2023

# Strategies to Increase Volunteer Retention in Protestant Churches

Anthony David Brown
*Walden University*

Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Anthony David Brown

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Irene Williams, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Ify Diala-Nettles, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2023

Abstract

Strategies to Increase Volunteer Retention in Protestant Churches

by

Anthony David Brown

MSPM, Walden University, 2018

BS, American Public University Systems, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2023

Abstract

Church leaders utilize volunteers as the primary human capital to accomplish organizational goals. However, volunteer retention is an ongoing global challenge for church leaders, and unless addressed, leaders will be hindered in achieving church goals. Grounded in the job embeddedness conceptual framework, the purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore strategies some church leaders used to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals. Three leaders from different Protestant churches in the Southwest United States participated in the study. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, internal church documents, and publicly accessible information. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, and six themes emerged: organizational culture of excellence, training and mentoring, clear and effective communication, rewards and recognition, sense of belonging, and relational leadership practices. A key recommendation for church leaders is strengthening organizational embeddedness to promote a healthy, empowering, and supportive culture. The implications for positive social change include the potential to accomplish the goal of creating a holistic transformation of church members and the local community residents.

Strategies to Increase Volunteer Retention in Protestant Churches

by

Anthony David Brown

MSPM, Walden University, 2018

BS, American Public University Systems, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2023

# Dedication

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

—Phil. 4:13

Believe in yourselves. Dream. Try. Do Good.

—G.F.

I dedicate this doctoral study first and foremost to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Through His calling, He was faithful to equip me with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to complete this project. He flooded me with grace during frustrating and difficult seasons during the completion of this doctoral study. To my faithful and supportive wife, Laura. I would not have completed this doctoral study without you cheering me on. Your love, prayers, and logic helped me through the tough times. The long nights for me meant early mornings for you, yet you still persevered. To my children, Nathan, Kaylin, Andrew, and Jenna. Thank you for allowing me to allocate some of my time that could have been spent with you to complete this endeavor. I am grateful for your understanding, even if you don't know it yet. To my extended family, you were always there to hear me talk about my program. You supported and encouraged me along the way.

## Acknowledgments

There are many people I would like to thank who supported me and encouraged me in this doctoral endeavor. First, I would like to thank Dr. Irene Williams, my committee chair. You inspired me from the first residency I attended during this program. When I thought I wouldn't have you as a chair, I was downtrodden; but God had other plans. You became my chair and answered many of my emails at lightning speed. You provided resources and always went to bat for me. Even when your family faced hardship, you never gave up. To my second committee member, Dr. Ify Diala-Nettles, I thank you for your input and guidance along this long journey. To my professors, thank you all for your patience as I learned the material in my coursework. Thank you to the support group, Doctors of Determination. To my church family, especially pastors Jon, Debbie, Alan, Andy, Matt, Will, Nate, my local church board, and District Superintendent Doug. You helped cultivate my calling that led me to hear the voice of God to pursue this doctoral journey. Without your guidance, I may not be where I am today or have the skills necessary to accomplish this endeavor. Finally, to my family, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you to my loving and supportive wife, Laura. Thank you to my mother and father, who gave me unconditional support, Kathy Brown and Howard Brown. Thank you to my siblings, Janessa, Ryan, Kimmi, and siblings-in-law Tim, Monica, Robert, and Allison. Thank you to my mother-in-law, Kathleen, and her husband Tim. Thank you to my father-in-law, Charles. Thank you to the rest of my extended family. Also, thank you to my two best friends Rick and David, and their wives Janae and Rachel. Thank you to my good friend, Sara.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

# Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Nonprofit organizations are a cornerstone in providing benefits to local communities. For-profit, not-for-profit, and nonprofit are classifications for businesses in the U.S. economy. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce defined for-profit businesses as organizations that want to make money, not-for-profit businesses as organizations that aim to achieve the owner’s goals, and nonprofit businesses as organizations that provide a public benefit (Heaslip, 2020). Public benefits include organizing and distributing food to low-income families, medical care, and education (Ngah et al., 2021). These efforts play a key role in preserving community health, food security, and social connectedness; Paul et al. (2019) found, for instance, that churches helped to reduce food insecurity, especially in rural areas. Thus, the services and resources that nonprofit organizations provide play a key role in sustaining communities.

Many organizations hold nonprofit status and use volunteers to achieve organizational goals (Pennerstorfer & Rutherford, 2019). Walk et al. (2019) described volunteering as completed work for which there is no monetary compensation. Ngah et al. (2021) further stated that individual skill-based volunteerism is when organizational leaders leverage the specific skillsets of volunteers to further organizational goals (e.g., the teaching background of volunteers to assist with teaching Sunday School classes). Churches are nonprofit organizations that have a religious foundation to their services offered to the community. Churches use volunteerism, especially individual skill-based volunteerism, as vital resources to achieve organizational goals (Edeigba & Singh, 2022; Hughes, 2021). However, some church leaders lack strategies to retain volunteers to achieve organizational goals (White Smith, 2020). In this section, I provide an overview of the study, including the background of the problem, problem and purpose statement, population and sampling, nature of the study, research question, interview questions, and conceptual framework. Furthermore, this section includes a scholarly review of the literature on volunteer retention, retention strategies, and the job embeddedness framework.

## Background of the Problem

In 2016, the United States, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) reported that approximately 1.54 million organizations filed as nonprofit status. Those organizations generated $2.62 trillion in revenue in that year (Statista Research Department, 2021). According to the National Council of Nonprofits (2014), nonprofit organizations spend about $1 trillion annually in the American economy, comparable to about 5% of the gross domestic product (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2020). The council also stated that nonprofits employ more than 12 million people, which is more than many other prominent industries. The successful operation of nonprofit organizations is important to the U.S. economy.

Nonprofits use volunteers to perform most of their workload to reduce labor costs to achieve their goals. Over 80% of nonprofits use volunteers to fill workload gaps that paid staff cannot perform (Walk et al., 2019). Since 2013, however, international volunteer rates have fallen from 29% to 25.4%, while only 15% of Americans dedicated time to volunteering (Ngah et al., 2021). This problem worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic; in 2020, the United States experienced a volunteer shortage of nearly two thirds compared to previous years due to lockdowns and other constraints on social interaction (Volunteerism Takes Big Hit, 2021). Volunteer rates continue to remain lower than pre-pandemic levels, comparable to rates during the Great Recession of 2008 (Jones, 2022). Volunteer managers must identify strategies to retain volunteers or experience increased labor costs.

Volunteer recruitment and retention are issues for churches, many of which have nonprofit status under the IRS code due to the eligibility to receive tax-deductible contributions (Internal Revenue Service, n.d.). The services they provide are often offered at no cost to the recipients; however, if churches cannot retain volunteers, churches must hire full-time staff to provide the same services. Hiring full-time staff to perform the same workload volunteers perform would increase the cost of services to cover labor costs (Ainsworth, 2020). Church leaders may recruit more volunteers, but adequately training volunteers costs money that could otherwise be used to achieve organizational goals (Walk et al., 2019). A decline in volunteer retention negatively impacts the completion of organizational goals; therefore, church leaders must retain volunteers to achieve organizational goals.

## Problem and Purpose

The specific business problem is that some church leaders lack strategies to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals. The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore strategies that some church leaders use to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals.

## Population and Sampling

Data were collected from three purposefully sampled church leaders of Protestant churches in the Southwestern United States. No additional church leaders were interviewed as data saturation occurred with these three participants. Data saturation is when the participants offer no new information, yielding redundant information (Hennink et al., 2019; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Conducting detailed interviews with a small number of participants produces rich data, although many participants may produce too much data thoroughly analyze the data (Ames et al., 2019). The church leaders were interviewed using semistructured interviews to elicit their experience in leading volunteer programs that implement successful strategies to retain volunteers. I also reviewed organizational documents for relevant information.

## Nature of the Study

Doctoral research consists of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies. Qualitative researchers use a holistic approach to explore phenomena, usually through interviews or narratives provided by participants in the study (Hollstein, 2019). Researchers using the qualitative methodology focus on understanding the social perspective of the participant and the lens or context in which the participants view the problem (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Researchers also use qualitative methodology to examine a specific topic, in detail, with a small group of participants. Quantitative researchers seek to examine the relationship between variables and test hypotheses through empirical investigation (Sogunro, 2002). Quantitative studies are broad and consist of data from large numbers of participants (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). I did not choose quantitative research because I do not need to find a relationship or correlation of variables (Taguchi, 2018). Mixed-methods research studies implement qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Matović & Ovesni, 2021). Researchers used mixed methodology to rectify the weaknesses that qualitative and quantitative create independently (Stoecker & Avila, 2021). I did not choose mixed methods because I do not need quantitative data. The qualitative approach was appropriate for my study because I examined the experiences of a small group of church leaders who were successful at retaining volunteers.

The qualitative research methodology consists of various designs. The most common designs are ethnography, phenomenology, and case study (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Ethnography is a type of study in which the researcher observes the experience and culture of participants in a naturally occurring setting (Hammersley, 2018; Monrouxe & Ajjawi, 2020). I did not choose ethnography because the information I collected was not in a naturally occurring setting. A phenomenological design focuses on exploring how things generally appear in the minds of a group of people (McNarry et al., 2019). I did not choose the phenomenological design because my study focused on a specific setting and group. I used a multiple-case study design in my study. A case study aims to explore or investigate a specific phenomenon within a particular context (Ridder, 2017). The phenomenon in a case study is typically a system within an organization, such as a program (A. D. Grant et al., 2019). Case studies do not have random sampling because the results are specific to the participants in the case study (Ridder, 2017). Types of case studies include multiple or single studies. I used a multiple-case study design instead of a single case study because I explored strategies from multiple church leaders rather than focus on an outlying phenomenon in one church.

## Research Question

What strategies do some church leaders use to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals?

## Interview Questions

1. How do you define volunteering in your church setting?
2. What strategies do you use to retain volunteers?
3. What are the key barriers or obstacles to implementing these strategies?
4. How do you communicate with your volunteers?
5. What do your volunteers sacrifice if they stopped volunteering?
6. How do you connect your volunteers to the church, leaders, and other members?
7. What support does your church offer to your volunteers?
8. What type of training do your volunteers go through?
9. What type of rewards system do you have in place?
10. What else, if anything else, would you like to add?

## Conceptual Framework

Researchers use a conceptual framework as the blueprint of the study. Mitchell et al. (2001) created the job embeddedness conceptual framework to predict the retention of employees because previous models of employee turnover did not have a high success for prediction rate. This model focused on link, fit, and sacrifice concerning the employee's job and community. Mitchell et al. (2001) defined *link* as how well the employee is connected to the organization and community. *Fit* is defined as the employee's perception of how they align with the organization and community culture and values (Porter et al., 2019). Lastly, *sacrifice* is what the employee must forfeit when leaving the organization or community (Mitchell et al., 2001). This study used the job embeddedness framework. This conceptual framework focuses on employee retention, or why people stay, rather than many studies which address why people leave (Reitz & Anderson, 2011). Therefore, this conceptual framework was an excellent framework to use in this study because this study explored how church leaders use strategies to retain volunteers.

## Operational Definitions

*Nonprofit volunteer*: An unpaid individual who performs activities or tasks designed to help others for the greater good, under the direction of a nonprofit organization (Ainsworth, 2020; Walk et al., 2019).

*Organizational mission*: One of the central guiding statements within an organization that clearly dictates the fundamental purpose of the organization (Alegre et al., 2018; Pollman, 2021).

*Retention strategies*: Processes, systems, or plans to mitigate the negative effects of a force on business (Porter et al., 2019).

*Volunteer fit*: How the employee perceives themselves meshing with the organization or community such as matching values, knowledge to perform job functions, or adaptation to the local environment (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001).

*Volunteer link*: The social, psychological, and financial connections between the employee and the organization or community such as relationships, religious institutions, and daycares (Porter et al., 2019; Thome & Greenwald, 2020).

*Volunteer retention*: The number of volunteers who continue to agree to a commitment to volunteer or the number of volunteers who successfully completed the commitment they agreed to (Sundram et al., 2018).

*Volunteer sacrifice*: The psychological or physical costs that the employee forfeits when leaving an organization or community (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004; M. Zhang et al., 2012).

*Volunteer turnover*: The departure of an employee or volunteer from an organization, either through voluntary or involuntary means (Olubiyi et al., 2019).

## Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Listing assumptions, limitations, and delimitations helps to create an ethical study by making transparent the thought process of the researcher (Skopec et al., 2020; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Researchers conducting subsequent studies may be able to address the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations to create a generalizable study.

### Assumptions

Researchers conducting qualitative studies assume specific ideas to be true. Assumptions are the preconceived ideas that researchers understand to be true without the need for proof (Kane, 2020). Hameduddin and Fernandez (2019) added that assumptions comprise what the researcher perceived as universal knowledge. A researcher needs to understand their assumptions because assumptions are a lens through which the researcher views the research question (Matta, 2021). Although the researcher cannot eliminate assumptions, the researcher can be aware of the assumptions and how the assumptions influence the processing of data.

The first assumption of this study was that churches need volunteers to remain sustainable in achieving organizational goals (Almas et al., 2020). Churches must continue to utilize volunteers in daily operations. The second assumption was that participants in this study would answer interview questions truthfully and recall the experiences that caused their volunteers to retain to the best of their ability. Truthful recollection is assumed to be true because this study promotes the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants (Lancaster, 2017). The third assumption was that the participants would understand how the interview questions apply to their ministry context. In other words, the participants would not need in-depth background knowledge of church volunteering and retention knowledge. The fourth assumption was that the participants would be willing to provide organizational documents related to volunteer retention.

