2022

The Impact of Servant Leadership on Employee Turnover in a Warehousing Environment

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Walden University
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Abstract

Unprecedented growth in the Port of Savannah, located in Savannah, Georgia, has resulted in growth in the local warehousing industry. With an increase in available warehousing positions, turnover has been high. High turnover costs warehousing leaders millions of dollars and results in degraded performance. Grounded in servant leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies warehouse supervisors use to reduce employee turnover. The participants were six distribution center supervisors in southeastern Georgia who worked for at least 1 year. Data were gathered from semistructured interviews and document reviews. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six steps of thematic analysis. Key themes were employee relationships, training, opportunities to perform, and salary. A key recommendation is for supervisors to utilize a training matrix to ensure each employee is trained on each piece of equipment and each job in the warehouse. Implications for positive social change include the potential to improve employees', families', and communities' quality of life through steady employment and income growth. With stable jobs and income growth, employees will be better equipped to care for their families and contribute to the surrounding communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my family. To my wife, Robyn Hicks, thank you for understanding what this means to me. Thank you for picking up the slack when I would devote hours day after day to this doctoral study. Thank you for sacrificing your husband for this doctoral study. To my children, Kayla and Simone, I want you to surpass what I have done. I have shown you how to achieve your goals through hard work and dedication while continuing to love your family. To my parents, Hercules and Piccola Hicks, thank you for your unending prayers, support, and encouragement. To my in-laws, Leonard and Sheila Small, your support and prayers helped me to achieve this goal. Finally, I dedicate this doctoral study to the people who helped me find my purpose and begin my life's work, the workers employed by the tire warehouse in rural Georgia. You are more than your past mistakes. You are more than a tool for work. With help, you can take care of your families while achieving your goals.

Acknowledgments

I honor and praise the almighty God for sustaining us during this process. My family has endured much over the past few years, but we were able to maintain thanks to your many blessings. I want to acknowledge my chair, Dr. Meridith Wentz, for guiding me through this study. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Edward Paluch and Dr. Patsy Kasen. Finally, I would like to acknowledge all my extended family and close friends who offered encouraging words when I needed them. I thank those were proud of me for attempting to complete this program.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee turnover is an issue for many organizations. One consequence is a shortage of skilled workers (Živković et al., 2021). Many skilled workers will often leave a critical position or a position that requires a high level of skill. The open positions are often filled with employees that have less skill or experience. Wang et al. (2017) stated that employee turnover critically affects an organization's sustained growth. Daily operations are dependent on the critical role that employees play (Dewa et al., 2017). Employee turnover can harm organizational performance and organizational costs (Lee, 2018); Therefore, warehousing organizations have a vested interest in reducing employee turnover.

Background of the Problem

Southeastern Georgia is experiencing unprecedented growth in the logistics marketplace due to the development of the Port of Savannah (Georgia Ports Authority, 2018, 2019). As a result of the growth of the Port of Savannah, the warehousing industry has also experienced growth. The Georgia Ports Authority plans to increase capacity to over 9 million 20-foot equivalent units by 2030 (Georgia Ports Authority, 2020). According to the Georgia Ports Authority, the actions of the investors translate to more jobs and opportunities for port customers to grow in the surrounding areas and contribute significantly to the local economy (Georgia Ports Authority, 2018, 2020). The warehousing organizations in the region need qualified workers to service the demand from the Port of Savannah.

The business problem is that many warehousing organizations have difficulty reducing the rate of turnover among experienced employees on the warehouse floor. The leading causes of warehouse employee turnover are job security, lack of personal attention, and limited experience (Min, 2007). Warehouse leadership can influence frontline employees through leadership strategies and interactions. Supervisors have the power to reduce the amount of employee turnover and decrease the expenses associated with replacing employees. The influence of top- and middle-level leaders trickles down to frontline employees and can shape their attitudes and performance (Ling et al., 2016; Reina et al., 2018). The primary goal of this research was to explore the strategies that warehouse supervisors use to reduce employee turnover.

Problem and Purpose

Excessive employee turnover negatively affects employee efficiency, organizational costs, and employee well-being (An, 2019; Dutta & Khatri, 2017; Zhang, 2016). In December 2019, warehousing organizations in the southern United States reported losing 251,000 employees to involuntary and voluntary turnover (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020b). Costs associated with turnover costs can range from 90% to 200% of the employee's annual salary (Hom et al., 2017). The general business problem is that employee turnover harms workers and costs warehousing organizations millions of dollars each year. The specific business problem is that warehouse supervisors lack strategies to reduce employee turnover.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that warehouse supervisors use to reduce employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of six general supply chain supervisors who managed employees in Georgia warehouses and had implemented successful turnover reduction strategies. The implications for positive social change include the potential for organizations to help improve the surrounding community through employee retention. Low turnover rates positively affect an employee's physical and mental health and a community's tax collections and social programs (Skelton et al., 2019). The findings from this research may allow workers to remain employed for longer, thus increasing their contribution to the community and their families.

Population and Sampling

The population of this study were warehouse supervisors who directly supervise front-line employees in distribution centers. The supervisors were employed for at least 1 year and work in southeastern Georgia. The sample size consisted of 6 participants chosen by purposeful sampling. The supervisors were identified through personal referrals and LinkedIn groups. Additionally, organizational documents were reviewed for relevant information.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative research method to explore strategies that warehouse supervisors use to reduce employee turnover. Researchers use a qualitative methodology to capture the target population's perspective (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). Qualitative research assists the researcher in better understanding the nature and complexity of the phenomenon and allows the investigation of the phenomenon in the natural environment while answering what, how, and why questions about the complex phenomena (Bansal et al., 2018; Basias & Pollalis, 2018). According to Rahman (2020), qualitative research allows the researcher to gather detailed descriptions of participants' opinions, experiences, and feelings while interpreting the meanings of their actions. Researchers use quantitative research methods to collect numerical data; isolate specific variables; and discover the correlation, relationship, or causality of the data (Park & Park, 2016). A quantitative research method was not suitable because the data were not numerical; instead, they were derived from the personal accounts of the target population. Researchers use the mixed-methods research approach to collect qualitative and quantitative data in one project (Fàbregues & Molina-Azorín, 2017). I did not need to isolate specific variables and explore the correlational or causal relationships among them to answer the research question about strategies to reduce employee turnover. For this reason, I opted against using the mixed-methods research method.

Phenomenology, ethnography, and case study were the three types of qualitative research designs that were considered. I chose a case study design to identify strategies that reduce employee turnover. The advantage of a case study is that the researcher can identify patterns and characteristics, investigate, and understand complex issues in real-world settings (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017). Researchers use a multiple-case study design to gain a deeper understanding of the subject by comparing similarities and differences among the participants (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Researchers use phenomenology to understand the lived experiences of a similar group of people (Bawa & Watson, 2017). Phenomenology was not appropriate because the focus of the study was the strategies that supervisors use to reduce employee turnover, not similar views and experiences of a group of people. Researchers use ethnography to focus on culture and the way of life of a group of people (Fusch et al., 2017). Ethnographic design was not suitable for this study because studying the entire culture of individuals to gain perspectives about employee turnover was unnecessary. I chose a multiple-case study design because it allowed me to explore the strategies that warehouse supervisors in different organizations use to reduce employee turnover.

Research Question

What strategies do warehouse supervisors use to reduce turnover?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to reduce turnover?
2. What strategies were most effective in reducing turnover?
3. What strategies were least effective in reducing turnover?
4. How do you assess the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce turnover?
5. What career advancement and training opportunities do you provide employees to reduce turnover?
6. What barriers did you experience as you incorporated strategies to reduce turnover?
7. What additional information would you like to share about strategies that you use to reduce turnover?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf outlined the idea of servant leadership beginning in the early 1970s. After reading Herman Hesse's short novel, *Journey to the East*, Greenleaf was inspired to write a series of essays that would be published in 1977 as Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness (Joseph & Winston, 2005). *Journey to the East* is a story about a group of people on a spiritual quest. The group could not sustain itself when the servant disappeared, and the travelers abandoned the trip. In the end, the travelers discovered that the servant who took care of the group was the leader of the religious order that inspired the initial quest. Greenleaf (as cited in Spears, 1996) theorized that authentic leadership results from a deep desire to help others and that the servant-leader is a servant first.

Servant leadership is a follower-orientated multidimensional leadership theory that focuses on the leader focusing on the needs of followers first to achieve organizational goals (Eva et al., 2019). The practice of servant leadership is centered around 10 constructs. The key constructs underlying servant leadership are (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d) awareness, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to the growth of followers, and (j) building community (Coetzer et al., 2017; Dutta & Khatri, 2017).

Servant leaders improve individuals, teams, and the organization (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Coetzer et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2017). Servant leadership has a positive relationship with employee work engagement, organizational behavior, and job satisfaction. It is negatively correlated with worker burnout and employee turnover. Servant leadership reduces employee turnover by increasing organizational commitment (Jang & Kandampully, 2018). The purpose of this study was to explore strategies that supervisors use to reduce employee turnover. Servant leadership is a theory that aligns with understanding how some supervisors minimize turnover.

Operational Definitions

Employee turnover: Employee turnover includes quits, layoffs and discharges, and other forms of separation from the organization (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020a; Li et al., 2019). Employee turnover occurs when an employee decides to leave or the organization terminates the relationship.

Involuntary turnover: Involuntary turnover occurs when the organization ends the relationship with the employee through termination or layoffs (An, 2019).

Servant leadership: Servant leadership is a leadership approach that focuses on the needs of the followers to achieve organizational goals (Eva et al., 2019).

Voluntary turnover: Voluntary turnover occurs when the employee voluntarily terminates their relationship with the organization (Hom et al., 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions occur when researchers perceive something that is not verified as true (Schoenung & Dikova, 2016). The first assumption was that the interview questions were appropriate for gaining information that would answer the research question. I had this assumption because the questions directly reference strategies for reducing turnover. The second assumption was that the interview process would produce common themes that would identify supervisor strategies that reduce employee turnover. I followed the same theme identification process when analyzing the interview data and company documentation. The last assumption was that the servant leadership theory was the best theory to understand warehouse supervisors' strategies to reduce employee turnover. I compared servant leadership to contrasting approaches to identify the best conceptual framework.

Limitations

Limitations are inherent weaknesses of a study that can influence the research results (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). A limitation of this study was that the supervisors in the study lived and worked in the state of Georgia. In other states the study phenomenon might be differently expressed, and the results may be different. The growth of the Port of Savannah made warehouses in the state the best choice for the study. A second limitation is that the focus of the study is the warehousing industry. The results of the study may vary based on the industry. The third limitation was that face-to-face interviews were not possible due to the worldwide pandemic caused by COVID-19. Social distancing procedures made conducting interviews virtually or via phone an adequate solution. A fourth limitation was the time that participating supervisors could dedicate to an interview and the member-checking process. The member-checking process required additional time to gather information from the participants through subsequent meetings. Time available for extraneous activities was at a premium due to the warehouse supervisors' work. Finally, my past work experience in the warehousing industry could have affected my interpretation of the findings.

Delimitations

Delimitations are limitations that a researcher sets for their study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The researcher has complete control of the scope of the study. The first delimitation was the small sample size of six warehouse supervisors. Case studies generally have small sample sizes (Guest et al., 2017). The second delimitation was that the study population consisted of warehouse supervisors. Interviewing the supervisors instead of employees kept the sample size small enough to complete qualitative research within a reasonable amount of time. The third delimitation was the restriction of the participants to warehouse supervisors who work in the state of Georgia. The knowledge and experience of the participants may not represent the turnover reduction strategies used in other geographic areas.

Significance of the Study

This study may help warehousing organizations improve business practices by identifying strategies that business leaders can use to reduce the costs associated with employee turnover. The reduction of employee turnover and turnover intention can improve productivity and profitability (Lin, C.-Y. and Huang, C.-K.,2021; Skelton et al., 2019). The resulting relationships between the organization and employees can encourage positive social change.

Contribution to Business Practice

Southeastern Georgia is experiencing unprecedented growth in the logistics marketplace due to the development of the Port of Savannah (Georgia Ports Authority, 2018, 2019). Employee turnover is a key issue that business leaders in the state need to address. Many warehousing organizations incur additional expenses when employees are dismissed or choose to leave the organization. A high turnover rate causes stagnation in the growth of organizations, and it must be minimized and moderated to protect the organization (An, 2019; Dutta & Khatri, 2017). Stagnated growth in the warehouse industry caused by employee turnover, coupled with the explosive growth in the shipping industry, can create problems that can affect ports, local businesses, and the community. Supervisors who use proactive strategies can help control the cost of employee turnover. This qualitative case study's findings may help supervisors implement strategies that reduce employee turnover and costs associated with turnover.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this qualitative case study may provide an opportunity for organizations to impact the surrounding community through strategies that reduce involuntary turnover. When warehouse organizations solve employee turnover, the organization and the surrounding community benefit. Wahlbeck and McDaid (2012) found that unemployed people experience increased mental and physical health problems, higher rates of mortality, and adverse changes in their family relationships. Reducing turnover rates among employees can improve the quality of life for those people, their families, and the communities in which they participate. When the employee turnover rate is high, the government collects less tax revenue, and its ability to support specific public programs decreases (Hoffman & Howard, 2017; Vasquez, 2014). The findings of this qualitative case study may contribute to positive social change by helping employers cultivate a more stable labor force that positively contributes to the community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Scholars write literature reviews to provide an account of what their peers have published about the study phenomenon. In writing a literature review, a researcher can also identify gaps, opposing views, strengths, and weaknesses of the conceptual or theoretical framework for their investigations (Adedayo, 2016). The purpose of this literature review was to synthesize the existing peer-reviewed literature on servant leadership and employee turnover. Critical analysis and synthesis of the literature will be an important part of the review.

