal culture (Ford et al., 2020).

Significance to Social Change

My study may increase awareness of why U.S. commercial pharmaceutical leaders leave high-paying jobs for other companies or industries. The lack of research for why commercial leader's transition from one pharmaceutical company in the United States to another is problematic. Leaders control the social and political environment and develop their teams' internal working structures. The higher turnover rate creates an atmosphere of inconsistency and less effective teams (Brymer & Sirmon, 2017). These inconsistencies in a business environment can ultimately hurt patients if medications do not reach masses of consumers who need them.

Principal decision-makers in companies are aware of this problem (Schweitzer & Lu, 2018), but the problem persists. If awareness is there, why does the problem persist? It appears that U.S. multinational pharmaceutical company leaders do not understand the perspective of some of their decision-makers concerning their role within the company, as many talented people seek employment elsewhere (Randstad, 2014). It is highly plausible to believe that pharmaceutical leaders will continue to resign from their

companies at current levels voluntarily. In general, voluntary resignations are likely due to the ever-changing social environment (Chamberlain & Tian, 2016), the frequent and expected large-scale change events, such as mergers and acquisitions (Johnson, 2016), along with the current trend in prescription and overall healthcare consumer spending (Kaiser, 2018). With that, 67% of 2,400 commercial pharmaceutical leaders will seek new employment within 12 months (Terry, 2019).

In general, voluntary mass resignations will adversely affect the industry's ability to make needed medical advancements and promote them responsibly to ensure the right people can access the right medicines. Patients are the principal beneficiaries of this study. Commercial leaders are responsible for developing and executing the core business strategies that ensure the right patient type receives the proper medication for the right reasons. Increasing industry awareness of why U.S. commercial pharmaceutical leaders leave high-paying jobs for other companies or industries may also help stabilize the pharmaceutical workforce.

Summary and Transition

The purpose of this case study was to gain insight into the factors that influence commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to seek employment outside of their organization. Specifically, the central research question was, What are the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies?

Regardless of the multitude of benefits and salaries offered to employees, turnover within the pharmaceutical business remains high (Chamberlain & Tian, 2016). This problem is likely to persist and is not under debate, as principal decision-makers in the industry are aware of the problem (Schweitzer & Lu, 2018). Researchers have focused on this subject in both the United States and abroad, studying pharmaceutical industry trends, employee retention, leadership impact and influence, and performance strategies (Chamberlain & Tian, 2016; Cunningham et al., 2015; Johnson, 2016; Kaiser, 2018; Randstad, 2014; Uitzinger et al., 2018).

The combination of Lewin (1997), Terry (2019), and Uitzinger et al. (2018) constituted the conceptual framework of my study. Elements of psychology and group think influenced the study design. Chapter 2 includes a concise synopsis of the current literature that establishes the nature of the problem under investigation. Chapter 2 also includes a description of the iterative literature search process for the study and a review of current literature on the topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Leadership turnover in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies remains high, regardless of the available benefits. As far back as 2014, 56% of commercial pharmaceutical employees actively looked for a new job (deBruyn, 2014; Randstad, 2014) even though U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies offer competitive salaries and benefits compared to other large industries (Chamberlain & Tian, 2016). More recently, Terry (2019) found that almost 67% of U.S.-based pharmaceutical commercial leaders will look for a job outside their current organization. This economic conundrum creates a problem for U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies on multiple levels, as general turnover costs pharmaceutical organizations more than an employee's yearly salary (Terry, 2019). Uitzinger et al. (2018) provided the impetus for my study. Uitzinger et al. generated insight into the leadership and performance management practices of top- and middle-level managers in multiple multinational corporations located in South Africa. They concluded that additional research is needed in other areas of the world.

The purpose of this case study inquiry was to explore the factors that influence commercial leaders to seek employment outside of their organization. The literature review uncovered that the focus of many studies on this subject was on countries other than of the United States, with most dealing with emerging economies (Tannoury & Attieh, 2017). I explored the factors that influence commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to change companies and analyzed the insights to determine whether these factors vary across company boundaries. This chapter includes

the literature review strategy, the conceptual foundation, and a review of relevant literature.

Literature Search Strategy

The list of databases and research terms was an amalgamation based on the central search strategy of ensuring the approach included all relevant areas related to the subject under investigation.

The library databases used were ABI/INFORM Collection, Business Market Research Collection, Business Source Complete, Dissertations & Theses @ Walden University, EBSCO ebooks, EDGAR database, Google Scholar (multiple databases involved in this search), GovInfo (FDsys), IBISWorld, Kaiser Family Foundation, MEDLINE, National Bureau of Economic Research, Nexis Uni (formerly LexisNexis Academic), ProQuest, ProQuest Dissertations & These Global, PubMed, ReferenceU.S.A, SAGE Journals, SAGE Stats, ScholarWorks, Thoreau Multi-Database Search (Walden University), and World Health Organization (WHO).

The main library search terms used were *pharmaceutical business ethics, pharmaceutical commercial leadership, human resource management, human resource business partner, retention, attrition, leadership style, coaching, strategic, laissez-faire, laissez-faire leadership style, bureaucratic, bureaucratic leadership style, autocratic, autocratic leadership style, democratic, democratic leadership style, healthcare, healthcare leadership style, healthcare business finance, pharmaceuticals, resignations, turnover, team dynamics,* and *impact of leadership styles on team dynamics.*

Conceptual Framework

The combination of Lewin (1997), Terry (2019), and Uitzinger et al. (2018) constituted the conceptual framework of my study. Lewin focused his research on social behavior and experiments related to people that fused psychology and scientific philosophy to a rational set of models that provided critical insight for psychologists and researchers to apply to their practice. Moreover, concerning my study, Lewin's approach was relevant, as field theory applies across multiple subjects in many global industries. Field theory's value seems appropriate based on Terry's findings of U.S. pharmaceutical commercial leader's intentions to leave their current organization. Moreover, Lewin's application of gestalt principles in his work advanced the concept's value for this study. The participants provided feedback based on their individualized experiences that will hopefully led to a grouping of insights and presented as themes. As gestalt principles provided the basis for his theoretical model, Lewin expanded upon how individual personalities, interpersonal conflict, and situational variables could influence operational excellence (Mcwilliams, 2015). Specific to field theory, this model's application focused on the development/evolution of an individual personality. In short, Lewin applied human development on a personalized level to the idea that human development was a product of who individuals were as people, their experiences in life, and the nature/environment around them. The importance of this on Terry's findings of U.S. pharmaceutical leaders' intentions to leave their job in short order and costs associated with those decisions is significant. Lewin's (1947) theoretical model took human behavior to the next level by incorporating various forces and personality tensions that

influence a person's behavior. Lewin's perspective dramatically influenced my study's design.

This overarching concept of what motivates a person to leave a high-powered, structured environment was critical to my study due to the lack of research or proper understanding of why a leader of a commercial pharmaceutical business is willing to leave their current company for another (Uitzinger et al., 2018). The value of field theory (Lewin, 1997) was significant, because of a person's behavior and the influence their immediate environment has on their mindset is critical to their personal development and perception of their value (Feldman et al., 2015). Many assumptions can be made related to why people leave their jobs. Understanding the depth of why is critical because the pharmaceutical industry is contracting at an alarming rate. To combat the impact of this contraction, dynamic leadership is necessary for the future success of developing innovative medicines to better the lives of patients (Burek & Wood, 2019).

Multiple researchers reference Lewin (1997). Paletz et al. (2018) focused their peer-reviewed research on how diversity impacts the creativity of teams. Paletz et al. claimed that today's most challenging problems, such as poverty, global health, and international crisis management, need people to work together collaboratively for a positive result. Their research included Lewin's theoretical model of original field theory that is directly related to the social influence of psychological and sociological effects on people interacting with other people. Paletz et al. claimed that Lewin's thought process was dynamic about the psychological forces that challenge a person to act one way or

another. These psychological forces are another reason field theory was critical to this study.

Though not directly articulated in their work, Uitzinger et al. (2018) focused on the idea of habit discontinuity. Verplanken and Roy (2016) focused their hypothesis on behavior change and how interventions are more or less effective. In their study a person was less likely to accept a new mindset designed to adapt to the desired behavior change. In Verplanken and Roy, 800 participants experienced relocation to another area while the control group stayed in their homes. After 8 weeks, factor evaluations established the timeframe for people to accept a new set of habits. The researchers collected self-reported frequencies based on 25 environmentally related behaviors. Factors considered were past behavior, perceived control, biospheric values, personal norms, and personal involvement specifically focused on those recently relocated. Verplanken and Roy found behavior change started approximately 3 months after the person transferred to another area.

Lewin's (1997) original field theory was critical to Verplanken and Roy's (2016) final perspective, as the primary benchmark is past behavior for change or interest in change. Verplanken and Roy were not primary sources for my study but served as examples of how Lewin's work might best be incorporated into my study, and demonstrated that the gap in Uitzinger (2018), which did not include an analysis of the time it would take for change to occur, exists.

Literature Review

Factors That May Influence a Leader's Mindset to Stay at Their Current Company

Career development is not something forced on a person as the motivation to better their career needs to come from deep within the individual (Burek & Wood, 2019). For leaders to feel respected by their organization and to stay employed there, all parties need to commit to the relationship (Yarnall, 2011). For organizations in any industry, retaining talent is an ever-challenging task for large and small companies (Dyk & Coetzee, 2012; Govaerts et al., 2011). Specific to the pharmaceutical industry, Johnson (2016) found in his analysis that 24% of employees voluntarily resigned from their organizations. Johnson referenced the Randstad (2014) survey. The principal finding from Johnson's study was that inadequate pay (36%), lack of opportunity advancement (34%), and high stress and challenging relationships with coworkers (29%) were the three main reasons people resigned from multinational U.S. pharmaceutical organizations. Johnson's study established profound results about pharmaceutical employees and leaders but only focused on the dynamics of mergers and acquisitions.

Retaining talent was the primary focus of Johnson (2016). Specific to retaining talent, and indirectly related to Johnson, Cappelli (2008) and Rondeau and Wagar (2016) found the main factor that influenced the retention of talented employees was globalization that resulted in volatile, dynamic, and open business environments. The evolution of technology, an individual's access to worldwide information via multiple sources, and the change of multinational corporations due to the expansion and contraction of economies throughout the world also significantly influence retention

(Cappelli, 2008; Rondeau & Wagar, 2016). Even in a robust economy, employees feel undervalued as their salaries do not align with corporate profits and short-term contractor work is valued over employee contributions; and falling share prices typically lead to reductions in the employee base (Smith, 2019).

Relocation and mobility is a general issue for leaders and employees, regardless of industry. Farndale et al. (2010) found that an individual's mobility increases the intentions to either stay and advance within or leave their organization. They designated this as a pull factor, and they explained that the higher the skills of a leader, the more likely this would influence their ability and willingness to stay or pursue a role elsewhere. The subjects in Farndale et al. had comparable leadership responsibilities to commercial leaders in the pharmaceutical business. Guthridge et al. (2008) found that top managers, on average, relocate twice to other countries to expand on their experiences and pursue various roles. Relocation allows them to advance their careers, furthering the subject's value concerning a leader's intention to either stay or leave their current organization. As the U.S. pharmaceutical industry is a dynamic system of companies and people, relocation and its influence is relevant to my study.

A poor working environment is a problem for any industry and at any employee level. Through their research, Monsen and Boss (2009) established that a leader would leave their company due to poor working conditions. Monsen and Boss defined working conditions as a *working environment*, from factory level to heavy labor conditions, to cultures with a toxic vibe, or cultures that consistently change with little regard for employees. A working environment considered inferior or unforgiving hinders an

employee's ability to succeed (Monsen & Boss, 2009). Furthermore, a reduction in professional and personal engagement in this type of environment reduces the level of motivation and significantly impacts any of its employees (Devi, 2009). Monsen and Boss's general definition of a poor working environment, relative to cultures with either a perceived toxic *organizational DNA* or a culture that consistently changes without regard to its people, furthers the importance of my study. Moreover, Johnson (2016) and Ranstad (2014) established that the general pharmaceutical commercial populations and those experiencing mergers and acquisitions were motivated or demotivated by poor working conditions. Neither established this result for commercial leadership team members as articulated in my study.

The pharmaceutical business is hierarchical and internal cultures support a top-down leadership model (PWC, 2020). Specific to that, White et al. (2010) found that hierarchical cultures or business systems, combined with micro-managerial leadership styles, impact the severity of a company's turnover rate and negatively influenced job satisfaction. They also concluded that leaders that micromanage an employee or their team significantly limited their ability to develop in their job. Moreover, White et al. found that productivity decreased and talented employees aggressively pursued leaving their company when they could not function autonomously and use their discretion to conduct their work (White et al., 2010). A lack of autonomy is essential and based on the notion that a culture that promotes this type of behavior will spread throughout the organization. Leaders then serve their management rather than critically analyze their team and lead as they see most beneficial (Duggal, 2019). Understanding this from the

point of view of a commercial leader in the U.S. pharmaceutical business is critical to my study.

Views of autonomy can change with a change in business culture or if the system is modified. Interestingly, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) analyzed the entire industry in their 2020 life sciences review and found that many U.S.-based pharmaceutical companies established relationships with outside organizations capable of filling critical gaps in their approach. With this change in the business model comes opportunities to advance what the internal audience works on regularly. They found that the business and the teams that ultimately create the strategies need to focus on how pricing and marketing budgets and programs must shift to accommodate the market's needs. It is logical to assume that culture changes when new approaches are adopted as new ideas are needed and, in many cases, new leadership.

Specific to culture, White et al. (2010) focused on how culture dictates top talent retention. White et al. found that top talent will consider other roles outside of the current business system, regardless of culture. This was relevant to my study, as Johnson (2016) found that 24% of employees voluntarily resigned from their organizations and that inadequate pay (36%), lack of opportunity advancement (34%), high stress, and challenging relationships with coworkers (29%) were the three main reasons general employees resigned from multinational U.S. pharmaceutical organizations. Combine this with the 67% of leaders seeking employment in the next 12 months, and an economic problem persists (Terry, 2019). Culture seems to be a significant factor. The ultimate

question here is why they consider leaving in the first place if they are responsible for creating the culture around them (Cappelli & Holmes, 2019).

Leadership motivation is another challenge in retaining top talent. Regardless of the business system, in or out of the pharmaceutical industry, motivation is a question mark at all levels (Johnson, 2016). One would think that with the ever-changing business environment, pharmaceutical leaders would be intrigued with the mental stimulation of a new and dynamic environment. With 67% of commercial leaders seeking employment with another company, questions arise.

Doh and Quigley (2014) studied mental stimulation in the workplace. They hypothesized that if top talent within an organization does not find their work stimulating, they pursued alternative employment, offering a higher mental stimulation level. Leaders not only left their jobs but also left their organizations. Additionally, Bhatnagar (2012) and Doh and Quigley argued that task-oriented work without a stated objective and extreme workloads are indicators that employees seek employment elsewhere. The current body of literature does not address mental stimulation and U.S. pharmaceutical commercial leaders. A gap exists.

Additionally, Doh and Quigley (2014) found that personal development and business objectives are significant factors that dictate employee appreciation. Unrealistic performance goals (Monsen & Boss, 2009) and a lack of evidence relative to objectives and the value of work relative to the bottom line (Govaerts et al., 2011) contribute to leaders and employees seeking employment in a more stimulating environment. The relevance of these findings was essential to my study as mental stimulation is critical for

highly skilled workers or leaders to stay with their organization when supported by its growth and development platform (Devi, 2009; Hausknecht et al., 2009).

In general, stress is a factor that influences a leader to leave their current job or organization. Tansley (2011) found that an organization that genuinely supports decision-makers focused on top employee talent and, more importantly, the leadership team's well-being. Moreover, top-talent employees seek out programs that focused on wellness and companies that operationalize a holistic Employee Assistance Program that focuses on more than the work-life. In general, when it was evident to employees that their well-being is the company's top priority, their stress levels reduced, and their commitment to the company's vision and strategy increased (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2012; Govaerts et al., 2011). Specific to the pharmaceutical business and process for commercializing a product, Parsons (2016) claimed that pharmaceutical leaders place inadvertent restrictions on their people, the process, and other internal stakeholder teams create an increasingly stressful environment. Commercialization can take decades and, in most cases, does not happen for most product compounds. Research does not exist regarding the implications of leadership decision-making and objective setting and goal attainment in the U.S. pharmaceutical business.