**Limitations**

Limitations are flaws, shortcomings, or characteristics not caused by the researcher due to the methodology, design, or statistical model of a study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). By listing the study's limitations, the researcher adds to the validity and transparency of the study to ensure an ethical delivery of the content (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). The first limitation of this study was geographical limitations. Geographical bias may occur in studies narrowed to a specific geographical location (Skopec et al., 2020). Individuals in one area may believe or act differently than individuals in another geographic area. The following limitation was the sample size. Qualitative samples are vague regarding the adequate amount but are generally much smaller than quantitative sample sizes due to purposive sampling (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Purposive sampling refers to collecting deep and rich data rather than shallow and broad data. To determine the sampling size, the researcher continues to interview participants until the researcher achieves data saturation or no new data (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Another limitation was that interviews are limited to church leaders. By only interviewing church leaders, this study does not contain the volunteers' perspectives that remained in a volunteer position. The last limitation was that the literature does not define a successful volunteer retention rate or how to measure the volunteer retention rate.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations are boundaries that the researcher establishes to narrow the scope of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). In other words, delimitations are what the researcher chooses to include or exclude in a study. The first delimitation of this study was the selection of church leaders with successful volunteer retention in their churches. Many churches in the United States of America utilize volunteers, but the participants in this study knew strategies to retain volunteers. Another delimitation was the selection of only Protestant church leaders. Many churches align with the general category of Christianity; however, the church leaders interviewed in this study attended Protestant churches. Protestant churches encompass a vast plethora of churches; therefore, the pool of selected churches included the mainline denominations and subsequent variations such as Baptist, Evangelical, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Holiness churches. The next delimitation was to classify pastors and lay leaders as church leaders. Some churches may have a leader who is not a lead or a senior pastor who manages volunteers and implements strategies to retain volunteers. The last delimitation was a geographical region. The interviewed participants attended churches in the Southwestern United States.

## Significance of the Study

This study may add value to business practice because nonprofit organizations utilize volunteers to perform much of the operational work required to achieve organizational goals. The strategies explored in this study may help church leaders retain volunteers to accomplish the organizational goals.

### Contribution to Business Practice

This study might contribute to business practice within a church because, according to Ashfaq et al. (2020), the use of volunteers is crucial for church leaders to achieve organizational goals. Therefore, retaining volunteers within a church setting can increase the chances of achieving organizational goals. Dutta and Dhir (2021) stated that turnover increased incrementally because others followed once the first few employees left. Khan et al. (2021) explained that the loss of high-performing volunteers led to decreased morale for the remaining staff. Therefore, failure to understand the importance of strategies for retaining employees may lead to church leaders failing to achieve organizational goals.

**Implications for Social Change**

The results of this study can effect positive social change. The implications for positive social change include increasing the ability of church leaders to achieve organizational goals and meet the needs of stakeholders (Shipman & Siemiatycki, 2022; Walk et al., 2019). The stakeholders of a church can include the members, attendees, and community members. Retaining volunteers enables church leaders to utilize the volunteers' talents, giftings, and abilities to strategically accomplish the organization's goals (Reitz & Anderson, 2011; Teng et al., 2021). If a church utilizes volunteers to promote the teachings and accomplish the mission of Christianity, the community's standard of living may increase because the church's volunteers are ministering to their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs (Denning, 2021). Church leaders who implement the results of this study should be able to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals.

## A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This qualitative multiple-case study explores strategies church leaders used to retain volunteers in Protestant churches to accomplish organizational goals. The framework used to guide this study was the job embeddedness framework. Professional and academic literature lack peer-reviewed articles that focus on this topic concerning this framework; therefore, much of this literature review focuses on employee retention strategies referencing the job embeddedness framework and other frameworks. About articles containing strategies to retain volunteers, most researchers used various frameworks but rarely connected volunteer retention and the job embeddedness framework. Researchers did not reference volunteer retention strategies in church settings that used the job embeddedness framework.

The literature review for this study comprised peer-reviewed articles, non-peer-reviewed articles, and seminal books. I used the following keywords to search for peer-reviewed articles: *volunteer, employee, retention, job embeddedness, community embeddedness, on-the-job, off-the-job, fit, link, sacrifice, planned behavior theory, conservation of resources theory, turnover, intent to stay, church, ministry, non-profit, nonprofit, organization, church leader, organization leader, strategies, congruency, organizational culture, sense of belonging, volunteer identity, human resource, strategic, training, development, communication, reward,* and *recognition.* The databases I used from the Walden University Library included Business Source Complete, Science Direct, Sage Premier, ProQuest, and Emerald Management. I also used Google Scholar to locate peer-reviewed articles. Table 1 outlines the breakdown of the type and date of sources.

**Table 1**

*Literature Review Sources by Year of Publication*

| Reference type | Total | <5 years | >5 years | % total <5 years |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Peer-reviewed journals | 87 | 76 | 11 | 87 |
| Non-peer-reviewed journals | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Books | 3 | 1 | 2 | 33 |
| Total | 90 | 77 | 13 | 86 |

In the first portion of this literature review, I discuss the job embeddedness framework and alternative frameworks I reviewed as possible frameworks for this study. The conceptual framework used for this study was the job embeddedness framework. I discuss the background, components, and context of the framework. I also analyze the planned behavior theory and conservation of resources theory as alternative frameworks in the following literature review sections. I then explain why I rejected the alternative frameworks. Following the framework portion of this literature review, I review strategies to retain employees and volunteers. I categorize the strategies into two groups. The first group is congruency with the organization. This group comprised organizational culture, sense of belonging, and volunteer identity. The second group is strategic human resources strategies. This group comprised training and development, effective communication, and rewards and recognition. I close out the review by discussing the need for more research pertaining to connecting the job embeddedness framework and volunteer retention in churches.

## Introduction to the Job Embeddedness Theory

The job embeddedness theory is a model organizational leaders use to identify predictors of why employees stay at organizations. Mitchell et al. (2001) developed this theory because previous models were largely unsatisfactory in predicting voluntary turnover. Researchers focused on why employees leave rather than stay (Allen & Griffeth, 1999; Jovanovic, 1979; Prestholdt et al., 1987). Lyons and Bandura (2019) stated that turnover occurs due to organizational decisions (i.e., involuntary turnover) or employee decisions (i.e., voluntary turnover). An organizational decision is when leaders initiate turnover, such as firing an employee or conducting layoffs (Burrows et al., 2022; Price & Mueller, 1981). An employee decision is when staff members choose to leave the organization (Shah et al., 2020). Turnover creates hardships for organizations, such as increased hiring and training costs, decreased employee morale, and compromised organizational performance (Basnyat & Clarence Lao, 2019). Moreover, Mitchell et al. created the job embeddedness theory to move from turnover to retention predictors. Job embeddedness theory predicts why employees stay at an organization rather than why employees leave an organization.

Researchers cannot illustrate a complete picture by only using turnover predictors. Despite previous research on voluntary turnover, the literature lacked essential factors that lead to voluntary turnover. For example, Mitchell et al. (2001) stated that much turnover research focused on attitude and job satisfaction. Regarding these factors, researchers could only show how the employee connected to the job (Mitchell et al., 2001). Moreover, turnover has become obsolete in agile business environments where organizational leaders seek to retain to increase competitive advantage (Afshari et al., 2019). Organizational leaders can use the job embeddedness theory to explore the organizational and community aspects of an employee's life that contribute to employee retention (Mitchell et al., 2001). This theory does not focus on specific elements but on a generalized categorization of embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001). By focusing on general categories, Mitchell et al. sought to overcome the tunneled focus of concentrating on attitudes and job satisfaction while branching out into more generic categories than nonwork elements. Organizational leaders, who implement the job embeddedness theory, focus on proactively retaining employees rather than reactively responding to turnover.

The job embeddedness theory is rooted in prior research. Mitchell et al. (2001) researched various models to create the job embeddedness theory. One such model was the causal model, developed by Price and Mueller (1981), who stated that an employee's intent to stay significantly impacted voluntary turnover. Through other research, Mitchell et al. formed the components of their theory. For example, Cohen (1995) explored non-work-related factors contributing to voluntary turnover, which aided Mitchell et al. in creating on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness. Furthermore, Reichers' (1985) findings were a foundation for Mitchell et al.'s link component. Through in-depth research of turnover studies, Mitchell et al. formed the job embeddedness theory composed of on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness predictors.

**Job Embeddedness Structure**

Organizational leaders use the job embeddedness theory to predict employee retention and determine the employee's organizational and community embeddedness levels. Organizational leaders use this theory to determine how rooted an employee is within their organization and community (Mitchell et al., 2001). For example, Burrows et al. (2022) found that highly embedded employees were 20% less likely to leave the organization. The more the employee is embedded, the more likely the employee will remain with the organization and local community, even if other alternatives arise (Mitchell et al., 2001; Shah et al., 2020). Mitchell et al.'s (2001) study consisted of randomly selected participants to determine the depth of an employee's embeddedness.

The participants consisted of 177 employees from grocery stores and 208 employees from hospitals who, as a part of the study, completed a questionnaire. Mitchell et al. examined job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job alternatives, job search behavior index, and intentions to leave through the questionnaire. Mitchell et al. determined that link, fit, and sacrifice, both on-the-job and off-the-job, are leading components of predicting employee retention. Organizational leaders can use link, fit, and sacrifice to help predict employee retention.

The job embeddedness theory contains two main research components: organizational embeddedness and community embeddedness. Organizational embeddedness is on-the-job embeddedness, and community embeddedness is off-the-job embeddedness (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021; Steindórsdóttir et al., 2021; Treuren & Fein, 2021). Additionally, employees are more likely to remain with an organization when they become embedded in the organization and the community (Mitchell et al., 2001). Ampofo and Karatepe (2021) confirmed Mitchell et al.'s findings that the subcomponents of job embeddedness (link, fit, and sacrifice) increased employee retention. Organizational leaders should employ strategies to increase embeddedness.

### *Organizational Embeddedness*

The first embeddedness category is organizational embeddedness. Organizational embeddedness is the various attachments an employee has to the organization in which they work or volunteer (Mitchell et al., 2001; Treuren & Fein, 2021). Organizational leaders can leverage the attachments to influence employees to remain working for the organization (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021). Although an employer may not want to retain poorly performing employees, Burrows et al. (2022) found that highly embedded employees typically performed better than lowly embedded employees. Furthermore, Coetzer et al. (2018) found that highly embedded employees were more likely to be innovative. Increasing on-the-job embeddedness may benefit organizational leaders because highly embedded employees can contribute to achieving organizational goals.

### *Community Embeddedness*

The other embeddedness category is community embeddedness. Community embeddedness is the nonwork influences or attachments that might cause an employee to remain in an organization (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2001). Although Mitchell et al. (2001) claimed that highly embedded employees, both in their organization and community, can lead to increased retention of employees, other researchers claimed that higher community embeddedness could lead to a decrease in retention. For instance, Chan et al. (2019) stated that because of the conservation of resources theory, highly embedded employees in areas off the job may place their resources in those areas rather than utilizing them on the job. Furthermore, Greene et al. (2017) stated that highly embedded employees might feel stuck in their roles when they desire to pursue a different role outside the organization, resulting in poor performance. Employers should elevate the level of on-the-job embeddedness over off-the-job embeddedness to increase employees' desire to do well in current positions. Although community embeddedness can contribute to an employee's embeddedness, employers should focus on improving organizational embeddedness.

***Link***

Link is the first component of the job embeddedness theory. Researchers (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021; Burrows et al., 2022; Mitchell et al., 2001; Steindórsdóttir et al., 2021) described on-the-job links as the formal or informal connections between the employee and the organization and between the employee and other people. Treuren and Fein (2021) added that on-the-job links are attachments that connect the employee to work and nonwork elements. Furthermore, Thome and Greenwald (2020) stated that on-the-job links are the social, psychological, and financial aspects of how the employee connects to the organization. Shah et al. (2020) contributed to the definition of on-the-job links by adding link is the positive relationship between the employee and the organization. Rubenstein et al. (2020) added that on-the-job links are social connections. Examples of on-the-job links are connections with colleagues, leaders, teams, and the organization (Shah et al., 2020). When employees experience an increased amount or a richer experience of on-the-job links, there is an increased chance that the employee will remain with the organization (Shah et al., 2020). To retain employees, organization leaders should implement strategies to foster an atmosphere where employees can easily create on-the-job links. Organizational leaders have the direct ability to influence on-the-job links that contribute to increased retention.

The other classification of links is off-the-job links. Mitchell et al. (2001) defined off-the-job links similarly to on-the-job links; however, off-the-job links refer to the relationships, connections, attachments, and associations with community influences. For example, employees can create links with community organizations, religious institutions, and friends and family (Mitchell et al., 2001). Furthermore, off-the-job links can include committees, families, other organizations, or activities such as in-laws, preschool, parent action committees, and church boards (Porter et al., 2019; Sender et al., 2018). Employees with increased on-the-job and off-the-job links usually have a higher chance of retaining within an organization.

### ***Fit***

Fit is the next component of the job embeddedness theory. According to researchers (Hussain & Deery, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2001; Sender et al., 2018; Teng et al., 2021), on-the-job fit is congruency with an organization. Rubenstein et al. (2020) added that on-the-job fit is the perceived compatibility with the organization. Furthermore, similar to link, Thome and Greenwald (2020) stated that on-the-job fit is the social, psychological, and financial aspects of how the employee matches or meshes with the organization. Chan et al. (2019) added that fit could refer to an employee's comfort towards an organization. Additionally, Shah et al. (2020) referred to on-the-job fit as how comfortable employees feel toward their job. Burrows et al. (2022) mentioned similar verbiage by stating that on-the-job fit relates to fit between the employee and job and employee and organization. Examples of on-the-job fit are the compatibility with the organization's culture, job role, career goals, and values (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2001; Treuren & Fein, 2021). Similar to link, the greater the employee's perceived fit, the greater chance of increased retention (Mitchell et al., 2001; Shah et al., 2020). To retain employees, organization leaders should implement strategies to assist employees with opportunities to increase perceived compatibility with the organization. Organizational leaders can also directly influence on-the-job fit, improving retention.

The other classification of fit is off-the-job fit, which Mitchell et al. (2001) defined as the level of compatibility between the employee and the community. Philip and Medina-Craven (2022) stated examples of off-the-job fit, such as community celebrations and activities related to the employee's stage of life. Hussain and Deery (2018) used the employee's perception of how well the community's leisure activities matched the employee's ideal leisure activities to assess off-the-job fit. For example, if the employee has young children, they might live in an area with parks, children's hospitals, and sports opportunities. The employee could have chosen the place because of high school sports teams or academic programs. Employees with increased on-the-job and off-the-job fit usually have a higher chance of retaining within an organization.