I used several databases and search engines to conduct research. I used Google Scholar, a search engine that is linked to Walden University's electronic library, as well as ABI/INFORM, Emerald Management, SAGE Premier, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, Business Source Complete, and EBSCOhost databases. Also, I retrieved federal government publications that contained data on warehousing separations from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics website. The following keywords were used to find articles to answer the research question: *servant leadership*, *servant leadership characteristics*, *servant leadership and turnover*, *servant leadership and employee turnover*, *advantages and disadvantages of servant leadership*, *transformational leadership*, *servant*, *transformational leadership*, *leader-member exchange* (LMX), and *LMX differentiation*. The Walden Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) doctoral study rubric suggests that 85% of the references should be peer-reviewed works published within 5 years of final study approval (Walden

University, 2016). The literature review contains citations from 132 articles and studies. Over 87% of the articles are peer-reviewed, and 87% are from the past 5 years.

Organization of the Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the strategies that warehouse supervisors use to reduce employee turnover. The conceptual framework for this study was servant leadership. The organization of this literature review includes an in-depth analysis of servant leadership. In the first section, I (a) introduce servant leadership, (b) explain the origins of servant leadership, (c) define the characteristics of servant leaders, and (d) examine the advantages and disadvantages of servant leadership. In the second section of the literature review, I explore contrasting and supporting theories of servant leadership. The final section includes a review of the literature on employee turnover. The topics explored in this section include (a) the definition of turnover, (b) the study of turnover, (c) turnover intention, and (d) the effects of turnover on organizations.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership approach where the leader has a primary goal to address followers' needs. Eva et al. (2019) referred to servant leadership as a way for leaders to empower followers through relational, ethical, emotional, and spiritual aspects to guide them to becoming the best version of themselves. Servant leaders help others grow, develop, and promote employees' overall well-being while achieving organizational goals over an extended period (Dutta & Khatri, 2017). Servant leadership has many positive effects on followers.

Trong Tuan (2017) researched how servant leadership influences organizational citizenship behavior and employee knowledge sharing. The study results showed that servant leadership positively correlates with organizational citizenship behavior and knowledge sharing. Sousa and Van Dierendonck (2016) found that servant leadership has a strong relationship with the degree to which the group engages in mutual and collaborative interaction. Servant leadership has a positive effect on internal and external stakeholders. While researching the impact of leadership approaches on internal and external stakeholders, Yang et al. (2017b) found a direct relationship between servant leadership and employee creativity, and team creativity. Employee satisfaction translated into consumer satisfaction. Although servant leadership is a relatively new leadership theory, it has been shown to positively affect leaders, followers, and external stakeholders.

Origins of Servant Leadership

Some scholars have contended that servant leadership has its roots in the teachings of Jesus Christ (Cincala, 2018; Locke, 2019). The idea of prioritizing the needs of followers while achieving organizational goals aligns with Christian disciplines. In his seminal essay, *The Servant as Leader,* Greenleaf (1977) recounted servant leadership's origin. Contemplation about a character named Leo led to the conceptualization of servant leadership. Leo is a character in the short novel *Journey to the East* by Herman Hesse. According to Greenleaf, Leo served a group of travelers by performing menial tasks and uplifting their spirits. As the journey progresses, Leo disappears, and the group begins to deteriorate. Eventually, they abandon the quest. After years of wandering, the narrator of the story finds Leo. He discovers that Leo was the head of the Order that sponsored the journey. Leo was a high-ranking leader, and he played the role of a servant because he lived to serve (Greenleaf, 1977). The actions of Leo inspired the core tenets of servant leadership.

Who Is a Servant Leader?

The leader is the central character in servant leadership. The servant-leader is a servant first. Servant leaders are known to have certain positive qualities. The leaders are goal-oriented, good communicators, situational, dependable, creative, trustworthy, and intuitive (Needham, 2019). Like Leo, the servant leader has a natural inclination to serve (Spears, 1996). As a person serves, eventually, they are inspired to lead. After studying the writings of Greenleaf, Spears (2010) identified 10 specific characteristics that servant leaders possess: (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d) alertness, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to others, and (j) the ability to establish a community. Servant leader characteristics are commonly defined as personality traits that influence an individual's behavior, feelings, and thought processes (Coetzer et al., 2017). These characteristics support the four leadership competencies of servant leadership. Coetzer et al. (2017) performed a literature review of 114 studies and found strong evidence to support servant leadership competencies. Four competencies of servant leadership that many scholars agree on are (a) empowerment, (b) stewardship, (c) building relationships (d) compelling vision. Competency combines the leader's knowledge, skills, traits, and habits (Coetzer et al., 2017; Podgórska & Pichlak, 2019).

The first competency of servant leadership is empowerment. Empowerment is the process of providing employees with the freedom, meaning, competence, self-determination, and autonomy to successfully influence outcomes at work (Begzadeh & Nedaei, 2017; Kim et al., 2017a). Servant leaders who empower followers contribute to the overall success of the organization. Empowered employees demonstrate positive organizational behavior (Begzadeh & Nedaei, 2017). Servant leaders act as stewards of the organization.

The following two competencies are stewardship and building relationships. The act of placing others' needs above their interests and taking responsibility for the organization's well-being is stewardship (Burton et al., 2017). Building meaningful trustful relationships is a natural byproduct of servant leadership. Lacroix and Pircher Verdorfer (2017) hypothesized that servant leadership is negatively correlated with leadership avoidance. Subsequent researchers affirmed the hypothesis. Of the 114 studies that Coetzer et al. (2017) reviewed, 54 of them recognized building relationships as a fundamental role of a servant leader. The fourth competency is a compelling vision. A skill of servant leaders is setting a compelling vision. Servant leaders create trust in followers and inspire follower creativity (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). The vision of the leader can help to influence employees to follow.

Benefits and Disadvantages of Servant Leadership

When servant leaders are hired and promoted from within, organizations improve due to their positive influence. Leaders who understand the needs of followers (i.e., staff) improve the latter's overall efficiency, personal benefits, and working and living conditions (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Dutta & Khatri, 2017; Jang & Kandampully, 2018; Newman et al., 2017). Servant leaders earn the power to influence followers positively.

Servant leaders create positive dyadic relationships with followers. Servant leaders affect followers by encouraging positive professional behaviors and increasing job satisfaction (Turgut et al., 2017). High-quality bonds formed by the dyadic relationship are valuable to both the employee and the organization. Leaders influence followers to improve organizational behavior and increase their value to the organization by allowing the servant leader to earn their trust and respect.

Thao and Kang (2020) discovered that the longer followers work with servant leaders, the more positive influence the leader has. The positive relationship results in an increase in positive organizational behavior. Newman et al. (2017) defined positive organizational behavior as a discretionary behavior that earns no reward and is not a part of regular duties. The behavior promotes the improved functioning of the organization. Many scholars have found that servant leadership positively affects employee organizational behavior (Afsar et al., 2018; Bavik et al., 2017; Dutta & Khatri, 2017; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Newman et al., 2017). Positive organizational behavior can create feelings of increased work engagement in employees.

Employees increase work engagement under the management of servant leadership. Yang et al. (2017a) found that servant leadership predicted employee engagement and job crafting. Scholars have found that leaders that adopt the servant leadership approach influence others through positive actions and relationships (Bao et al., 2018; Kaur, 2018). When employees experience increased work engagement, the turnover rate can decrease.

The trust gained by the servant leader reduces employee turnover intention (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016). Servant leadership significantly reduced voluntary and involuntary turnover by increasing employees' commitment and increasing positive organizational behaviors (Dutta & Khatri, 2017; Jang & Kandampully, 2018). Servant leadership can mitigate the adverse effects of turnover.

Although servant leadership has many positive aspects, ineffective servant leaders can have negative consequences. Many organizations select leaders to achieve organizational goals. A downside of servant leaders is that they primarily focus on improving their followers' well-being (Andersen, 2009). Focusing on followers can cause the servant leader to neglect the organization's goals. Greenleaf (1977) identified the real enemy of servant leadership as fuzzy thinking by good, intelligent, vital people and their failure to lead. Servant leaders who are fuzzy thinkers manifest the adverse effects of servant leadership.

Camm (2019) explained that the aspects of fuzzy thinking appear in three ways; the naïve or unaware, the paternalistic leader, and the authoritarian. The naïve or unaware leaders are not aware of their ignorance. Dunning (2011) credits the source of ignorance as having a lack of experience and knowledge. The unaware leader will influence followers but not have the skills to lead them. What is dangerous is that the naïve servant leader will think he is performing at a high level because of the followers' positive attention. As a result, followers learn improper habits and are ill-equipped to achieve organizational goals.

The paternalistic leader has more awareness and understanding but relies on the father figure's influence. Greenleaf (1977) asserted that followers of servant leaders are likely to become servants themselves because they are healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous. The paternalistic influence can cause followers to adopt child-like behavior. The power of a paternal leader reverses the autonomy that followers gain from servant leadership. Paternal leaders lead the same way a father can lead a family (Hou et al., 2019). The paternal leaders' followers will learn to rely on the leader 4the same way children depend on their parents. They may not independently solve work issues and require a hands-on leadership style as a side effect.

The servant-leader with authoritarian tendencies attempts to hide a controlling leadership style by using servant leadership within a rigid leadership style. Authoritarian tendencies are derived from the characteristics of an authoritarian leader’s behavior. Authoritarian leaders exert authority and control over followers and do not expect to be questioned or challenged (Wang & Guan, 2018). A violation of servant leadership's reciprocal nature happens when the leader is highly skilled in manipulation and low on empathy. Schaubroeck et al. (2017) found that authoritarian leadership harms employees' job performance, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. Servant leaders develop intimate relationships with followers. The relationship and influence can cause positive organizational behavior to degrade. The degradation of positive behavior can harm organizational performance and affect the achievement of organizational goals.

Scholars recognized that an overlap exists between servant leadership and transformational leadership (Hoch et al., 2016). Therefore, transformational leadership is an appropriate contrasting theory. LMX has a positive relationship with servant leadership (Abu Bakar & McCann, 2018; Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2019). The positive nature of the relationship between servant leadership and LMX qualifies the latter as a supporting theory.

Contrasting and Supporting Theories

The following sections will include information about the supporting and contrasting theories of servant leadership. A contrasting theory to servant leadership is transformational leadership. Andersen (2018) compared servant leadership and transformational leadership in four categories: scope, leadership concept, definitions, and organizational outcomes. Servant leadership and transformational differ in all four categories in varying degrees.

LMX theory is a supporting theory to servant leadership. Many scholars have studied the relationship between LMX and servant leadership. Akdol and Arikboga (2017) studied Turkish ICT companies and found that LMX mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. Hanse et al. (2016) conducted a study that showed servant leadership has a strong positive effect on high-quality LMX relationships. While studying the relationship between LMX and servant leadership, Mostafa and El-Motalib (2019) found that servant leadership has a positive relationship with LMX. The association has a significant impact on proactive behavior.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that influences followers to put the organization's needs before their self-interests (Eberly et al., 2017). The transformational leader can achieve organizational goals by creating shared goals, visions, and values (Park & Pierce, 2020). Sun and Henderson (2017) found that transformational leaders generate a feeling in their subordinates that encourages them toward achieving organizational goals.

James V. Downton initially introduced transformational leadership in 1973 (Khan et al., 2018). Downton contrasted transformational rebel leaders to leaders who motivate followers through rewards and punishments. Later, James MacGregor Burns conceptualized transforming leadership by researching political leaders' leadership characteristics (Hoch et al., 2016). Burns (1978) contended that transformational leadership was a process in which leaders and followers can help one another improve their morale and motivation. Transformational leaders influence followers to serve the collective interest of the organization above their own. In later years, Bass (1985) expanded on the idea of transformational leadership. The works of Bass were the basis for the modern definition of transformational leadership.

Bass (1985) theorized that transformational leadership comprises four dimensions or characteristics. Leaders who possess the four characteristics positively impact business performance, reduce worker turnover, improve group functionality, and bolster team spirit (Nohe & Hertel, 2017; Sahu et al., 2018). The four dimensions of transformational leadership are (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individual consideration (Park & Pierce, 2020; Sun & Wang, 2017).

Transformational leaders exhibit idealized influence when followers view leaders as role models (Alwahaibi, 2019). Idealized influence encompasses both attitudes and `behaviors of the transformational leader. Chan et al. (2019) defined idealized influence as the activities that the charismatic leader practices that cause followers to focus on the organizational goals' significance. Idealized influence has a positive relationship with organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Malik et al., 2017; Puni et al., 2018).

Inspirational motivation helps the transformational leader influence followers to align their personal goals with the organization's vision and mission. Workers who followed transformational leaders who possessed inspirational motivation surpassed organizational goals and improved communication (Pilbeam et al., 2016). Transformational leaders used inspirational motivation to establish trust among followers (Jena et al., 2018). Trust in supervisors has been shown to influence turnover and job embeddedness. Purba et al. (2016) verified the relationship between supervisor trust, turnover, and job embeddedness.

The transformational leader who possesses intellectual stimulation influences followers to grow intellectually by solving work problems in new ways (Bass et al., 1987; Grégoris et al., 2017). Intellectual stimulation aids in employee empowerment. Choi et al. (2017) researched how effective transformational leadership styles influence team effectiveness. Choi et al. found that employee empowerment has a significant positive relationship with improving job satisfaction.

Individual consideration refers to how leaders mentor and coach followers (Puni et al., 2018). Mentoring and coaching are more effective when followers view a transformational leader as a role model. Lapointe and Vandenberghe (2018) found that mentoring from supervisors significantly reduced the likelihood of employee turnover.