There is other research on the pharmaceutical industry worth examining. Specific to employee stress, Haider et al. (2018) studied the influence of stress and deviant behavior on leaders and employees in the pharmaceutical industry. They specifically addressed the reality that there is limited research focusing on essential trends and insight into this business's executive leaders' mindset. Haider et al. based their study in Pakistan

and focused on leadership behavior and job-related stress. Though Haider et al. concentrated on the pharmaceutical industry, their research is relevant to any sector as they focused explicitly on the practices of leaders as people versus pharmaceutical executives. Haider et al. focused on destructive leadership as the focal point, as this is an emerging problem for companies throughout the globe due to increased workload and stress placed on employees.

Haider et al. (2018) found that destructive leadership led to employee turnover and behavior change. They concluded that leaders' job stress within the Pakistani pharmaceutical industry was very similar to other world areas. Much like my study, which had U.S. commercial leaders as the participants, Haider et al. were concerned with executive leadership in the same industry's growth sector. Haider et al. ultimately found that a reduction in job stress significantly mediated the relationship between destructive leadership behaviors and their intentions applying deviant behavior. Johnson (2016) found that high pressure and challenging relationships with coworkers (29%) directly contributed to employees leaving their jobs in the pharmaceutical industry.

Furthermore, Parsons (2016) claimed that leaders focus on business processes over their team's mental health. In many cases, personal and group resilience is the focus, and employees, including leaders, suffer. The problem was that pharmaceutical companies define resilience as doing more with less. Parson’s disagreed and stated that mental health should be a moral, ethical, and business imperative in need of more attention. These findings and points-of-view focused on unique aspects of pressure in a work environment. Reducing stressful situations can directly contribute to a more

positive and retention-focused work environment. Haider et al. also argued that organizations must minimize or eradicate destructive leadership behaviors to avoid the cultural and financial cost of replacing an effective leader.

Research on these topics in the pharmaceutical business specific to commercial leaders is limited. Historically, the lack of research on this subject is significant (Uitzinger et al., 2018). Combine this with the problem of 67% of U.S. pharmaceutical leaders seeking employment (Terry, 2019), and the historical precedence that 56% of commercial pharmaceutical employees actively looked for a new job (deBruyn, 2014) and considered resigning from their roles in 2014 (Randstad, 2014). The literature review is broken down into a few more sections; leader and employee perceptions, leader and human resource professional points-of-view, and overarching strategies companies employ to retain talented leaders.

Leader and Employee Perceptions of What Motivates Them to Stay or Leave Their Current Company

It is essential to understand the employee's point of view through the literature as they are next in line for their company's leadership roles. Furthermore, employees of an organization are the engine that enables the company to continue forward. Due to the importance of the fact that the employee population of a company is the main economic driving force of an organization (Lozano & Haartman, 2017), their opinion as to why they choose to stay or leave their company is vital to my study. This dynamic may even be a contributing factor for leaders to consider another job with another company. That has yet to be researched. Employees place severe expectations on their superiors and, in

many cases, expect their leaders to assist them more holistically with a focus on their well-being and recognized as contributors to the bottom line (Ladyshewsky, 2010). From a leadership perspective, they place business behaviors over the individual frame of mind change (Parsons (2016). The pharmaceutical industry is trending towards an attenuation in overall healthcare spending, with a contraction in prescription spending expected through 2024 (Kaiser, 2018). Based on this, the workforce demands more from their leadership (Deery & Jago, 2008). As the commercial leadership team in a pharmaceutical company controls the culture, another gap for employees and leaders is access to holistic employee wellness programs (Yarnall, 2011). The key to a wellness program's success is the holistic mindset needed for the people in the program and the organization's cultural transformation (Deery & Jago, 2008). Wellness programs are only one area that will drive employees and leaders to require more support from their organization (Govaerts et al., 2011; Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2012).

The most viable relationship between pharmaceutical employees and leader is the idea of succession planning (Jindal & Shaikh, 2020). Jindal and Shaikh found that numerous immersion strategies allowed for a succession planning operation to generate a stable talent pool beneficial for both the leader and the employee in a commercial pharmaceutical business or franchise. It is essential to note that talent pools impact commercial leaders and employees in pharmaceutical companies. The problem with Jindal and Shaikh that researchers did not formulate why. They only shared what made up the reasoning for the talent pool strategy. In other research, Byham et al. (2002) found that talent pools were another principal driver to maintain leadership interest in their

current role and stay with their organization. They claimed that a dedicated strategy focusing on the internal talent pool allowed an organization to improve its succession planning.

Furthermore, Byham et al. found that this approach allowed the company to replace rigid talent strategies with an evolved focus on creating a future succession plan for top performers. Other benefits of a formal talent pool for an organization and directly attributed to the value for a leader included but were not limited to focused leadership training skills and resources that fill gaps in the individual's development; limiting turnover rates of leaders and top talent; the lateral movement of leaders within the business; and reductions of rates of failure for new employees (Edenhart-Pepe, 2007; McCartney & Garrow, 2006; Nottingham Business School, 2007; Ruppe, 2006). Directly related to the individual leader, advantages of a talent pool are increased commitment to the business and its people, increased stakeholder and cross-organizational support, and more significant growth opportunities as a lead for the business (Byham et al., 2002).

Leaders and employees outside of the United States seek employment elsewhere as well. Sarmad (2016) focused on the employee population's opinions in Pakistan's public sector oil and gas industry. The research focused on retention in large-market organizations that required a shift in mindset to ensure top talent stayed in their current role. Though oil and pharmaceutical industries are unique, they are large and powerful, political, and greatly influence the surrounding economy. Sarmad believed that as an underdeveloped country, Pakistan was the right environment for his research. During Sarmad's study, Pakistan evolved, and employee retention was vital for companies to

focus on as top talent consistently sought employment outside of their current organization. The relevance of the Pakistan situation to the U.S. pharmaceutical business system is clear, as Pakistan's market economy also evolves quickly and consistently.

The U.S. pharmaceutical business system transitioned, much like the conditions in the Pakistani economic system. Employee retention and attrition is an essential factor for companies to place their attention. Sarmad (2016) collected the data in questionnaires from 112 employees of major public-sector oil and gas sellers in Pakistan and applied multiple regression analysis. Sarmad found that companies needed to devise a comprehensive motivational process and thoughtful financial remuneration programs to provide better compensation while maintaining a view into incumbents and current employees' ascending living costs. The respondents indicated that this would help retain top talent. Beyond the economic reasons that contributed to employee turnover, Sarmad addressed how discrimination plagued the Pakistani culture and business system.

Much like Sarmad (2016), Khoele and Daya (2014) studied employee retention in South Africa and focused on how a systemic discriminatory culture affects specific populations' retention. They claimed that discrimination was the primary reason for employee turnover in South African culture. Discrimination had a considerable impact on leaders and employees, as one might imagine. In the South African organizations, they investigated, the employee turnover rate was 22% from 2007 to 2010, with white employees retained at a much higher rate than their black colleagues (Khoele & Daya, 2014). The rate differences and influences on the overall business are similar to the U.S.

problem that 67% of U.S. pharmaceutical commercial leaders will seek employment within 12 months.

Terry's (2019) research, where organizational cost implications were between 70% and 300% of the leadership jobs lost, was similar to the secondary findings in Khoele and Daya (2014). The principal issue raised by Khoele and Daya was discrimination and the significant influence on an organization's business culture and bottom line. In contrast, the focus for my study was not on discrimination but on factors that influence retention in the U.S. pharmaceutical business. Moreover, it is evident in research by Terry (2019), Sarmad (2016), Khoele and Daya (2014), Johnson (2016), and Randstad (2014) that factors directly related to discrimination, or those perceived as such, influence employees to feel less engaged and less able to perform essential work functions.

The literature further supports transformational change between leaders and employees in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry. Outside of the U.S., Khoele and Daya (2014) found that transformational and basic business acumen skills shortages, specific to South African business culture, influence a company's ability to retaining top employees. This is similar to Jindal and Shaikh (2020), as they outlined a process and set of strategies to maintain a reliable leadership team and the core group in line to replace them. Khoele and Daya (2014) found that financial compensation in South Africa was not a significant factor in causing employee turnover. These qualities link Khoele and Daya to my study, as transformational leadership and business acumen skills are determinants of retention and employee satisfaction (Johnson, 2016). Compensation is a reason leaders decide to

either stay or leave, as employees in the U.S. pharmaceutical business earn high salaries (Randstad, 2014).

On a more granular level, Cunningham et al. (2015) focused on how leaders and employees within the U.S. commercial pharmaceutical business perceived and if they were accepting of a specific leadership style over another. Their work was relevant to my study. Cunningham et al. addressed a significant gap in current research directly related to this topic, as they studied the factors that lead employees to respond to one motivational style over another. This study of business leaders' intentions to either stay or leave their job and their current employer was essential due to the limited research on the primary leadership styles people impose on their people in the commercial pharmaceutical business.

In Cunningham et al. (2015), participants were project leaders and managers in healthcare, finance, and the pharmaceutical business. Again, it is unique to have the perceptions of both pharmaceutical leaders and their employees as researchers have either focused on one or the other versus both. In Cunningham et al., leaders were the workers in charge of specific programs and projects and were not considered leaders within their organization. The researchers focused on the motivational and leadership styles most desired by employees in these industries. Each group presented with a unique set of preferences, with the project leaders and managers in the pharmaceutical sector preferring strategic, coaching, and transformational styles. The U.S. pharmaceutical industry employees studied in Cunningham et al. preferred three types of leadership. Of the three, democratic leadership was the only transformational leadership style chosen by the

participants. Strategic leadership and coaching were the other two preferred by the participants and identified as transactional forms of leadership. This finding is contradictory. Each leadership type, though similar in theory, can have various applications in real-life situations.

My study took the idea of Cunningham et al. (2015) further by generating insight from the principal decision-makers versus the people expected to execute in a project management capacity. This was a key to answering my central research question: What are the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies? Similar to Cunningham et al., Yarnall (2008) found that companies focus more on the leader's career success than the employees they led. Through multiple case studies, Yarnall found that many organizations are focused more on top talent and controlling high performers' careers, and assessing their development within smaller group settings with an intense focus on their business's core strategy.

Johnson (2016) focused on the pharmaceutical business in the United States. Like Cunningham et al. (2015), Johnson is relevant to the subject under investigation as the participants were people in U.S. manufacturing and commercial industries. The difference between the two studies is that Johnson focused on how employees responded to significant change events versus Cunningham et al., which focused on the project manager's impressions of leadership styles. From a general employee retention perspective, Johnson's finding that 24% of employees voluntarily resigned from their organizations overlaps with the Randstad (2014) survey that found that inadequate pay

(36%), lack of opportunity advancement (34%), high stress, and challenging relationships with coworkers (29%) were the three main reasons people resigned from multinational U.S. pharmaceutical organizations. Resignations occurred even though 61% of MNPCs offer profit-sharing and 50% offer remote working options versus 36% and 36%, respectively, for other industries. This amalgamation of qualitative and quantitative findings coincides with the current issue of 67% of pharmaceutical leaders intending to seek employment elsewhere within the next 12 months (Terry, 2019).

A review of the literature clearly established a relationship between leaders and their employees. This relationship, which is not dependent on the industry, is relevant to the U.S. commercial pharmaceutical business. According to Johnson (2016), Randstad (2014), Cunningham et al. (2015), Terry (2019), and Kaiser (2018), as the pharmaceutical industry is trending towards a significant contraction in spending and consumer investment through 2024, the internal dynamics of major pharmaceutical businesses will change even more. The core components of Johnson's research were relevant to my research. Johnson's focus was on four primary predictors: initial change reaction, change communication, involvement in change development, and perceived change success and the effect on two dependent variables or a response to change and support of the change. Each of these factors was relevant in my investigation of leaders in the U.S. commercial pharmaceutical business. Taking Johnson's research a step further in my research helped to generate more insight into factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies.

Leadership and Human Resource Points-of-View

The literature substantiates that leaders and human resource professionals (HRPs) are connected in many ways. Conversely, there are areas where HRPs and the leadership team members differ. Jindal and Shaikh (2020) established talent management strategies that included all stakeholders from leaders down to the worker level. Again, their approach neglected to provide why and did not conclude what-if scenarios. Logically, HRP opinions are essential and craft the internal strategies to maintain strong leadership teams (Doh & Quigley, 2014; Uitzinger et al., 2018). With this context, and on a day-to-day basis, commercial pharmaceutical leaders have the power to influence and create an internal culture that will either motivate or demotivate a person to stay or leave their current organization (Cunningham et al., 2015). Most research on employee retention focuses on non-U.S. organizations in growing healthcare sectors worldwide (Bloom, 2012), mainly in the Middle East, India, and Asia.

From the commercial leader's point of view, Cunningham et al. (2015) researched preferred leadership styles in the U.S. pharmaceutical business. Still, they only focused on employees in tactical roles (project managers) versus decision-makers. This is a problem as employee perceptions, and leader impressions will likely differ. As the U.S. pharmaceutical industry is in a contraction mode, most scholarly research on the subject focuses on drug development topics and medical research (Bloom, 2012). Healthcare economic contraction resulted in an average of 24% of employees from U.S. pharmaceutical companies and other U.S. industries voluntarily resigning from their positions annually from 2004 to 2005 (Johnson, 2016). Though Johnson found that

multiple factors, in complex combinations, are necessary to predict a pharmaceutical employee's response to change, a significant gap in the research directly relates to why commercial leaders leave their organizations.

Doh and Quigley (2014) focused on stakeholder theory, with a primary focus on the leader and business they served. The impact of an effective stakeholder strategy versus a leader who did not adopt the idea of managing stakeholders and company expectations had stark differences. Stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995) is important as HRPs view this as a preeminent thought-process when developing concepts and strategies to manage human capital. From a general corporate point of view, Greenwood and Freeman (2011) suggested that stakeholder theory may help conceptualize the relationship between leader and employee. Moreover, they suggested that morality is a primary contributing factor. A general employee, or a leader, has the right to pursue their interests. My study dealt with the potential implications of extensive free thinking by employees in the most regulated industry in the United States.

Uitzinger et al. (2018) generated insight into the leadership and performance management practices of top- and middle-level managers in multiple multinational corporations located in South Africa. Uitzinger et al. surveyed 90 human resource professionals. They found that mid- and top-level managers for global multinational organizations respond positively to integrating leadership development courses and performance management skill-building in the learning curriculum. They highlighted the need for companies to focus more on such programs for pharmaceutical leaders. In relation, the commercial side of the pharmaceutical industry in the United States lacks

peer-reviewed research. The majority of the insight in peer-reviewed research supports the clinical side of the business. My research may reduce a significant gap related to Uitzinger et al. (2018) and the overall U.S. pharmaceutical industry as it focused on the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies.

What made Uitzinger et al.'s research (2018) unique was their attention to the HRPs. They found that employee well-being and targeted performance management strategies helped keep top middle-level managers in South African multinational companies from leaving their organization. Uitzinger et al. focused on middle-level managers in the South Africa economic system, not specifically on the pharmaceutical business. The gaps identified by Uitzinger et al., combined with Jindal and Shaikh (2020), Johnson (2016), Jerry (2019), Cunningham (2015), and Ranstad (2014), provided insight I used to develop my study.

The current body of research does not address why commercial leaders in the U.S. pharmaceutical business leave their organizations, even though a plethora of insight suggests that the topic needs to be better understood. The next section of this literature review focuses on strategies companies implement to retain leaders and future leaders.

Strategies Companies Apply to Retain Their Leadership

For any company, including pharmaceutical organizations, it would seem that protecting their leadership team from considering an opportunity with another company would be critical to their success. Specific to leaders seeking employment elsewhere within 12 months (Jerry, 2019), the current research body suggests that, in general,

actionable strategies are needed to address the environmental and cultural challenges leaders and their employees face (Jindal and Shaikh, 2020). Specific to an employee's desire to stay with their current organization, a leader's influence is a paramount consideration (Lawler, 2008). The feature here that aligns with my study is the fact that all leaders have a boss.