### *Sacrifice*

Sacrifice is the last component of the job embeddedness theory. Shah et al. (2020) and Philip and Medina-Craven (2022) stated that sacrifice is the psychological or physical element that the employee must give up. Specifically, on-the-job sacrifice is the perceived tangible or intangible items, perks, or relationships the employee would give up if they left the organization (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021; Hussain & Deery, 2018; Steindórsdóttir et al., 2021). Furthermore, Sender et al. (2018) added that employees may see on-the-job sacrifice as losing out on a lucrative opportunity. Examples of on-the-job links are promotions, compensation, vacation hours, and organizational status (Burrows et al., 2022). Rubenstein et al. (2020) added that sacrifice might add to the employee's standard of living, such as a short commute or working from home. According to Mitchell et al. (2001) and Philip and Medina-Craven, when organizational leaders contribute to increasing the employee's perceived sacrifice, if the employee leaves the organization, the employee is more likely to remain with the organization. Organizational leaders can influence on-the-job sacrifice by increasing the physical and psychological elements the employee would give up if the employee left the organization.

The other classification of sacrifice is off-the-job sacrifices. Mitchell et al. (2001) defined off-the-job sacrifices as the elements the employee would forfeit if the employee had to leave the community. Off-the-job sacrifices can be as simple as moving to a new location with a laundromat rather than a washer and dryer in the home. Sacrifices can also spill over from on-the-job to off-the-job, such as losing the financial ability of children to play sports because the employee received a lower compensation package (Philip & Medina-Craven, 2022; Shibiti, 2019). Other off-the-job sacrifices include low crime statistics in the employee's neighborhood, lower city taxes, forfeiture of season tickets, or the inability to continue family traditions (Mitchell et al., 2001). Employees who face increased off-the-job sacrifice may have a higher chance of retaining with an organization.

## Alternative Theories

When deciding which framework to use for this study, I chose the job embeddedness theory; however, I researched other possible theories. Researchers used planned behavior theory and conservation of resources theory when studying retention strategies. I did not choose the planned behavior theory because the theory focuses on volunteer motivation, commonly used in turnover research, rather than retention literature (Mitchell et al., 2001). Moreover, I did not choose the conservation of resources theory because there is a lack of literature that confirms that the conservation of resources theory produces practical strategies to retain volunteers. This theory can aid in understanding the embeddedness of volunteers or how business leaders can increase volunteer motivation (L. Zhang et al., 2019). The job embeddedness theory can stand alone as a theory and enable me to explore various retention strategies.

### ***Planned Behavior Theory***

In retention and turnover literature, researchers have used the theory of planned behavior as a research framework. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) created the theory of reasoned action to understand if an individual would engage in a behavior at a specific time and place. The authors designed the theory of reasoned action so that researchers can study choices that the employee has complete control over (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Later, Ajzen (1988) added behavioral control as a predictor to the theory of reasoned action and retitled the theory as the theory of planned behavior. Ajzen (1988) added behavioral control so that researchers can study choices that the employee has incomplete control over. These choices are also labeled as involuntary control (Ajzen, 1991). The difference between the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior is the autonomy of the employee’s choice. Researchers use both theories to predict behavioral intentions in specific contexts rather than the general attitudes theory, which predicts behavioral intention in broad contexts, or the principle of aggregation, which indicates multiple behavioral intentions to determine an overall behavioral intention

(Ajzen, 1991). Predicting behavioral intentions in a specific context is essential because intentions may not transfer to similar contexts with added variables. Researchers use the theory of planned behaviors to predict behavioral intentions in particular contexts.

The planned behavior theory contains both components of the reasoned action theory, attitude towards the behavior and societal norms. Ajzen (1991) defined attitude toward behavior as the favorable or unfavorable view towards the behavior. For example, a volunteer might have a complimentary view of an organization where the business leaders reward the volunteers for meeting organizational goals. On the other hand, Iqbal et al. (2022) found that despotic leadership and toxic work environments lead employees to quit. The other component, societal norms, Ajzen defined as peer pressure toward completing or not completing the behavior. Kurniawan and Galushasti (2021) further stated that an employee’s beliefs are essential to societal norms. An example of societal norms is an adult male volunteer driving a female youth home after an event. Some may view this behavior as inappropriate; on the other hand, others may find no fault in conducting this action. Researchers who use this theory to predict the retention of volunteers analyze the volunteer’s attitudes toward the behavior and societal norms.

Organizational leaders use the outcomes of the reasoned action theory to predict if an individual will act, assuming the individual volition to perform the behavior; however, Ajzen (1991) expanded the reasoned action theory into the planned behavior theory by adding perceived behavioral control. Ajzen stated that perceived behavioral control is the individual’s volition regarding their ability to perform the behavior. For example, volunteers may donate their time to an organization because they assume community service is the only way to attain the social status necessary to receive the organization’s perks, such as a seat on a local church board. Although there may be other ways to earn a seat on the local church board, the volunteer perceived the lack of volition to attain the perk. Church leaders can use the planned behavior theory to determine the retention behavior of a volunteer in a local church setting.

I reviewed the planned behavior theory when selecting a framework for this study. Ajzen (1991) created a framework to predict behavior in specific times and contexts. The principles of this theory are rooted in motivational studies (Same et al., 2020; Zollo et al., 2022). Additionally, Almas et al. (2020) classified volunteering as a planned behavior and stated that the planned behavior theory is a beneficial theory for predicting the retention of employees; however, Mullan et al. (2021) stated that there is little evidence that intention directly predicts retention behavior. The job embeddedness theory, however, was built to predict retention predictors. Although the planned behavior theory may prove beneficial in identifying motivators contributing to retention in future studies, I can use the job embeddedness theory to identify strategies to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals.

### *Conservation of Resources Theory*

Researchers used the conservation of resources theory to study the retention of employees. Hobfoll (1989) developed the conservation of resources theory to understand stress. Although a plethora of research on stress existed, most findings failed to produce a practical and concrete model due to the debate on the definition of stressors (Hobfoll, 1989). Some thought camps emphasized the ability only to know stressors after the individual completed the event, although others sought only to include the perspective of the individuals (Hobfoll, 1989). To follow the middle way, Hobfoll categorized stressors into four categories (see next paragraph). These categories enable the researcher to anticipate and examine everyday stressors instead of waiting for the event to complete. Furthermore, the conservation of resources theory considers the role of resources. Instead of only researching how individuals cope with stress, Hobfoll examined why individuals act the way they use resources. Resources are the elements the individual holds in high regard or a pathway to obtaining the elements. Elements are objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies (Hobfoll, 1989). The conservation of resources theory aims to better understand stress through the net gain or loss of individuals' resources.

Under the conservation of resources theory, four types of stressors exist. Initially defined by Elliot and Eisdorfer (1982), the four categories of stressors are (a) acute, time-limited stressors, (b) stressor sequences, (c) chronic intermittent stressors, and (d) chronic stressors. Acute, time-limited stressors may include a volunteer starting in a new position for the first time. On the other hand, stressor sequences may consist of volunteers who must fulfill their commitment during the quarter they agreed to volunteer while finishing an education certificate. Chronic intermittent stressors may include the rotation of teaching a children's class when the volunteer teaches Sunday school classes. Finally, chronic stressors refer to ongoing or continuous stressors such as waking up early to volunteer when the volunteer is used to working night schedules. By defining the four main categories of stressors, researchers can readily study the impact of stress on volunteers.

Researchers use the conservation of resources theory to determine how the availability of resources affects employee retention. When employees have a plethora of resources, such as an open schedule and a steady paycheck, they are more likely to have lower stress levels, which empowers them to stay with an organization (Bettini et al., 2020). On the other hand, if the employee splits the resources between multiple areas of their life, such as time dedicated to family, work, and school, this situation will increase stress, and the employee will need to determine where to allocate resources. The organization leader can provide alternative solutions to reduce stress to increase employee retention. For example, if the employee's highest priority is their family, working from home can reduce their stress levels and contribute to retention in the organization because the employee no longer needs to work with limited resources (S. Choi, 2020). Organizational leaders use the conservation of resources theory to identify areas of high stress, and the leaders use strategies to balance resource use to increase employee retention.

I reviewed the conservation of resources theory when selecting a framework for this study. Regarding retention, researchers typically use the conservation of resources theory as a supporting framework or a mediating variable. Unlike the job embeddedness theory, I have not seen researchers use the conservation of resources theory as a primary strategy to increase retention. Treuren and Fein (2021) used the conservation of resources theory in conjunction with the job embeddedness theory to examine the effects of off-the-job embeddedness on employees. Zhang et al. (2019) identified the conservation of resources theory as an antecedent to job embeddedness. The conservation of resources theory is a valuable framework for decreasing employee turnover rather than increasing employee retention (Rubenstein et al., 2020). Although the conservation of resources theory may aid as a mediating variable or framework in predicting retention, I can use the job embeddedness theory to identify strategies to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals without any mediating variables.

**Strategies to Increase Retention**

Organizational leaders need employees (paid or unpaid) to staff operational positions to fulfill the organizational purpose, accomplish the organizational mission, and achieve organizational goals. Without quality and skilled employees, organizations cannot deliver products and services; therefore, employee retention remains one of the most significant priorities and challenges for organizational leaders (Raziq et al., 2021; Uitzinger et al., 2018). Employee retention refers to the reasons why employees stay with an organization rather than turnover, which refers to the reasons why employees leave an organization (Mitchell et al., 2001). Organizational leaders may focus on irrelevant organizational changes if they only address reasons employees leave. For example, employees may leave an organization because they do not feel the management team values their skills (Noranee et al., 2021). To address the turnover, business leaders must consistently implement strategies reactively. Also, business leaders may be unable to determine the reason for the employee's departure. Retention, on the other hand, is used to increase the sustainability of an organization (Alafeshat & Tanova, 2019). Business leaders may not uncover why an employee left an organization; however, the leaders can uncover the reasons why employees stay. Although turnover and retention are both important metrics to organizational leaders, focusing on employee retention through implementing retention strategies enables the organizational leader to accomplish organizational goals.

## Congruency with the Organization

Throughout the literature, one strategy that researchers found positively affects employee retention is increasing the employee’s congruency with the organization. For this study, congruency with the organization is described as how well the employee identifies with the organization through mission, satisfaction, and values (Audenaert et al., 2018; Hayes & Stazyk, 2019; Kim et al., 2019). Congruency with the organization can be subcategorized as organizational culture, sense of belonging, and volunteer identity. Organizational leaders who strategically implement these three subcategories may experience increased employee retention.

### *Organizational Culture*

The first subcomponent of congruency with the organization is organizational culture. Organizational culture is an organization’s habits, beliefs, values, and patterns (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020; Slade, 2020). Additionally, employee unity contributes to the foundation of organizational culture (Azeem et al., 2021). In other words, organizational culture is the atmosphere in which the employees work together to achieve the organizational mission. Employees may not identically match the organizational culture; however, organizations experience higher retention when most employees identify with the organizational culture (Adeoye & Hope, 2020; Groza & Groza, 2021). Therefore, organizational leaders should strive to create a cohesive organizational culture. Organizational culture is a vital component of congruency with the organization, leading to increased employee retention.

If developed positively, organizational culture can contribute to employee retention. A culture that emphasizes the organizational support of employees contributes to the formation of a connection between organization personnel and employees (Merrilees et al., 2020). When employees feel supported by the organizational leaders, the employees are more likely to commit to the organization and retain the organization because the employee develops a bond of trust with organizational leaders (Walk et al., 2019). Leaders should develop and implement methods to increase the unity of organizational culture so that the employees feel connected with the organization and each other. This connection influences employee loyalty, increasing retention chances (Dutta & Dhir, 2021). Furthermore, Woolford et al. (2022) suggested that organizational leaders emphasize the participation of employees in volunteer opportunities. Moreover, leaders can create an atmosphere where volunteering is communicated positively (Mullan et al., 2021). Leaders can positively communicate the importance of volunteering through training, orientation, team meetings, and the mission and purpose of the organization. Leaders can increase employee retention by creating an organizational culture of commitment, unity, and positivity around volunteering.

Employees are more likely to retain in organizations where the culture empowers employees' individuality. Organizational leaders contribute to fostering employee individuality by enabling a sense of ownership. Slatten et al. (2021) defined a sense of ownership as an environment where employees contribute to organizational decision-making. Ainsworth (2020) recommended using possessive language such as *your* and *our* to help shape the employee's sense of ownership. Furthermore, organizational leaders can create opportunities that reflect the employee's individuality (Neely et al., 2022). By the leadership team increasing ownership and seeking out ways to link opportunities to the employee's individuality, employees will feel as though they mesh with the organization's culture. Employee individuality is vital in developing an employee's congruency with an organization through organizational culture.

***Sense of Belonging***

The second subcomponent of congruency with the organization is a sense of belonging. One of humankind's basic needs is belonging (Maslow, 1943). An employee's sense of belonging is not limited to the general sense of belonging in society but also to the specific facets of a person's life, such as the workplace. Belonging to a workplace is the attachment produced by an employee's involvement within an organization (Komisarof, 2022). Employees who feel they belong to an organization tend to form an attachment and are more likely to contribute to achieving organizational goals (Filstad et al., 2019). On the other hand, when employees feel they do not belong in their workplace, their well-being declines, negatively impacting their performance (Haldorai et al., 2020; Rasool et al., 2021). It is imperative that employees feel they belong to an organization so that they remain with the organization and further advance the organizational mission.

Organizational leaders can contribute to the employee's congruency with the organization by increasing the employee's sense of belonging.

Researchers identified various strategies to increase the sense of belonging of employees in the workplace. Organizational leaders can contribute to employees' sense of belonging in the workplace by creating opportunities that highlight the employee's work as a valuable contribution to the organization. Employees may not feel their work is valuable to the organization if the organizational leaders promote generalized projects (Gilbert et al., 2021). Organizational leaders should identify employees based on their skills and discuss with the employees how their skills can aid in completing the project (Behnia, 2021); when employees recognize their contribution towards completing a project, their pride increases (Groza & Groza, 2021). Employees with increased levels of pride feel a greater sense of belonging to an organization. By highlighting how an employee's work contributes to the organization, organizational leaders increase the employee's sense of belonging.