Benefits and Disadvantages of Transformational Leadership. Transformational leadership is considered one of the premier leadership approaches. Since the conceptualization of the transformational leadership theory, transformational leaders have demonstrated that the idea has advantages. Many organizations have benefited from transformational leadership. Benefits of transformational leadership included reduced turnover, elevated organizational commitment, improved employee engagement, more positive employee work behavior, and increased work performance (Chan, 2020; Eberly et al., 2017; Khattak et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019; Park & Pierce, 2020; Sahu et al., 2018).

Organizations experience improved performance when transformational leaders lead followers. While researching the influence of self-efficacy on the relationship between transformational leadership and volunteers' performance, Chan (2020) found that transformational leadership was positively associated with the volunteers' performance. Khattak et al. (2020) studied 282 employees working in eight different private and public sector organizations from the banking, higher education, telecommunications, and health sectors. Khattak et al. found that transformational leadership influenced continuous improvement efforts.

Followers of transformational leaders have increased job satisfaction. The charisma and influence of the transformational leader improve how the follower feels about the job. Boamah et al. (2018) found that transformational nurse leaders enhance patient care by creating positive and empowering work environments. These leaders provide employees with a clear sense of mission, communicate with employees how their work is important, dedication to organizational goals, and encourage others to follow. In a study of 281 multinational organization employees in China, Li et al. (2019) found that transformational leadership has a positive relationship with innovative work behavior, work engagement, and trust in the leader. Trust in a leader can influence job satisfaction.

Organizations that employ transformational leaders report lower amounts of employee turnover. Job satisfaction was directly related to less turnover for organizations (Lu et al., 2016; Min, 2007). Eberly et al. (2017) examined the effects of transformational leadership on followers' turnover intentions within an extreme context. Extreme context was defined as an environment where extreme events occur and result in personnel's physical, psychological, or material consequences. Eberly et al. found that transformational leadership increases on-the-job embeddedness, indirectly reducing employee turnover intentions. The more extreme the environment, the more significant influence transformational leadership had on the follower’s motivation to stay.

Although popular among scholars and leaders, transformational leadership has criticisms. One criticism is that transformational leadership behavior is a limited resource. Breevaart and Bakker (2018) found that transformational leadership varied from day to day within the same leader. Leaders are encouraged to decide when to be a transformational leader (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). The variance of transformational leadership strategies highlights that transformational leadership is a process and not an inherent characteristic of the leader.

Another criticism of transformational leadership is that no definite, clear definition exists. The constructs of transformational leadership are ambiguous. Fischer (2016) found that it was difficult to observe how transformational leadership influenced positive outcomes. Berkovich (2016) shared a similar viewpoint and asserted that transformational leadership was the byproduct of effective leadership, not a form of leadership.

The main characteristics of transformational leadership drive what defines a transformational leader. Alatawi (2017) argued that leaders who possess only one of the attributes are considered transformational leaders. After studying pertinent literature, Alatawi concluded that idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration do not affect the positive results of transformational leadership. Alatawi supported the idea that conceptualized factors of transformational leadership may not be central to what makes a transformational leader.

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

LMX theory is a leadership approach that focuses on the dyadic relationship between the leader and the follower instead leader's traits and behaviors (Sparrowe, 2020; Zhao et al., 2019). LMX addresses the idea that leaders have different relationships with their followers. Scholars found that many leaders treat all followers differently and establish different relationships with them (Liden et al., 1997; Muzammal et al., 2017;

Quade et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2019). The nature of the relationships between leader and subordinate makes LMX a similar theory to servant leadership.

LMX has beginnings in the seminal works on vertical dyad linkage (Gottfredson et al., 2020). Dansereau et al. (1975) posited that the relationships in each vertical dyad are radically different. A vital component of the research was focusing on the leader's behavior. Dansereau et al. conducted a study 60 managers in high leadership positions at a large public university. Their dyadic relationships spanning over 9 months were the data sources. Dansereau et al. found that followers became separated into trusted assistants and ordinary members. The leader developed a more substantial, developmental relationship with trusted assistants than ordinary members. Dansereau et al. found that leaders concurrently establish leadership behaviors with some followers and supervision behaviors with others. Vertical dyad linkage became an alternative approach to traditional leadership styles.

In later years, scholars expanded vertical dyad linkage to include leaders' influence on followers' actions and behaviors (Muzammal et al., 2017). A pivotal moment in the development of LMX was the work of Graen and Uhl-Bein. Graen and Uhl-Bein (1995) found that LMX was more than the dyadic relationship between leader and follower. The LMX model shifts from the relationship to the process of effectively increasing the effectiveness of those relationships.

LMX has three main life cycle stages; the stranger stage, acquaintance stage, and a mature partnership (Hwang et al., 2020). In the stranger stage, the relationship between the leader and follower is formal. In the acquaintance stage, a series of events improve the relationship's quality (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Finally, a mature partnership develops. A mature partnership represents the pinnacle of the dyadic relationship. A mature partnership's hallmarks are loyalty, support, trust, mutual respect, influence, obligation, and long-term reciprocation from both parties (Graen & Uhl-Bein, 1995).

Differentiation and Its Impact on Leader-Follower Relationship Quality. LMX differentiation is the degree that leaders' relationships with followers of the same group differ in quality (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018; Martin et al., 2018; Xie et al., 2019). The relationships that leaders forge with followers differ in quality. These relationships determine if the follower is in the in-group or out-group. Lee and Chae (2017) found that LMX differentiation had an inverted U-shaped relationship with group performance. LMX differentiation positively affects group performance up to a certain point. After that point, LMX differentiation begins to harm group performance.

Relationship quality can determine the direction and intensity of follower behavior (Jawahar et al., 2018). High-quality relationship exchanges result in positive outcomes for the organization and its followers. Followers in high-quality relationships have been found to have improved communication with managers, better rapport, personal attention, positive emotional support, and experience constructive discourse with leaders (Jawahar et al., 2018; Lee & Varon, 2020; Nguyen, 2020). Lee and Varon found that employees in high-quality relationships demonstrate more loyal behaviors and are less likely to participate in neglectful behaviors than those in low-quality relationships. The relationship's quality determines if the follower is a part of the in-group or the out-group.

The central concept of LMX is that leaders form unique relationships with followers. These relationships ranged from high-quality, in which mutual trust, respect, and obligation are the foundation of the relationship, to low-quality relationships based on economic exchanges or contractual transactions (Seo et al., 2018). Followers who experienced high-quality relationships are in the in-group, while those with a lower quality relationship composed the out-group (Estel et al., 2019). The formation of the groups can have many benefits and disadvantages for organizations.

Advantages and Disadvantages of LMX. LMX has a positive effect on organizations and followers. Employees who participate in high-quality LMX have higher performance levels (Lu & Sun, 2017; Xie et al., 2019). Jawahar et al. (2018) studied 189 high-tech professionals to determine the relationship between LMX, occupational self-efficacy, and counterproductive performance. The authors found that a low-quality relationship restricts occupational self-efficacy and encourages ineffective performance. Employees with high-quality LMX relationships with supervisors had a higher organizational commitment, job satisfaction, employee empowerment, positive organizational behavior, and lower turnover rates (Sparrowe, 2020). Nguyen (2020) found that the relationship between the leader and followers impacted performance through job satisfaction and innovation.

Employees also experience a benefit from LMX. As a result of high-quality relationships, many employees experienced differences in status, attention, autonomy, opportunity, or access to information (Buengeler et al., 2020). When employees perceive a high-quality LMX relationship with a leader, they experience a personal benefit. Ellis et al. (2019) studied 129 employees from different industries. Ellis et al. found that when employees thought they had a higher quality LMX with the leader, they increased positive feelings, such as a sense of belongingness, increased stamina, and decreased emotional exhaustion. LMX has benefits for the organization and the follower, but it also has disadvantages.

LMX has a foundation in the relationships that leaders cultivate with followers. Through interactions with leaders, followers become members of the in-group and the out-group. Many of the positive gains are from the LMX focus on the organization and the in-group members. Immediate supervisors can positively affect organizational citizenship behavior through LMX (Anand et al., 2018).

The disadvantages of LMX are evident with members of the out-group. Jawahar et al. (2018) discovered that members of the out-group feel less effective at their jobs and are more likely to participate in malicious behavior. The source of the negative feelings is repeated experiences of unfavorable treatment from their leader compared to the in-group (Jawahar et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2017b). The treatment of those in the out-group is at the root of many disadvantages of LMX.

How supervisors treat subordinates daily affects how employees perceive LMX relationship quality. The perception of LMX quality can change daily. Ellis et al. (2019) reported the positive effects of the perception of LMX quality. If an employee has a negative perception of LMX quality, the benefits fade. Employees who possessed political communication and relationship-building skills forged high-quality relationships with leaders (Epitropaki et al., 2016). Employees that lacked these skills but demonstrated proficiency in the workplace eventually degraded. As a result, both the organization and the employee experienced harm.

LMX differentiation is a disadvantage of LMX. LMX differentiation comprises three constructs: LMX separation, LMX variety, and LMX disparity (Buengeler et al., 2020). LMX separation happens when employees split into an in-group and an out-group. Distribution of employees along a spectrum from low LMX to high LMX results in LMX variety. LMX disparity happens when a disproportionate number of employees are in the out-group. According to Ellis et al. (2019), employees can have different perceptions of LMX daily. The leader must maintain followers with high-quality LMX and increase those with low-quality LMX daily. The danger is that the leader can focus on those in the in-group and neglect those in the out-group. When leaders do not invest in the relationship with the out-group, it can accelerate the approach to the apex of the inverted U-shaped relationship with group performance that Lee and Chae (2017) discovered.

Employee Turnover

According to Price (2001), employee turnover is the movement of employees away from the organization. Scholars commonly separate turnover into two main categories, voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary turnover occurs when the employee severs the relationship between the organization and themselves. Involuntary turnover is the opposite; the organization ends the relationship with the employee. Hom et al. (2019) believe that scholars and employers are most concerned with voluntary turnover because they have less control over the outcome. Therefore, many conceptual models and theories are concerned with voluntary turnover.

Bills (1925) completed one of the earliest empirical turnover studies. Marion Bills studied 59 clerical workers in a medium-sized life insurance company. Bills discovered that the company experienced an average turnover of 20.5%. Employees from professional or small business owner families were more likely to quit than those who were semi-skilled or unskilled laborers. The results of Bills laid the foundation for using data to forecast outcomes, consequences, or effects of turnover. In the following sections, I further explore turnover. The sections are structured as follows (a) the study of employee turnover, (b) turnover intention, (c) the effects of turnover on organizations, and (d) servant leadership and turnover.

Study of Employee Turnover

Hom et al. (2017) described the 1920s to the late 1960s as the formative years of turnover research. During the 1930s through the 1940s, scholars discovered occupational turnover patterns and correlations between demographics using predictive test validation to determine job tenure. In 1958, James March and Herbert Simon published their seminal work that established a formal voluntary turnover model (Hom et al., 2017; Wilden et al., 2019). March and Simon asserted that employers could influence employee job satisfaction and intention to leave through enticements (Arekar et al., 2016). The work of March and Simon influenced scholars to define turnover over the preceding decades further.

In the late 1970s, William H. Mobley further elaborated on the theory of turnover. Mobley (1977) defined how feelings of dissatisfaction can result in employee turnover. Mobley developed a linear sequence that includes (a) dissatisfaction, (b) thoughts of quitting, (c) evaluation of job search utility and costs of quitting, (d) search intention (e) evaluation of alternatives, (f) comparison of alternatives and present job, (g) quit intentions, (h) quits (Hom et al., 2017; Price, 2001). Later, Mobley et al. (1979) found that age, tenure, overall satisfaction, job content, intentions to remain on the job, and commitment consistently negatively impact turnover. Mobley et al. created a conceptual model that explained the difference between satisfaction and job utility; and non-work values and consequences of turnover behavior.

Another pioneer of turnover theory was James L. Price. Price was responsible for determining what factors motivated people to quit (Price, 2001). Price's research highlighted internal and external factors that contributed to turnover. External factors that influence turnover are opportunity and kinship responsibility. Price defined opportunity as the availability of replacement jobs and kinship responsibility as obligations toward relatives. The availability of replacement jobs and kinship responsibility has many mediating factors that influenced turnover. Internal variables that were determinants of turnover are job satisfaction, organizational commitment, search behavior, and intent to stay (Price, 2001).

The unfolding model was the next milestone in turnover research. Mitchell and Lee (2001) challenged March and Simon's ideas about turnover and developed the unfolding model of voluntary turnover. The unfolding model explains how a single event can influence an employee to voluntarily leave their job through one of four paths (Mitchell & Lee, 2001; Srivastava & Agrawal, 2020). Once the event, which Mitchell and Lee refer to as a shock to the system, the urge to quit is initiated, and the person internally has thoughts of leaving.

Shocks can be positive, negative, or neutral (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). In the first decision path, a positive shock occurs. Lee et al. (1999) identified an example of a positive shock as an unsolicited job offer. The employee quickly decides to leave the organization. When the employee engages on the second path, an adverse organizational event originates the shock event. These events can include not being chosen for a promotion or an unfavorable review (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). The employee then reassesses their commitment to the organization and its relation to their value system. In this case, the employee does not have the option of another job readily available. The employee decides to stay or leave the company based on an internal decision-making process.

In the third path, the employee experiences a positive, neutral, or negative shock. The opportunity for a job alternative instead of the current situation is available. The employee must decide to leave or stay with the organization. A shock does not predicate the fourth path. The employee has negative feelings regarding the organization. When the dissatisfaction becomes unbearable, they choose to leave. Either they can have a job alternative or have no job prospects. Studying the behaviors that lead to voluntary turnover through the unfolding model has helped scholars better understand how and why people quit their jobs (Hom et al., 2017).