Deloitte conducted a study of leaders on the primary factors driving current pharmaceutical industry changes (Ford et al., 2020). From a strategy point of view, leaders claimed that curative therapies, customized treatments, digital therapeutics, prevention, early detection, non-pharmacological interventions drive strategy, and an internal mindset shift. According to all of the literature in this review, the people aspect of change is imperative. Not one part of Deloitte's analysis suggested that leadership or employee behavior change is necessary for long-term, viable success. This is a problem.

More holistically, Letchmiah and Thomas (2017) found that people leadership, the culture of an organization, the vision, and purpose of a company, individual developmental opportunities, work considered meaningful to employees, and employee collaboration are principal factors for companies to focus on when developing strategies to retain top talent. Much like the perspective of Lawler (2008), Govaerts et al. (2011), Yarnall (2011), and Jääskeläinen and Lönnqvist (2011) found that explicit individual leadership behavior was a significant indicator, providing insight into their attitudes towards their employees. This holistic perspective is critical to my study, as commercial leaders in pharmaceutical companies need to be flexible due to the constant change in the

industry. Commercial leaders' ability to be autonomous in their role can significantly influence whether they act in a destructive way towards their employees.

In many cases, autonomy and individualization go hand in hand. Individualization is an essential feature that leaders need to consider during personal development discussions and objective setting. For instance, when employees feel that there is a lack of evidence relative to objectives and the value of their work (Govaerts et al., 2011), along with the idea that leaders should develop a clear and sharp vision to increase job satisfaction and employee retention (Yarnall, 2011), individualization should occur. Govaerts et al. and Yarnall defined individualization as viewing and treating a person individually versus treating them the same as a mass of people, regardless of skill set or learning style. Specific to that point, (Lewin 1947; Lewin, 1997) applied human development on a personalized level to his work to the idea that their growth was a product of their experiences in life and the environment around them. Lewin took the concept of human behavior to a different level by discussing special forces and personality tensions that influence a person’s behavior.

One primary personality tension is trust. Trust is vital for executives and business leaders (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2012; Govaerts et al., 2011; Wasylyshyn, 2017) as employees need to feel that their work is influential to the strategy of the organization and their growth and development is a focus from the standpoint of the company. The researchers found this sense of respect and care are important features for a leader to focus on, but so is their autonomy to execute the business strategy. There are three fundamental components of business strategy that leaders address, strategy, execution,

and people (Wasylyshyn, 2014). Each needs to be present for a leader to be effective and for their core support team or employee base to want to follow them. It also must be evident that their organization appreciates the leader. Wasylyshyn argued that leaders should always have at least one trusted advisor or support person to help influence their thinking for this to happen. As leaders are responsible for the overall business unit, the burden of responsibility is on them. Due to their role and responsibilities' complex nature, leaders must quickly and effectively address the more significant problems (Wasylyshyn, 2014).

Understanding the general talent management process is essential to study the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies. Cappelli (2008) defined talent management as a process designed to evaluate the need for human capital and setting a plan to meet that need. The lack of a growth and development program is a primary reason organizations fail to manage their employees' talent. Cappelli explained the two most utilized and extremely opposite concepts for managing talent as either the do-nothing approach or the 1950s bureaucratic succession planning model that many large organizations currently use. The historical context of these approaches is essential. In short, larger U.S. organizations implemented the succession model in the 1950s and included executive coaching and talent management as the primary aspect but phased out due to shifting in workforce behavioral dynamics in the 1970s due to market uncertainties (Cappelli, 2008).

Many strategies exist in the literature designed to influence talent retention and talent management of organizations. However, a limited approach exists in the literature concerning the commercial pharmaceutical business. Comprehensive talent management and retention strategies exist; some traditional and some unique. Compared to operational models such as supply chain designs, talent management approaches have not changed since the 1950s (Cappelli, 2008). In the 1980s, the just-in-time supply chain approach became popular with many organizations (Cappelli, 2008). Cappelli suggested a unique point of view that a talent model designed similarly to the just-in-time manufacturing method has the potential to reimagine how companies, their leadership, and the employee base can build the proper skills to evolve professionally. This approach has a significant value on a leader's intention to either stay or leave their organization. Beyond leaders, Randstad (2014) found that 34% of employees considered leaving their organization in their survey. Talent management programs cease in organizations when leaders and workers perceive a lack of opportunity for advancement. Due to this dynamic, employees leave too early to pursue a more fruitful opportunity (Cappelli, 2008). The problem here is that the employee takes their skill, acquired it, and applies it elsewhere.

Forecasting and communication are two more distinct elements in the current body of evidence that drive a decision to either stay or leave their company. Forecasting is the principal idea specific to Cappelli's (2008) strategy and the relationship between a just-in-time model and an effective talent management program design. Uniquely, Cappelli suggested that a supply chain, management, forecasting system that focuses on four principles should be the central premise for managing and retaining employee talent.

First, as in any formidable forecasting model, a focus should be on making and buying *to manage risk* and treat talent management as an investment versus an entitlement. Communication here is a factor that can ensure this approach is a realistic solution for an employee base (White et al., 2010). Second, to adapt to uncertainty in talent demand. In short, this idea addresses how companies should reconsider long, sometimes 3 years long, talent management programs and condense the program to more concise units and train cross-functional employees to capitalize on their strengths concerning their job function (Cappelli, 2008).

Cappelli (2008) also argued that companies need to improve the return on investment in developing employees by ensuring the program requires them to work on stretch assignments on a volunteer basis. Govaerts et al. (2011), Van Dyk and Coetzee (2012), and Wasylyshyn (2017) all discussed how personal development drives employee engagement, which suggests that employees need to feel as if their work influences their driving or supporting strategy. Employee growth and development enable people to aspire to achieve more. Devi (2009) and Saks (2006) found that the business strategy is the driving force for employee motivation and drives their business contributions. They found that employees show their engagement by devoting their potentials more time and effort due to moving the overall business strategy or corporate vision relative to their job function. The final element Cappelli (2008) argued is that a talent engagement strategy should focus on preserving both the investment of employee and employer interests. This point may be most relevant to consider as employee intentions and company vision

directly relate to why employees leave their organization for another opportunity (Cappelli, 2008; Randstad, 2014).

The current body of evidence does not outline how pharmaceutical companies plan to retain top talent in the coming years. This is surprising as commercial leaders intend to leave their jobs (Jerry, 2019), general commercial employees are not happy in their current environments (Ranstad, 2014), and employee retention programs are not a main strategic lever for multinational pharmaceutical executives (Ford et al., 2020).

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, general employee populations are a main focus in the literature, not leaders. For this group, culture motivates retention, but the results do not focus on pharmaceutical leaders (Burek & Wood, 2019; Monsen & Boss, 2009; White et al., 2010). Employee motivation and the differing perspectives of general employee populations versus leadership teams are also prevalent in the research, but does not focus on the pharmaceutical industry either (Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2012; Deery & Jago, 2008; Govaerts et al., 2011; Ladyshewsky, 2010; Lozano & Haartman, 2017; Yarnall, 2011). Mergers and acquisitions are another major contributor to general pharmaceutical employee job disenchantment but there is not an established difference between how leaders and employees react to massive change (Johnson, 2016).

Performance management is prevalent in the literature as poor conditions have an impact on retention. However, it has not been established whether poor performance management influences a pharmaceutical leader to leave their company. The literature also indicates that HRPs are critical to performance management (Dochy et al., 2011;

Dyk & Coetzee, 2012; and Yarnall, 2011) even though they are considered tacticians and in need of upskilling in retention practices (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). Uitzinger et al. (2018) highlighted the need to understand the subject of retaining leaders from a senior leadership perspective, not only from an HRP perspective, providing the essential foundation of my research.

Another factor, studied outside of the pharmaceutical business, was mobility in relation to access to information. Leaders move frequently (Guthridge et al., 2008) and consider mobility a factor to stay or leave their company (Farndale et al., 2010). Moreover, the evolution of technology, access to worldwide information, and business environmental changes significantly influence retention (Cappelli, 2008; Rondeau & Wagar, 2016). The problem is that the literature does not specify whether this mindset is prevalent in the pharmaceutical business.

The current body of research does not establish the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies. Ultimately, the research gap led to my research problem—the lack of knowledge and understanding of why U.S. pharmaceutical companies' commercial leaders leave their organizations and what behavior may or may not motivate them to leave. Chapter 3 includes a detailed description of the research methodology, research participant selection criteria, the qualitative research design and rationale, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this case study inquiry was to explore the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies. Within the objective, securing insight into the factors that influence business leaders to change organizations in one of the largest industries, pharmaceuticals, and determining whether these factors vary across organizational boundaries is inherently vital to our U.S. economy and medical patients. The literature review indicated that many studies on this subject exist outside of the United States and focus on emerging economies. But a gap exists in the research, knowledge, and understanding of why U.S. pharmaceutical companies' commercial leaders leave their organizations and what behavior may or may not motivate the mindset change.

Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale directly related to the fundamental question under investigation. What factors cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies? This chapter presents an in-depth description of the research process. It includes insight into the thought process for choosing a case study, an in-depth analysis of the researcher's role, and other details of the methodology adopted, such as participant selection, procedures for recruitment of participants, the data collection and analysis process, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question that guided my study was, what are the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies? The critical influencing dynamic was that frequent and large-scale change events impact U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies regularly, creating an uncomfortable and inconsistent working environment for employees that results in many voluntarily resigning from their roles due to fear of the unknown (Johnson, 2016).

The study's central concept was specific to the U.S. pharmaceutical business and focused on a few issues. The first issue was that 56% of commercial pharmaceutical employees seek jobs elsewhere (deBruyn, 2014). This general phenomenon causes multiple problems, not only for the industry but for patient groups, local and the federal government, and the healthcare economy as dynamic leaders are needed to lead the business but are not engaged in their roles or actively seek employment elsewhere (Burek & Wood, 2019). The second issue was that many employees feel that even with competitive, industry-wide, robust compensation (Chamberlain & Tian, 2016), inadequate pay (36%), lack of opportunity for advancement (34%), high stress, and challenging relationships with coworkers (29%) still exist as reasons to resign from their employer (Randstad, 2014). The third issue was that 67% of commercial pharmaceutical leaders are likely to seek employment outside their organization, creating an inconsistent structure and costing their organization between 70% and 300% of their job's financial value (Terry, 2019).

A case study design best served this research. It enabled me, as the researcher, to secure in-depth insight into bounded systems such as individuals, teams, and organizations (Yin, 2014). Other possible research designs for my study included quantitative research and other qualitative methods such as phenomenology. The focus of this study was on the experiences of the participants based on their in-depth explanation of the factors that cause leaders to leave their company, rather than the relative importance of a predefined set of causes. Furthermore, the purpose of this case study was to explore the factors that influence commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to seek employment outside of their organization, not on a general phenomenon. Hence, this was a case study, not a quantitative inquiry.

Role of the Researcher

With 20 plus years of pharmaceutical industry background, my experience spans the spectrum of the commercial side of the business. For the past 10 years, I have led multiple teams and business units across three multinational pharmaceutical companies. I have provided people with professional job opportunities and always supported their growth as employees. On the other hand, I have eliminated jobs due to company mandates, disciplinary issues, and for other business-related reasons. My leadership experiences connect me to a plethora of people across the industry. I did not interview anyone who currently works for me or within the business unit of my current organization given the potential for bias and potentially ethical conflicts. The intention was to eliminate any immediate personal influence based on the current business environment or my recent interactions with my team or direct colleagues. I interviewed a

few employees of my current organization as they do not directly connect with my work, group, or business unit. These people previously worked for one of the 10 U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies included in this study.

It is important to note that I do not have any financial connections outside of my current company as a consultant or contractor. However, I have investments in multiple industries, including the pharmaceutical business, for retirement purposes. An investment firm manages these investments, and I do not influence the decision-making or the people involved.

Due to my pharmaceutical business experience, I have preconceived notions about many aspects of the industry, human behavior related to the employee population, government involvement, and the legal aspects of why particular dynamics exist. Bias is not an issue as the interview questions' design focuses on securing insight versus influencing a thought to generate the desired answer. There are no desired answers to the research question in my study. The insight generated from the interviews produced a more holistic picture of the phenomenon based on the participants' points of view, specifically about the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies. Moreover, my research may inform business leaders about the emotional and behavioral dynamics that influence a person to either stay or leave their company.

Methodology

The case study design supported finding reasons why U.S.-based commercial pharmaceutical leaders leave their organization. Many commercial leaders stay within the

pharmaceutical industry but leave their companies for one reason or another. The purpose of this case study inquiry was to explore the factors that influence commercial leaders to seek employment outside of their organization. In this study, I explored the factors that influence commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to change companies. The case study design guided me to reach many commercial leaders in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry to secure insights about their experiences and perspectives.

Participant Selection Logic

The target population consisted of commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels who had worked for one of 10 mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies with at least 5 years in the pharmaceutical industry. These people are responsible for driving or supporting their current business's commercial function. I used purposeful sampling to select as study participants individuals who met the selection criteria. Defining aspects of the pharmaceutical industry is essential. The group that sells the product to the market is the commercial team. Commercial leaders collaborate with cross-functional teams, including business development, finance, new products, commercial strategy (e.g., marketing teams), and medical. Collaboratively, these teams are asked to create a strategy to bring a novel treatment to market (Darinoet al., 2018). Leadership roles that filled this requirement were associate director, director, senior director, executive director, vice president, executive vice president, chief innovation officer, chief operating officer, and chief executive officer.

The source of prospective participants were professional connections or direct professional network connections. LinkedIn profiles provided an extensive network of individuals qualified to engage in this study. Using LinkedIn was a tactic that allowed for the vetting of specific individuals before contacting them to participate in the study. This approach provided the means to directly contact people within three degrees of separation while highlighting their professional background when the search began.

Instrumentation

The data collected in this study came directly from digital, face-to-face interviews on Microsoft Teams. I used audio recording software to record each interview. Many multinational pharmaceutical commercial executives run large teams and have little time to engage people outside of working hours. I chose Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) as the interview and recording instrument as one-on-one meetings were not possible due to travel restrictions, scheduling challenges, or other issues related to the pandemic.

Interviews best served the data collection phase of this research for a few critical reasons. First, this was a case study that required one-on-one discussions between participants and me to secure insight into the situation under investigation (Yin, 2014). Next, interviews allowed me to understand the participant's impressions or experiences specific to the situation in a controlled and trusted environment (Mack et al., 2005). There were multiple advantages to this approach. It allowed for sharing a full range and depth of information between the researcher and the participant. Next, it provided for the relationship between the researcher and participant to grow during the discussion, effectively enabling the researcher to ask more insightful questions as the conversation

evolves. Finally, it allowed for flexibility in the conversation empowering the participant to answer the questions without the researcher trying to drive the discussion (Mack et al., 2005). This approach reduced researcher bias. Appendix A includes the interview protocol for the data collection and qualitative insight gathering for each virtual interview. This protocol provided structure for me during the interview discussion (Mack et al., 2005).

Triangulation can align data sources, methods, investigators, or participant perspectives (Heale & Forbes, 2013). The participants in my study were subject matter experts with experience related to the phenomenon of interest in this study. Their information constituted the primary data for the study. When proposing this research, I thought that historical and legal documents could help the analysis. As corporate websites provide essential information about each company, I included them in this study by analyzing the stated corporate viewpoints regarding the participants' perspectives to best ascertain the answers to the research question. Finally, examining similar companies with differing publicly stated perspectives on their websites created a better understanding as to why particular participant perspectives existed.

Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to ensure that the interview protocol and process to collect and analyze the study data were effective in exploring the factors that cause commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to seek employment outside of their organization. The pilot study consisted of three mid- to executive-level commercial leaders who worked within the past 5 years for one of the 10

U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies included in the study. I used the interview protocol (see Appendix A), which provides the structure for the interviews (Mack et al., 2005), for data collection in the same manner as in the actual study. Member-checking for the pilot was a critical feature that I conducted by digitally transcribing and analyzing recorded data and sending a summary of the interview transcription to participants for confirmation to close out the data collection process.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Data collection was from interviews with leaders who work for multinational pharmaceutical companies stationed in the United States, who worked for one of 10 global companies. I did not have authority over any of the participants. It was not appropriate to ask any of my current employees to participate in a study conducted by their manager. However, leaders within my current organization who do not work for me were potential participants, as they had the right experience, and had worked for multiple multinational pharmaceutical companies in the United States.