To further increase an employee's sense of belonging, organizational leaders can influence the employee's psychological ownership. Ainsworth (2020) defined psychological ownership as the link someone feels towards a tangible or intangible object, in this case, towards the organization. Including employees in the decision-making process increases psychological ownership. Employees included in the decision-making process have increased levels of perceived organizational ownership (Slatten et al., 2021). Furthermore, organizational leaders can include employees to determine how the outcome of the organizational mission impacts local communities. When employees contribute to the impact of local communities, they have an increased sense of ownership (Groza & Groza, 2021). Additionally, employees who see the positive impact of their work on their stakeholders' lives are more likely to retain in an organization (Woolford et al., 2022). Increasing how employees see the impact of their work increases the employee's sense of ownership. By increasing the employee's sense of ownership, organizational leaders can positively influence an employee's sense of belonging.

### ***Volunteer Identity***

The third subcomponent of congruency with the organization is volunteer identity. An individual's volunteer identity is defined as the internalization of volunteer work as synonymous with the individual's work (van Schie et al., 2019). Individuals who adopt a volunteer identity are more likely to continue volunteering in the future (van Schie et al., 2019). Adopting a volunteer identity is highly common among retirees who participate in volunteerism as fulfillment for lost wages (Russell et al., 2019). Organizational leaders can influence volunteer retention by increasing the depth of the individual's volunteer identity. Thoits (2021) stated that organizational and role identity significantly impact solidifying volunteer identity when harnessed in tandem. Organizational leaders can foster a deeper level of organizational identity and role identity to increase volunteer identity.

Volunteers can express their volunteer identity by working for an organization. An employee's organizational identity stems from the perceived employee alignment with the organization's mission, purpose, and values (Zollo et al., 2019). Volunteers who align spiritually with the organization's mission, purpose, and values are more likely to retain the organization (Zollo et al., 2022). Volunteers can experience increased organizational identity when they volunteer under leaders who promote congruent organizational citizenship behaviors. Citizenship behaviors are employees' actions central to the organizational mission without the need for reward or recognition (Ocampo et al., 2018). By engaging in organizational citizenship behaviors, volunteers create a collective identity that increases job satisfaction (Benevene et al., 2020). Volunteers who work for an organization with a similar organizational identity to other employees are more likely to align with citizenship behaviors. The promotion of external transmission of the organizational identity contributes to volunteers' confidence to participate in citizenship behaviors (Nogueira et al., 2020). Organizational leaders can increase a volunteer's congruency with an organization by increasing organizational identity.

Volunteer identity is further classified as role identity. A volunteer's role identity is the emotional association between the employee and their position (Afshari et al., 2019). Volunteers are more likely to retain an organization if they have a clear role identity (Woolford et al., 2022). The volunteer creates their identity by how others in their sphere of influence define the volunteer's role (Thoits, 2021). Organizational leaders can create opportunities for those in the volunteer's sphere of influence to see the volunteer work in action. Moreover, role identity significantly influences long-term volunteer retention (Almas et al., 2020). Organizational leaders can create opportunities for employees to understand how their identity meshes with the organization. For example, organizational leaders can interview volunteers to understand the volunteer's perspectives on how they can contribute to the organization. Then, the organizational leaders can match the volunteer’s perspectives and skill sets with a role rather than filling a need with a volunteer who may not be interested or qualified to fill that need. Both the employee’s organizational identity and role identity contribute to how the employee perceives their congruency with the organization.

Volunteers can also experience identity formation through socialization. Socialization refers to the communication between friends, family, and colleagues (Behnia, 2021). Volunteers tend to continue volunteering with an organization when they know someone volunteering at the same organization (Stefanick et al., 2020). Edeigba and Singh (2022) stated that more than half of the volunteers in their study continued volunteering because of socialization opportunities. When volunteers establish connections with members of organizations, they begin to form their identity around the organization’s cause (Wegner et al., 2021). In response to positive socialization, volunteers experienced increased motivation to continue volunteering at an organization (Groza & Groza, 2021). One reason for increased motivation is that increased socialization allows organizational leaders to learn about the volunteer, which can help the volunteer become more congruent with the organization (Merrilees et al., 2020). The volunteers develop a shared identity with the other volunteers (Gray & Stevenson, 2020). To aid in the formation of volunteer identity, organizational leaders must foster an environment where volunteers can create social connections with members of the organization (Almas et al., 2020; Groza & Groza, 2021). Volunteers whose volunteer identity is formed because of socialization are more motivated to participate and continue in volunteering opportunities because they experience congruency with an organization.

**Strategic Human Resources Management Practices**

Another strategy researchers found that increased employee retention was implementing human resource management practices. Worldwide, organizational leaders have implemented strategic human resource practices to increase employee retention (Fahim, 2018). For this study, human resource management practices are described as the actions taken by organization leaders to improve volunteer motivation and experiences to increase retention and volunteering outcomes (Basnyat & Clarence Lao, 2019; Walk et al., 2019). Human resource management practices can be subcategorized as training and development, communication, and rewards and recognition (McClean & Collins, 2019; Neves et al., 2018; Walk et al., 2019). Implementing human resources practices enables organizational leaders to create environments where volunteers can experience increased motivation, value, and ownership. Organizational leaders should seek human resource management strategies to increase volunteer retention.

***Training and Development***

A subcomponent of human resources management practices is training and development. Organizational leaders can implement training and development as an effective retention strategy, especially among younger generations who seek training and development to further future career possibilities (Hopkins & Dowell, 2021; Woolford et al., 2022). Volunteers who need more skills related to their role cannot fulfill their responsibilities (Edeigba & Singh, 2022); therefore, when leaders implement quality training and development, volunteers are more likely to fulfill their responsibilities (Loomba & Karsten, 2018). Moreover, volunteers are more likely to engage in volunteer opportunities when they experience an environment that contributes to the development of habits (Mullan et al., 2021). Implementing training programs can provide volunteers with the skills they need to be confident to complete their work (Woolford et al., 2022). The results of Cho et al.'s (2020) study supported Woolford et al. (2022) by confirming that training inspires volunteer confidence. Organizational leaders may increase volunteer retention by implementing training and development programs.

Organizational leaders should be intentional about what training and development programs they implement concerning other retention strategies. Researchers such as Lukman et al. (2019) found that training reduced volunteer attrition, whereas Noranee et al. (2021) found no relationship between training and retention. On the other hand, Ngah et al. (2021) explicitly stated that training increases volunteer retention. The type of employee may explain this discrepancy. In the study conducted by Ngah et al., the training was directly related to volunteers who did not receive compensation packages. In contrast, Noranee et al.'s study participants were employees who received poor compensation packages. Moreover, another study by Walk et al. (2019) found that implementing training programs in non-profit organizations increased male volunteer retention. Groza and Groza (2021) suggested that organizational leaders train volunteers on skills that relate to the volunteer's role. Additionally, training volunteers based on their career goals also increased volunteer retention (Behnia, 2021; Groza & Groza, 2021). Organizational leaders' intentionality of training content may increase volunteer retention.

The implementation of various training methods may increase volunteer retention. A standard method of training in literature is peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. Peer-to-peer knowledge is the sharing of knowledge, expertise, culture, and skills from one volunteer to another volunteer in an organization (Azeem et al., 2021; Fait & Sakka, 2020). When the volunteer shares their knowledge, it increases their reputation amongst other volunteers (Fait & Sakka, 2020). Moreover, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing enables volunteers to create social connections with other volunteers (Fait & Sakka, 2020). Additionally, when volunteers create social connections, they can produce new knowledge, which is advantageous for the organizational leader (Azeem et al., 2021). As a result, tenured volunteers are considered reputable, approachable, and innovative. Organizational leaders who implement various training methods can increase volunteer retention at their organization.

### *Effective Communication*

Another subcomponent of human resources practices that organizational leaders can implement is effective communication. Basic communication is the transfer of knowledge that provokes a response (van Ruler, 2018). Communication can either be non-verbal (body language) or verbal (spoken or written; van Ruler, 2018). Furthermore, effective communication is the transfer of knowledge from the sender to the intended recipient in a way that correctly conveys the message of the sender (van Ruler, 2018). Effective communication opportunities include performance feedback, role coaching, career-development counseling, leader-employee relationship building, vision casting, and brainstorming (Adiguzel, 2019; Tian et al., 2020; Yildiz et al., 2020). By implementing effective communication, leaders can increase productivity and decrease wasted time from unnecessary and repeated clarification (Adiguzel, 2019). Organizational leaders who use effective communication are clear, direct, and concise; therefore, organizational leaders should seek opportunities to use effective communication.

Employees benefit when organizational leaders use effective communication. Employees tend to exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement when organization leaders use effective communication (Kramer et al., 2021; Yildiz et al., 2020). Employee motivation increases mainly because effective communication increases how employees positively identify with an organization (Yildiz et al., 2020). Additionally, when an open line of communication exists between the employee and the organizational leader, the employee and leader can elaborate on the responsibilities of the employee's position (Woolford et al., 2022). This exchange can continue until the employee is placed in the best-fit position (Woolford et al., 2022). The organization also benefits when organizational leaders use effective communication. Moreover, effective communication spurs creativity, leading to innovation (Adiguzel, 2019). When employees are innovative, organizational leaders can use the innovations to accomplish organizational goals in new ways. Organizational leaders who implement effective communication benefit the employee and the organization, resulting in increased employee retention.

In the literature, researchers outlined practical strategies to implement effective communication, which resulted in increased volunteer retention. One strategy is to emphasize volunteering opportunities as projects. By promoting project-based opportunities, organizational leaders create an environment where skilled volunteers can utilize their skills (Gilbert et al., 2021). When leaders communicate how the volunteers impacted the success of the volunteer project, the volunteers gain a high level of satisfaction (Huang et al., 2020). Volunteers who have bad experiences are less likely to continue volunteering in the future (Denning, 2021); therefore, leaders should use positive communication language to communicate the benefits of volunteering and the overall impact of their work and develop communication on how to start the volunteering process (Mullan et al., 2021). Moreover, suppose volunteers understand that their commitment has a start and an end date, coupled with communication on how their work contributed to the project's success. In that case, the volunteers may be more likely to begin and continue volunteering in other capacities. Effective communication that is clear, concise, and informative is more likely to increase volunteer retention.

### *Reward and Recognition*

The third subcomponent of human resources practices that organizational leaders can implement is rewards and recognition. Regarding volunteer positions, rewards may include monetary compensation such as gift cards, free lunch, or a check; however, when discussing volunteerism, rewards can be tangible or intangible concepts that benefit the volunteer (Fait & Sakka, 2020). Additionally, intangible rewards can be labeled emotional rewards (Koo et al., 2020). Rewards can include increased responsibilities or decision-making opportunities, gifts, or awards (Kollmann et al., 2020; Koo et al., 2020; Same et al., 2020). Recognition is the act of identifying and publicizing the output of the volunteer (Walk et al., 2019). For example, recognition may be an award presentation, acknowledgment of the employee’s success in a newsletter, a shout-out in an organizational email, or kudos in a coaching session (Walk et al., 2019). The primary difference between reward and recognition is that rewards are given in response to the output from the volunteer, whereas recognition is to communicate to others the success of the volunteer. Implementing rewards and recognition may help employers retain volunteers.

Organizational leaders use rewards and recognition to retain volunteers. When leaders use rewards and recognition to highlight successes, volunteers tend to stay with the organization (Edeigba & Singh, 2022); however, when leaders use overuse rewards and recognition, volunteers may become dissatisfied with the organization and leave the organization (Kollmann et al., 2020). Moreover, volunteers view management positively when given rewards (Cho et al., 2020). Incentives, empowerment, promotions, and recognition effectively retain employees (Koo et al., 2020). Although the overuse of rewards and recognition may negatively influence volunteer retention, the lack of rewards and recognition also negatively influences retention. Volunteers are likelier to stay with an organization that has rewarded or recognized them in the past (Afari-Asiedu et al., 2018). Organizational leaders should identify what tasks, goals, or actions merit rewards and recognition. Although there may be some autonomy for leaders to give rewards and recognition outside of that criterion, leaders should follow the rewards and recognition guidelines so that rewards and recognition maintain their appeal to volunteers.

Furthermore, researchers argued that rewards and recognition influences volunteers differently based on their age. Younger people are more likely to be concerned about their future careers; therefore, giving any sincere reward and recognition that furthers their monetary or career potential is more likely to increase young people’s retention (Hopkins & Dowell, 2021; Kollmann et al., 2020). On the other hand, older volunteers are more likely to be motivated by rewards that increase socialization, such as the ability to change positions so that the volunteer can talk with new people or participate in an activity with their friend (Hopkins & Dowell, 2021; Kollmann et al., 2020; Same et al., 2020). Although not all volunteers are motivated by the same type of rewards or recognition, younger people are more materialistic, and older people are relationally driven. Organizational leaders should create relationships with volunteers to understand what rewards inspire each volunteer.

**Volunteer Retention and Job Embeddedness**

Retaining employees is a common issue organizational leaders face around the globe. Furthermore, organizational leaders need help to implement effective employee retention strategies. Regardless of full-time, part-time, or volunteer status, losing employees is a vitally important concern that prevents organizational leaders from accomplishing organizational goals. Non-profit organizational leaders must be intentional about seeking volunteer retention strategies. Most of a non-profit organization’s workforce is volunteers; therefore, if non-profit organizational leaders cannot increase retention, the organization may cease to exist, or the cost will be transferred to the recipients of the services. Church leaders rely on donations through tithes or various gifts (one-time donations, annuity or life insurance payouts, and fundraising campaigns); therefore, strategies most likely will not include monetary variables such as pay raises, tuition reimbursement, or medical insurance. Church leaders must be creative and innovative in exploring, understanding, and implementing volunteer retention strategies.

There is a lack of current professional and academic literature that references volunteer retention in Protestant churches under the framework of job embeddedness. To date, my study is the only study that explores this topic. Even more generally, there is a lack of literature on the retention of volunteers in churches, without the qualifier of Protestant or job embeddedness. Additionally, there is a lack of literature on volunteer retention and the job embeddedness framework. Much of the literature referencing the job embeddedness framework discusses retention in terms of employees (paid staff). One possible reason for the lack of literature on volunteer retention in churches may be because Doctor of Divinity programs do not tend to focus on volunteerism within a church setting. Popular protestant seminary schools such as Dallas Theological Seminary, Nazarene Theological Seminary, and Fuller Theological Seminary focus on theology, leadership, counseling, missions, or pastoral care. Volunteerism is vital in church operations; therefore, researchers should explore this topic in further detail.