Mitchell et al. (2001) further expanded upon the unfolding model and introduced the concept of job embeddedness. The purpose of the study was to define further the factors that make people stay in their jobs and encourage them to leave. Erkutlu and Chafra (2017) defined job embeddedness as the combined forces influencing an individual not to quit their job. A key component of job embeddedness is the links to other aspects, such as people, job fit, and consequences of leaving (Mitchell et al., 2001; Rubenstein et al., 2019). The stronger the employee's bonds, the less likely they are to leave.

Turnover Intention

Scholars often split turnover into two constructs, intentional and actual. An employee's probability of leaving an organization is known as turnover intention (Skelton et al., 2019). Actual turnover happens when the employee leaves the organization. Fukui et al. (2019) stated that actual turnover data is not always available and is challenging to collect reliably. Therefore, many scholars choose to focus on turnover intention.

Employees have many different reasons that they choose to leave an organization. Scholars have reduced reasons to leave to withdrawal categories. The withdrawal categories are push-to-leave, pull-to-leave, or pull-to-stay (Sun & Wang, 2017). Push to leave withdrawal is a predictor that affects how much an employee wants to leave. Pull-to-leave are difficulties that occur when transitioning from an intention to leave to leaving. Pull-to-stay are the factors that encourage an employee to stay.

Scholars have found a relationship between turnover intention and turnover rate (Fukui et al., 2019; Sun & Wang, 2017). Sun and Wang (2017) studied the turnover intentions of 62,115 teachers. Sun and Wang revealed that supervisor actions that positively affect turnover intention also positively affected actual turnover within each school in the system. Teachers did not desire to leave, and a more collaborative culture resulted from positive supervisor actions. Fukui et al. (2019) examined turnover intention and actual turnover among community mental health providers. According to Fukui et al., increased supervisor support reduces turnover intention and actual turnover. A change that affects turnover intention will have the same effect on actual turnover. Reducing turnover intention will reduce actual turnover.

Conversely, Cohen et al. (2016) studied the usefulness of turnover intention as a predictor of actual turnover. The study consisted of 180 federal agencies in the United States. The researchers studied various relationships between performance culture perception, satisfaction, and turnover intention rate. The study results show that individual turnover intentions directly affect actual turnover. The effects of the relationship between turnover are diminished on the organizational level. Cohen et al. found that of the 11 variables that predict turnover, only three predict turnover intention: telecommuters, workload satisfaction, and pay satisfaction. Cohen et al. concluded that turnover intention and actual turnover are not the same at the organizational level, and the variables that predict them are different.

Effects of Turnover on Organizations

Zhao et al. (2018) asserted that employee turnover poses a significant problem for organizations because it damages a skilled workforce through the team's damaged integrity. Organizations bear a heavy burden due to excessive turnover. Dissolving the relationship between the organization and the employee has been found to, directly and indirectly, affect the business. Scholars have concluded that turnover causes many organizations to experience increased hiring and training costs, reduced efficiency, diminished profits, restricted growth, and overall lower employee morale (An, 2019; Dutta & Khatri, 2017; Hom et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2018; Skelton et al., 2019; Vardaman et al., 2018). The cost of losing an employee and hiring a replacement can average about 20% for each employee and will often exceed 100% of the yearly salary for each position vacated (Thacker et al., 2019).

Turnover can have other adverse effects on organizations. Other turnover effects include reduced organizational performance, productivity, and ineffective organizational strategies (Chanodkar et al., 2020; Hausknecht, 2017). During the turnover process, the organization replaces the former employee. The new employees require a period of adjustment that disrupts the flow of operations, costs valuable time and effort, and detracts from achieving organizational goals (Abdali et al., 2020). Therefore, business leaders must learn how to monitor and control turnover.

Organizational Costs. When employees separate from the company, it can cost the organization anywhere from 90% to 200% of their annual salary (Hom et al., 2017). Scholars often classify the cost of turnover into direct and indirect costs (Li, 2017). The direct costs that the organization endures are damaging. Direct costs are paid directly by an organization and include separation costs, replacement costs, and training costs (Grotto et al., 2017). Separation costs are commonly associated with termination or voluntary leaving. Direct separation costs include severance pay, unemployment insurance claims, and continued health benefits (Grotto et al., 2017). Indirect costs include exit processing, time spent updating employee records, and other maintenance activities (Grotto et al., 2017). Once the employee is separated, the organization must incur replacement costs. Direct replacement costs include recruitment, orientation, and training costs (Kang et al., 2018).

Reduced Efficiency. Turnover is an event that causes a disturbance in the organization. According to Grotto et al. (2017), when turnover occurs, the social environment is disrupted, knowledge and skills are lost, the probability of accidents increases, and quality degrades. Turnover can cause a loss of skills and knowledge that employees gain through experience (Wynen et al., 2019). The remaining employees are left to pick up the slack until a new team member is recruited, trained, and begins to produce at an acceptable level. The additional effort by the remaining employees can cause undue stress that may affect their turnover intention; when employees experience high occupational stress levels, burnout, compassion fatigue, and low work-life balance, turnover rates increase (Bhojanna & Srikanth, 2019; McDermid et al., 2019).

Minimal amounts of turnover are healthy for organizations. De Winne et al. (2019) found that productivity increases when turnover levels are low. The relationship between turnover and organizational performance is related to an inverted U shape (An, 2019). When an organization experiences turnover, the first impact is positive, as represented by the apex of the inverted U. As turnover levels continue to increase, the benefits associated with the turnover transitioned to negative impacts on performance (Wynen et al., 2019).

Li and Guthrie (2016) examined the effects of excessive turnover on organizational performance. The focus is on the loss of star performers and the effect on performance. The study population was 4,535 research-oriented academic departments within 329 large universities, from agricultural sciences, biological and biomedical sciences, engineering, physical and mathematical sciences, and social and behavioral sciences. Li and Guthrie found that high levels of employee turnover cause unit-level performance to suffer. Wynen et al. (2019) studied the impact of turnover on performance in 30 divisions of the same agency in Belgium. The results of the study lead to the conclusion that higher levels of turnover negatively affect performance. Both studies support the theory of the inverted U. Turnover positively affects work performance up to a certain point. After turnover reaches a critical level, the organization experiences performance that trends in a negative direction.

Servant Leadership and Turnover

Employees that work in high-stress environments tend to experience high turnover rates (McDermid et al., 2019). According to the OSHA Pocket File, the warehousing industry's fatal injury rate is higher than the national average for all industries (OSHA Pocket File, n.d). Warehousing environments are high-stress environments. Turnover in a high-stress environment can have dangerous and costly consequences. Organizations often employ expedited hiring processes and bypass safety training (Thacker et al., 2019). Servant leadership has a relationship with employee turnover.

Servant leadership affects turnover. Thacker et al. (2019) found that servant leadership can reduce employee turnover rates in solid waste management firms and overwhelmingly positively affect employees. Employees of solid waste management firms are like many employees of high-stress environments. Jang and Kandampully (2018) found that servant leadership influences turnover in unskilled or semi-skilled employees through affective organizational commitment. Many unskilled or semi-skilled employees work in high-stress environments. Turgut et al. (2017) found that servant leadership has a negative and significant relationship with turnover intentions.

Summary and Conclusions

Servant leadership has a strong focus on leader behaviors that satisfy the follower's needs (Liao et al., 2020). Robert Greenleaf theorized servant leadership in his seminal essay, *The Servant as Leader* (Greenleaf, 1977). Beginning as an idea in an essay, the concept of servant leadership has evolved into a widely studied leadership theory.

The leader is the central character in servant leadership. A servant-leader is a servant first. Scholars have found that servant leaders possess certain influential characteristics and competencies (Coetzer et al., 2017; Needham, 2019; Podgórska & Pichlak, 2019; Spears, 1996). Spears (2010) identified ten specific characteristics that servant leaders possess: (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d) being alert, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to others, and (j) establishing a community. Servant leaders also possess four competencies. The four competencies of servant leadership are (a) empowerment, (b) stewardship, (c) building relationships (d) compelling vision (Coetzer et al., 2017).

Like many leadership theories before it, servant leadership has many benefits and disadvantages. Some of the more popular advantages include positive effects on employees, increased job satisfaction, and reduced turnover intention (Afsar et al., 2018; Bavik et al., 2017; Dutta & Khatri, 2017; Jang & Kandampully, 2018; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Newman et al., 2017; Turgut et al., 2017). The disadvantages of servant leadership mainly originate from the flaws of the leader. Greenleaf (1977) identified servant leadership's weaknesses as fuzzy thinking by good, intelligent, vital people and failure to lead. Servant leaders who are fuzzy thinkers manifest the adverse effects of servant leadership.

This literature review contains information about the supporting and contrasting servant leadership theories. A supporting theory to servant leadership is LMX. Scholars have found that LMX and servant leadership have a positive relationship (Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2019). Transformational leadership is a contrasting theory to servant leadership—the main difference between the two theories is the leader's focus. Transformational leaders have an organizational focus instead of a follower focus (Eberly et al., 2017).

Employee turnover history and the relationship between servant leadership and employee turnover concludes the literature review. Thacker et al. (2019) found that servant leadership can reduce employee turnover rates and positively affect employees. Jang and Kandampully (2018) found that servant leadership influences turnover in unskilled or semi-skilled employees. Turgut et al. (2017) found that servant leadership has a negative and significant relationship with turnover.

Transition

Section 1 of this doctoral study examined the specific business problem and purpose of the study. In the remaining parts of Section 1, the nature of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, and the significance of the study was introduced. A review of the relevant professional and academic literature completes the section. In Section 2, I reiterate the purpose of the study. The role of the researcher is elaborated upon, as well as procedures to mitigate bias. An explanation of the research participants, research method and design, population sampling, and ethical research discussion follow. Section 3 includes the findings of the research, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations, and reflections.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I review the research method and the study's design. Section 2 begins with a restatement of the purpose statement from Section 1. In this section, I review the role of the researcher in the data collection process, ethics, bias, and the interview protocol. The participants' eligibility criteria and strategies to gain access and establish a working relationship are defined. Next, in describing the nature of the study, I explain the research method and design. I then explain the population and sampling of the study before transitioning to details of the ethical procedures that I followed in conducting the study. Finally, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, and data analysis are explained. Section 2 concludes with a transition and summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that warehouse supervisors use to reduce employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of six general supply chain supervisors who manage employees in Georgia warehouses who have implemented successful turnover reduction strategies. The implications for positive social change include the potential for organizations to help improve the surrounding community through employee retention. Low turnover rates positively affect the employee's physical and mental health and the community's tax collections and social programs (Skelton et al., 2019). The findings from this research may allow workers to remain employed for longer, thus increasing their contribution to the community and their families.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers are considered the research instrument in qualitative studies (McGrath et al., 2019). Researchers must be mindful of how they can influence participant consent, data collection, and analysis (Geddis-Regan et al., 2021; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Researchers use a qualitative methodology to capture the target population's perspective (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). The role of the researcher is essential in the completion of a doctoral study. The researcher recruits the participants, collects data, analyzes the data, and evaluates the findings.

Qualitative researchers must recognize that their personal experiences and biases can influence how they interact with participants (Karagiozis, 2018). The researcher's bias is a concern because personal bias can cause the researcher to misrepresent the participant's experiences (Wadams & Park, 2018). I previously held the position of assistant general manager of a warehouse in southeastern Georgia. The workforce was comprised mainly of semiskilled or unskilled labor. Managers who had direct contact with employees were my subordinates. One of my responsibilities was to hire the labor company that supplied workers and set parameters on the type of worker that would fit into the organization. I oversaw the replenishment of employees after involuntary and voluntary turnover occurred. These experiences allowed me to recognize the negative impact that businesses and employees experienced from turnover. Yin (2017) asserted that a researcher must understand the business problem to produce a high-quality case study. Firsthand knowledge of the effects of turnover created a desire to research how successful supervisors reduce turnover. Because I no longer work in the warehousing industry, my relationship with the research participants was only that of an outside observer.

Researchers can experience ethical challenges when conducting research. Cumyn et al. (2019) found that researchers usually embody three roles in research: reflective practitioners, protectors of participants, and technicians. Reflective practitioners integrate ethics into their mindset at each stage of the research. Researchers fill the role of protector of participants. Throughout the doctoral study, researchers protect participants by (a) making considerations on how to minimize harm, (b) continuously practicing the process of informed consent, and (c) engaging in ongoing communication until the study is complete (Cumyn et al., 2019). Finally, the researcher must ensure technical compliance with the code of ethics set forth by regulatory agencies. These roles relate to the three guiding principles of the *Belmont Report*. The three principles are (a) boundaries between practice and research, (b) basic ethical principles which include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, and (c) applications of the general principles to the conduct of research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Reflective practitioners place boundaries between practice and research by implementing ethics in each part of the research. Researchers protect participants by following the basic ethical principles outlined in the *Belmont Report*. Finally, technicians consider informed consent, risk/benefit assessment, and how the research subjects are selected (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Researchers must collect, evaluate data, and determine a conclusion. Researchers are human, and it is impossible to omit bias completely (Zapf & Dror, 2017). Because the researcher is the data collection instrument, not mitigating a personal lens/worldview can create bias within the research. In qualitative research, some accepted ways that a researcher can mitigate bias are conducting unstructured semistructured interviews, engaging in bracketing, seeking data saturation, using an interview protocol, partaking member checking, and incorporating triangulation (Peterson, 2019; Wadams & Park, 2018). I sought to mitigate bias by implementing these strategies. Eliminating personal bias is impossible, but researchers can reduce it to a manageable level.

Yeong et al. (2018) explained that a reliable interview protocol is imperative to obtaining the best quality interview data. Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggested that qualitative interviewers use a four-phase process to further refine interview protocols. The four phases consist of the following actions: (a) ensuring that interview questions align with research questions, (b) constructing an inquiry-based conversation to encourage the participant to engage in conversation about the topic, (c) receiving feedback on interview protocols, and (d) piloting the interview protocol through practice. Researchers implement reliable interview protocols to mitigate bias and collect quality data.