Interview recordings with transcription and member-checking comprised the primary data collection and validation mechanisms. The analysis for each interview built on the previous interview, leading to the emergence of study themes. The interview strategy was to collect the data over 6 to 8 weeks from up to 15 participants who worked for one of 10 U.S. pharmaceutical companies, or more if necessary to reach data saturation. I used Excel to organize the data and thus facilitate the analysis of the interview data.

Recording interviews was vital to the study. Though most participants live in proximity to me in New Jersey, due to COVID-19 it was in the best interest of all involved to conduct face-to-face interviews via Microsoft Teams. I used my mobile iPhone as a back-up recording device. Any interview recorded via iPhone was stored as per the requirements for this study and is considered confidential.

The primary objective was to select the participants through purposive sampling and generate a robust set of insights from up to 15 participants, from different companies, based on the business environments and their collective experiences. I conducted 10 interviews with mid- to executive-level U.S. commercial leaders who worked for one of the 10 U.S. pharmaceutical companies included in the study to achieve data saturation.

I first interviewed participants who worked for more than one of the 10 organizations as they had a more holistic experience and might have had a deeper insight into each organization than participants who worked for only one company. This knowledge and the collective, holistic perspective provided an opportunity for an in-depth exploration versus a singular perspective that may have required further analysis. With the latter, bias would have been possible. Korstjens and Moser (2018) provided the basis for eliminating bias and ensuring neutrality during the interview and analysis phases, including creating an audit trail to guard against misleading interpretations.

Francis et al. (2010) linked the idea of saturation with content validity. They suggested that saturation relies on the extent to which newly identified themes within the data materialize. However, Guest et al. (2006) strongly suggested that quality prevails over quantity when choosing the number of participants in an ethnographic or case study

design. They found that saturation occurred in their research within the first 12 interviews. In Guest et al., meta-themes were prevalent as early as in the first six interviews. Guest et al. suggested that 12 participants per group of interest should be a preferred metric when examining how two or more groups differ within a similar environment. It is important to note that my study focused on one group. Guest et al. established saturation early on but continued to interview 60 participants ultimately. Arguably, Guest et al. oversampled and did not identify a new theme beyond the 12 initial participants. This is important to note in relation to my study as saturation was met after the 10th interview. Saturation occurred when the same themes were evident in multiple successive interviews near the end of data collection. Reaching data saturation was a crucial feature as more than just a few people need to have supported the study findings (Mason, 2010). Follow-up interviews for additional insights were not necessary.

Data Analysis Plan

I used a constant comparative method throughout the process. While collecting data, I took notes and made additional observations after the interviews. I transcribed each interview and reviewed the transcriptions prior to sending them to each participant for member-checking. It was not necessary to revise any of the transcripts as a result of member-checking. Starting with the first interview transcript, I examined each transcript for the answers provided by the participant to the question of why the left their company, which I noted in the Excel spreadsheet as potential themes. After identifying the potential themes for the first six participants, I rank ordered the list of potential themes identified by all six participants based on the number of participants who (independently)

mentioned a given potential theme. I did this to establish a baseline of most likely themes for subsequent data saturation analysis.

As I approached the 10th interview, I noted for Participants 7, 8, and 9 that the potential themes from the baseline analysis recurred frequently, suggesting that I had reached data saturation. I did a saturation analysis after the 10th interview, which consisted of comparing the most likely themes identified using all 10 sets of interview data to the baseline determined by using the data from the first six interviews. The fact that no new potential themes emerged allowed me to conclude that data saturation had occurred after the 10th interview. The final set of potential themes were the themes that resulted from my analysis of the data provided by the 10 participants. The constant comparative method allowed me to engage with my dissertation chair after each interview to ensure I followed the proper process to identify themes based on the responses of the participants.

Analysis of the primary data allowed me to link the insights gathered from each participant interview to the research question while ensuring efficient timing of the interviews. Although this was a qualitative research study, I anticipated that participants might also provide pertinent quantitative data, which I treated in the same manner as qualitative interviews.

I planned to triangulate secondary data from public information (corporate website data) to the themes derived from the interviews to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. Participants' experiences expressed in the one-on-one interviews provided the primary data. Analysis of corporate websites containing critical information was

expected to provide secondary data that I could compare with the participants' insights from the interviews to add enhance the credibility, dependability, and transferability of the findings.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility, which is equivalent to internal validity in a quantitative study, is the extent the observed results accurately represent the reality of a situation for a population under investigation and, thus, are not due to methodological errors (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Saturation is a critical component of credibility as reaching a credible number of participants allows for the utmost accuracy (Mason, 2010).

Credibility was vital for my study's success as the executives and leaders in the pharmaceutical business rarely share their personal beliefs regarding the industry. Network connections within my professional network provided a transparent introduction to my study while at the same time allowing for a degree of separation to exist—resulting in objectivity and limiting bias. A person can trust another when transparency is at the forefront of the relationship.

A researcher’s social position based on demographics, personal experiences, and political and professional beliefs directly influences reflexivity (Berger, 2013). Reflexivity requires focusing on participants’ expertise versus assumptions based on prior research or researcher opinion. This component was vital to this study's success, as I work in the pharmaceutical industry and am aware of the dynamics that influence the business.

To enhance the credibility of the study, I used two strategies based on Creswell (2007). The first strategy was to confirm insights with participants at each interview stage, called member-checking. Member-checking consisted of digitally transcribing recorded data and sending the transcripts to participants to close out the confirmation process. Member-checking allowed each participant to correct information they felt was not appropriately represented. Member-checking enabled participants to engage with their transcribed interview and interpret data after their semi-structured interviews (Birt et al., 2016). The second strategy was to add the insights from each interview concerning emergent themes to a composite of previous interview themes. This approach allowed for a constant comparison of insight, which enabled me to identify potential themes as the data collection process was executed, and to check for data saturation as the data collection process unfolded.

Transferability

A critical component of this study was transferability, which is the equivalent of external validity in a quantitative study. It is essential to know that the study design yielded confirmable results, but also that those results may be applicable with diverse populations in similar environments (Green, 1977; Habicht et al., 2004). My study yielded a holistic set of insights that focus on the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies.

Thick description is paramount to establishing transferability as it establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in

question (Denzin, 1989). While listening and engaging with the participants, I identified stated actions, and sought to understand the true meanings of their explanations of situations. I also focused on contextual detail related to each conversation by probing, when necessary, to gain a finer understanding of social meanings related to participant responses**.**

Dependability

Capturing the final constructs using multiple measures is critical to the success of qualitative research. In this case, triangulation, based on Denzin (1989) and Patton (1999), was to consist of a comparison of multiple sources (i.e., interview data and archival data from corporate websites). This is a case study based on the impressions of individuals with standard skill sets and job functions from mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies. Converging experiences from multiple interview sources was a part of the research strategy for this study. This convergence was intended to develop a more cohesive point of view about why a leader would leave their organization for another. Dependability and triangulation were also conditional on analyzing public content via corporate websites, allowing for a better understanding of the organizations in this study.

Confirmability

In this study, neutrality was a challenge as many people in the pharmaceutical business know one another and understand how specific companies operate. Moreover, commercial leaders in the pharmaceutical business carry impressions that preclude them from presenting information less favorable for them or their company due to their

personal experiences. As I have over 20 years of experience in the pharmaceutical business, I strove to maintain a neutral position throughout the entire process of this research and believe I could do so.

Korstjens and Moser (2018) provided the basis for addressing confirmability in my study. Viewpoints of participants drove my interpretations, not my own bias. The analysis led the process of interpretation, as found in the audit trail. Note-taking was an essential practice for this study as it was imperative to capture the participants' impressions, both stated and inferred, free of researcher bias. As findings emerged, transparent data management enabled me to determine the collective wisdom in the study data in the form of the central themes.

Ethical Procedures

Research conducted involving humans must inform and protect the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). As Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prescribed, all ethical guidelines were adhered to in my study. Human-to-human interaction occurred in the interviews that required ethical behavior on my part as the researcher. Multiple questions enabled participants to engage in a deep conversation without bias as memoranda will inform participants of all critical information regarding the nature of the study. The following sections include the notification sent to the participants to the informed consent approach, data storage, and material destruction to protect individuals confidentially.

All information was safeguarded per IRB and federally mandated guidelines. Safeguarding measures were present in my residence using a locked storage file or in my

digital cloud in my computer system. I will hold on to this information for 5 years, and I will destroy all research documents related to this study. I treated participant information as confidential throughout the entire process and will continue to do so per Walden University requirements.

Specific to ethical concerns and data collection, all wishes of participants were of the utmost importance. For example, if a participant had refused to engage in the study or asked to withdraw earlier than anticipated, I would have removed them as requested, destroyed all materials collected from them, and moved on to the next participant. It is important to note, that this did not occur. This ethical consideration is significant for those working in my current organization as they have the right to feel safe in their professional environment.

Summary

Chapter 3 included the reasoning for the research design and rationale related to the fundamental question under investigation; what factors cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies? Moreover, the chapter included the thought process for choosing a case study, an in-depth analysis of my role as the researcher, a description of the methodology adopted for this study, and a discussion of measures incorporated in the study to ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings.

Commercial leaders at the middle and executive level with 5 years or more of experience in the pharmaceutical business and who worked for one of 10 mid- to large-size companies met the study participants' selection criteria. Gender and race were not

considerations in this case study as the objective is to understand better the main dynamics that influence a leader to leave their organization. The purpose was to collect data from multiple people based on experiences in various organizations and develop insight into why a leader would leave their company. I planned 15 to 20 interviews, or more if necessary to achieve data saturation, to generate this qualitative case study data. Data saturation was reached after the 10^{th} participant.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this case study was to explore the factors that influence commercial leaders to seek employment outside of their organization. Tannoury and Attieh (2017) claimed that many studies on this subject exist, but mainly outside of the United States, with a heavy focus on emerging economies. I explored the factors that influence commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to change companies. My research question was, what are the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies?

Chapter 4 includes a description of the pilot study and the influence the pilot had on the main study approach, as well as the research setting, participant demographics, data collection approach, and data analysis. Also included are the features related to trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability). A description of the study results (i.e., the seven themes uncovered by the participant interviews) concludes the chapter.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study by interviewing three participants who met the main study criteria but were not part of the main study. The purpose of the pilot was to determine if the interview design and data analysis approaches were sufficient to secure enough reliable insight to develop themes using the constant comparative method. The three participants fell within the required range of business professionals from the associate director to chief executive officer level who previously worked in one of 10

U.S. pharmaceutical businesses. Each had more than 5 years of experience in the commercial side of the pharmaceutical business. The pilot study included an associate director, director, and an executive director. Though the participants presented unique backgrounds, themes were identifiable in each with several themes represented across all three participants. The pilot study was performed to determine if changes were needed to the interview protocol to ensure clarity and logic, and to facilitate a successful set of interviews with the main participants. It was evident that the pilot participants were comfortable engaging with me and shared intimate details of their previous experiences.

While listening and engaging with the participants in the pilot study, I identified insights through their stated actions and was able to understand the true meanings of their explanations of situations through the questioning. I conducted member-checking with the pilot study participants, digitally transcribing and analyzing recorded data and sending a summary of the interview to each individual participant for them to confirm the accuracy of the data collected. Finally, the constant comparative method for analyzing and developing the initial themes from the pilot was seamless and led to an effective main study research process. The instrumentation and data collection process in the main study remained unchanged based on the pilot. The process to secure insights and analyze the insights remained the same throughout both phases of the research. I used Microsoft Excel to progressively organize interview insights into themes. The process I used to execute the pilot proved to be the proper path forward for the main study.

Research Setting

The research methodology remained consistent between the pilot and the main study. Neither personal nor organizational conditions negatively influenced participants or their experience during the time of study that might have influenced interpretations of the insight. The interviews were not physically face-to-face, but were conducted live, over the internet, using Microsoft Teams. All participants were in a secure, undisturbed office environment. During each interview, it was clear that each participant was also located in a secured office and not one person was disturbed during the interviews, including myself.

I used Microsoft Teams as the communication and recording medium for the interviews, with my personal cell phone as a secondary method, to capture interview recordings. The recordings were saved according to Walden University requirements. During the interview process, the research setting remained confidential and I did not experience any delays or glitches during the live engagements. The study participants had previous professional experience using Microsoft Teams and I did not receive any complaints or stated challenges by the participants using Microsoft Teams as the software for the interviews.

Demographics

The target population for the study consisted of commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels who worked for one of 10 mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical companies with at least 5 years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry. Participants were selected from the target population through purposeful

sampling. All participants were responsible for driving or supporting their current business's commercial function and held commercial side positions at the companies they previously worked for, which qualified them to be in the study.

I interviewed 10 leaders who worked for one of the 10 companies included in the study and established the point of saturation after analyzing the 10th participant's data. Table 1 illustrates the number and percent of participants who held the roles specified in the study requirements.

Table 1

Participants Job Level

Job Level	Number or Participants	Percent of Participants
Associate Director	1 out of 10	10%
Director	3 out of 10	30%
Senior Director/Executive Director	5 out of 10	50%
Vice President	1 out of 10	10%

It is important to note that all 10 of the people I reached out to accepted the invitation to partake in the study. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5 as the willingness of the participants to participate is important to address. Five organizations were represented in the study, and are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Companies Represented by the Study Participants

Company	Number of Participants Who Worked at This Company
Novartis	4
AstraZeneca	2
Teva	2
Pfizer	1
Sanofi	1

I captured the age, education, and gender of each participant in the interviews to help generate a trusting rapport and to enable me, as the interviewer, to understand to whom I was talking in that moment. The age range of the participants was evenly distributed, and gender skewed more towards male (7 out of 10). Seventy percent were white, 20% were Asian, and 10% were Hispanic. It is important to note that all participants had at least one graduate degree, with 80% having earned a master's degree (MBA) and 20% a doctoral degree in pharmacy (PharmD). Specific to age, the range for the participants was evenly distributed, as 30% represented 35 to 44 years old, 50% represented 45 to 54 years old, and 20% represented 55 to 64 years old. This evenly distributed range of the participants allowed me to gain a diverse generational perspective.

Each participant was experienced in the business and worked for an average of four companies. Nine out of 10 participants still work in the pharmaceutical industry, and

are in the United States. As for organizational structure, the participants described their previous organizations as either matrixed, traditional, or a combination of both. It is critical to note that multiple levels of leadership were well represented and the results were consistent across the participant's responses. This collective depth of experience, along with the fact participants reported that the organizations shared similar designs, further justified the use of a case study design.

Data Collection

Ten commercial leaders participated in the study. The data collection phase went smoothly and I did not encounter any unusual circumstances during the process. The interviews averaged approximately 45 minutes and member-checking averaged approximately three business days per participant. Data were captured via digital recordings and I used the Google transcribe tool to transcribe the interview discussions. I used this method for each interview and did not encounter any issues with transcriptions, such as losing or misplacing data. I used Excel to organize and analyze the interview data to identify the themes that emerged.

I triangulated the information from the interviews with public information from corporate websites. I found that the information on the public sources did not relate directly to the research question or the interview questions in the study. The interview participants shared their experiences and specifically stated why they left a company. All participants were forthcoming and open to sharing experiences and the reasons they left the organization. I could not relate any of that insight to the public information from the

corporate websites. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 further include my triangulation of interview insights with public sources.

Data Analysis

I used a constant comparative method described in Chapter 3 to analyze the interview data. My thought process for developing the themes was straightforward. Participant comments drove all theme development. I did not attempt to assume or link concepts that did not relate to the actual participant comments to create a potential theme. Potential themes were based on the actual words of the participants. The intention here was to eliminate subjectivity and use the actual participant comments to capture the potential themes versus my interpreting what they were trying to say. When a potential theme or primary insight was prevalent and articulated in similar ways, the theme took form. As the U.S. pharmaceutical business is somewhat of a closed system of people, the terminology used to describe situations is similar. Plus, the participants in the study were extremely open to sharing their opinions, allowing me to capture direct versus indirect insight.