## Transition

In Section 1 of this study, I outlined the need for church leaders to implement successful strategies to retain volunteers to accomplish organization goals. I explained the foundation and background of the problem and probed into the need for church leaders to retain volunteers. In the problem and the purpose statement, I identified that some church leaders lack strategies to retain volunteers and explored this problem through a quantitative, multiple-case study. Then, I included a summary of the population and sampling and the nature of the study, followed by the research question and interview questions. I selected the job embeddedness framework as the conceptual framework to view this study through. Also, I included operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, which I used to create boundaries for the study to be conducted within. In this section, I reviewed the existing academic and professional literature about volunteer retention strategies and the job embeddedness conceptual framework.

In Section 2, I provide a detailed outline of how the study was conducted. I also include details on the role of the researcher, population sampling, the participants in the study, and how I ethically conducted the study. I list the details of the research methodology and design, including why I did not choose other methods and designs. Additionally, I discuss the data collection instrument, data collection technique, data organization technique, and data analysis. I close Section 2 with a description of the reliability and validity of the study.

In Section 3, I include an introduction to the findings of this study followed by a comprehensive description of the findings. Then, in Section 3, I transition to the application of the findings on professional practice and implications on social change. Finally, I provide recommendations for action and recommendations for further research, followed by reflections on this study and a conclusion.

# Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I restate the purpose of the study and then describe the role of the researcher, the participants, research method and design, population and sampling, and ethical research considerations. I then explain the data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization techniques, and data analysis. Additionally, I discuss the steps to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. I conclude this section with a summary and transition to Section 3.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore strategies that some church leaders used to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals.

## Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, a researcher's role is to be the instrument in the data collection and analysis. According to Collins and Stockton (2018) and Pratt et al. (2022), a researcher starts the creative flow in the data collection and analysis process by aligning the interview questions with the problem statement, purpose statement, and the research question(s). During the formation of these research components, C. Grant and Osanloo (2016) stated that a researcher formulates a blueprint, by way of a conceptual framework, to determine the methodology and design to understand the phenomenon best. I continued to review my collection and analysis process to ensure that my study aligns with the problem statement, purpose statement, and research question.

The researcher, as the instrument of the data collection and analyzing process, selects the participants in alignment with the study. Kegler et al. (2019) stated that a researcher identifies the participants for various reasons, such as matching the study's purpose. I selected the participants through the purposive sampling of the targeted population. After the researcher selects the participants, the researcher collects the data. In a qualitative, multiple-case study, the researcher collects data through semistructured interviews and triangulates the data by collecting and analyzing organizational documents (Crowe et al., 2011; P. R. Smith, 2018). I conducted virtual, semistructured interviews with three participants and triangulated the interview responses with organizational data such as training processes, policies, and job descriptions. Yin (2018) stated that the researcher is responsible for understanding the information. I used NVivo 14 to assist in coding the data, but I used thematic analysis to understand the meaning behind the participant's responses.

Another role of the researcher is to recognize personal bias and mitigate viewing the data through a personal lens. I have a fundamental relationship with this topic. I am an ordained elder in the Nazarene Church and have served in many volunteer positions with various local churches. Before conducting this study, I did not lead volunteers or research strategies to retain volunteers. I had possible ideas of strategies church leaders could use to retain volunteers, but I did not conduct formal research. Featherston et al. (2019) stated that the researcher cannot eliminate bias; therefore, the researcher should use multiple strategies to mitigate bias. To mitigate bias in this study, I created an interview protocol of open-ended questions to explore the participants' responses instead of using closed-ended questions that could lead the participants to respond a certain way. I created an interview protocol, so each interview was conducted using the same questions. I also used member checking to mitigate bias. This method allowed the research participant to validate the researcher's interpretation of the data by reviewing transcribed notes (Candela, 2019). According to Reid et al. (2018), researchers use reflexivity and self-awareness to identify how background, beliefs, and experience may influence the interpretation of the data. I used reflexivity and self-awareness to mitigate researcher bias and provide a neutral processing of data.

The role of the researcher also entails implementing an ethical process to conduct the research. *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1979) outlined the standards or basic principles for ethical research. The report, created by Congress in 1976, focused on respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. *The Belmont Report* outlined the basic ethical principles as (a) respect for persons by treating all participants as autonomous agents and providing protection for those with diminished autonomy, (b) beneficence through minimizing harm and maximizing benefits, and (c) justice through the equitable selection of participants (White, 2020). Walden University adheres to the standards outlined in this report. To adhere to this report, I sent each participant an informed consent form to know their rights regarding their participation in this study. Another requirement of Walden students is to seek and gain approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB). To gain approval, I used the Case Study Manual with Data Collection Steps, Consent Form, and Site Agreement created by the Walden IRB. By adhering to *The Belmont Report* and using the forms and agreements created by Walden's IRB, I ethically conducted my study.

## Participants

In this qualitative, multi-case study, I interviewed three church leaders who attend churches in Protestant denominations or Protestant nondenominational churches in the Southwestern United States. The church leaders attempted to offer strategies to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals. For this study, a church leader is someone who actively manages volunteers in a church. I did not limit this study to senior or lead pastors because there may have been instances where a staff pastor or a lay leader had the role of managing volunteers. To aid in the selection process of participants, researchers use eligibility criteria to limit bias or conflict of interest (Gaur & Kumar, 2018). To be considered for participation in this study, the church leader must be at least 21 years old and have had at least 3 years of experience managing volunteers in the local church where they are presently attending. Management experience includes but is not limited to recruiting, retaining, rewarding, maintaining relationships, and disciplining volunteers within a local church setting (Ertas, 2019). The church leader also had to be in good standing with the local church leadership at the time of the interview. Yin (2018) stated that the researcher uses documents to triangulate the data. I collected documents from training, retention, onboarding, and rewards systems. Prior determination of participant selection criteria can mitigate bias in the participant process.

After establishing the requirements for participant selection, the researcher must seek out the participants. Churches do not usually have a list outlining the ratio of volunteers to nonvolunteers; therefore, seeking out participants can be difficult. Researchers should seek individuals who provide adequate participation because participation is critical to the study’s outcomes (Raymond et al., 2018). The two primary methods I used to seek out eligible participants were social media mining and snowballing. Social media mining uses social media platforms to ask if anyone knows participants who meet the qualifications to participate in the study. For this study, I used LinkedIn to connect with professional connections and Facebook to connect with pastors in ministry groups. Researchers using the snowballing method ask whom the participants know who might also qualify (Kelly et al., 2021). I identified participants through social media and used snowballing to seek out other participants. Once I identified the participants, I emailed the partner site about participating in the study per the guidelines outlined in the DBA Case Study Manual provided by Walden University’s IRB. After sending the initial email, I waited for the partner site agreement form and then was approved by the IRB. I then identified the participants and used email correspondence to explain the process in more depth. Between the recruitment of partner sites and the site agreement forms, I did not discuss the details of the study. Then, between the initial contact with the participants and the receiving of the informed consent forms, I did not discuss the details of the study. Finally, between the interview scheduling and the interview, I did not ask any interview questions but attempted to build rapport, resulting in increased engagement and participation from the participants (McGrath et al., 2019; Yin, 2018). During the rapport-building and process explanation, I discussed with the participants the study background, confidentiality agreement and the researcher’s responsibility, scheduling of the interview, and the interview process.

In qualitative research, semistructured interviews are a prominent tool to explore participants’ experiences. Participants in the interviews share relevant information regarding the research question and the interview questions (Yin, 2018). I discussed confidentiality with the interview participants because Lancaster (2017) stated that participants who do not fear the risk of adverse consequences from the interview tend to share more openly about their experiences. I interviewed participants through a virtual setting because virtual settings can make the participant more comfortable because they are used to the environment they choose, which results in richer data (Johnson et al., 2021). During the interview, I followed my interview protocol to ensure I asked all the participants the same questions that resulted in comparable responses (McGrath et al., 2019). I completed the interview and informed the participants so that they could understand I would not use anything else they say after the interview concluded. I reiterated that I would transcribe the interview and use the member checking process to ensure I captured their responses correctly (Candela, 2019; McGrath et al., 2019). After transcription and member checking, I used thematic coding to identify themes throughout the interview. As mentioned, I started with three church leaders and did not need to interview other church leaders as this was the number necessary to achieve data saturation. In accordance with Walden University policy, after the interview process and coding process were completed, I stored the interviews on a flash drive and placed the flash drive into a locked safe for 5 years.

## Research Method and Design

Researchers select a research methodology and design appropriate for their study. The researcher can choose qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches when conducting research (Yin, 2018). The researcher chooses a method, the overall strategy for the study, based on inductive or deductive reasoning when answering the research question (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). In this study, I chose to utilize a qualitative methodology. The researcher can choose from a single case study, multiple-case study, phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, historical, narrative, or action research design (Kelly et al., 2021). In this study, I chose to utilize a multiple-case study design. The following sections explain the rationale behind my choice of methodology and design.

### Research Method

For this study, I used the qualitative research method to explore strategies some church leaders use to retain volunteers. Researchers in social sciences tend to use qualitative research methods because they explore participants' experiences (Strijker et al., 2020). Researchers use the qualitative research method to explore a phenomenon through the lens of the participants' real-life experiences (Kelly et al., 2021; Poucher et al., 2020; M. N. K. Saunders et al., 2015; Sawatsky et al., 2019; Yin, 2018). Myers (2019) and Olubiyi et al. (2019) also stated that qualitative research aids researchers in understanding the context in which the participants experienced the phenomenon. Furthermore, the researcher subjectively analyzes and interprets the responses from the participants to answer the study's research question and add value to the specified field

(Eakin & Gladstone, 2020; McGrath et al., 2019; Poucher et al., 2020; Sawatsky et al., 2019). Researchers using the qualitative research method conduct semistructured interviews as the primary source of data collection because the responses from the participants yield deep and rich data (Kelly et al., 2021; McGrath et al., 2019; Yin, 2018). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study because I sought to explore, through inductive reasoning, the lived experiences of church leaders who discovered successful strategies to retain volunteers.

Researchers may decide to use a quantitative or mixed research method. Researchers in natural sciences tend to use quantitative research methods (Strijker et al., 2020). Quantitative research is a formal, rigorous, and systematic process in which the researcher tests hypotheses to determine relationships between variables such as correlation or causation regarding a phenomenon (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The tested relationships are between dependent and dependent variables (M. N. K. Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers use the quantitative methodology to examine the generalizability of the phenomenon; however, researchers do not use the quantitative methodology to understand the participants' experiences. I sought to understand the participants' experiences through interviews, not through testing the relationships between variables; therefore, the quantitative method was unsuitable for my study. When a qualitative or quantitative research method cannot alone answer research questions, researchers may use a mixed-methods approach (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019; Hendren et al., 2018). Researchers use mixed methods research to understand the phenomenon through a qualitative and quantitative lens (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019).

According to Strijker et al. (2020), researchers use mixed methods to create generalizability from a quality perspective. The research can merge both methods into one mixed-method study, conduct subsequent studies using alternating methods, or conduct a qualitative study to build an instrument and test the instrument using quantitative data (Kelly et al., 2021). I did not use quantitative research; therefore, the mixed-methods approach was inappropriate for my study.

**Research Design**

For this qualitative study, I used a multiple-case study design to explore strategies some church leaders use to retain volunteers. Qualitative researchers can choose from many designs such as case study, phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, historical, narrative, or action research (Kelly et al., 2021). The case study design is the most prominent research design in management literature, with over 2,400 articles published from 2001 to 2010 (Takahashi & Araujo, 2019). According to many researchers (e.g., Crowe et al., 2011; Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018; Mohajan, 2018; J. G. Smith, 2018), researchers use case studies to understand a person, program, or organization. Yin (2018) also stated that a case is a real-life phenomenon. Researchers seek to answer questions that can provide deep and rich information about the topic (P. R. Smith, 2018). Researchers use single or multiple-case studies. If the researcher wants to explore a phenomenon that occurs as a unique situation, the research uses a single case (Takahashi & Araujo, 2019). On the other hand, the researcher uses a multiple-case study if multiple instances occur among many organizations, systems, or populations (Takahashi & Araujo, 2019). A researcher, if possible, should conduct a multiple-case study to ensure data saturation from multiple sources (Yin, 2018). I interviewed three participants by studying multiple cases until I reached data saturation. I did not continue to uncover new information from the three participants, so I did not need to increase the number of participants. I sought to explore strategies that multiple church leaders at various churches use to retain volunteers; therefore, I used a multiple-case study.

I considered using research designs such as ethnographic and phenomenological designs but decided to use a multiple-case study design. I considered an ethnographic research design because a researcher using this design uses the knowledge they collect from key informants to learn about the culture and context of the key informants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The researcher observes the participants in a naturally occurring setting (Hammersley, 2018; Monrouxe & Ajjawi, 2020). Furthermore, researchers use ethnography to understand how the specific cultural group experienced the phenomenon (Bass & Milosevic, 2018). My research question was not limited to a specific cultural group, and I did not observe the participants in a naturally occurring setting; therefore, I did not choose the ethnographic design. I also considered and rejected the phenomenological design. The purpose of a phenomenological design is to explore how a person views their overall life experiences related to the research topic (McNarry et al., 2019; Mohajan, 2018). Errasti-Ibarrondo et al. (2018) further added that phenomenological designs focus on reflective writing. My research aimed to explore strategies that church leaders found successful at retaining volunteers. I did not observe the volunteers serving or observing the church leaders using the strategies; therefore, the phenomenological design was not an appropriate research design for my study.

## Population and Sampling

Researchers recruit participants from a larger group called the population. The population is the entire group of individuals who meet the requirements the researcher set forth to obtain the most relevant data for the study (Berndt, 2020). Sampling, as defined as the selection process of dwindling the population down to a manageable size according to the researcher’s bandwidth (Berndt, 2020; Campbell, Greenwood, et al., 2020; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), the sampling plan outlines the method involved in sampling, interviewing process, and the method of recruiting participants. Additionally, the researcher determines the sampling method by the research question, research methodology and design, and knowledge about the topic (Berndt, 2020). In this qualitative, multiple-case study, the population was Protestant church leaders who managed volunteer programs in the Southwestern United States. I used non-probability, purposive sampling to select three participants.