Participants

Qualitative researchers deliberately choose sample participants to provide information to answer the research question (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The interview participants had the knowledge and experience necessary to answer interview questions. The participants in the study were warehouse supervisors who directly supervised frontline employees. These supervisors had experience managing employee turnover in distribution centers. The supervisor must have been employed for at least 1 year and worked in Georgia.

Over 3 million square feet of warehousing space was available within 30 miles of the Port of Savannah (Dillon, 2020). The Port of Savannah also has the largest concentration of retail distribution centers on the East Coast (Dillon, 2020). Given the abundance of warehousing facilities in the local area, gaining access to participants required a well-focused strategy. I used my personal network to achieve the required number of participants. I have worked in the warehousing industry for several years and have maintained contacts in the field.

Establishing rapport and building trust are imperative to cultivating a working relationship with participants before and during the interview (McGrath et al., 2019). Participants should understand the research in which they have chosen to participate. McGrath et al. (2019) suggested that researchers present participants with a summary of the purpose of the research written in lay terms. The summary explains the topic of the interview and why it is essential. Before interviewing the participants, reviewing participant rights, privacy clauses, guidelines, and confidentiality procedures increases trust (Petrova et al., 2016). Following a specific interview protocol with an open and curious attitude helps build rapport (McGrath et al., 2019; Yeong et al., 2018). The development of rapport before and during the interview process helps the member-checking process. I established a working relationship with participants by summarizing the purpose of the research in lay terms, reviewing participant rights, privacy clauses, guidelines, and confidentiality procedures, and following a specific interview protocol with an open and curious attitude.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Scholars may choose to use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research methods to answer research questions (Khaldi, 2017). Qualitative research has benefits that quantitative and mixed methods do not. Qualitative research assists the researcher in better understanding the nature and complexity of the phenomenon and allows the researcher to investigate the phenomenon in the natural environment while answering what, how, and why questions (Bansal et al., 2018; Basias & Pollalis, 2018). According to Rahman (2020), qualitative research allows the researcher to gather detailed descriptions of participants' opinions, experiences, and feelings while interpreting the meanings of their actions. I chose a qualitative method because the purpose of the study was to discover what strategies supervisors use to reduce turnover. A qualitative methodology allowed me to study turnover reduction strategies in the working environment and better understand how the strategies reduce turnover.

One way to collect data using a qualitative methodology is to conduct participant interviews. Researchers can gain rich and detailed information about an individual's experiences by conducting interviews (Majid et al., 2017). In this study, I examined warehouse supervisors' strategies to reduce employee turnover. By conducting individual interviews, I was able to answer what, how, and why questions about employee turnover strategies.

Researchers use qualitative research methods to explore various concepts. Researchers can use interviews, focus groups, and observations to collect data (Bleiker et al., 2019). The main form of data collection for this study was participant interviews. Therefore, there were no numerical data or variables to isolate.

The purpose of this study was to examine strategies that warehouse supervisors use to reduce turnover. Seeking the correlation, relationship, or causality of the data was not an aim of this study. Quantitative researchers cannot determine how people interpret their actions or the actions of others (Rahman, 2020). The interpretation of the actions of the warehouse supervisors in the study was paramount to examining turnover reduction strategies. The quantitative research methodology was not appropriate for this study.

When researchers desire to collect qualitative and quantitative data in one project, they employ the mixed-method research design (Fàbregues & Molina-Azorín, 2017). The mixed-methods approach can overcome many limitations of qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Turner et al., 2017). By definition, a researcher must use both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a mixed-method approach. A mixed-methods approach was not appropriate because this study had no quantitative aspects.

Research Design

Phenomenology, ethnography, and case study are the three types of qualitative research designs that I considered. The advantage of a case study is that the researcher can identify patterns and characteristics, investigate, and understand complex issues in real-world settings. (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017; Heale & Twycross, 2018). A multiple-case study allows the researcher to compare multiple cases and gain a more comprehensive perspective of the research questions (Heale & Twycross, 2018). I chose a multiple-case study design to identify strategies that reduce employee turnover in the warehousing environment.

Researchers use a phenomenological research design to understand the lived experiences of people through careful and thorough data gathering (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Neubauer et al., 2019). The purpose of a phenomenological research methodology is to describe the participants' experiences and how it was experienced (Neubauer et al., 2019). An advantage of phenomenological research design is that it allows a researcher to effectively describe subjective realities, insights, beliefs, motivation, and actions (Qutoshi, 2018). Phenomenological research design was not appropriate for this study. The focus of the study was the strategies that supervisors use to reduce employee turnover, not the lived experiences of the supervisors.

Ethnographic researchers focus on culture and the way of life of a group of people (Fusch et al., 2017). Furthermore, ethnographic researchers learn the feelings, beliefs, and meanings of relationships between people within their culture or respond to a changing phenomenon (Fusch et al., 2017). If the basis of the study were the lived experiences of employees affected by turnover reduction policies, the ethnographic design would be appropriate. Because I sought to explore turnover reduction strategies employed by supervisors, ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study.

Data saturation is an essential aspect of validity for qualitative studies (Alam, 2021). Due to the Port of Savannah, logistic organizations in southeastern Georgia have experienced unprecedented growth (Georgia Ports Authority, 2018, 2019). Because of the growth in the area, distribution centers of various sizes have moved into the local area. Many warehouses in the study area did not have enough supervisors to allow me to reach data saturation. Therefore, including participants from many different distribution centers helped to ensure data saturation.

Data saturation occurs when no new themes appear from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Scholars recognize data saturation as evidence of rigor (Constantinou et al., 2017; Guest et al., 2020). To aid in data saturation, I used multiple sources of data. These sources included interview transcripts, government data, and publicly available company documents. In each interview, I followed the same interview protocol and used the same interview questions.

Population and Sampling

Researchers create sampling plans to specify a sampling method, a sample size, and a procedure for recruiting participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). A sampling strategy informs how researchers will choose participants. The sampling method helps researchers gain an in-depth insight into the phenomenon (Gentles & Vilches, 2017). In this study, I chose purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling involves the researcher purposely selecting the sample that will be most informative in answering the research question (Farrugia, 2019; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Many researchers use purposeful sampling to recruit participants with high levels of expertise and gain a higher response rate (Rahman, 2020).

Data saturation is imperative to ensure validity. Data saturation occurs when no new themes emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Guest et al. (2006) found that qualitative data saturation occurred within 12 interviews and that basic themes were evident as early as six. To ensure data saturation, I interviewed participants until no new themes emerged.

Moser and Korstjens (2018) found that knowledgeable participants about a phenomenon provide the richest information regarding that phenomenon. I identified supervisors through personal referrals and LinkedIn groups to select participants to interview. The participants for the study were six distribution center supervisors in the state of Georgia who have worked in the role for at least 1 year. These supervisors actively employed strategies to reduce turnover. All potential participants received an email with my contact information, a copy of the informed consent form, and information about the study. Participants provided written acknowledgment via email if they agreed to participate in the study voluntarily.

When this study was conducted, the United States were under social distancing recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that minimized the impact of COVID-19 on individuals. These recommendations included the use of masks, ventilation, hygiene, and space and distance guidelines (Massetti et al., 2022). Social distancing guidelines may remain in place for a time to come (Hill et al., 2021). Face-to-face or virtual communication are options for conducting interviews (Rahman, 2020). Archibald et al. (2019) found that Zoom is preferable for qualitative data collection because it is easy to use, cost-effective, and has data management features and security options. Also, many interview participants rated Zoom above other options such as face-to-face, telephone, and other videoconferencing services, platforms, and products

(Archibald et al., 2019). Therefore, I used virtual communication and in-person interviews to gather data. A virtual or in-person interview was scheduled with each participant considering the dates and times convenient for them. Before the interview, the participant replied to my email to indicate their consent. Any questions or concerns were answered via email or phone.

Ethical Research

Informed consent is a foundational aspect of the relationship between the researcher and the participant that promotes understanding and the voluntary nature of the study (Axson et al., 2017; Rodriguez-Patarroyo et al., 2021). Before the interview, each participant received and replied to the email with the informed consent form. The IRB approval number for this study is 01-13-22-0672534.

Participants retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Fernandez Lynch, 2020). I informed the participants that they should let me know if they desired to withdraw from the study via email or verbally. A reason may be provided if desired but is not required. Participation is voluntary, and at the end of the study, the participants received a modest gift card and a handwritten thank you card.

The *Belmont Report* guides researchers in ethical actions during research. The three principles of the *Belmont Report* are beneficence, justice, and respect for persons (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). I followed the guidelines set forth by Walden University's ethical standards and The *Belmont Report* throughout this study. To further ensure the ethical protection of the participants, I asked the same interview questions during each session. During semistructured interviews, researchers use predetermined questions but can ask clarifying questions to learn more about the response (McGrath et al., 2019). When the opportunity was presented, I asked clarifying questions to gain a deeper understanding of the response given by an individual participant.

Information that is not relevant to the research questions and the theory should be excluded from participant description (Lancaster, 2017). To preserve anonymity, each participant was assigned a unique identifier such as S1, S2, S3, and S4. Researchers must make strides to safeguard confidentiality (Martin-Ferreres et al., 2019). To preserve confidentiality, the names of the participants and companies were included in the final study. To further protect the confidentially of the participants, the data will be securely stored for 5 years.

Data Collection Instruments

Qualitative researchers are the primary data collection instrument. According to Yin (2017), qualitative researchers ask relevant questions, listen attentively, adapt to new opportunities, maintain a firm grasp on the study, and professionally conduct the research from an ethical standpoint. Semistructured interviews allow for a structured, flexible method to gather rich data through face-to-face, telephone, email, or virtual meeting software such as Skype and Zoom (Brown & Danaher, 2019; Peesker et al., 2019). The primary data collection method I used was semistructured, in-depth interviews in a virtual and face to face setting. The use of secondary data has become an accepted part of the research process due to a culture of data sharing, open access to scientific data and research, and increased professionalism in education, practice, and research (O'Connor, 2020). The secondary data collection method I used was accessing publicly available documents, data, and documents provided by participants.

The interview protocol and the use of a computer with virtual meeting software are the data collection instruments. An interview protocol (a) helps the researcher stay focused and cover all the relevant topics of the interview, (b) maintains control of the interview, (c) helps to promote natural conversations from the research questions, and (d) provides a way to maintain the flow of the interview (Arsel, 2017). A good interview protocol is critical in gathering rich qualitative information from participants and facilitating the interview process consistently (Yeong et al., 2018). The interview protocol was used for each interview.

According to Weller et al. (2018), open-ended questions help the researcher deeply explore topics, understand specific processes, and identify potential causes of observed correlations. The interview questions are composed of open-ended questions that align with the research question. Zoom is easy to use, inexpensive, efficient for managing data, and secure (Archibald et al., 2019). Interview sessions were conducted in person and via Zoom. Zoom can record audio and video and generate searchable transcripts for each session (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., n.d.). With participant permission, I employed the recording feature of Zoom or a personal recorder to document the audio and video of the interview.

Validity and reliability can increase transparency and decrease researcher bias in qualitative research (Mohajan, 2017). Member checking is a standard tool to ensure validity, provide a reflective opportunity for participants to check the accuracy of the data, and an opportunity to offer reason and additional explanations (Candela, 2019; Varpio et al., 2017). I used member checking and an interview protocol to enhance validity and reliability. Each participant had the opportunity to member check the data summary to verify accuracy and my interpretation. The interview protocol that was followed data collection instruments is in the appendix.

I did not use a pilot study. Lowe (2019) defined a pilot study as a small feasibility study that tests the methods planned for a more significant, more rigorous, or confirmatory investigation. Pilot studies are not meant to answer the research question but to evaluate the methods planned for an investigation (Lowe, 2019). Utilizing a pilot study was not appropriate for this study. The purpose of the study was not to launch a large-scale study but to answer the research question.

Data Collection Technique

An interview protocol guides the interview process. The interview protocol consists of three main sections: a brief introduction, the procedure for establishing informed consent, and interview questions (Arsel, 2017). As society has gained more experience with COVID-19 and social distancing, guidelines continue to evolve. Therefore, interview sessions were virtual, and one member checking session was in person. Gray et al. (2020) found that qualitative interview participants thought that Zoom was convenient and easy to use, promoted the discussion of personal topics due to the interface, accessible from different types of devices, and saved time.

Yin (2017) explained that interviews should be in a comfortable, quiet environment free from distractions. The participant chose the environment. Interview participants can face problematic issues that affect virtual interviews (Joshi et al., 2020). Before the meeting, guidance was given on choosing an optimal environment for maximizing audio and video quality in virtual interviews. Each participant received the informed consent form before the interview via email. The informed consent form included the background and purpose of the study, the expected length of the interview, a voluntary disclaimer, risk and benefits for participants, an incentive statement, privacy information, and instructions for asking questions before starting the interview. Participants responded to the email with the words "I consent." I reviewed the consent form again at the beginning of the interview.

Arsel (2017) recommends that researchers avoid proper unstructured interviews and ensure the interviews have a structure and focus. My interview protocol details what I did and said throughout the interview process. The interview protocol was comprised of three main parts: (a) a simple description of the purpose of the interview, (b) a concise explanation of the interview procedure with an invitation to the interviewee to ask questions about the study and procedures as well as the procedure for establishing informed consent, and (c) the interview questions.