The interview approach included two phases. Phase one included the first six interviews followed by a strategic check-in between me and my chair to align on the common (i.e., most likely) themes present in the first six interviews and to create a baseline for data saturation. This approach allowed us to ensure we were working under the same assumptions and fully aligned as I moved into the next round of interviews. Phase two included the next four interviews and another check-in. This final check-in allowed us to align once again and compare the phase two potential themes, which

included all the data collected, with the potential themes from phase one. This process allowed me to determine that no new potential themes had emerged because of the additional four interviews and thus conclude that I had reached saturation after interviewing 10 participants. Because of this process, seven themes as to why U.S. pharmaceutical commercial leaders changed companies from one of 10 major pharmaceutical organizations included in the study had emerged. The results are summarized in Table 3 in the Study Results section.

Triangulation was another technique incorporated in the design to attempt to align the stated reasons for leaving by the participants to the corporate vision as stated on the company public websites. This was a secondary data source, as the information, such as company values and mission and employee perspectives on the culture, could be found on corporate websites. The process for triangulating public sources was straightforward and intended to uncover areas that related to, agreed with, or conflicted with the responses of my study participants. Each company reviewed projected similar values: patient focused business strategies, expectations of diversity in hiring, product pipeline portfolios, and connected the U.S. business to the global corporate strategy for business sustainability (Astrazeneca, 2021; Novartis, 2021; Pfizer, 2021; Sanofi, 2021; Teva, 2021). Ultimately, an extensive review of each corporate website established that each company, though unique as an entity, shared the clear majority of qualities related to their corporate perspective on pharmaceuticals, patients, and the associated world around them. I concluded that the companies operate in the same way.

When I compared the corporate perspective contained in these company websites to the responses of the participants, I discovered that the information on the websites did not relate in any specific and direct way to the responses of the participants. I did not design the research to ascertain if a leader who decided to leave agreed or disagreed with the company vision. Triangulation worked in the sense that it established that there is no clear evidence in stated corporate values related to the reasons why a person leaves their organization. The decision to leave is based on the seven themes that emerged from the interviews. Finally, while the examination of secondary data on corporate websites did not directly point to the participants' reasons for leaving their companies, it provided important insights into the similarities between the companies in terms of their vision, mission, and focus on supporting customers.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility is critical to this study for a multitude of reasons. As a well-networked person in the pharmaceutical business, it is imperative, to me personally, that integrity on all levels is held to the highest standard. I have the trust of many people in the business and I intend to maintain that trust. Many executives and leaders in the pharmaceutical business, are not quick to share their personal beliefs regarding the industry, companies, or situations that impact their livelihood. I used network connections from my professional network to allow for a transparent introduction to the intention of the study that ultimately allowed for a degree of separation to exist. The result of this were 45-minute interviews that netted significant insight and allowed me to reach saturation.

To enhance the credibility of my study, I implemented two strategies based on Creswell (2007). First, I member-checked by confirmed insights derived from the interview with participants at each interview stage. Second, I added the insights from each interview concerning emergent themes to a composite of previous interview themes. Insight was constantly compared enabling me to check for data saturation as the study was conducted. This process was transparent and allowed for the participant to be an active member in the process versus simply a person being interviewed for a study. It is important to note that there were not any adjustments to credibility as stated in Chapter 3.

Transferability

This study's results are intended to yield a holistic set of insights that focus on the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies. Thick description is paramount to the study as it establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question (Denzin, 1989). While I listened and engaged the participants, I identified their stated actions, and listened intently to best understand the true meanings of their explanations of situations. With that, the participants were clear in their reasons for leaving their previous organizations and were quick to clarify statements that allowed for the true meaning to be transparently shared.

Dependability

Dependability in this study was achieved in the following ways. In Chapter 3, I stated that the triangulation of the interview insights with public sources (i.e., corporate websites) would add to dependability. After a significant in-depth review of the available

public resources, triangulating the information gleaned from corporate websites with the insights derived from interviews did not produce any additional evidence regarding the seven themes. The public sources did not yield information or statistics that either supported or contradicted the insight gathered from the study participants, but did support the implicit assumption that publicly available information about the 10 organizations were comparable. To enhance dependability, the constant comparative method was used to ensure the participant insight-based themes truly depicted the reason why the participant changed companies.

Confirmability

Korstjens and Moser (2018) provided the basis for addressing confirmability in this study. I based my interpretations on the participant viewpoints, not my own bias. Furthermore, the analysis, which can be found in the audit trail, drove the process of interpretation. The U.S. pharmaceutical business is a large industry, but operates as a narrow universe as many know one another and understand how specific companies operate. Moreover, commercial leaders in the pharmaceutical business carry impressions that preclude them from presenting information less advantageously due to their personal experiences. Recognizing that I have more than 2 decades of experience in the pharmaceutical business, I maintained a neutral position throughout this data collection and analysis process, and continued to do so through the completion of the dissertation.

The next section includes the results of the constant comparative analysis of the interviews with 10 participants that met the study criteria. The presentation of themes is in the order of the top seven themes in Table 3.

Study Results

The research question for this study was, what are the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in mid- to large-size U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies? Table 3 includes the seven themes that emerged from the overall data analysis rank ordered by the percentage of the 10 participants who mentioned the theme as being important.

Table 3

*Factors Causing Commercial Leaders in U.S. Multinational Pharmaceutical Businesses to Change Companie*s

Themes	Number or Participants	Percent of Participants
Political company culture	10 out of 10	100%
Negative relationship with management	8 out of 10	80%
Undefined career path	7 out of 10	70%
Reached a career plateau	6 out of 10	60%
Lack of respect for leadership	5 out of 10	50%
Victim of cost cutting	5 out of 10	50%
Lack of stability due to frequent reorganizations	5 out of 10	50%

Themes Developed from Interviews

Seven primary themes emerged from the constant comparative analysis of the primary data (Table 3). The seven themes were (a) highly political and noncollaborative company culture (100% of participants), (b) negative relationship with management (80% of participants), (c) undefined career path (70% of participants), and (d) career growth plateau (60% of participants) (e) lack of respect for higher-level leadership (50% of participants), (f) company focused on cost cutting versus supporting people (50% of participants), and (g) lack of stability due to constant reorganizations (50% of participants). These themes represented the major findings for this study as these themes clearly motivated the participants to the greatest extent to change companies. The following sections contain information on each of the themes identified from the interviews.

Political Company Culture

The primary reason why U.S. pharmaceutical commercial leaders decided to leave one of 10 mid-to large U.S. based pharmaceutical companies is a highly political and noncollaborative company culture. For my study, political company culture was only related to the internal political characteristics, such as careerism, and not related to the world outside of the company. This theme was evident in all 10 interviews. Related to political company culture, the insight collected from the participants revolved around how the culture of the company they previously worked for did not align with their values as an individual. Identifying this theme was a simple task as political company

culture was specifically stated by each participant, along with features related to the culture they described, as a reason they left for another company.

The participants perceived the company cultures as too cut-throat, driving them to change companies. Specifically, Participant 4 described the culture of one large pharmaceutical company as a *red culture* and that they struggled with this reality from the beginning of their 3-year tenure. Participant 4 described *red culture* and how they felt in vivid detail: "I had to sharpen my teeth, learn to bark and growl, and that is really not my style." Though this quote is specific to one participant, this point of view was evident within many of the interviews. Participant 3 described the culture of the organization they left as *cut-throat*, *stressful*, and *demanding*; and claimed that these aspects are why they and other U.S. based leaders decided to leave that organization.

Company politics was a primary driver of this theme and why leaders decided to change organizations. Many study participants commented about how highly political cultures eliminated the power of U.S. commercial leaders to make their own decision about their future or professional direction. Participants reported that factions developed in these cultures and these cliques of people created a lack of trust among multiple groups of people within the organization. Participant 7 and Participant 10 reported that factions were detrimental to their ability to trust their colleagues and depleted their appreciation of experience working for the organization. Further, these participants reported that other leaders in the same organization left due to political culture—scheming and maneuvering among cliques and individuals. This is important as many described seeing their colleagues leave as a primary factor for them to experience how the political culture in

that company was either changing or had changed. Specifically to political culture and change, Participant 10 discussed that a merger between their organization and another created factions of people. As the factions developed due to the political nature of the company culture, challenges persisted for over 5 years among groups of leaders and employees. The participant stated that this political challenge motivated them to change companies due to this constant battle between leaders and employees.

Participant 4 claimed that the negative civil aspects of the society in the United States in 2020 influenced how their organization determined the factors that best defined leadership roles. As it pertained to the political culture of the company, this participant described how this highly political internal corporate culture, would not allow them to pursue a role and that ultimately contributed to them losing respect for their organization due to being told that they were not diverse enough for the job. Specifically as shared in the interview, the recent death of George Floyd motivated the manager of Participant 4 and the human resource department to seek another, more diverse, candidate. This deeply offended Participant 4 as they considered themself a diverse member of the workforce. This specific situation was not the final reason they left, but led to it by creating the impression that the organizational political nature of the company, related to conflict and careerism among employees, was not the right fit for their personality.

In highly political and noncollaborative company cultures, trust or the lack thereof, motivated participants of this study to change companies. Trust was not specifically stated as the reason why they left their organization, but it is important to include trust in this analysis as trust between people and the leadership influenced the

participant's perception of the culture. Seventy percent of participants (P1, P2, P4, P5, P8, P9, and P10) described how culture, such as careerism and professional maneuvering, negatively affected trust between people and their perception of how people worked together, and how that ultimately led to their departure.

Participant 4 concisely described the influence of trust in detail when they explained a situation related how a highly political, nontrusting culture drove leadership to force an excessive amount of pressure on them while working on a trivial project. Participant 4 stated, "I was working in a constant, psychological fear of doing anything wrong." Further, they alluded to the fact that this constant dynamic destroyed any element of trust between them, their manager, and their colleagues. When describing this situation, Participant 4, much like other participants (P1, P3, P5, P7, P8, P9, and P10), became somewhat emotional prior to sharing more detail. After collecting their thoughts, Participant 4 described the situation and claimed that our interview was a cathartic and relieving experience for them. In general, the highly political culture theme brought out the most emotion in the study participants.

All participants described how a noncollaborative culture created a highly political, corporate environment that ultimately drove them to leave their organization. Furthermore, noncollaboration between employees at all levels created negative experiences for the participants and led them to change organizations. Participant 7 described an environment where the culture was dictated by the yearly bonus payout. The problem was that the organization paid bonuses to the marketing franchises different from the rest of the business. For context, marketing franchises (also known as brand

teams or brands) are the lead groups within U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses that develop the sales strategy, control the clear majority of budgets, and dictate direction to rest of the business. Stakeholder groups (Participant 7 led the Managed Markets team) competed to secure funds to deliver on projects to drive the brand strategy. The problem described by Participant 7 was that their team was paid on outcome factors that were not aligned with how the brand teams paid their employees. The brand team members made decisions that would grant them a bonus versus the direction Participant 7 and their team provided them. Participant 7 made clear that the bonus payout was not the reason they changed companies. The political dynamic, related to careerism and professional maneuvering, created a non-collaborative culture across the entire U.S. business and ultimately drove Participant 7 to leave the business as they did not see a positive future for themself nor did they believe this type of culture would yield positive outcomes for the business or for patients.

It was clear from the participant interviews that a highly political and noncollaborative culture drove the participants of this study to leave their organization. Participant 6 summed up the general dynamic surrounding politics as they felt that the existence of a highly political corporate culture plagues organizations in the U.S. pharmaceutical business. They explained that politics within the office environment, along with socially driven factors, are driving commercial leaders to seek employment elsewhere, more frequently. “Ultimately and in the past, the paradigm was centered on the idea that strong performance, longevity, and loyalty to a company would result in career advancement. That paradigm seems to be shifting.” Participant 9 shared the same

feelings. They claimed that same highly political, corporate environment will exist forever in pharmaceuticals as they shared how the approach for the past 40 to 50 years will remain and, ultimately, dictate the future business dynamics of the industry.

Negative Relationship with Management

A negative relationship with management drove 80% of the study participants (P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, and P10) to change their company. This theme was prevalent across all job titles and spanned multiple segments of years of experience. *Negative* best describes the insight derived from the participant interviews as eight of the participants described changing companies due to either a direct set of negative interactions with their leadership or an overall negative experience in their job due to a weak relationship with their superior. Participant 5 described it as, "People say that you leave the company because of your boss or your manager and not leave the company. I think that is so true unless there are other extenuating circumstances." This quote serves as representative of how many of the participants of this study felt about leaving one company for another.

Moreover, Participant 5 made it clear that if their relationship with their manager included better communication they would have likely made more of an effort to find a role in their organization versus seeking employment elsewhere. This is a good example of a negative situation that was based on communication issues versus negative interactions between a manager and employee. Participant 1 shared a similar experience as they pursued another leadership role prior to leaving the company and were offered a completely different position with another team without being interviewed for it. The participant's feelings and opinion about the new leadership role on a different team they

would be leading were never taken into consideration. This situation ultimately led to them changing organizations.

Participant 2 described a negative interaction with their direct manager that created a major rift between them. The problem between them drove the direct manager to circumvent the participant's leadership authority as they placed less qualified people in roles under them that undermined their ability to get the job done efficiently and effectively. Moreover, the participant shared that the direct manager treated them and other employees poorly by speaking down to them. When describing the direct line manager, Participant 2 unapologetically used expletives and shared their disdain for that leader. Based on their experience with that person, Participant 2 left that organization for another to work on the same type of projects and lead a similar type of skilled team. Ultimately, Participant 2 stated that they would have not changed companies if it was not for the way the negative way their direct manager treated them. Throughout the many of the interviews, participants shared experiences similar to Participant 2 as a reason why they too changed companies.

The insight from the interviews uncovered that negative relationships with second and third level managers also made U.S. pharmaceutical commercial leaders to leave their organization. Many of the participants described the organization in which they left as matrixed, or systems with multiple stakeholders and with many dotted line leadership and employee relationships. Participant 8 discussed a situation that highlighted how they were not given the opportunity to interview for a position that they felt they were the best fit for the role. Participant 8 explained, in detail, how they were the only person at that

level in the U.S. business in this company to have specific experiences that positioned them as the most qualified candidate. Ultimately, the second level manager did not allow for this participant to interview for the position as the political nature of the social system allowed for other leaders to be elevated in the minds of the decision-making leadership team. Though politics influenced the reason for leaving, Participant 8 claimed that their relationship between them and the second level manager led to their departure. They stated that the relationship between the participant and their manager was not soured by any specific situation, but the relationship was not strong enough for the highly qualified participant to be considered for a basic interview.

The situation described by Participant 8 demonstrates a microcosm of the primary problem as to why pharmaceutical commercial leaders change companies. Ultimately, and regardless of first line or second line manager alignment, relationships with management are a critical deciding factor as to whether a leader will change organizations.

Undefined Career Path

An undefined career path motivated 70% (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P9) of the study participants to leave their organization. Similar to a negative relationship with management, an undefined career path was represented in the top three themes in phase one (1-6) and two (7-10) of the interviews. Undefined was the ultimate theme as terms such as, nonspecific, undetermined, unspecific, an unclear were used by the study participants to describe an undefined career path that ultimately motivated a leader to change companies. In general, the participants described holistic sets of experiences that

highlighted how an undefined career path within their organization motivated them to seek employment elsewhere and change companies.

Participant 5 explained how their career path was halted by a new strategic direction implemented by their company. The participant described change as a frequent occurrence and not unique to them in the sense that all employees were impacted by this dynamic. This situation was the first that truly affected their ability to move their career in the direction anticipated. The shift in company culture, loss of relationships and a lack of training related to their individual ability to manage their career growth contributed to their sense that her career path was undefined as the changes made by the organization impacted their business unit. This participant felt as if they had no control related to their career path until the situation described. At that point, the participant shared that they realized that the company did not define their career for them. This directly influenced them to look elsewhere. Specific to that mindset, Participants 1, 4, and 5 perceived an undefined career path as one that the company did not define for them with Participants 2, 6, 7, and 9 feeling they were unable to define their career path themselves. Though diverging perspectives on the same subject, both sets of participants claimed that an undefined career path was a reason they changed companies.