In qualitative research, however, the researcher is limited to non-probability sampling methods. Qualitative researchers are limited because the researcher should only use sampling methods that allow participants to offer the most detailed information about the phenomenon (Campbell, Greenwood, et al., 2020; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The type of nonprobability sampling I will use is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the selection of sample size based on the participant’s ability to provide relevant and valuable information about the research topic (Campbell, Greenwood, et al., 2020). I chose the purposive sampling method to identify participants who have a deep and rich understanding of the research topic to reach data saturation. Data saturation is when the participants collectively offer no new information.

A qualitative researcher continues to collect data until data saturation occurs. Data saturation is when a researcher uncovers all new data and further data collection only reveals redundant data (Hennink et al., 2019; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In qualitative research, the sample size varies based on the scope of the study (Hennink et al., 2019). Some researchers suggest five to 12 participants will yield enough data to reach saturation (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018; Lowe et al., 2018). Hennink and Kaiser (2022) stated 12 to 13 interviews would yield saturation, whereas Conlon et al. (2020) listed 15 participants. Sebele-Mpofu (2020) summarized the debate by saying it depends on the study. Therefore, since successful volunteer programs seem to be the unusual case, I planned on interviewing three participants in this study to achieve data saturation. I reached data saturation with three participants; therefore, I did not increase the number of participants since I reached data saturation. In other words, since the participants did not continue to reveal new information, I did not conduct additional interviews because the three participants did not reveal new strategies to retain volunteers.

The setting for interviews is critical in obtaining deep and rich data. I used Microsoft Teams as the medium to interview the participants. The primary reasons for using a virtual interview are recordability, travel, and scheduling. I recorded virtual meetings and enabled transcript recording. Though Microsoft Teams transcripts are not entirely accurate, I paired the transcripts with the audio recording when I conducted member checking to understand the participant's responses better. Virtual meetings also enabled me to interview participants I may not have been able to due to lack of transportation. By using virtual meetings, I scheduled appointments with participants at convenient times when they could be in a quiet and calm location.

## Ethical Research

Conducting ethical research is imperative to scholarly research. Researchers are responsible for upholding high ethical standards when conducting research (Yin, 2018). The National Research Act of 1974 established the necessity to conduct ethical research; moreover, in 1983, this act was amended to establish IRBs (Paquin et al., 2019). The IRB is a committee that conducts an independent and transparent review of research ethics (Lynch, 2018; Osborne & Luoma, 2018). The IRB is useful to protect participants, determine if policies and procedures have changed, manage legal liability, and aid in the process of peer-reviewed publishing (Osborne & Luoma, 2018). According to Walden University's research policy, I sought IRB approval before recruiting participants, collecting data, or accessing data sets. After receiving Walden's IRB, I followed the principles outlined in *The Belmont Report* (NCPHSBBR, 1979) to protect fundamental human rights. The IRB approval number for this study is 04-04-23-0694383.

Informed consent forms are essential in communicating to participants their rights to participate in a research study. To ensure the fundamental ethical principles, I distributed an informed consent form detailing the information necessary for the participants to make informed decisions (Ripley et al., 2018). Walden University's Institution Review Board created a manual for case studies under the IRB's blanket ethics pre-approval. My study qualified under the requirement of this pre-approved manual because I conducted a qualitative, multiple-case study in which I interviewed leaders and collected organizational documents. I distributed the pre-approved informed consent form and to the best of my knowledge the participant's signature on the form signified that the participants consented to participate in the study. Participants need to know that they can withdraw or stop the study at any time and that the researcher's responsibility is to protect their confidentiality (Gillies et al., 2018). Furthermore, I ensured a partner organization agreement form was signed by the church leader before I recruited participants, which allowed me to collect documents from the organization. In my interview protocol (see Appendix), I outlined the participant's rights concerning the ability to refuse to answer a question, stop the interview, or withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, I explained to the participants that I would mask their identity and organization per Walden University's research policy. I explained to the participants that the safe storage protocol consists of storing the video-recorded semistructured interviews, transcriptions, and documents on a password-protected thumb drive for 5 years. I treated all participants with honor, dignity, and respect and did not mistreat any participant. I did not provide rewards or compensation for participation in this study.

## Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting data. The researcher's purpose as an instrument is to gather data from participants and interpret data to answer the research question (Alam, 2020; Naicker & Maharaj, 2020). In this multiple-case study, I was the researcher, thus the primary data collection instrument. I adhered to the principles outlined in *The Belmont Report* (NCPHSBBR, 1979) during the research process to ensure the participants' rights. As the primary data collection instrument, I gathered information from church leaders in Protestant churches to understand their strategies to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals.

The secondary data collection instrument used in this study was virtual, semistructured interviews. Interviews are one of the most common qualitative data collection tools (Dadzie et al., 2018). A researcher uses interviews to collect the subjective perspective of a participant regarding the research topic (Denny & Weckesser, 2019; McGrath et al., 2019). Using open-ended questions and probing into further detail regarding the participants' responses yields a more efficient interview than using closed-ended questions or a large but shallow sample size (Weller et al., 2018). The use of open-ended questions also allows the participants to share as much detail as they desire and allows the researcher to follow up to clarify any additional questions (Weller et al., 2018) I used open-ended questions when conducting semistructured interviews. I followed my interview protocol, located in the Appendix. By using my interview protocol, I ensured that each participant knew their rights, interview expectations, and were asked the same questions as other participants (Yin, 2018). Using the interview protocol also helped me in avoiding bias. I conducted the interviews virtually. According to Johnson et al. (2021), virtual interviews are comparable in effectiveness to in-person or phone interviews. Dadzie et al. (2018) added that virtual interviews allow for more flexibility in location and schedule. Collecting organizational documents is another data source I used. Organizational documents are evidence that corroborates the information gained in the semistructured interviews (Yin, 2018). I sought to collect documentation such as training manuals/processes, organizational policies, and job descriptions.

Accurate interpretation of the data is essential in qualitative research. Member checking is a standard method and best practice to ensure the accuracy of participant responses in qualitative research (Candela, 2019). I used member checking to ensure my interpretation of the interview responses was correct. The process of member checking consists of analyzing each of the participant's responses, reflecting on how each response answers the research question, writing a summary of each response, and then sending the summaries to the participant to verify the accuracy of the analysis (Brear, 2019; DeCino & Waalkes, 2019; Iivari, 2018). The holistic purpose of member checking is not to check off a research review validity task but to allow the researcher and participant to verify the accuracy of the findings (DeCino & Waalkes, 2019). If the participant disagrees with the interpretation, the researcher should continue to build the relationship and try to remedy the discrepancy (Brear, 2019). Researchers use tools, such as member checking, to ensure accurate interpretation of data.

## Data Collection Technique

The primary data collection technique of my study was semistructured interviews. The interview protocol I created I listed as the Appendix. I used semistructured interviews to explore the knowledge of participants who met the criteria to be participants in my study. After developing my research question, problem statement, research method, and research design, I created interview questions I thought would help me understand the strategies some church leaders use to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals. I framed open-ended questions to enable the participants to share their knowledge, filtered through their context lens (Roberts, 2020). My interview questions were broken down into manageable questions that, when analyzed together, answered the research question (Staller, 2022). To promote transparency (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019) and adhere to *The Belmont Report's* (NCPHSBBR, 1979) principles, I sought Walden IRB approval. Upon the successful approval of my study by the Walden IRB, according to my participant selection process, I emailed possible participants about participation in my study. Before I proceed with any further steps, I waited until I received confirmation of consent by email stating *I consent*. According to the Walden University Case Study Manual, I also sent a site agreement form to the participant's organizational representative, before I recruited participants, so that I could collect organizational documents. I then scheduled virtual interviews and sent a Microsoft Teams meeting link. I used Microsoft Teams because the transcription service was relatively accurate and required a few changes.

An interview protocol is critical to have and follow to ensure the validity and reliability of the interviews and mitigate researcher bias. According to Carnochan et al. (2019), the researcher should set up an interview protocol to safeguard participants and collect data. The interview protocol enables a researcher to conduct thorough and consubstantial interviews (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, the interview protocol enables the researcher to gather rich and comprehensive data from the participants (Yeong et al., 2018). When the participant and I entered the virtual meeting, I greeted the participant and started the interview protocol (see Appendix). During the interview, as outlined in the interview protocol, I informed the participant that they had the option to refuse to answer any question, stop the interview at any time, and withdraw from the study at any point. I asked the participant for verbal confirmation of acknowledgment to proceed, and then the interview commenced. I then recited the introduction from the interview protocol and began to ask the interview questions. After I finished the interview questions and said my closing remarks, I stopped the recording and transcription service. I thanked the participants for their time and explained the next steps in the process. The following steps involved a restatement of the participant's rights, scheduling a follow-up session, and the process of member checking. I ended the virtual meeting.

Interviews are both beneficial and disadvantageous as a data collection technique. Semistructured interviews are beneficial for a qualitative researcher to use because the results can yield deep and rich data that other methods cannot derive, primarily because the open-ended questions allow the participant to freely respond in as much detail as they desire (Ergul Sonmez & Koc, 2018; Roberts, 2020; Yin, 2018). Semistructured interviews are also beneficial as a qualitative data collection technique because researchers can guide the flow and flexibility of the interview according to the research question (Young et al., 2018). Another benefit is that virtual interviews tend to be easier to schedule and more comfortable for the participant because the schedule and the environment are on their terms (McGrath et al., 2019). One disadvantage of semistructured interviews as the primary data source is social desirability. According to Bergen and Labonté (2020), social desirability is when individuals focus on their positive attitudes, behaviors, and results and downplay their negative attitudes, behaviors, and results. Another disadvantage is the researcher’s skill as an interviewer or the participant’s participation. If the interviewer is unfamiliar with the interview process, the interviewer may not ask enough probing questions to collect sufficient data (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). On the other side of the table, the participant may not be open to sharing detailed information, hindering the researcher from collecting sufficient data (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Researchers must be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of using interview as the primary data collection technique.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the interview, I used member checking. According to Candela (2019) and Yin (2018), researchers use member checking to verify the accuracy of the information shared by participants. The member checking process begins after the interviews are analyzed and interpreted. Once I clearly understood what the participant was trying to convey, I summarized each response. After I created the summaries, I sent them to the participant through email and scheduled a time to discuss their confirmation of accuracy (Brear, 2019; DeCino & Waalkes, 2019; Iivari, 2018). The researcher uses the follow-up meeting with the participant to discuss any discrepancies or other areas the researcher needs to clarify to better understand their response (Brear, 2019). Using member checking ensured I accurately interpreted the data. All my participants approved my interpretations.

## Data Organization Technique

Researchers use various methods to store and organize data. I used a software analysis tool to store and organize data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The tool stored recorded interviews, transcripts of the interviews, and organizational documents in one program. I also used a software tool to transcribe the interviews. Additionally, I used a reflective journal to record my thoughts, suggestions, and observations as I collected and analyzed data. The purpose of reflective journaling, as described by Alt et al. (2022), was to learn from experience over a period. All data collected in this study were stored on a USB flash drive for 5 years, according to Walden University's data storage policy. I created a cataloging system on the flash drive that ensured the confidentiality of the participants by using pseudonyms. The information stored in the software program is only accessible by me, housed on my password-protected desktop computer. After 5 years, I will format the flash drive and purge the software tool to ensure no trace of the information.

## Data Analysis

To increase the quality of the study, researchers (Noble & Heale, 2019, 2018; Yin, 2018) recommended the use of triangulation. Methodological triangulation is the act of using multiple data collection methods to arrive at the same conclusion (Campbell, Goodman-Williams, et al., 2020; Dzwigol, 2020; Fischer & Van de Bovenkamp, 2019; Heesen et al., 2019). The main method I used to collect data in my study was semistructured interviews and the secondary method was review of documents. Therefore, I used methodological triangulation for my case study.

Qualitative researchers should have an analysis plan to effectively analyze data. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) outlined five steps for data analysis: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. According to Castleberry and Nolen, compiling is transforming the data into a usable format. To execute this plan, researchers may use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to assist with creating codes and categorizing data. Though the software is helpful, the researcher is ultimately responsible for understanding the outputs (Yin, 2018). I used an inductive approach to coding by using NVivo to create codes without pre-defined coding parameters thereby decreasing any bias that may be associated with qualitative coding (O'Kane et al., 2021; Williams & Moser, 2019). Castleberry and Nolen then defined dissembling as putting the data into meaningful groups. I analyzed the codes to identify any similarities or differences. Furthermore, Castleberry and Nolen defined reassembling as establishing a meaningful context of the groups of codes. For example, the interview may contain a response where the codes were gift card, certificate, and ceremony. The meaningful context of these codes is rewards and recognition. I used the codes to identify themes that will reveal important relationships between the codes and the research question. This was seen in the previous example of using codes to reveal rewards and recognition as a theme. Interpreting the data, defined by Castleberry and Nolen, is the process of drawing analytical conclusions about the data. I interpreted the themes by using NVivo to create a list of themes so I could see the weight of the themes compared to the other themes. Castleberry and Nolen complete the data analysis process with the step of concluding. They defined concluding as interpreting the themes to respond to the purpose of the study. I concluded my study by seeking new studies published since the acceptance of my proposal and studies that I had not yet used in my literature review to answer the purpose of my study. By using an analysis plan, I focused on the literature review.

## Reliability and Validity

Researchers use reliability and validity to ensure high quality in qualitative research. Hayashi et al. (2019) stated that qualitative researchers prefer to use the term dependability not to confuse qualitative reliability with quantitative reliability. Hayashi et al. also noted that the validity of qualitative studies could not be measured the same way researchers measure quantitative studies; therefore, researchers use credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation as marks of qualitative validity. A researcher uses dependability, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation to enhance the validity of qualitative research.

### Dependability

The most common measure of reliability in qualitative studies is dependability. Dependability is the consistency of qualitative research (Janis, 2022). In other words, dependability is consistency through detailed documentation of a qualitative study so that other researchers can understand the study's method, flow, and process (Campbell, Greenwood, et al., 2020; Janis, 2022). Researchers who ensure their study's dependability enhance their research's transparency and quality. I used methodological triangulation of semistructured interviews and organizational documents in this study to ensure dependability. Moon et al. (Moon, 2019) stated that interview protocols and member checking help to ensure that the participant's responses are accurate and true. I used an interview protocol and member checking to establish dependability in my study. Researchers use member checking and interview protocols to add to the dependability of qualitative research.