Qualitative interviews are used as a data collection method that is appropriate for understanding the interviewee's subjective perspective of a phenomenon (McGrath et al., 2019). I used semistructured interviews to secure the participant's perspectives. Open-ended questions can provide access to specific participant insights (Singar & Couper, 2017). To answer the research question, I asked open-ended questions. Each interview will have audio and video recorded by the Zoom software. Zoom can record audio and video and generate searchable transcripts for each session (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., n.d.). Recordings of interview sessions are more precise than handwritten notes (Yin, 2017).

After the data were collected, I checked the accuracy of the Zoom transcription with the audio and video recording. Participants can check the accuracy of the data through member checking (Candela, 2019). After the interview, I transcribed the interview data into a Word document. The results of the interview were summarized for the member-checking process. The summary results were emailed to the participant, and a follow-up meeting was scheduled to review and discuss the accuracy of the summary. If the participant disagreed with the summary, I was prepared to offer a subsequent meeting for further discussion.

Triangulation enhances validity through the convergence of findings, sources, or methods (Farquhar et al., 2020). Secondary documents were used to achieve triangulation. I identified appropriate documents through a web search. I also asked the participants to provide appropriate supporting documents that align with their responses with the caveat that they are publicly available.

Semistructured interviews are advantageous and disadvantageous to qualitative researchers. Semistructured interviews allow researchers to collect open-ended data, explore participant thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a particular topic and deeply explore personal or sensitive issues (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Interviews also have disadvantages. Researchers must have skills and practice in interviews to be effective (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Semistructured interviews require a relatively extensive commitment of time and resources from the researcher and the participant (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017).

Data Organization Technique

Researchers use data from multiple sources to identify patterns in interviews and keep accurate data records (Twining et al., 2017; Yin, 2017). I collected audio and video interview files, transcripts, organizational documents, and member-checked documents. Martin-Ferreres et al. (2019) stated that researchers must make strides to safeguard participant confidentiality. Audio and video interview files were assigned a file name that corresponds with the unique identifier of each participant and the date of the interview. All paper documents were scanned and stored on a USB drive. The paper documents were shredded upon scanning. The electronic files were named according to the document's title and the business from which it originates.

NVivo is a software that allows researchers to store, manage, query, and analyze unstructured data, including text, images, audio, video, and other data types (Phillips & Lu, 2018). All data types were loaded into NVivo to assist with developing, categorizing, and organizing codes. The electronic data were stored on the USB and deleted from the computer's main hard drive. The USB will be stored in a locked safe within my home office for 5 years after the study is published. After 5 years, the USB drive will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Leo (2019) stated that data analysis aims to reduce collected data in a continuous process by organizing or coding, comparing, and interpreting the data. The interview data consisted of participant interview transcripts, handwritten notes, audio and video recordings, and miscellaneous company documents. Using the data analysis process, I member checked the data, condensed the data into themes, and triangulated the data.

I used thematic analysis during the data analysis process. Thematic analysis is a method that helps researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns in a set of data (Scharp & Sanders, 2019). The researcher can closely examine different viewpoints of participants, evaluate similarities and differences, generate unanticipated insights, summarize key features of an extensive data set, provide an organizational structure to the data, and help to produce a clear and organized final report (Nowell et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined a thematic analysis method composed of six steps to promote deliberate and rigorous research. I employed the six steps of thematic analysis to process the interview data. The six steps that I followed were (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) generating coding categories, (c) generating themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (e) producing the report. Following the six steps provided a logical and sequential process for the data analysis.

Step 1: Familiarization with the Data

Qualitative researchers must immerse themselves in the data by taking and reviewing notes, identifying patterns and themes to develop a coding framework (Cleland, 2017). I reviewed the data from both the interviews and the documents. The data was also reviewed extensively through transcription and the process of loading the data into NVivo. A researcher will become familiar with the data through repeated and active reading (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). I became familiar with the data through reading and rereading the data while taking notes on possible codes and themes.

Step 2: Generation of Coding Categories

Coding data allows the researchers to identify the characteristics of the data through interaction and reflection (Nowell et al., 2017). Computer-assisted qualitative data software, such as NVivo 13, can increase the speed of data analysis, help with more rigorous analysis, allow for more consistent coding, and allow for a deeper analysis of the data. (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Cypress, 2019). I used NVivo to generate codes for the data.

Step 3: Generation of Themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), researchers use the coded data to develop themes in the third phase of thematic analysis. Themes are actively created by the researcher and correlate data that may not be connected and capture the implicit meaning of the data (Clarke & Braun, 2018). I used the coded data to construct common themes and sub-themes that align with the research questions.

Step 4: Review of Themes

The fourth step in the thematic analysis is reviewing themes. Reviewing themes is a process in which the researcher reviews and revises the codes and themes of the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). I reviewed and fine-tuned the themes and codes to achieve alignment with the research question.

Step 5: Definition and Naming of Themes

The fifth step is to define and name the themes. Researchers should determine why the themes are important and how they fit into the story the theme tells (Nowell et al., 2017). Themes are patterns that capture essential information about the research questions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). When identifying the essence of the themes, I ensured the correlation with the literature. I reviewed the themes to determine the underlying meanings concerning the research question.

Step 6: Production of the Report

Producing the report is the final step of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Scharp & Sanders, 2019). The report's contents should be concise, consistent, logical, nonrepetitive, and engaging (Nowell et al., 2017). The report must support the themes identified in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the data was coded, grouped into themes, and analyzed, I reported the findings.

Reliability and Validity

The quality and rigor of a study are established through reliability and validity (Cypress, 2017; Hayashi et al., 2019). Mohajan (2017) stated that reliability and validity are fundamental instruments to reduce bias in research. Reliability and validity are important to qualitative research (Spiers et al., 2018). Researchers use credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to assess reliability, validity, and trustworthiness (Cypress, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Soroush et al., 2018).

Reliability

Reliability ensures that the results are consistent over time by reducing errors and biases (Hayashi et al., 2019; Yin, 2017). Reliability is used to address dependability in qualitative research. Implementing specific methods, such as member checking, an interview protocol, and triangulation, enhance dependability. Member checking can increase the study's credibility, increase the research's fidelity, and further include the participants in the research (Iivari, 2018). All participants were provided the opportunity to verify, clarify, or elaborate on the interpretation of their answers. Consistency in the administration of interviews is achieved using an interview protocol (Yeong et al., 2018). The interview protocol (see Appendix) was used for each interview.

Validity

In qualitative research, validity can be synonymous with rigor, and without rigor, the research would be considered worthless (Hayashi et al., 2019). Validity supports data appropriateness which enhances the accuracy of the participant experiences (Spiers et al., 2018). Validity can be demonstrated through credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation (FitzPatrick, 2019; Hennink & Kaiser, 2020).

Credibility refers to the degree the study results are accurate and align with the purpose of the research and the experiences of the participants (Soroush et al., 2018). Credibility can be demonstrated through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers draw out responses and actively engage the participant during the interview process (Roberts, 2020). I ensured prolonged engagement through semistructured interviews and asking probing questions. Persistent observation is achieved by examining the data, developing codes and themes, reading, rereading the data, and analyzing the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The thematic analysis method comprises six steps that help researchers conduct research deliberately and rigorously (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I employed the six steps of thematic analysis to process the interview data. Triangulation can be achieved by using multiple research approaches (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I employed the thematic analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke. To achieve methodological triangulation, I conducted semistructured interviews, took notes, digitally recorded the interviews, and examined government employment data and secondary documents. All participants had the opportunity to member check the interpretation of the data. Heesen et al. (2019) stated that methodological triangulation is advantageous because using multiple methods to reach a conclusion is better than using a singular method. Methodological triangulation can reinforce the dependability of the research (Fusch et al., 2018). I conducted semistructured interviews, took notes, digitally recorded the interviews, and examined government employment data and secondary documents to achieve methodological triangulation.

The researcher's responsibility is to achieve transferability by providing thick descriptions so that researchers can determine if the results apply to other situations (Maxwell, 2021; Soroush et al., 2018). Soroush et al. (2018) suggest that thick descriptions describe behavior, experiences, and the context of those behaviors and experiences. According to Moon (2019), triangulation is a method to increase transferability. I increased transferability by using different methods to collect data, conducting a multiple-case study, interviewing various participants, and using different data sources.

Confirmability occurs when the researcher and participants have a high degree of agreement concerning the accuracy and relevance of the meanings of the data (Soroush et al., 2018). Each interview participant was provided the opportunity to member check the interpretation of their interview data. Korstjens and Moser (2018) explained that confirmability relates to the neutrality of the study. An effective strategy to ensure confirmability is an audit trail so an auditor can study the transparency of the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I provided a comprehensive account of the research process. Each step of compiling, organizing, and analyzing the data was reported within the study.

Data saturation can improve the validity of a study and is often used to assess the quality of the study (Hennink & Kaiser, 2020). Data saturation is reached when no new themes or codes emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I ensured data saturation by interviewing participants until no new themes occurred. To further aid in data saturation, I used multiple sources of data. These sources will include interview transcripts, government data, and publicly available company documents.

Transition and Summary

At the beginning of Section 2, I restated the purpose statement. In this section, I explained the role of the researcher and detailed information about the participants. Next, I explained the research method and design, a justification of the participants, and a discussion about ethical research. Finally, I described the data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, data analysis, and strategies to ensure the reliability and validity of this study. In Section 3, I presented the research findings, provided an application to professional practice, reviewed the social change implications, and suggested recommendations for action and further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that warehouse supervisors use to reduce employee turnover. The participants consisted of six general supply chain supervisors who managed employees in Georgia warehouses and had implemented successful turnover reduction strategies. To answer the research question, I conducted semistructured interviews via Zoom and reviewed publicly available organizational documents. After each interview, I transcribed responses for accuracy,then summarized for data analysis and member checking. The transcribed interview responses were uploaded into NVivo. The findings from this research show three distinct areas that managers can address to reduce turnover in warehousing organizations: (a) employee relationships, (b) training and opportunities to perform, and (c) salary. Section 3 includes the presentation of the findings, discussion of the study's application to the professional environment and implications for positive social change, recommendations for action and research, reflections, and a conclusion to the study.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question was, What strategies do warehouse supervisors use to reduce turnover? I conducted semistructured interviews via Zoom and in person. Finally,I reviewed organizational documents to answer the research question. The participants were six warehouse supervisors who worked in Georgia. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a thematic analysis method composed of six steps. I employed the six steps from Braun and Clarke to analyze the data, generate the coding categories and themes, and recognize patterns in the data. I used NVivo 12 for coding, mind-mapping, and identifying themes. The findings suggest that successful supervisors focus on (a) employee relationships, (b) training and opportunities to perform, and (c) salary.

Theme 1: Employee Relationships

The first theme that became apparent from the data was employee relationships. Trust-based social exchange relationships are developed when servant leaders show concern for followers and treat them fairly (Elche et al., 2020). Organizational performance can degrade because of bad relationships between employees and employers; therefore, managers must create and maintain a good relationship with their employees (Samwel, 2018). Every participant spoke about developing and maintaining employee relationships, and this theme comprised 46% of all responses. Based on the data analysis, two subthemes of employee relationships emerged from the data: communication and knowing the employees (see Table 1). Included in those responses were the subthemes of communication (21%), knowing the employees (17%), and other (8%).

Table 1

Percentage of Responses with References to Employee Relationships Theme and Subthemes

Key construct	%
Employee relationships (overall theme)	46
Communication (subtheme)	21
Knowing the employees (subtheme)	17
Other	8

Communication

Communication skills are imperative to obtaining positive outcomes (Chater & Courtenay, 2019). Each supervisor in the study remarked that supervisors must take the time to interact and talk to subordinates. S1 and S3 spoke about the necessity for supervisors to explain the expectations of the job and the policies and procedures. S3 does not assume that the workers fully understand the policies. S3 reported reviewing human resource policies about the treatment of others on a weekly basis. S1 emphasized communicating that every job constantly changes in the warehouse, and workers must be flexible and adjust accordingly.

One way that all participants communicated with employees was through daily morning meetings. Daily morning meetings can improve communication with staff and increase efficiency without taking value work time (Paleri et al., 2021; Panayiotou et al., 2020). Morning meetings should be at the same time each day, be brief, and be completed in about 20 minutes (Schatz & Bergren, 2022). Each participant reported using morning meetings to communicate with employees about organizational policy, safety, employee issues, and forecasting. Some supervisors use a morning meeting template, while others create daily lists to guide communication. Based on the morning meeting template supplied by the participants and the responses given, successful supervisors cover daily tasks and assignments, group performance feedback, announcements, forecasted workload, safety issues and reminders, acknowledgments, and employee questions.

Communication from leadership is critical in earning followers' trust and acceptance in the workplace (Usadolo & Usadolo, 2019). Supervisors have an essential role in organizational communication. S1 said

> a lot of times, a supervisor is the person that is between the employee and upper management. So that person has to be able to deliver the message both ways, upper and downward, to the employees in the corporate to make it a smooth transition of any kind of information.

S1 submitted a training document for effective communication. The documentation detailed several tools that help supervisors gain a better understanding, buy-in, and decision-making from employees. The tools included huddle meetings, visual communication boards, monthly planning, quarterly updates, and annual reviews.

Another similarity that surfaced was being honest with employees. S2 expressed that when supervisors lose trust in the leadership, they will lose trust in the company. This loss of trust eventually leads to increased rates of turnover. S4 spoke about respecting followers by being upfront and honest with them. Positive feedback from supervisors is a tool that can affect the performance and attitude of employees (Su & Xiao, 2022). Su and Xiao (2022) stated that positive feedback demonstrates respect for subordinates and that employees perceive the feedback as recognition, encouragement, and support. S4 said,

> Because most times, people just quit, they quit and leave jobs. Well, at first, it seems like it's about the money. But in actuality, that's only a small part of it; they

> just want to feel like they're important and feel like they're treated well. And that they're not just objects.