Participant 7 described how an undefined career path led to them and other leaders to leave an organization that they claimed most employees enjoyed working for. Throughout the interview, this participant discussed how performance was a primary factor related to defining a career path at their previous organization. Based on their experiences at this company, they acknowledged that even those in the “in-crowd,” as

they were, struggled with defining their careers as solid performance did not lead to their desired career goal. “Many employees, including me at one point, find that strong performance alone isn’t enough to achieve their career goals through internal promotion.” This was a defining factor for them to consider changing companies.

Participant 9 described a career path situation that led to them moving on to another company. They discussed how their performance at the company and their skill-sets qualified them for an international assignment. They were ultimately passed up as another leader had a predetermined career path aligned to their performance plan that led them to be considered the best candidate for the job. Participant 9 was not even considered for an interview even though they claimed they had the most experience and were best qualified. The participant described how they never felt the need to look beyond their current position and did not engage in the politics of career progression that was evident in that organization.

Participant 9 was a leader in their organization, but not defined by the company as future talent by human resources or by executive management. Participant 1 and 2 changed companies for the same type of reason, but were defined by the business as future leaders. This defining characteristic made both feel as if their careers were defined for them by the company, but each shared that this was not the case. They left their organizations for higher level positions even though they were considered “rising stars” by human resources and the executive leadership teams. Participant 1 and 2 both changed companies as their careers were not clearly defined by their organization and did not see a path forward.

Reached a Career Plateau

Career growth plateau motivated two (P2 and P3) of the first six interviews in phase one (P1-P6) and was confirmed by four other participants (P7, P8, P9, and P10) in phase two (P7-P10) as a primary reason U.S. commercial leaders changed companies left mid- to large-size pharmaceutical businesses. The thought-process to for the theme, career plateau was based on direct comments such as, "hitting the flat part of the curve," I was flat," and "I was just doing the same stuff…I was not growing." The career growth plateau theme represents the participant's inability to experience new and innovative job functions, a situation where they no longer learn from their peers and leadership, and when they felt unfulfilled as the mental stimulation of the job disappeared. It was evident by the participants' demeanor that a career plateau was a deflating situation for them. Participant 9 described their situation in a way they felt deflated, describing the essence of their time at the organization as simply, "putting your time in" versus experiencing more.

Participant 8 discussed that the reason why they stayed at a large pharmaceutical company for almost 30 years was due to having the opportunity to constantly experience a new role. They claimed to be in a job for 18 months and no more than 2 years. This stimulated them. As soon as the system around them started to change that dynamic offered them less opportunity. In turn, they felt unfulfilled and changed companies. Similar to Participant 8, Participant 10 changed companies due to being in one place for a long time with little opportunity to advance to a job that was related to the role they had for almost 7 years. The problem for them was that they did not feel stimulated by the job

feel as if they were learning or experiencing more. *Lack of stimulation in their role with limited visibility for a future* was another phrase that described career growth plateau. Related to stimulation, the other issue that led to them changing companies and was that they worked in a supporting function that was unique to the rest of the business and there were no other places they could grow into having that experience. This career growth plateau situation led them to leave the company along with a few other factors.

Participant 6 captured the essence of the impact of career growth plateau and how it influenced their decision to leave their organization. Their explanation represents the general point of view of the study participants. They claimed that outside of reasons related to layoffs tied to acquisitions or downsizing that, "career growth plateauing can also include the influence of office politics or other socially driven factors in the workplace environment." This is important to highlight as this statement encapsulates how the primary reason participant's left their company (Political company culture) may have been influenced by this other primary reason they decided to change companies.

Lack of Respect for Leadership

A lack of respect for higher-level leadership motivated 50% of the participants to leave their organization (P2, P4, P8, P9, and P10). This theme is unique to a negative relationship with management as the concept here focuses on how the ultimate group or person that made up the leadership team was perceived by the participant. The thought process for the theme, lack of respect for leadership, is specific to the delineation between those two factors. The five participants that identified this theme as a main reason for changing companies all shared the idea that they lacked respect for the highest-levels of

leadership in their company. This is important to note as this separates this theme from the negative relationship with management theme previously addressed. Terms such as, disrespectful, discourteous, and rudeness constituted the building blocks for lack of respect for leadership when the comments pertained to the leadership of the participant.

Disrespect was a core topic for this theme. Specific to this term, Participant 9 discussed how the disrespectful behavior of executives made it easy for them to leave their organization after almost 30 years at their company. They described that the large pharmaceutical company they worked for evolved into a negative culture, where well-known and respected leaders were leaving in large numbers. They described their direct manager as someone they respected, but as for the U.S. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and his staff Participant 9 stated, “I just didn't think they were good people to be honest.” They also claimed that they did not have a negative relationship with this executive leader, but they simply did not respect them. Furthermore, Participant 9 suggested that the leaders who were forced out of the company by this Chief Executive Officer (CEO) did not share the same values and working principles that Participant 9 felt were vital for a multinational pharmaceutical company to be successful in helping patients. It is important to note that this participant was a senior executive in the organization and was well respected by their peers and management. Participant 9 described that the CEO led leadership team lost its way due to the newly hired executive management team. Their mindset lacked a focus on people development, less of an interest in patient outcomes, and a non-self-aware attitude towards how they presented themselves. Participant 10

shared a similar perspective and claimed that this dynamic is typical in the pharmaceutical business and a problem.

Beyond having disrespect for higher level leaders, participants shared other reasons as to why they disrespected executive leadership and changed companies. Specifically, two interviews uncovered examples related to how higher-level leaders ignored advice from analysts that ultimately led to the company failing in multiple areas. Participant's 9 and 10, both worked for the same company during the same time frame. They both supported the commercial business, but from unique positions within the organization. Both participants shared a situation that described that after a major product acquisition a Wall Street analyst was hired to attend a leadership summit with the intention to provide insight into why the company was faltering in a few areas. Ultimately, the analyst shared insight around business practices and how the vision of the company culture caused serious confusion for the employees and for future planning. The higher-level leaders did not heed the advice of the analyst, even though the participants described the advice as more than reasonable and agreed with the culture issues. They also claimed that their leadership colleagues agreed with the analyst. Participant 9 stated, "Organizationally I found it to be too much of that hierarchy approach where some people would call it a good old boys club." This was followed by the catalyst for Participant 10 leaving as the described situation made them lose respect for executive management as they ultimately did not trust their judgement any longer. They went from perceiving the leadership team as a strong unit to a loss of respect for them prior to leaving the company, "I didn't necessarily feel like we had the most skilled people in

those leadership positions." Participant 9 and 10 experienced similar feels as they lost of respect for the same leadership at the same time in the same organization.

Victim of Cost Cutting

Five participants (P1, P2, P5, P9, and P10) claimed that a primary reason they left their organization was that the company focused on cost cutting versus supporting them as an employee and as a leader. Cost cutting was simple to identify as participants articulated situations that revolved around lowering costs and company cutbacks. Each of these examples revolved around the company's desire to reduce their financial output in one way or another. Cost cutting was a major factor for Participant 1 deciding to change companies as the business forced them, their colleagues, and their teams to take on more with less support. In short, the company required Participant 1 to work longer hours and take on significantly greater responsibility as they, in turn, found 'efficiencies' in staffing. Participant 2 shared that they changed companies due to their organization forcing them to hire people with less experience with the intention to maintain lower cost profiles for their business units that ultimately led to their teams to be less effective and created a challenging environment for them to lead a team with less experience. This led them to leave and pursue a similar role with another company.

Participant 10 described corporate legal troubles as the reason why their company focused on cutting costs versus supporting them as a leader and their colleagues. They described a legal situation that forced the business to reduce its budget spend to levels that did not allow the business to expand in ways this participant felt it could have. The budget reductions led to wholesale changes as to how this leader could fund their

resources and ultimately created a dynamic where they could not afford to drive business. In this situation, cost cutting was stated as a main reason they changed companies. Participant 9 discussed the same cost cutting problem at the same organization, but claimed that a somewhat recent merger was the source for the cost cutting and did not mention the legal issues that Participant 10 alluded to in their interview. Participant 9 claimed that cost cutting was a frequent problem at this business and the constant changing budget requirements motivated them to leave for another company.

Participant 2 described in detail the effect that cost cutting had on their psychological state and how this drove them to leave for another company. During their last year at a large pharmaceutical organization, they described that they, along with other leaders were "just considered a number." Furthermore, they described how lower-level employees were considered less valuable by executive management. They described the situation with deep emotion and described how other leaders talked openly about reducing people with zero empathy when they discussed cutting a thousand or more employees. Specifically, they recalled executive leadership saying, "Let us figure out how we can just to hit a number." They described the result of cost cutting as disheartening and a primary reason, along with the highly political culture that drove them to change companies.

Lack of Stability Due to Frequent Reorganizations

Lack of stability, due to reorganizations, is another primary reason participants of this study decided to change companies. My thought process revolved around the most important aspect of this theme, as it was related to the idea that the effect of a

reorganization was the catalyst for the change in mindset and motivation to leave for the participants. Reorganizations focused on team redistribution throughout the business, products placed into the hands of other teams within the organization, and described as time-bound in the sense that it was a recurring or consistent practice for the company. Fifty percent of the participants (P1, P2, P7, P8, and P10) shared reasons and experiences as to how reorganizations motivated them to make a change. It is also important to note that this theme was equally represented in the first (P1-P6) and secondary interview phases (P7-P10). Participant 2 described when reorganizations happened, the company culture changes and that change in culture pushes the organization to take on a different personality. Multiple reorganizations created a feeling of instability for them and forced them to change companies even though they appreciated the people they worked with and enjoyed their experience when working for these companies.

Participant 6 experienced a lack of stability on the first day they started with a large pharmaceutical company that continued throughout their tenure. They started at this company with an understanding that the business would be structured in one way with their leadership ultimately reorganizing the participant's franchise prior to their start date. This created an unstable environment and immediately placed them in a challenging situation that they did not expect to deal with. This ultimately caused them to make decisions that were not in their or their employee's best interest. Specifically, they claimed that did not appreciate how the operation was structured as they shared, "I felt that it was (the new organizational design) more of a hindrance to growth (personal) and strategic growth, more than anything else. More of a barrier." They also used the term

"segregated" to describe how they perceived how the teams within the business system were segmented, along with the impression that the leaders did not have control of their teams. Due to the reorganization, where they had zero control but were expected to lead, they decided to change companies to gain more control over their career and business decision-making.

Participant 1, 2, 7, 8, and 10 each described how a lack of stability due to reorganizations, led to their negative feelings of their company and that it directly contributed to them changing organizations. As described by the participant's perspective, the idea of stability was not unique to them and was considered an industry problem. Insight gained from the participants focused on how instability due to reorganizations significantly influenced their leadership mindset and how it evolved or remained stagnant. Participant 8 shared that their direct leadership colleagues left their company due to reorganizations since executive leadership team did not create a stable working environment for the leaders. This resulted in them losing valuable relationships and impacted their ability to articulate a path forward in their career. Furthermore, they described that their career growth then plateaued due to the new leadership implementing business practices that limited innovative strategic thinking. Participant 8 claimed that they changed companies for a multitude of reasons, but specifically mentioned how the reorganization destabilized their experience at this organization and was a primary factor for them to change companies.

Analysis of Secondary Data

I found it was essential to use secondary data to triangulate with the primary data from interviews. Secondary data consisted of information provided publicly on corporate websites. In the proposal stage, it was logical to deduce that triangulating this information with the participant responses would allow me to better ascertain the validity of the statements of the participants. I triangulated participant responses to information on the corporate websites for the companies the participants left. After conducting an in-depth analysis of the external corporate website sources for the companies represented by the participants in the study, the information in the public domain did not produce any additional evidence directly related to reasons why people leave their companies; nor did it confirm or challenge any of the statements from the participants. More specifically, nothing in the publicly available material described the factors that contributed to attrition among company leaders.

While conducting the analysis of external sources in the public domain, I found that all the organizations in question shared corporate values that focused on harboring trust, a patient-first mentality, living a longer and better life, and focusing on diversity and inclusion (Astrazeneca, 2021; Novartis, 2021; Pfizer, 2021; Sanofi, 2021; Teva, 2021). The seven themes identified by analyzing the responses of my study participants did not directly conflict with the corporate vision or success factors that each of the companies presented to the public via their company websites. This led me to believe that the reasons participants stated for changing companies was truthful and strictly based on their actual experiences. This dynamic supports the notion that the vision of each

organization, in many cases referenced by the participants (P1, P2, P4, P8, P9, and P10), demonstrated an altruistic intent to help patients and create a better world for all of us. However, corporate statements in every case did not address internal, human resources subjects that are related to challenges among people working for the organization with regards to internal politics, personal values, and building trust between individuals or teams; nor did any of the sources address business decisions related to mergers or acquisitions. This is important to note, as these internal issues are directly related to one of the seven reasons why the participants left their organization for another.

The secondary research analysis I conducted on one corporate website provides an example as to how the analysis did not yield additional information directly related to the factors contributing to attrition found by analyzing participant responses. The content on this specific corporate website was highly focused on how the science of medical therapies is the core focus of their business, along with the intent of helping patients live happier and longer lives. The participants who worked for this organization, and decided to leave, independently agreed that a highly political and noncollaborative company culture, having a negative relationship with their manager, and lack of stability due to constant reorganizations drove their decision to move on. The company's website did articulate the values of the company and the culture the leadership intended to foster, but no information that would shed light specifically on reasons why people left the organization. The perspective of the participants, triangulated to public information about this specific company, did not yield direct evidence to confirm or refute directly the factors contributing to leadership attrition.

As the triangulation process unfolded, it became evident that triangulating specific factors and the themes associated would not yield information directly related to the participant responses. In closing, while the analysis of corporate websites allowed me to better understand the altruistic vision of each of these organizations, it did not effectively confirm or challenge the leadership attrition factors that were identified in the form of responses of the participants during the interviews.

Analysis of Other Data

Participants in the study had to have worked for one of the top 10 pharmaceutical companies. Ten individuals from five of those top 10 companies (see Table 2) participated in the study. I reached data saturation based on my interviews with those 10 individuals. Seven themes (i.e., factors) arose from the research as the primary reasons why leaders left their company. The themes were consistent across all levels of commercial experience and background.

Although the goal of this research was to uncover the factors that caused commercial leaders in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry to change companies, I captured other data during the interviews with the participants—on age, education, and gender—to help generate a trusting rapport and for me, as the interviewer, to understand the person I was talking to in that moment. The age range of the participants was evenly distributed, and gender skewed more towards male (7 out of 10). Seventy percent were white, 20% were Asian, and 10% were Hispanic. All participants had advanced degrees, 80% with a master's degree (MBA) and 20% with a doctoral degree in pharmacy (PharmD). Specific to age, the range for the participants of the study was evenly distributed, as 30%

represented 35 to 44 years old, 50% represented 45 to 54 years old, and 20% represented 55 to 64 years old. This evenly distributed range of the participants allowed me to gain a diverse generational perspective.

Each participant was experienced in the business and worked for an average of four companies. All 10 participants still work in the pharmaceutical industry and are located in the United States. As for organizational structure, the participants described their previous organizations as either matrixed, traditional, or a combination of both. It is critical to note that multiple levels of leadership were well represented in the study and the results were consistent across the participant's responses. Ultimately, this collective depth of experience, along with the fact participants reported that the companies had similar organizational structures, further justified the use of a case study design for this study. I identified no themes or factors that could be related directly to one demographic segment of my sample.

Summary

This study yielded a holistic set of findings in response to the research question: What are the factors that cause commercial leaders at the middle and executive levels in U.S. multinational pharmaceutical businesses to change companies? The pilot and main study uncovered the reasons that motivated a person to move on or stay with their current company. All themes were based specifically on the reasons participants stated in the interviews and are not based on my own bias in any way. Seven primary themes were established (Table 3) (a) highly political and non-collaborative company culture (100% of participants), (b) negative relationship with management (80% of participants), (c)

undefined career path (70% of participants), and (d) career growth plateau (60% of participants) (e) lack of respect for higher-level leadership (50% of participants), (f) company focused on cost cutting versus supporting people (50% of participants), and (g) lack of stability due to constant reorganizations (50% of participants). These themes represented the major findings for this study because they clearly motivated the participants to change companies.