**Credibility**

A researcher uses credibility as a mark of validity in qualitative studies. Credibility is essential in qualitative research because qualitative studies are rarely reproductive (Carlos, 2021). Instead of proving credibility through repeated studies, researchers ensure credible data in interviews and documents. Member checking is the primary method I used to ensure the credibility of my research. To create credible documents, the researcher uses member checking to verify each interpretation of the participant's response is accurately summarized (Yin, 2018). The participant then converses with the researcher to ensure the researcher is using the data in a way that accurately reflects the intention of the participant's response (Candela, 2019). I also used methodological triangulation to confirm the participant's responses match the organizational documents. The researcher uses methodological triangulation to add credibility by using multiple sources to establish a complete picture of the phenomenon (Moon, 2019). Using tools such as member checking and methodological triangulation, researchers strive to use credible data to add to the study's credibility.

**Transferability**

Another mark of validity in qualitative research is transferability. Whereas quantitative researchers aim to examine data that applies to a general population, qualitative researchers seek to document processes so that researchers can reproduce the study in different settings resulting in additional possible findings (FitzPatrick, 2019). Transferability is essential because other researchers can determine if the study applies to other populations and settings (Campbell, Greenwood, et al., 2020). According to

Korstjens and Moser (2018), the researcher should document, in detail, the processes used to collect and analyze data; moreover, the researcher should solicit a thick description of their context. In my study, the participants were comprised of church leaders. I wanted this study to be transferable to other churches; however, if other churches used lay leaders as volunteer leaders, then only senior or lead pastors as the participants would not have been transferable. Also, I crafted my interview questions to create a holistic picture of the participants' responses. By selecting a specific criterion of participants and the holistic interview questions, I sought to enhance the transferability of my study. Researchers use a participant selection protocol and interview questions that yield rich data to add to the transferability of qualitative research.

**Confirmability**

Researchers use confirmability to add to the validity of a qualitative study. Confirmability is the process in which the researcher shows that the interpretation of the data is not from the researcher's viewpoint and thought pattern but from a neutral perspective of the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In other words, a confirmable study is one in that other researchers are confident the results can be corroborated (Forero et al., 2018). Researchers use member checking to confirm interpretations of the data and challenge the interpretations to find inaccuracies such as researcher bias or personal influences (Iivari, 2018). I used member checking to ensure the neutrality of the interpretations of the participants' responses. Furthermore, researchers use an audit trail to confirm the process the research took to interpret the data resulting in transparency (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For this study, I was part of a university team that reviews the research and provides feedback which consists of the doctoral chair and second committee member. Along with this team, I used NVivo to produce an audit trail of my interpretation. Researchers use member checking and audit trails to add to the confirmability of a qualitative study.

**Data Saturation**

A final method to ensure the validity of a research study is data saturation. As a mark of qualitative rigor and the flagship measure of validity (Guest et al., 2020), in simplest terms, data saturation is the redundancy of information (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Adding to the definition of data saturation, Alam (2020) stated data saturation occurs when no new information is uncovered, expanding the codes or themes. The sample size of participants is ultimately determined when data saturation occurs (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). B. Saunders et al. (2018) also proposed that data saturation can occur within a single interview when the participant offers no new information. Although there is no exact science to determine data saturation, once the researcher reaches data saturation, the researcher should conduct one additional interview to determine if data saturation occurred (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In my study, I started by conducting two interviews, and since data saturation occurred, I did not conduct an additional interview. No new information was uncovered in the third interview; therefore, I did not continue to interview additional participants. My last interview question was an open-ended question that enabled the participants to add any further comments they wish to express. Data saturation is the most important marker of validity in a qualitative study.

## Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I reaffirmed the purpose of the study, role of the researcher, sample size, and the criteria I used to select participants. I also discussed the research method, research design, and the steps I took to conduct an ethical study. Then, I explained the data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization techniques, and data analysis. Additionally, I discussed the steps to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. In Section 3, I include the presentation of the findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for actions. I conclude this study with recommendations for further research and reflections.

# Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

## Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore the strategies some church leaders use to retain volunteers in Protestant churches to accomplish organizational goals. In this section, I present the findings from semistructured interviews with three church leaders residing in the Southwestern United States. I also present the findings from publicly accessible and internal documents for the three Protestant churches. Through these findings, I identified strategies these church leaders use to retain volunteers in their churches to accomplish organizational goals. I uncovered the following strategies that some church leaders use to retain volunteers: (a) organizational culture of excellence, (b) training and mentoring, (c) clear and effective communication, (d) rewards and recognition, (e) sense of belonging, and (f) relational leadership practices. The impact of these findings may improve church leaders' ability to accomplish organizational goals by providing essential services to the local community and assisting those in need.

## Presentation of the Findings

The research question for this qualitative, multiple-case study was: What strategies do some church leaders use to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals? The primary source of the data was in-depth semistructured interviews with three Protestant church leaders who manage volunteers in their local churches. I collected other data that corroborated the interviews from internal organizational documents and publicly available documents. I will discuss the themes from the interviews and documents related to volunteer retention.

The job embeddedness theory comprises link, fit, and sacrifice. Unlike an employer who pays their employees with a salary, benefits, and perks, church leaders develop an organizational culture emphasizing link and fit formation. If developed well, volunteers will value the links formed and the fit created that losing the link and fit will resemble sacrifice. This principle was a common occurrence in all the themes. For example, volunteers may feel like they are sacrificing the opportunity to grow through training if they leave the organization. Additionally, volunteers may lose a sense of belonging if they leave the organization. Therefore, since volunteers seem to experience sacrifice of link and fit in all themes, the following themes address strategies to increase link and fit while understanding that if properly cultivated, the volunteer would sacrifice these two components if they left the organization.

**Theme 1: Organizational Culture of Excellence**

The first theme that emerged was a culture of excellence in an organization. All three participants stressed the importance of incorporating a culture of excellence. Participant 1 (P1) stated, “Well, one of the things that I always want to cultivate as a culture is – I guess we could call it – excellence and that when we labor, we do it unto the Lord.” Furthermore, P1 said, “It’s sort of like you create a culture and invite them to it and it’s a culture of excellence and what we do, we just intent to do it well.” Participant 2 (P2) added, “We have stressed that when you go through your membership interview, there is a whole system in place because we hold membership in such a high regard.”

Participant 3 (P3) contributed the following two statements, “I would also like to briefly highlight, from my personal and professional experience, that people want to be part of something that has high standards of excellence” and “I’ve been pushing lately, just to get more comfortable with clearly defined expectations, high standards of excellence, and not being afraid to correct, rebuke, coach, or train a volunteer.” Failing to promote a culture of excellence can lead to a decrease in volunteer retention. P3 stated,

> I think a lot of churches make mistakes by lowering the bar, lowering the standards for volunteers, and they almost have a poverty mentality such as they are lucky to have anything showing up to volunteer. They’re not willing to hold people who serve to a higher standard of excellence across the board, which then ends up frustrating the other people who serve. It decreases the overall experience for everybody across the board.

Church leaders should seek to create a culture of excellence to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals.

The participants agreed that creating a culture of excellence starts with communicating the organization’s history, background, vision, mission, and purpose. They also referred to these elements as the *why* of the organization. The participants’ websites, handbooks for orientation, and internal procedures emphasize these vital organizational elements. It is not enough, however, for only the documents to list the *why*. Leadership must also live the *why* to demonstrate the principles to the volunteers. P1 shared,

> I'm trying to rehearse to those around me a great vision of why we're here on Earth and I think that is one of the secrets of our environment. We call it epic living – where we never want the smallness of life.

P3 stressed that all communication and messaging in the organization should be consistent and constant to reflect the *why* of the organization. P3 also stated a practical way to promote the *why* of the organization is to highlight the wins. P3 said, "Wins are stories about the impact of the volunteer's service along with testimonies of people whose lives were impacted and changed." By creating a culture of excellence, the participants were able to inspire their volunteers to produce quality work which positively impacted the retention of volunteers.

***Culture of Excellence and the Literature***

Theme 1, organizational culture of excellence, aligned with current literature. Culture is the habits, beliefs, values, and patterns that form a foundation for a localized people group (Randall et al., 2023). More specifically, organizational culture comprises expectations, business methods, ethics, and organizational goals (Buttery et al., 2023). Furthermore, a culture of excellence is the way of life for the employees of an organization regarding the level of quality attributed to deliverables as outlined in the organization's vision, mission, and purpose (Provance et al., 2022). When church leaders define the organizational vision, mission, and purpose, they should strive to create a culture of excellence so that volunteers choose to self-identify with the organizational culture. Volunteers who self-identify with the organizational culture remain longer with the organization (Traeger et al., 2023). To create a culture of excellence, church leadership should inundate meeting agendas, websites, orientation documents, policies, and procedures with the vision, mission, and purpose. The alignment of a volunteer's culture and a church leader's culture with the organization's culture results in harmonious operations to achieve a culture of excellence displayed through the deliverables of the organization's goals.

### ***Culture of Excellence and Organizational Embeddedness***

Theme 1, organizational culture of excellence, aligned with Mitchell et al.'s (2001) job embeddedness theory. According to Mitchell et al.'s embeddedness component, fit, volunteers are more likely to remain with an organization if their values, beliefs, and habits mesh with its culture. By creating a culture of excellence, church leaders can attract volunteers to the organization with the same standard of excellence. This attraction occurs because of perceived organizational identity. According to Lee et al. (2023), perceived organizational identity is the relationship between the volunteer's internal beliefs and how they view the organization's beliefs. When the perceived organizational image is congruent with the organizational culture, the volunteer is more likely to be engaged with the organization (Lee et al., 2023). Additionally, church leaders must also understand the cultural context surrounding the organization's geographical area. The misalignment of cultural context and organizational culture may cause volunteers to lack fit embeddedness (Y. Choi et al., 2023). If the organization's culture contradicts the local culture, church leaders may face challenges in accomplishing organizational goals due to low volunteer retention. Therefore, church leaders must understand what a culture of excellence is in the cultural context in which they reside so that volunteers experience fit embeddedness.

## Theme 2: Training and Mentoring

The second theme comprised training and mentoring. Although similar, separating training and mentoring into two subthemes allowed for uncovering specific and vital information. These two subthemes increase the knowledge and experience of volunteers. Church leaders should implement training and mentoring to enhance volunteers' experience.

### *Training*

The three participants spoke extensively about training and development. The participants used training, development, and discipleship interchangeably but usually referred to training and development for skills or knowledge and referred to discipleship for spiritual growth or mentorship. P3 stated that each volunteer team receives the training necessary to complete the service. P3 said,

> The different volunteer teams do get something like the equivalent of a training process, though not the same for each team. For some teams, like the kids' ministry, there is written training material and very strict policy standards and expectations. We must protect minors.

P2 mimicked this response by saying of children's ministry volunteers, "After the person is interviewed, they go through a sexual abuse awareness training video series, and they go through a training in person." P2 stated, "When we do a large training, we also try and get everyone together who serves in the same way or serves the same age group.” Larger training sessions ensure consistency across all volunteers’ skills. P1 connected the success of their organization to their training goals, “So, we don’t struggle with the training side because we’re a training organization if you will. That’s like our specialty on Earth is we are really good at training and so how we train them.” When referring to volunteers unequipped to complete their responsibilities, P1 stated, “We would train anyone to the degree that they need, or we wouldn’t put them in the position if we didn’t feel that they were ready.” According to the participants, organizations that equip their volunteers have better outcomes concerning organizational goals.

### *Training and the Literature*

The subtheme of training and development aligned with current literature. Volunteers gain knowledge through training and development. Training and development provide a supportive work environment (Employee Retention and the Effects of Supportive Work Environment, 2022). Organizations that offer training and development attract and retain employees more than organizations that do not implement training programs (Bharadwaj, 2023). Training and development increase volunteer retention because volunteers are better equipped to perform the role’s responsibilities (Yan et al., 2023). Church leaders should assess the organization’s needs and implement training programs to equip volunteers with relevant skills.

### *Training and Organizational Embeddedness*

The subtheme training and development aligned with Mitchell et al.’s (2001) job embeddedness theory. Training and development increase and enhance a volunteer’s knowledge, resulting in successfully completing a task. Volunteers who share knowledge are more likely to use the newly gained knowledge to enhance their current role (Ampofo et al., 2023). Volunteers who understand how to successfully perform a task and take pride in their accomplishments increase their motivation resulting in increased fit within the organization (Yu et al., 2020). By enhancing their current role, volunteers understand their duties, responsibilities, and how to complete their tasks resulting in congruency with the organization.

### *Mentoring*

The second subtheme of Theme 2 was mentoring. All participants spoke highly of discipleship, which they referred to interchangeably with mentoring and shadowing. The purpose of discipleship is to guide the volunteer through the process of the role. P3 said, “I think you could call it on-the-job training. An experienced volunteer would show the newer volunteer how to perform the task or the ropes, such as training on a sound board.” P1 stated, “If you have a strong volunteer that has a desire to grow and to be discipled and to have more opportunity, yet you don’t raise the ceiling, they get a crick in their neck, and they’ll oftentimes leave.” Church leaders should seek to create opportunities to foster growth for the volunteers. Connecting discipleship to retention, P1 said,

> So that includes discipleship and being open to answering questions. That includes taking time just to speak into their life and proactively do it. Like, just look at them and come up to them and speak into their life. Just things that you’re noticing. So, those are critical things that have secured a longer-term commitment if you could say it that way.

P2 commented that there is a 2-week shadowing process and “Part of the training is the 2-week shadowing where they do not have any responsibilities.” Although training enhances the volunteer’s knowledge, discipleship allows the volunteers to see the role in action.

### *Mentoring and the Literature*

Although training is beneficial, church leaders should also implement mentoring or discipleship programs. When volunteers participate in mentoring, the mentor can explain the “why” behind the process (Cox & Overbey, 2022). Moreover, mentors show volunteers the connection between the task and the organization’s mission (Moore & Hanson, 2022). Additionally, the mentor can inform the volunteer of best practices that may not be available in a training session (Shields et al., 2023). Through the support and experience of mentoring, volunteers can become better equipped to handle a church’s day-to-day operations. Mentoring is a valuable tool that church leaders can use to retain volunteers.