S5 said that the strategy that works is connecting with people on a more emotional level in addition to incentives.

Daily communication and performance feedback can increase employee motivation and shape employee attitudes (Lee et al., 2019). Every participant agreed that regular communication and feedback are crucial to reducing turnover. To obtain the full benefits of feedback, supervisors should identify positive behavior and results that originate from their knowledge, skills, or talents (Rony et al., 2020). S1 suggested that supervisors should try to give positive feedback to all subordinates. S1 said,

> there's something about every employee that they do, right. So, try to, of course, address when they do something wrong, but find something daily that you can say to them that they're doing right, even if it's putting a seatbelt on, on that forklift, or picking up a pallet or slowing down honking their horn, just say something positive to them. So, it keeps them motivated and know that you're paying attention to them and makes them feel, you know, like, they're part of the team, and you care about their what they're doing.

According to the participants, positive feedback aids in creating positive motivation and a positive work environment. S2 stated that constant negative feedback without positive feedback leads to negative feelings within followers and eventually turnover. One participant submitted a feedback document that included sections for positive feedback, negative feedback, and an action plan.

Execution of change is the responsibility of employees, and these changes can result in employee turnover (Srivastava & Agrawal, 2020). Change communication is crucial in reducing negative feelings and increasing willingness to contribute positively to change (Haqq, 2021). S1, S2, and S4 responded that resistance to change was a barrier to reducing the rate of turnover. The respondents shared how they minimize the effects of resistance to change. The servant leader's concern for people's well-being effectively manages resistance to change (Khatri & Dutta, 2018). S1 said that some organizations focus on the bottom line, so the goals constantly change to support those goals. Specifically, S1 remarked that resistance comes from above and below. As a result, some employees resist the change in several ways. S1 and S2 spoke about how some employees will slow down on production, improperly do tasks, and influence newer employees negatively. The participants said that solutions to resistance to change include preparing the employees for changes as soon as possible, training employees for the upcoming changes, communicating the purpose for the changes, and reviewing how they can improve the processes.

Knowing the Employees

One of the main factors that affect job satisfaction, employee performance, positive psychology, and the development of subordinates is the relationship between supervisors and subordinates (Tsitmideli et al., 2016). Each participant remarked that taking the time to know workers assisted them in discovering the type of employee each person is and how to best improve their skillset abilities and attitude. S2 said,

> Well, first of off, I take it upon myself to get to know individual workers and try to find out how I can personally invest them in how and get them to be personally invested in the company and what we do.

Formal and informal mentoring opportunities can accelerate employee growth (Parfitt & Rose, 2020). S6 stated that they met with each permanent employee and used a list of questions to discover mentoring opportunities. These discovery questions covered experience, skills and knowledge, training goals, personal contribution statement, and future goals.

The participants described three different types of employees. The first is an employee who only wants to come to work, do their job, and go home. They are not interested in growth within the organization or leadership but only doing what they are hired to do. When asked about this type of employee, S3 responded that some of these people are the best employees. They do what is asked of them effectively with minimal supervision. The second type of employee searches for an opportunity to grow and gain skills to improve their value to the organization. S1 said,

> just because they're doing a manual labor job does not mean they don't have the potential to be something better than what they are or, I mean, they could be comfortable in that, and that's fine. But there might be that diamond in the rough, or someone just needs that extra education or something else to actually do more.

The third is the person who does not care about anything but getting a paycheck. S5 said, “And that's basically what it is. It's just there's no care. So, they don't care about their job or anything; really, they just want to come for a paycheck. That's that.”

Leaders should see employees as human beings, and employees' personal problems should be regarded (Varolgunes et al., 2018). Employees do not want to be treated as machines. They want validation and recognition for good work. S4 said, “A lot of that is how they're being treated. Often after the pay goes away, you know, not where the pay is, actually, how are they being treated on a daily basis, you got to treat them human.” Employee personal problems can harm work performance.

Maintaining positive employee relationships can improve performance (Samwel, 2018). Negros (2022) found that managers can build deeper employee relationships through empathy. S4 mentioned that some employees might portray an abrasive, negative attitude, but they have had a rough time in life for a long time. Approaching them in a different empathic way can yield better results. There is a limit to how empathic a leader should be. S4 also told a story about an employee:

> I had a young lady who was hired and supposed to come in at a certain time. After starting work, she couldn't come in at the assigned time. And she was doing a pretty decent job. So, I talked to the temp agency. People kind of overlook that a little bit. Once she gets over one hurdle, things will be better. And you know, you give and give, and you give, you loosen up that rope a little bit. I said, hey, I know you're supposed to come in at this time. But understand you can't make it until this time. Well, that time changed into another time. And this time, get backed up to another time. Well, hey, look, it can't happen like that. Well, you did this before. Yeah, but that's because you had a certain circumstance; you got to understand that this is a job. And this is me having a conversation with this young

> lady. And then it is okay, that first couple of weeks, you know, it's like, you want to be there. And then whatever's going on outside, it starts kind of trickling on into the job, which you? Yeah, I'm trying to help you work with it. But at the same time, hey, you got a job to do. And sometimes you got to understand to take whatever you're going through; sometimes they have to get put on the back burner.

Managers must find the balance between being empathic and jeopardizing the organization. S5 emphasized the centrality of the manager's relationship with their team members. S5 said,

> Um, you know, really, I mean, it all basically just, you know, like I was saying earlier, boils down to the relationships with your people. Just be there. Don't, you know; life happens; you can't let people walk all over you. But at the same time, be on the level with them to where if their kid gets sick, they'll call you and say, hey, you know, my kids are sick. Now, if kids get sick every day, or four or five times a week, and they are never there, just sit down and have a conversation with them and help them figure out what's best for them. You have to work with people. Because, you know, like I said, life happens. And I think a lot of managers don't like to do that.

Theme 2: Training and Opportunities to Perform

The second theme apparent from the data was training and opportunities to perform. Two subthemes emerged from the data: training and opportunities to perform. Training availability and learning motivation can influence employee turnover intention

(Qaisar Danish et al., 2019). A central theme in common with all the participants was cross training. Every participant contended that cross training is beneficial to the company and the employee. According to S2, one way that cross training is advantageous to the company is the increased versatility of the employee. The participants referred to situations where the organization can pivot to compensate for absent employees or abrupt changes. Each participant gave an example of how cross training benefits employees by building their skill set. They also stated that cross training would serve them with the present company or the next. S5 gave an example of how cross training simultaneously helps the organization and the employee. In the example, the employees learned how to operate various pieces of equipment and the manual labor part of the job. When the warehouse was behind schedule, employees could work where the need was the greatest. Also, employees who desired to earn additional pay were allowed to work in any area on days when they were not scheduled to work. S5 described this as a win-win situation. The employee had the opportunity to earn additional income, and the company was able to meet shipment goals.

According to Ludwikowska (2018), the supervisors use training needs analysis to determine how best to plan employee training. A training needs analysis identifies gaps between current and desired results and selects the most appropriate methods to eliminate the gap and enhance employee efficiency by acquiring knowledge and skills and improving on existing expertise (Ludwikowska, 2018). One way that supervisors enhanced their cross-training efforts was by using a training matrix (see Table 2). The training matrix allowed the supervisor to accurately track what area or equipment in which each employee was trained. S6 used the training matrix to help create well-rounded employees. S6 said,

> as people get more cross trained, and more developed, and other areas throughout the, you know, warehousing industry or the company, the more beneficial they are to the company, and the quicker it is to kind of bump them up. And you know, the more knowledge you acquire, the more beneficial you are. And more knowledge is a lot of times, promotions, and other things.

Table 2

Training Matrix

Title	Forklift	Reach	Clamp	Pick	QC	Load	Rec	Inv	Put.
WHSE lead	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CSS				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
WHSE clerk	Yes								
Material. Handler				Yes		Yes			Yes
Operator	Yes		Yes						
Inventory	Yes			Yes		Yes			

Note. WHSE = warehouse; QC = quality control; Rec = receiving; Inv = inventory; Put = put away; CSS = customer service staff

An effective manager allows subordinates to take responsibility for the day-to-day operations and make daily decisions (Bans-Akutey, 2020). S1 and S3 identified employee autonomy as key to knowing if specific employee improvement strategies are working. After reviewing goals for the day, they both spoke about the employee's taking ownership of the operation and achieving the task without supervisor interference. S3 discussed allowing employees with minimal experience in another area to work in those areas. If the employee performs well in the new site, S3 will recommend a transfer if the employee desires. Another option was to allow the employee to work in the other department when needed. When S6 regularly updates the training matrix with notes to track employee opportunities to perform in the area in which they were trained.

Theme 3: Salary

Employee compensation is quantifiable rewards that employees earn for work performed and affects motivation, loyalty, performance, and turnover intention (Prasetio et al., 2019). Prasetio et al. stated that compensation includes base pay, pay incentives, and indirect compensation and benefits. An adequate reward system is composed of strategies and policies to reward employees fairly, equitably, and consistently based on their value to the organization (Jones & White, 2021). According to the participants, ensuring employees are adequately compensated is essential to reducing turnover. S1 noted

> the pay does not have to be outrageous, but it has to be in the means of where all the other warehouses are or to make them comfortable and make sure they're getting what they can for what the job they have to do.

According to the Workforce Statistics & Economic Research Occupational Employment Statistics and Wages Program. (n.d.) the median salary for warehouse workers in Georgia is $18.73. The participants provided forklift operator job descriptions from their respective employers. Nine of the 10 positions had a starting pay of at least $17.00 per hour. Table 3 shows an analysis of local job descriptions for forklift operators. The job descriptions show that the salary for the jobs is similar, but the organizations offer additional compensation and benefits.

Table 3

Advertised Salary and Benefits for Forklift Operators at Participants' Organizations

Feature	Organization 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Hourly wage	$15-16	$17.50-20.50	$17	$17-20	$18.40	$17	$18.59	$18-18.50	$17	$20
Temporary to permanent		Yes	Yes							
Insurance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Referral program	Yes						Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bonus pay	Yes					Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
401(k)		Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes			Yes
Next day pay		Yes								
Employee discounts		Yes								
Paid time off							Yes		Yes	

Salary has a U-shaped relationship with turnover. Ryu and Jinnai (2021) found that compensation has a positive relationship with turnover up to a point, and then the relationship is negative. Employees that start with low wages are positively influenced by increases in pay. For those with a higher salary, increases alone are not a motivator to stay on the job but must be combined with pay incentives and indirect compensation and benefits to be effective. Each participant provided a job description that detailed starting pay as well as additional compensation (see Table 4). S4 said, "Paying employees more does not work unless additional incentives and extrinsic rewards are added." S2 spoke about the organization giving pay raises to employees based on extraordinary performance throughout the year. S6 said that nearby organizations pay a rate of about $3.00 above the median and another pays an additional .50 per hour for coming to work on time. These extrinsic rewards can include company parties, giveaways, raffles, employee of the month awards, fair treatment daily, opportunities to learn new things, and general concern for their well-being. Participants S1, S2, S4, S5, and S6 said that making employees feel valued and treating them like humans in conjunction with proper salary levels reduces turnover.

Table 4

Salary and Additional Compensation at Participants' Organizations

		Incentive at participant's organization						
Participant	Hourly wage	Temp to perm	Insurance	Referral program	Bonus pay	401(k)	Next day pay	Employee discounts
S1	$15.00 - 16.00		Yes	Yes	Yes			
S2	$17.50- 20.50	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes
S3	$17.00	Yes	Yes					
S4	$17-20		Yes			Yes		
S5	$18.40		Yes					
S6	$17		Yes		Yes	Yes		

Note. Temp to perm = temporary to permanent.

Alignment With Conceptual Framework

The findings of this study are consistent with the key constructs of servant leadership. Servant leadership is a form of leadership where the leader focuses on the followers' needs and seeks to address the employee's need to grow, develop, and prosper (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021; Song et al., 2021). The responses of the participants align with the constructs of servant leadership (see Table 5). The theme of employee relationships aligns with awareness, listening, empathy, healing, stewardship, and building community. The theme of training and opportunities to perform connects to empathy, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of followers. The theme of salary is correlated with listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, stewardship, commitment to the growth of followers.

Table 5

References to Servant Leader Constructs in Participant Responses

Key construct	No.	%
Awareness	27	13
Community building	20	9
Commitment to the growth of followers	47	22
Conceptualization	16	8
Empathy	18	8
Foresight	34	16
Healing	8	4
Listening	6	3
Persuasion	17	8
Stewardship	20	9
Total	213	100

Applications to Professional Practice

This study is based on successful servant leaders' strategies to reduce turnover in their organizations. According to scholars, supervisors play a significant positive role in the retention of employees (Iqbal et al., 2020; Muhammad et al., 2020). Supervisors can reduce the effects of voluntary and involuntary turnover on the organization by incorporating the strategies outlined in this study.

Many employees left their jobs in what many scholars call The Great Resignation (Sull et al., 2022). The Great Resignation has caused an increase in costs and a reduction in efficiency for organizations. When an employee leaves the company, voluntarily or involuntarily, the organization must bear the cost and experience a reduced work output (Chakraborty et al., 2021; Dobrosavljević & Urošević, 2021). Sull et al. found that the leading cause for turnover during The Great Resignation was a toxic organizational culture, and both white and blue-collar were equally affected. The characteristics of servant leaders caused employees to embrace the organization's needs and help improve employee performance (Ross et al., 2020). Supervisors can significantly reduce the rate of turnover and enhance organizational culture.