The purpose of the study was met through the processes of a phased approach to interviewing, transcribing, member-checking, and conducting a constant comparative analysis. The study design yielded confirmable results, but the results may also be applicable with diverse populations in similar environments, or unique business economies (Green, 1977; Habicht et al., 2004). In Chapter 5, I will discuss interpretation of the results, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications of the study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Recommendations, and Implications

The purpose of this case study was to explore the factors that influence commercial leaders to seek employment outside of their organization. Many studies on this subject have been done on organizations outside of the United States operating in emerging economies (Tannoury & Attieh, 2017). I explored the factors that influenced commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to change companies. Although the study data came from participants from many company cultures, it was evident that the participants shared similar perspectives.

Seven primary themes comprise the key findings from my research (see Table 3). The top four themes, mentioned by at least six out of 10 of participants, were a highly political and noncollaborative company culture (100% of participants), a negative relationship with management (80% of participants), an undefined career path (70% of participants), and reaching a career growth plateau (60% of participants). The other three themes mentioned by 50% of the participants were lack of respect for higher-level leadership, being a victim of cost cutting, and lack of stability due to constant reorganizations. It was evident from a constant comparative data analysis that these themes clearly motivated the participants, across multiple companies, to change companies.

Interpretations of the Findings

Interpretation of the Themes

The findings of this study extend the body of knowledge. The seven themes, identified by the study participants, did not exist in the literature prior to the study. The

literature review did uncover that many studies on this subject existed outside of the United States, with most focusing on emerging economies (Tannoury & Attieh, 2017). In my study, the themes were consistent across company boundaries in the U.S., as the themes identified during the interviews were consistent for the leaders, regardless of the pharmaceutical organization.

The sentiment of the participants in my study supported the idea that U.S. based pharmaceutical leaders are comfortable with the idea of changing companies for a better situation, and that they move for seven primary reasons. The literature review uncovered that almost 67% of U.S.-based pharmaceutical commercial leaders intended to look for a job outside their current organization (Terry, 2019). As of August 2021, in the post COVID-19 pandemic era, Fox (2021) found that 4.3 million people in the general U.S. population resigned from their jobs. Specific to the pharmaceutical business, Fox interviewed a chief executive officer and pharmaceutical industry expert and learned that U.S. based pharmaceutical companies "need to bend" and recognize that "everyone has realized it is not about corporate America. It is about them" (Fox, 2021). The value of this point of view is that the mindset of U.S.-based pharmaceutical leaders is not only similar to pre-Covid-19 pandemic times, but leaders may be even more aggressive in seeking employment elsewhere than they were in years past. The seven themes found in this study are still relevant as the pre-Covid 19 job seeking behaviors and conditions still exist. Additional research into this subject may uncover further insight into the reasons why this phenomenon continues to persist.

In my current, professional experience as a leader in the pharmaceutical business, I find that this aggressive job seeking behavior is real. I receive resumes for positions that do not represent the job posting, nor do the experiences the person represents relevant to the job function. It is important to note that diverse experiences can lead to better outcomes but hiring a person for a role they are not qualified for, or if the learning curve is assumed to take at least a year, would likely cause an issue for the team or leader responsible for this new person. Also, based on my experiences interviewing people for corporate jobs, candidates sometimes openly state that they are simply fielding opportunities for their next job and not fully interested in pursuing the specific job in the interview. This is a blatant disregard for the time of the interviewer and further illustrates the aggressive nature the of current candidate pool. These candidates are usually not passed through to the next round for good reason. Human resource professionals acknowledge this dynamic and feel responsible for placing additional hiring requirements on new candidates, making the entire hiring process more cumbersome for all involved, including them. If the seven themes, or the reasons leaders leave, identified in my study were acted on by senior leadership in pharmaceutical companies, the serious problem of leaders leaving might be reduced, perhaps significantly.

The findings from my study added value to the current literature as many of the themes uncovered in my research had never been identified before. For example, Randstad (2014) found that inadequate pay (36%), lack of opportunity for advancement (34%), and high stress and challenging relationships with coworkers (29%) were the three main reasons people resigned from multinational U.S. pharmaceutical

organizations. My study uncovered similar insights; but due to the design, I was able to ascertain additional themes and a more nuanced understanding of those themes from interviews. My study can then be compared to Randstad's survey which relied on a set of predetermined reasons provided to participants. Randstad's results were then based on those predetermined factors, an artifact of their research design. In my study, the research design mattered because the actual reasons why a leader left their organization were not predetermined but emerged as themes derived directly from interviews.

A major difference between the themes identified in the literature review and my study was that inadequate pay did not materialize as a theme. This factor was only mentioned one time (by Participant 2). In my professional experience, inadequate pay is not typically a factor for a leader within the pharmaceutical industry to leave. Many companies are willing to negotiate with employees and leaders depending on the value the person provides the business and the current financial situation of the organization. In many cases, the employee can discuss retention with the employer, but they simply may not be equipped to have the discussion, or they are not in the best position to conduct this type of conversation. One could question their value as a leader if they cannot negotiate financially for themselves.

The seven themes, based on the insight from my study participant interviews, provide a cogent set of reasons why U.S.-based pharmaceutical commercial leaders leave their company. Furthermore, the themes provide a deeper and more explanatory perspective relative to previous research. My study advanced the current body of knowledge because I focused on the United States, and on organizational leaders, not just

human resource professionals. Uitzinger et al. (2018) provided the impetus for my research as they generated insight into the leadership and performance management practices of top- and middle-level managers in multiple multinational corporations located in South Africa. They concluded that additional research was needed in other areas of the world and with other business stakeholders. My study directly contributed to advancing knowledge in this space as I focused on leaders in U.S. pharmaceutical companies who are the people who resigned from mid- to large companies versus instead of a more generalized set of employees and human resource professionals.

The primary reason why leaders, interviewed in my study, moved to another company was company political culture as it related to careerism and the internal dynamics between people in a specific organization. This is a new and critical theme as the literature review did not uncover this as a reason for leaders to leave. For example, Monsen and Boss (2009) established that a leader would leave their company due to poor working conditions. This assertion is relevant to my study findings because, while it may be related to, it is not equivalent to the primary theme in my study. Participants in my study did not specifically state that poor working conditions influenced them to leave. Monson and Boss simply considered poor working conditions as environments that are inferior or unforgiving, thus hindering an employee's ability to succeed. I could not directly relate this to the themes in my study since Monson and Boss described poor working conditions in such a general way. Since commercial leaders in the U.S. pharmaceutical business work in offices versus warehouses, I could not articulate, identify, or compare themes related to any factor related to *poor working conditions*. That

said, political company culture, undefined career path, and reaching a career plateau were the three themes that are most closely related to the idea of poor working conditions. This is good example of how my study extended the knowledge within the literature.

Company political culture, negative relationship with management, reaching a career plateau, and lack of respect for leadership were all new themes related to hierarchy, which was prevalent in the literature review. Hierarchy was identified in the literature review across multiple industries and organizations and can be considered the themes most related to the four themes identified by the participants in my study. In my experience, corporate hierarchy has a significant influence on a business system and the people in it. Political company culture, negative relationship with management, reached a career plateau, and lack of respect for leadership, are similar to the subject of hierarchy from the literature review, but are inherently different. This is because hierarchy was loosely defined in the literature and based on traditional business structures, rather than being specifically identified with and defined for the U.S. pharmaceutical industry.

In addition, White et al. (2010) found that hierarchical cultures or business systems, combined with micromanagerial leadership styles, impacted the severity of a company's turnover rate and negatively influenced job satisfaction. This finding is relevant to my study findings because the theme, political company culture, can be related to a hierarchical culture, combined with micromanagerial leadership styles, although not the same. Political company culture, such as careerism and professional maneuvering, as stated by the participants in my study was the number one theme for all participants and not related to factors in the literature.

Negative relationship with management (80% of participants) and lack of respect for higher-level leadership (50% of participants) are two themes that are new and share characteristics. Negative relationship with management was described by Participant 5 who claimed, “People say that you leave the company because of your boss or your manager and not leave the company.” This simple statement encapsulates several conversations related to negative relationship with management.

According to the participants in my study, a U.S. pharmaceutical commercial leader may develop strong relationships among peers and employees, an appreciation of the overall company vision, anticipation of highly competitive (industry relative) and lucrative bonuses, and some vision of a future; but leaders may still decide to leave due to a negative relationship with their management or due to a lack of respect for the higher-level leadership. This is devastating for a business and the teams that rely on leaders to effectively power-through challenging relationships for the betterment of the business. This was an insightful revelation as many people, in other industries, could easily argue that a situation like the one previously described would be hard to leave. For pharmaceutical leaders, leaving a situation such as this is acceptable, and in many cases, expected.

Undefined career path was identified by 70% of my study participants as a reason they left U.S. based multinational pharmaceutical organizations. Like all other themes identified, this theme is new to the body of research. Jindal and Shaikh (2020) found that the most viable relationship between pharmaceutical employees and leaders is the idea of succession planning. Byham et al. (2002) found that talent pools were another principal

driver to maintain leadership interest in their current role and stay with their organization. While succession planning and the development and cultivation of talent pools are tactics that can help a leader identify their future within an organization, neither encapsulates the notion that an unidentified career path was a reason leaders left an organization. Based on my personal experience, the value this theme has on the pharmaceutical business is significant as it is reasonable and expected that all employees circulate throughout the business to gain breadth of experience. The problem is that depth of experience is not typically valued at the same level as breadth. This ties directly into career path identification as the cultural systems that pharmaceutical employees operate in are not designed to help people identify a career path, but instead to incentivize those who move quickly and frequently. This is a major problem, as a career is a set of strategic decisions, not simply a plethora of well written descriptions of jobs on a resume.

Career growth plateau is similar to a lack of opportunity for advancement found by Randstad (2014). Lack of opportunity was not specifically mentioned by any participants in my study but was described by them as a component of a plateauing or plateaued career. Career growth plateau was directly related to the participants' inability to feel as if they could grow or to envision a more dynamic future with their organization. Opportunity, though a factor that motivated participants in my study to feel stagnant, was not articulated as a reason to leave a company, but a career growth plateau was identified by 60% of the participants as a primary reason to leave. Career growth plateau aligns with Doh and Quigley (2014) who hypothesized that if leaders within an organization do not find their work stimulating, they pursue alternative employment with another

organization. Participants P2, P3, P8, P9, and P10 reported that their careers plateaued due to a multitude of reasons, one of which was lack of job stimulation. Participant 8 explained how they were no longer stimulated and felt that their career was flat; and how this led them to leave:

> I just was flat and the people I was working had been in the company forever. I worked with people who I felt were good, decent people and had stuff to teach me. I would say my last 5 years at the company, if I was dealing with 10 people, 9 of them pretty much had nothing to teach me. I wanted a new experience that would help me to continue to kind of learn and grow.

In my professional experience, I have observed that a lack of opportunity for advancement is not a major issue in general for leaders in the pharmaceutical business. Instead, perception of a lack of opportunity is dependent on the current situation of a company and the skill sets of the person. However, career growth plateau is a real issue and I, personally, witnessed colleagues leaving highly respected jobs at elite companies for opportunities in other companies where they could advance beyond the monotony of their current role.

As a theme, victim of cost cutting is new to the body of research. Cappelli (2008) was the only source found in the literature review with any discussion of this theme. Cappelli suggested that a focus should be to manage risk and treat talent management as an investment versus an entitlement. This is relatable to the theme, but in no way equivalent to it, as Capelli's suggestion is a corporate tactic and not based on a holistic

mindset set of changes, down-sizing, and other dynamics that force a company to eliminate jobs, regardless of whether high performers would be affected.

The final theme was a lack of stability due to constant reorganizations. Reorganization is well covered in the literature and spans all businesses and global economies. However, the U.S. commercial pharmaceutical industry was not specifically mentioned in the context of reorganization in any source found in the literature review. Yet, 50% percent of the participants of my study claimed that a primary reason for leaving an organization was due to a lack of stability due to constant reorganizations within the company. Reorganizations are normal and expected in the U.S. pharmaceutical business. It has been my experience to witness or be directly impacted by reorganizations that occurred due to a multitude of factors. Participants' in my study defined reorganizations in a similar manner. I interpret this to mean that organizational restructuring changes in U.S. pharmaceutical businesses are severe enough to create long-term retention problems and can have a detrimental influence on the mindset of leaders.

Critical Interpretations Not Represented in the Themes

Stress (Randstad, 2014) is an important subject as it is relates to mental health and was identified by two participants in my study in the first six interviews (Phase 1). This potential theme was not prevalent in any other interviews and was not representative of the greater participant pool. High stress and overworked was mentioned by Participant 1 and Participant 3, but not corroborated by any other participants. In the end, stress was not a theme. I conclude that additional research can help bridge the gap between the factors found in Randstad (2014) and those identified in my study. High stress is an issue

I can attest to in my professional experience working in the pharmaceutical business. In short, it is all stressful. The responsibility of the commercial business is to get medicine to the healthcare providers, patients, hospital systems, and to the public; and to engage the managed care industry to ensure patients gain access to the medicine they need. In my experience, if stress is a major issue for a pharmaceutical leader, then there is high likelihood that person should consider another line of work as there are many other people capable and willing to take on challenging and stressful roles.

Globalization is an issue discussed in the scholarly research but not identified as a potential theme in my study. Johnson (2016), Cappelli (2008), and Rondeau and Wagar (2016) found that the main factor that influenced the retention of talented employees was globalization, resulting in volatile, dynamic, and open business environments. The participants in my study did not specifically state that globalization impacted their decision to leave a company. Based on my experiences, globalization is a factor as to why businesses make decisions and changes. In many cases, employees, even midlevel leaders (i.e., levels below the director level), are not aware of how globalization impacts them. The leaders interviewed for my study were commercial leaders based in the United States. In many cases, these people are not influenced by the multitude of challenges imposed by globalization as the responsibility of these leaders is focused on the U.S. business system. Corporate restructuring typically includes elements related to globalization, but in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry restructuring is typically perceived by U.S. employees as a larger situation, predetermined by obvious financial, or external environmental forces. As it pertained to globalization, the participants of my study may have been impacted by

globalization and did not even recognize or become aware of it. As the term globalization did not come up in the interviews, I conclude globalization is not a factor for the commercial leaders in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry. Hence, my findings are not consistent with Johnson, Cappelli or Rondeau and Wagar.

The ability to move, or mobility (Farndale et al., 2010), was a not mentioned by the participants in my study, but is an important subject because mobility is a critical factor for people when choosing a company to work for in the post Covid-19 era. Farndale et al. (2010) found that a leader's mobility increases their intention to either stay and advance within, or leave, their organization. Farndale et al. suggested this was a pull factor, which they found was more likely to influence the willingness of a leader to pursue a role elsewhere. The post COVID-19 pandemic world is forcing companies to be more aware of the impact location has on an employee and their leaders. It is also a significant force for investment in new technologies that enable people to communicate in digitally fluent an efficient way. Recently, many, if not all employees have been working remotely and mobility is not a factor. The economic and social impacts of COVID-19 was not prevalent at the time of the literature review and was not a factor for the participants of my study. Due to this lack of prevalence in the literature and the fact that none of the participants mentioned mobility, I conclude that Farndale et al. was not conclusive and that insight gained from leaders in the pharmaceutical business in future research may help determine the importance mobility has on a leader to leave their company for another. Regardless of the findings of this study and the literature review, this subject should be of

highest priority for future research as the ability to connect remotely versus in a live setting is significantly affecting the business world.

Autonomy was a factor mentioned by a few participants but did not materialize as a theme for this study. Participant 2 and Participant 8 specifically addressed autonomy as a leader but did not say whether lack of autonomy drove them to leave. They both described ways in which they lost control of their teams but stated the demotivation and choice to leave were due to other factors, with political company culture and a negative relationship with their management as the primary reasons for leaving. Based on my professional experience, autonomy influences certain leaders, but not all. Some leaders feel comfortable with being controlled as this allows them to rely on their direct supervisors to advance. Other leaders, like myself, appreciate the ability to advance based on merit, personal victories, and the success of their employees.

Objective setting drove multiple participants (P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P9) to become frustrated with their jobs at their previous companies, but none of them specifically claimed that unrealistic performance objective setting drove them to leave their organization. Professionally, it has been my experience that objectives drive success for a pharmaceutical employee, but the process to establish the yearly objectives is a multistage endeavor that includes the executive leadership and human resource teams. This process mitigates issues related to unrealistic performance objectives. Monsen and Boss (2009) found that poor objective setting contributed to leaders and employees seeking employment with another company.

Limitations of the Study

Prior to conducting the study, I thought that participants' willingness to disclose their perspective on the industry might be a major limitation of the study. The pharmaceutical business, even though substantial, is an insular and tightly-knit system of relationships in which social perception is valued. I also thought that participants might feel there would be repercussions if they shared a contrary view of their company. As it turned out, this was not the case, as the participants were highly engaged and offered deep and personal insight during the interviews. The data collection and the analysis was completed with no real challenges presented. The interview process went smoothly as all of the participants were comfortable with conducting the interviews over Microsoft Teams. This may be because many, if not all participants', use this technology daily in their work-life. Furthermore, time constraints did not prove to be a limitation as the participants were motivated to engage and provide timely member-checked transcriptions to me.

All participants worked for at least 5 years in the pharmaceutical business, held roles relevant to the study requirements, and demonstrated a clear understanding of the U.S. pharmaceutical business. The trustworthiness of the study results was not an issue as each of the participants was forthcoming in providing feedback and a direct perspective. The potential, highly political nature of the participants did not seem to infiltrate any interview as each discussion was direct, forthcoming, and in some cases, emotional.

Recommendations

This study yielded insight for future research on the subject related to the factors that influenced commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical organizations to change companies. I determined that these factors were consistent across company boundaries in the U.S., as the themes identified during the interviews were consistent for the leaders, regardless of the pharmaceutical organization. Based on the findings of this qualitative inquiry, the case study approach is justified as does the conclusion that the companies in this study share similar characteristics. The participants of my study were independently aligned across seven primary themes that support the notion that the pharmaceutical business has a serious retention problem. Participant 7 explained it best:

> Ultimately, and in the past, the paradigm was centered around the idea that strong performance, longevity, and loyalty to a company would result in career advancement and so employees were staying at companies longer. That paradigm seems to be shifting. If you look at LinkedIn these days, you will notice more people who are spending less time at a greater number of different companies in order to progress in their careers.

This statement by Participant 7, along with Terry's (2019) finding that 67% of 2,400 pharmaceutical leaders would be looking for a new job within 12 months, aligns with the current situational finding from Fox (2021) who described how the great resignation phenomenon has continued to infiltrate the pharmaceutical business.

Though this study produced significant insights related to the specific research question, further research should be conducted on the subject. It is possible to replicate this study and focus on other segments of the pharmaceutical business in the U.S. This study purposefully focused on leaders as literature review uncovered the opportunity to dig deeper into this subject with this segment. There are many other segments of employees under the associate director level in U.S.-based pharmaceutical companies. Employees under the associate director level are extremely important to the business as they execute on the commercial plans for the business. It would benefit the body of research, if these segments were studied in the same way, and then properly triangulated. This approach might yield a result that either represents the findings of the study or provides a reason to study this subject even more. From a limitations point of view, this approach may harbor a few challenges as the segment base may not have the proper experience, at least 5 years, working directly for a U.S.-based pharmaceutical manufacturer. In many cases, the stakeholder execution teams, employee segments under associate directors, worked for pharmaceutical advertising agencies or major consulting firms for some time. This poses a problem for future research related to experience and the potential time it would take to secure participants for a study. It is important to note that having trusting network connections enabled me to secure participants quickly as the relationship started off in the trustworthy way. In this case, my standing in industry and relationship with potential participants was arguable as or more important than the subject under investigation in terms of enlisting participants.

Uitzinger et al. (2018) studied this subject and focused narrowly on human resource professionals and generated insight into the leadership and performance management practices of top- and middle-level managers in multiple multinational corporations located in South Africa. They concluded that additional research is needed in other areas of the world, and the participant base should be unique to the population investigated. My study followed this guidance and approached a segment not yet studied, but justified as a serious source for insight into the subject as to why leaders change companies. I previously suggested to further the research, and study the segments under the associate director level. I now expand on this, and suggest that the essence Uitzinger et al. be applied to human resource professionals in the U.S.-based pharmaceutical companies. This may yield a unique perspective to Uitzinger, and to my study, as U.S. and South African human resource professionals may have different points-of-view due to the unique nature of the national systems in which each stakeholder operates. Moreover, this may yield further insight into why certain aspects of my findings, specifically political company culture, even exist.

In the interpretations of findings section I outlined where the literature review identified gap areas between the previously studied research and my study. It would be interesting to learn the Chief Executive Officers' point of view on this subject as they ultimately are accountable for the direction of the organization. Participant 8 described how the ultimate executive leader and their immediate executive team motivated them to leave:

> I was getting to a point where I didn't really respect the U.S. company President. I didn't like the people under them either. They were not the people I had a lot of respect for. I just didn't think they were good people to be honest.

This statement encapsulates the notion that the ultimate leader and or their leadership team can create an environment that either motivates or demotivates their employee population. Better understanding the perspective of the overarching executive leader can provide more insight into the dynamic related to this subject. It would also be interesting to take the point of view of the five participants (P2, P4, P8, P9, and P10) that claimed that this reason motivated them to leave. Understanding the relationship between leaders and their leader may provide insight into how and why the dynamics evolves. A limitation for this would be securing the time of chief executive officers as they rarely provide specific details into how and why the culture of an organization is the way it is. Moreover, it is likely not all vice-president level executives would provide specific insights into their relationship with the executive leader and their immediate leadership team. This could present a limitation to studying this dynamic.

Implications

Seven themes were uncovered that represent the primary reasons why U.S. pharmaceutical commercial leaders ultimately decided to move from one organization to another. The seven themes did not exist in the literature prior to my study. The value of this research rests on these newly established, common themes from 10 independently minded and well-respected business leaders with at least 5 years of experience in the pharmaceutical business. In Chapter 1, I conceptualized that this study might increase

awareness of why U.S. commercial pharmaceutical leaders leave high-paying jobs for other companies or industries. In my review of the literature, I found that there is a lack of research as to why commercial leader's transition from one pharmaceutical company in the United States to another. The rate at which this occurs is problematic for businesses as it costs companies up to 300% of an employees' salary to fill a gap with a new hire (Terry, 2019). According to the literature review, within a company, higher turnover rates create an atmosphere of inconsistency and produce less effective teams (Brymer & Sirmon, 2017). My study confirmed that pharmaceutical leaders are comfortable switching from one company to another based on seven primary factors. The primary factor, a highly political and noncollaborative company culture, was mentioned by all 10 participants.

Principal decision-makers in companies are aware of problem of leaders moving from company to company (Schweitzer & Lu, 2018), but the problem persists. Randstad (2014) claimed that U.S. pharmaceutical company leaders did not understand the perspective of leaders concerning their role within a company, as many of them looked for employment elsewhere. My findings align with this point of view and my professional experiences and drove them to make the decision to move on to another company. Understanding these seven themes may empower organizations to better serve their employees by re-evaluating the cultural elements affecting the reasons leaders leave companies.

The potential impact for positive social change falls at the individual, organizational, and public level. My study may provide executive leaders with a better

understanding of the reasons why their most influential commercial leaders decide to transition from one organization to another, an extremely important retention problem that persists (Terry, 2019). It would be in the best interest of mid-sized to large pharmaceutical companies to address how the seven identified themes are likely impacting their ability to retain talented leaders responsible for the development of important pharmaceuticals. The resulting cost savings from fewer of these leaders leaving and needing to be replaced, as well as the enhanced productivity of happier leaders and their followers, could represent significant positive social change.

On an individual level, it was clear based on the emotional tone of some of the responses during the interviews that the mental health and wellbeing of the participants had some influence on their decision to move to another organization. Though mental health was not specifically stated as a reason, it was clearly important to them in one way or another as their demeanor changed when discussing the reasons why they left their previous organizations. One participant needed a moment to collect themself prior to continuing to describe the events that led them to move to another company. Based on this dynamic, a focus on the mental health of leaders and, just as importantly, the remainder of the employee base, may serve midsized to large pharmaceutical companies in their attempts to retain their top-level talent.

Furthermore, and related to positive social change for the individual, it was clear that the themes uncovered in this study revolve around participants wanting to experience a better situation: either a new, challenging experience or an environment that was less politically motivated compared to the company they decided to leave. It seemed that the

leaders in this study wanted to experience more, and they did not like to feel as if they were in a stagnant and politically demoralizing corporate environment.

The organizational implications related to positive social change are clear as well, based on the interviews. My review of the literature revealed that pharmaceutical leaders are moving from company to company at high rates causing organizations to consistently invest in new talent which cost the organization up to 300% of the salary of that person (Terry, 2019). This was evident prior to the pandemic. In this postpandemic world, companies must be even more mindful of the social implications of their work cultures as many companies now offer virtually based experiences and other flexible work arrangements. My professional experience supports this as many prospective employees either expect to be working remotely, or expect the company to relocate them at full cost, and then provide remote options after the start of their employment. Based on the participant responses in my study, their expectations revolve around the idea that organizations need to recognize that the dynamics in the industry have already changed and not an evolving cultural element. Participant 3 described this general feeling about how the social dynamics of a company create the need to look elsewhere for a job. This perspective was shared across multiple participants in my study:

> They want a different environment. The company I worked for is very, very big. It's a very well-oiled machine. It's a very big organization. Often times people can get lost. I think that sometimes it’s an environment people don't want to be part of.

This study also has positive social change implications for other business stakeholders, such as human resource professionals, trainers for headquarters and field-based teams, and those responsible for relationships with external vendors. For context, this may include any commercial employee or leader of a pharmaceutical company. Executive leaders adopting the idea that the seven themes from this study are potentially prevalent in their business environments would allow them to take additional steps to truly understand which of the themes, along with any other glaring issues could help them conceptualize and fight for a better culture for their employees. This could be in the form of a more inclusive positive social and business culture, career growth and professional aspiration focused environment, along with a focus on building more altruistic interpersonal relationships between leaders and their employees, at all levels. It also may influence companies to hold their leadership teams accountable for how they treat their people.

From a public standpoint, word travels quickly in the pharmaceutical business and it is generally known how certain organizations operate and what people can expect from working for one company versus another. It would be in the best interest of the business for each of these companies to ensure they understand how these themes can be perceived by people outside of their business. This may allow them to retain top talented leaders as it is possible these leaders would be less likely to entertain a discussion with an outside organization seeking to secure their professional services. It is also critical to highlight that all employees of a company are also consumers and members of the public. Positive social change starts from within the walls of the company as the people are the engine of

the business. The *telephone game effect* is a real issue in the pharmaceutical business as the network of people is small and the communication channels in which they stay connected are endless. Maintaining a positive and altruistic public perception is critical as well.

Beyond the leaders and employees that work for a mid to large pharmaceutical company, patient groups may be considered people who could benefit from the social implications of the themes in this study. Though the themes directly pertain to the participants in the study, it can be deduced that group that ultimately loses out the most from turnover are the patients that unknowingly count on business strategies that enable them to become aware and gain access to medicine that could save or better their life. This is not a stretch assumption as it is vastly the responsibility of the commercial business stakeholders to educate, create awareness, and make medicine available to primary stakeholders, including but not limited to pharmacies, health systems, governments, and the end patient consumers. Again, stakeholders are people and they are the engine for positive social change, not the company.

Finally, the findings of my study do not suggest the need for any changes to the conceptual framework, Lewin's (1947, 1997) three-stage model of unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. My primary focus was not on the model, but on the factors causing commercial leaders from mid- to large-size U.S. pharmaceutical companies to seek employment outside of their organization. Nor are any changes to the case study method warranted, as no issues arose in the application of the method during the study.

Conclusion

As a result of this qualitative inquiry, I found that seven themes drove pharmaceutical business leaders to leave established, high paying jobs for another company. The seven themes were (a) highly political and non-collaborative company culture (100% of participants), (b) negative relationship with management (80% of participants), (c) undefined career path (70% of participants), and (d) career growth plateau (60% of participants) (e) lack of respect for higher-level leadership (50% of participants), (f) company focused on cost cutting versus supporting people (50% of participants), and (g) lack of stability due to constant reorganizations (50% of participants). These themes represented the major findings for this study as these themes clearly motivated the participants to the greatest extent to change companies. Prior to these interviews, the literature review uncovered that that inadequate pay (36%), lack of opportunity for advancement (34%), and high stress and challenging relationships with coworkers (29%) were the three major reasons people resigned from multinational U.S. pharmaceutical organizations (Randstad, 2014). My study challenges the current body of literature as, in contrast, a leader's decision to leave was not based on money, but on a multitude of other reasons confirmed across 10 individual leaders with unique experiences. I conclude that the design of my study allowed me to establish a more accurate impression of the thoughts and behaviors of pharmaceutical executives as I had the pleasure of interviewing them live.

The interviews clearly uncovered the leaders' desire to work in an environment that supports them and allows them autonomy to grow as they continue to lead. It was

evident that the five companies that these leaders left, shared similar characteristics on almost every level, from organizational structure to the impact the company culture had on its people. The interviews uncovered insight into the psyche of the participants as it pertained to their desire to want their previous situation to work out. The participants of this study ultimately decided that their own well-being was more valuable than finding a way to compete in an unforgiving corporate environment. These leaders' all seemed to gravitate towards a more reasonably, forgiving environment that allowed them to place the needs of the patients they served over the need of the internal political system of the organization. It is my hope this research is the catalyst for change for an industry that supports 131 million or 66% adults in the United States (Ihara et al., 2019). As an industry, we still have a lot to learn, not only about the patients we serve, but the people who ensure life-saving and life changing medicine gets to those who need it most.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

General demographics questions:

What is your age?

- ✓ 18-24
- ✓ 25-34
- ✓ 35-44
- ✓ 45-54
- ✓ 55-64
- ✓ 65+
- ✓ Prefer not to comment

What would best describe you?

- ✓ African American
- ✓ Asian
- ✓ Native American
- ✓ White
- ✓ Hispanic
- ✓ Others
- ✓ Prefer not to comment

Which gender do you identify most with?

- ✓ Male
- ✓ Female
- ✓ Prefer not to comment

What is your highest qualification?

- ✓ High school diploma or equivalent degree
- ✓ No degree
- ✓ Bachelor's degree
- ✓ Master's degree
- ✓ Nurse Practitioner
- ✓ Physician's Assistant
- ✓ Doctoral Degree / PhD
- ✓ Pharm D
- ✓ Medical Degree (MD, DO)
- ✓ Prefer not to comment

What company or companies have you worked for?

Highest level of leadership at a life sciences/pharmaceutical company:

- ✓ Associate director
- ✓ Director / Sr Director
- ✓ Executive Director
- ✓ Vice President
- ✓ Executive Vice President
- ✓ Chief Information Officer
- ✓ Chief Operating Officer
- ✓ Chief Executive Officer
- ✓ Other

1. How long did you work for X company?
2. How long ago did you leave X company?
3. Do you still work in the pharmaceutical industry?
    a. If yes, are you in a large, medium, or small organization?
        i. How did you characterize your answer on company size?
    b. If no, what industry did you move to? Why?
        i. Are you holding a similar role/job?
            1. If yes, are the dynamics the same? If yes, how? If no, how do they differ?
4. Related to your role in the pharmaceutical industry, what functions/job did you serve? How many years for each role/job? What was the typical time frame you spent in each role?
5. How many people ultimately worked for you in your final role at company X?
6. How many managers did you have in your final role? How was the organization structured (e.g., matrix, traditional hierarchy, flat, other)?
7. Did you reach the role you aspired to at X company?
    a. Did you define your career path there?
    b. If not, who decided on your career path?
8. What are the primary reasons you left X company?
    a. What experiences led to your leaving?
    b. Do you consider those experiences unique?
        i. Why or why not?

9. Would you consider going back to X company?
    a. If yes, why?
    b. If no, why?
10. Do you feel that leaving X company was the right choice?
    a. If yes, why?
    b. If no, why?
11. *If the participant is still in the pharmaceutical industry:* Would you recommend working for X company to a person you consider a trusted colleague? *Or If the participant is no longer in the pharmaceutical industry:* Would you consider moving back to the pharmaceutical industry in the future?
    a. *Regardless of the answer:* Why?