This study's results can be used by organizational leaders to help improve the organization's competitive advantage. Employees are vital to warehouse operational efficiency, especially in labor-intensive environments (Ramli et al., 2017). Ramli et al. (2017) found that taking steps to improve human capital results in a moderate increase in warehouse operations performance. Skilled, trained employees are vital for sustained competitive advantage in many organizations (Butt et al., 2020). Frontline leaders are positioned to improve their competitive edge through their interactions with subordinates. The servant leaders in this study produced skilled, trained employees through intentional interactions and intimate knowledge of the subordinate. By incorporating the strategies from the servant leaders in the study, supervisors can indirectly give the organization a competitive advantage by improving employees through communication, training, and advocating for a reasonable salary.

Implications for Social Change

When the employee turnover rate is high, the government collects less tax revenue, and the ability to support specific public programs decreases (Hoffman & Howard, 2017; Vasquez, 2014). The findings of this qualitative case study may contribute to positive social change by helping employers cultivate a more stable labor force that positively contributes to the community.

The results of this study have positive ramifications for social change through increased employment opportunities. Poverty in many surrounding communities is a problem. Rural areas in the south have large collections of counties with continuously high poverty levels (Lewis & DiFurio, 2021). When jobs and income grow, poverty decreases (Lewis & DiFurio, 2021). When supervisors use the strategies in this study, they help jobs and income grow, therefore influencing growth in the company. The increased organizational growth can result in increased employment opportunities.

Job growth in the warehousing and transportation industry in Georgia is near the top of job growth rankings from 2018 to 2028 (Georgia Department of Labor's Workforce Statistics and Economic Research Division, 2019). An increasing number of available employment opportunities are in Georgia's transportation and warehousing industry. Many of these opportunities are for non-skilled and semi-skilled positions. Employees can grow within a company and learn valuable skills that can increase the salary that they employee earn.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), employees working in warehousing and storage earn a mean hourly wage of $19.43, which exceeds the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour (Georgia Department of Labor, n.d.). People in this field are expected to earn more in the upcoming years. Reducing turnover rates can improve the quality of life for those people, their families, and the communities through steady employment and income growth. Therefore, they will be better equipped to care for their families and contribute to the surrounding communities.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this study was to discover strategies that successful supervisors use to reduce turnover. Supervisors should pay attention to the results. They will gain insight on how to better relate with their subordinates and reduce organizational turnover. Training and development departments should pay attention to these results. They will gain insight into the development of training programs for floor supervisors. Upper-level leaders of warehousing organizations should pay attention to these results so that they may be better able to empower supervisors to help reduce turnover. There are two main areas in that organizations could focus efforts to reduce turnover. The first is an investment in the training and development of floor-level supervisors based on the competencies of servant leadership. The second is exploring employee development opportunities. According to Holt et al. (2018), effective leadership development programs have a specific curriculum, a minimum time limit that spans a minimum of 2 years, and mixed delivery of group learning and online delivery. I propose a training and development program encompassing the following parameters.

Curriculum

The purpose of this study was to find the strategies that successful supervisors use to reduce turnover. A correlation exists between the findings of this study and the constructs of servant leadership. Therefore, the results of the study influence the leadership development curriculum. The tenets of the curriculum are empathy, communication, and awareness.

Empathy happens when leaders strive to empathize with others through understanding another person's perspective and mental state (Cahyono et al., 2020; Coetzer et al., 2017; Dutta & Khatri, 2017; Malhotra, 2019; Spears, 2010). Instructors can teach long-term changes in empathic behavior through targeted psychological interventions (Weisz et al., 2020). One of the most effective approaches for adults to learn empathy is through immersive and experiential simulations that focus on vulnerable groups coupled with opportunities for guided reflection (Levett-Jones et al., 2019). To improve empathy training, the participants should role-play situations in mixed groups with opportunities to reflect on the role play.

Communication can increase employee motivation, encourage positive outcomes, shapes attitudes, and helps to develop employee trust and acceptance (Chater & Courtenay, 2019; Lee et al., 2019; Usadolo & Usadolo, 2019). Therefore, leadership development should include communication. It is essential to learn how to communicate and what to communicate. According to Quejado et al. (2022), people have three learning styles, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. These learning styles are how individuals absorb, regulate, and process information (Quejado et al., 2022). Supervisors who interact directly with floor-level employees must communicate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic to ensure understanding. Supervisors can use these learning modalities to share organizational policies, positive and negative feedback, and mentoring opportunities.

Leaders must develop and maintain a strong leadership identity, self-awareness, a growth mindset, and a sense of purpose (Roux & Härtel, 2018). Internal and external self-awareness is vital to the development of a leader. Internal self-awareness is how leaders understand themselves and how they impact others (Barry & McManigle, 2021). External self-awareness refers to how leaders understand how others see them (Barry & McManigle, 2021). When leaders know themselves and their employees, coupled with empathy training, they can make better decisions. Supervisors can use leadership assessments such as The DiSC personality test, insights discovery assessment, Myers–Briggs type indicator, and Clifton Strengths to develop awareness and acknowledge biases (Pierre & Okstad, 2021). Supervisors must also be aware that employees fit into the organization's mission and vision and how the organizations fit into the employees' lives. These actions will help the supervisor better understand how to handle problems derived from workplace ethics and values.

Employee Development

Providing opportunities to develop employees is an effective way to increase employees' performance and reduce turnover (Nerstad et al., 2018). There are four areas that organizations should concentrate focus: identifying employees for training opportunities, implementing a training matrix, tracking performance, and salary comparison. These actions will help organizations to reduce turnover.

The first step is to identify employees for training opportunities. Training for supervisors should include how to mentor their subordinates. The first step is to interview each permanent employee using a questionnaire that identifies prior skills, knowledge, experience, and growth plans. Supervisors should review and update the answers to the questions as often as employees have performance reviews.

The second step is to utilize a training matrix. Using the training matrix will ensure that each employee is trained on each piece of equipment and each job in the warehouse. Supervisors must make time throughout the year for cross training.

Employees are more likely to stay with an organization if the pay is higher or equal to similar organizations (Ryu & Jinnai, 2021). Organizations must ensure the fair compensation of all employees. Three actions are recommended: benchmarking salaries, listening to the employees, performance tracking, and rewards

- Benchmarking salaries: Benchmarking occurs when organizations estimate each position's upper and lower wages at a specific company (Meng et al., 2018). Meng et al. (2018) described the classic benchmarking method as creating a job-company matrix that includes salary and position. The results should be reviewed with a consistent frequency.
- Listening to the employees: Employees will often voice concerns about pay concerning work performed. Supervisors should listen to employees when they complain about pay or quit due to pay. These concerns should be researched and considered by organizational leadership. Investing resources in benchmarking salaries can reduce concerns about compensation.
- Performance tracking: Allow supervisors to collaborate with employees to create systems to track performance coupled with a clear compensation strategy.

- Rewards: Allow supervisors to award pay, bonus, or positive reward recommendations for employees who work at an above-average level or go above and beyond for special projects.

Due to the limited time available in the warehousing environment, these trainings can be held at weekly meetings in an ongoing manner. By implementing these recommendations, warehousing organizations can actively reduce turnover.

Recommendations for Further Research

Three limitations were identified in this study. The first was that the supervisors all live and work in Georgia. Future studies should expand the geographical location to include various regions of the United States. The second limitation was that face-to-face interviews might not be possible due to the worldwide pandemic caused by COVID-19. During this study, I completed both face-to-face and virtual interviews. A combination of both interview types was more convenient for the participants. Using virtual methods to interview participants made it easier to gain access to the supervisors. Some participants may not be able to use virtual means due to technology limitations. Future studies can use both interview types to gather data from many locations, regardless of distance or situation. The third limitation was the time supervisors can dedicate to an interview and the member-checking process. Using in-person and virtual interviews will allow supervisors to participate during breaks or other free periods. Finally, the past work experience of the researcher in the warehousing industry may affect the interpretation of the findings. Future researchers will be from many different backgrounds and experiences, and the interpretations of their results will vary.

Several opportunities for further research were presented after reviewing the study results. While researching specific studies related to turnover in warehouses, the amount of directly related sources was sparse. Many studies concerning turnover, leadership, servant leadership, salary, communication, and others focus on areas such as education, banking, and healthcare. More studies on turnover, temporary employees, and the unique dynamics of the warehouse environment are needed. When reading studies concerning leadership and turnover, few researchers studied the phenomena from the lens of the employee. Future qualitative studies should focus on employees who have terminated and voluntarily left organizations. There are many studies from the viewpoint of leadership but very few from the employee's perspective.

The results of this study revealed that successful supervisors focus on (a) employee relationships, (b) training and opportunities to perform, and (c) salary. Surprisingly, employee relationships are more impactful in reducing turnover than salary. In a time of increased costs to individuals and a record number of people leaving their positions, it is imperative to discover what motivates people to stay. Future researchers can explore the reason why employees value relationships with their supervisors.

Reflections

I had many reasons for pursuing a DBA degree. I am the father of two teenagers. They look to me for guidance and example. This journey has shown them the effect of hard work, sacrifice, and the value of gaining knowledge. Over the past 6 years, I have dedicated myself to studying organizational leadership. I completed a Master of Business Administration degree and now a DBA. I have encountered many roadblocks that would have made many others quit. My family has endured prostate cancer, liver cancer, an organ transplant, eye operations, trips to the neighboring state for doctor visits, and COVID-19. Likewise, we had family gatherings, vacations, births, and deaths. The only way to fail is to quit; I wanted to show my children never to quit but persevere.

My goals included making a positive change in my community. While working in a warehouse in a rural area, the workers were primarily from there. The work was difficult manual labor for relatively little pay. A labor service hired the workers. Most of the people that worked in the warehouse were convicted felons, high school dropouts, or both. The longer I worked there, the closer I became to the employees. I discovered they were honest fathers who cared for their families, uncles who wanted to set examples for their nieces and nephews, mothers who were trying to feed their children, and many others. They were people with dreams and aspirations, talents, and specialties. After becoming close to those unable to better themselves, I knew I must find a way to help them.

My experience as an assistant general manager in a warehouse was the root of personal biases, preconceived ideas, and values. My relationship with former employees had the potential to create bias. I saw how the upper management treated their floor-level employees, and the employees shared their thoughts with me. During the data collection and analysis phase, I employed a neutral and professional approach that minimized bias. I relied on an interview protocol to minimize bias and completed member checking with participants before completing the data analysis process.

Completing the study had a profound effect on my thinking. I realized that not every warehousing organization disregarded employees and viewed them as tools to achieve a goal. The study's results showed that successful supervisors view their employees as human and operate with their best interests in mind. What I found surprising is the role that salary played in turnover. One would think that salary makes everything better. In my study results, I demonstrate that employees value relationships and training more than salary.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that warehouse supervisors use to reduce employee turnover. The business problem was that many warehousing organizations have difficulty reducing the turnover rate of experienced employees. Increased turnover rates represent a severe problem for the local economy due to the rapid expansion and the forecasted growth of the Georgia Ports. The conceptual framework used for this study was servant leadership. Servant leaders improve individuals, teams, and the organization. The literature demonstrates that servant leadership has a positive relationship with employee work engagement, organizational behavior, job satisfaction and negative correlations with worker burnout and employee turnover (Afsar et al., 2018; Coetzer et al., 2017; Jang & Kandampully, 2018; Newman et al., 2017; Thacker et al., 2019). A central component of servant leadership is the leader. The longer workers follow servant leaders, the more positive influence the leader has on them (Thao & Kang, 2020). Therefore, organizations must incorporate the tenets of servant leadership to reduce turnover.

Data were collected using semistructured interviews and document review. I triangulated data to understand successful supervisors' strategies better to reduce turnover. The triangulated data included member checking, training manuals, meeting templates, job descriptions, and tracking documents. The findings of this study suggest that successful supervisors focus on (a) employee relationships, (b) training and opportunities to perform, and (c) salary. Not every supervisor is a servant leader, but they can adapt some tactics that successful supervisors employ. Organizations can invest in additional training for floor supervisors to improve skills in identifying employees for training opportunities, implementing a training matrix, and tracking performance. Finally, organizations should conduct salary comparisons to ensure employees are paid fairly. A specific focus on employee relationships, training, opportunities to perform, and salary can help reduce turnover.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

What you will do	What you will say—script
Introduce the interview and set the stage	Hello _______ (interviewee). Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Simone Hicks, and I am a doctoral scholar at Walden University. I know that employee turnover is a problem that turnover negatively affects employee efficiency, organizational costs, and employee well-being. The aim of this interview is to determine what strategies successful warehouse supervisors use to reduce employee turnover.
• Watch for non-verbal queues • Paraphrase as needed • Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth information	1. What strategies do you use to reduce turnover? 2. What strategies were most effective in reducing turnover? 3. What strategies were least effective in reducing turnover? 4. How do you assess the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce turnover? 5. What career advancement and training opportunities do you provide employees to reduce turnover? 6. What barriers did you experience as you incorporated strategies to reduce turnover? 7. What additional information would you like to share about strategies that you use to reduce turnover?
Wrap up interview thanking participant	Those are all the questions I have. Do you have any further comments you wish to make on the topic of employee turnover in the warehousing environment? Thank you so much for your time today. Your input has been extremely helpful to my case study.

What you will do	What you will say—script
Share a copy of the succinct synthesis for each individual question Bring in probing questions related to other information that you may have found—note the information must be related so that you are probing and adhering to the IRB approval. Review each question, read the interpretation, and ask: Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add? Follow-Up Member Checking Interview.	Thank you for taking the time to meet with me again to conduct member checking. I am providing you with a succinct analysis for your review?
	1. What strategies do you use to reduce turnover? Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?
	2. What strategies were most effective in reducing turnover? Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?
	3. What strategies were least effective in reducing turnover? Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?

What you will do	What you will say—script
	4. How do you assess the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce turnover? Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?
	5. What career advancement and training opportunities do you provide employees to reduce turnover? Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?
	6. What barriers did you experience as you incorporated strategies to reduce turnover? Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?
	7. What additional information would you like to share about strategies that you use to reduce turnover? Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?