### *Mentoring and Organizational Embeddedness*

Mentoring increases the job embeddedness component, link. This form of training, also known as on-the-job training or coaching, fosters relationships between the volunteer and the mentor (Lyons & Bandura, 2021). An outcome of mentoring is to transfer knowledge from the mentor to the mentee, but a secondary outcome is to foster a relationship between the mentor and mentee (Shields et al., 2023). Church leaders should identify seasoned volunteers or staff who can form links or developmental relationships with volunteers who intend to remain with the organization (Kiazad et al., 2020).

Creating quality, beneficial, and supportive relations between volunteers and mentors can increase link-embeddedness.

**Theme 3: Clear and Effective Communication**

The third theme that emerged was clear and effective communication. The frequency that the participants spoke about communication indicated this theme may be the frame for all the other themes. The other themes cannot be fleshed out if church leaders use unclear communication. P1 said, “Good communication with a team or with volunteers takes time and organization.” P1 recalled, “I have had many times in my life where I’ve had to seek forgiveness from volunteers, from even some of my staff, for not communicating as well as I should.” One strategy to communicate clearly and effectively is through a standardized communication system. P2 and P3 have systems such as a church-specific application or an intranet website that volunteers use to see scheduling, materials, and ministry updates. All three participants stated that volunteers have access to this internal system so that they are clear on the expectations of the roles. Regarding the systems, the participants mentioned that their communication is designed to be uplifting, encouraging, and supportive. When the participants mentioned supportive communication, that included being firm with volunteers if a position was not a good fit. For example, P3 stated,

> I’ve been pushing lately just to get more comfortable with clearly defined expectations, high standards of excellence, and not being afraid to correct, rebuke, coach, or train a volunteer. Sometimes you must fire a volunteer from a role and tell them this isn’t the team for you. We’ve got another area where you could

> potentially serve. That is painful in the short run, but they yield a lot of fruit in the long run.

P2 reiterated that even though hard conversations may need to happen, leaders should always communicate in a way that the volunteers feel valued. Clear and effective communication enables volunteers to understand the expectations of their roles.

Clear and effective communication is not only about how leadership communicates with volunteers but also what leadership communicates to volunteers. A common communication strategy is onboarding. Although a culture of excellence or training can include onboarding, the participants discussed the topics they communicated in the onboarding sessions. For example, P3 said,

> We start out with an assimilation class ... but it is like an introduction to the church, and it highly emphasizes volunteering. We talk through the *why* and the mission statement. Our mission is "So that people far from God can experience new life in Jesus." In the meeting, we would discuss the purpose of volunteering and cast the vision for the one-day principle. You might be doing something on a particular Sunday that seems like an insignificant task, but for somebody, someone's grandma, grandchild, or husband … this could be the one day that they meet Jesus, and their life has changed forever, and people get super fire up about that.

P2 stated,

> We have a rigorous onboarding system. We go through a lot of steps, but eventually, they get to a point where they are doing an interview. Every single

> volunteer had done an interview either with myself or one of my associate directors. We learn about them, but we also tell them about our ministry, and they get a handout of our policies and procedures.

P1 mentioned that the organization had an onboarding session, but many of the volunteers attend the school of ministry attached to the organization, which already teaches the material that was in the onboarding session. Also, P1 said they are not looking to increase church attendance at the current moment because they are out of physical space. Additionally, in the onboarding sessions, all participants shared that the volunteers learned the organization's vision, mission, and purpose. Onboarding sessions enable church leaders to communicate the expectations of membership, role expectations, and the *why* of the church.

### *Clear and Effective Communication and the Literature*

Theme 3, clear and effective communication, aligned with current literature. Volunteers communicate in a variety of ways and through a plethora of media. Volunteers need to understand how to successfully execute and complete their responsibilities, how their current and future skills can impact the organization, how their contributions accomplish goals, and how the organization supports them in fulfilling their role (Tetui et al., 2023). Church leaders can implement various communication strategies to keep volunteers informed. One strategy is that church leaders can communicate expectations clearly to volunteers by holding tiered huddles before events. Using tiered huddles enables volunteers to openly share ideas and concerns about the area in which they volunteer (Rangachari & Woods, 2020). Another strategy is to use different mediums to convey information. Leaders can use internal newsletters or social media platforms to inform volunteers of wins related to organizational goals, relevant information related to specific ministries, and recognition of outstanding volunteer accomplishments (Bauer & Lim, 2019). By using clear and effective communication, church leaders can empower volunteers to understand the organization's expectations concerning achieving the organization's goals.

### *Clear and Effective Communication and Organizational Embeddedness*

Theme 3, clear and effective communication, can increase the job embeddedness component, link. Church leaders should implement clear and effective methods of communication to create a link between church leaders and volunteers. By creating this communication structure, church leaders create multidirectional communication consisting of horizontal and two-way vertical communication (Windon et al., 2023). Using the multidirectional communication structure enhances job satisfaction and empowers the volunteers during times of uncertainty (Windon et al., 2023). Volunteers stay with the organization longer with a positive work environment and are satisfied with their roles due to supportive leadership communication (Usadolo & Usadolo, 2019). Implementing multidirectional communication structures between leaders and volunteers increases volunteer retention within an organization. Church leaders should review what type of communication style their leaders use and foster an open communication strategy.

## Theme 4: Reward and Recognition

The fourth theme that emerged was rewards and recognition. All three participants spoke about rewards and recognition; however, only two out of the three participants referenced tangible rewards. P3 stated that during their volunteer appreciation day, “we gave all our volunteers a gift” and that leadership “reward them with a gift card or something like that.” P2 discussed the two parties they host each year for ministry volunteers. P2 said, “We host two a year. Once in the summer and once at Christmas. We host Christmas parties for ministries, so the kids’ ministry has their own party, but that’s a broad one, and it’s available for all volunteers.” P2 also referenced the breakfast they provide the volunteers each Sunday morning. P2 stated, “We want them to know that your kids have a bagel or a breakfast burrito waiting for you when you get there.” P2 alluded to the breakfast not as an enticement but as a reward and a thank you for volunteering. P1 took a different approach to rewards and only discussed intangible rewards. P1 stated, “Yeah, that would probably be encouragement, gratefulness, and accommodation. You know, the same things I just mentioned would be our version of a reward.” All three participants, however, spoke more about recognition than rewards.

Recognition was a common theme among all participants. About forms of recognition, P1 stated, “I would say one of the other ones is just part of our culture. We have a constant encouragement system” and used “encouragement, gratefulness, and accommodation” To describe the system. P1 gave the following as an example:

> For instance, we have in our midst a work crew that’s been here. They’re all volunteers that have been here since September, October of last year. It’s like 7-8 months and we will consistently have or make opportunities for encouragement and encouragement from the top level. You know, whether it’s me, [Leader 1’s

> name], [Leader 2’s name], [Leader 3’s name], where we’re speaking into their life.

P2 stressed the importance of the personal value of the volunteers. P2 said, “We want to make sure people feel valued, so we want to celebrate things with them and not just put tasks on them.” Although the semi-annual parties were considered rewards, P2 also stated that leadership celebrated the volunteers during the parties. P3 echoed this statement and said, “We recognize our volunteers both as a group and individually.” Furthermore, P3 said their church “holds team rallies. During our team, we celebrate together. We recognize our volunteers and try to thank them.” P3 also has a volunteer appreciation service and said, “we had our Team Appreciation Day. At the beginning of my sermon, I highlighted the volunteers and thanked them.” P3 also said, “When we have our weekly team rally, we will recognize a team member of the week at all our campuses.” Finally, like P2, P3 stated, “Each year, we will have one or two team nights where the whole church comes together, and we will usually recognize a team member of the year and give them a big prize.” P3 did caution, however:

> I think people all respond well to those things, but they are not the main motivators. The rewards are appreciated, and we constantly tell them how much we appreciate them; but I think the main motivator is the celebration of the team wins that we share.

All three participants supported rewarding volunteers but highly promoted volunteer recognition.

***Rewards and Recognition and Literature***

Theme 4, rewards and recognition, aligned with the current literature. When discussing faith-based organizations' rewards and recognition, volunteers may have a higher tolerance for intangible rewards than volunteering for a secular nonprofit. Transcendental rewards are one of the main reward categories in a faith-based organization (Faletehan & van Burg, 2023). These rewards may comprise the promise of everlasting life, an increase in the favor of God, or a heavenly reward such as a crown. Volunteers may experience burnout or lack of motivation by not receiving a tangible reward. Volunteers have been abused in some cases, such as performing work a paid professional should have been compensated for (Faletehan & van Burg, 2023). With the assumption that church leaders value their volunteers, alternative, tangible rewards, or recognition may mitigate the feelings of abuse. For example, volunteers in the 25–64 age group may find a certification or letter of recommendation appealing to advance their career in response to learned skills (Hopkins & Dowell, 2021). Church leaders should explore what rewards or recognition everyone prefers.

Moreover, recognition is a valuable response to excellent volunteer work. For example, recognition can be spontaneous or recognize set accomplishments. Church leaders may use spontaneous recognition before a team huddle or in a sermon on a Sunday (Walk et al., 2021). A church leader may use set accomplishments to recognize years of service (Walk et al., 2021). Volunteers may like to be recognized in various ways but dislike other ways. For example, one person may like to be recognized in front of a group, whereas another may like to be recognized privately. Church leaders should develop relationships with volunteers to understand what type of reward and recognition each volunteer prefers.

### ***Rewards and Recognition and Organizational Embeddedness***

Theme 4, rewards and recognition, can increase the job embeddedness components' link. If a volunteer were to leave a church, they would miss out on the transcendental rewards the organization offers and the relationships the volunteer forms with members of the organization. Faletehan and van Burg (2023) found that volunteers of faith-based organizations did not seem interested in financial rewards but emphasized transcendental rewards and personal recognition. Church leaders should focus on implementing these types of rewards and recognition. For example, church leaders who publicly provide volunteer recognition create a positive memory for the volunteer (Walk et al., 2021). By creating this memory, the church leader creates a link for the volunteers between the organization, leadership, and achieving the mission. The volunteers may then feel that if they left the organization, they would miss out on creating more similar memories. Volunteers do not usually start volunteering for monetary gain; therefore, church leaders should implement reward and recognition systems that promote transcendental rewards and recognition to create a link with the organization.

## **Theme 5: Sense of Belonging**

The fifth theme that emerged was a sense of belonging. P1 started this conversation by stating, "We have a camaraderie and a closeness that is unusual in that sense." P2 added,

> Our volunteers are in smaller segments inside classrooms or as part of the midweek prep team. In these groups, they build relationships because our volunteers serve so often that they form a bond with the other volunteers in the classroom, which they would miss out on.

P2 also added, “When we do a large training, we also try and get everyone together who serves in the same way or serves the same age group. They get to know each other that way.” Additionally, P3 stated, “Within the church, there is a sense of camaraderie and duty because volunteering is relational.” All three participants emphasized that volunteers remain with the organization because they form relationships with each other and church leadership. For example, P3 stated,

> We focus on the relational aspect of the team. The two easiest ways to engage in church are either by joining a small group or serving in a team. Depending on the team, the relationships can be just as deep as a Bible study or small group because people spend hours and hours per week together. They are not just performing a task, but they are sharing stories, praying for each other, hanging out outside of church, and forming relationships. Relationships are a sticky factor in keeping people volunteering.

P3 also stated, “Each year, we will have one or two team nights where the whole church comes together... That night, we will have fun, food, dessert, and play games together.” Moreover, P2 added that membership increased volunteer retention as well. P2 stated that over 90% of all volunteers became church members. P1 echoed this statement by saying almost all the volunteers participated in their organization’s membership class.

As mentioned in theme three, clear and effective communication, onboarding was a strategy the participants used to increase volunteer retention. The onboarding process also created a sense of belonging by introducing volunteers into the organization's community. P1 called the onboarding process,

> Family Show, which is and it has an orientation to it, sort of acquaints people with the way we function in our church, what we believe, and why we do the things we do. And that was a process that was, I don't remember how many weeks, 8 weeks maybe, and it was sort of an introduction into our environment.

P2 stated the onboarding process included an interview, introduction to the organization, review of policies and procedures, and deciding possible ministry areas for the volunteer to assist. P3's assimilation or onboarding session leaders highly emphasize volunteering during the session. Additionally, P3's onboarding material emphasizes organizational ownership. P3's onboarding document contains information about communication such as the *Don't Say* and *Instead Say* comparison chart. For example, instead of saying *The Church* volunteers are instructed to say *Our Church*. By saying, *Our Church*, volunteers frame the church through collective ownership. Enforcing all volunteers go through the onboarding session helped filter out those attendees who did not align with the organizational vision, mission, and purpose. Volunteers who remained aligned with the organization's culture mostly aligned with the beliefs and values of the other volunteers.

### ***Sense of Belonging and Literature***

Theme 5, sense of belonging, aligned with the current literature. Sense of belonging corroborates other themes such as organizational culture of excellence, training and mentoring, and clear and effective communication. For example, males tend to experience a sense of belonging when older males mentor them because they can freely and openly discuss their thoughts and feelings with the mentor, which is usually looked down upon in American culture (M. Henderson et al., 2022). Older volunteers tend to volunteer because they form social connections with other volunteers and leaders (Dury et al., 2020). Therefore, volunteers can also use volunteering to overcome isolation (Ambrosini & Artero, 2023). Volunteers experience a sense of belonging in group settings (A. C. Henderson & Sowa, 2023). To develop a sense of belonging, volunteers should use ownership phrases like *our* and *my* (Ainsworth, 2020). Church leaders can use onboarding sessions and small groups to foster the development of relationships and ownership which results in a sense of belonging. Creating a sense of belonging enables volunteers to create social connections and enter a culture where they identify.

### ***Sense of Belonging and Organizational Embeddedness***

Theme 5, sense of belonging, can increase the job embeddedness components, fit. Volunteers experience a sense of belonging through everyday activities and benefit from a healthy environment. Volunteers may experience discrimination or detachment in their current cultural context. However, they may feel a sense of belonging in an organization like a church because the organizational vision, mission, values, beliefs, and relationships transcend the cultural context (Lehner et al., 2022). For example, a volunteer may live in a poverty-stricken area, but when volunteers use their skills to help others, they practice a universal concept of the church; therefore, the volunteer feels a sense of belonging in the organization despite a lack of belonging in the community. A result of volunteering is volunteers may move from an unhealthy environment to a positive environment. According to Bowe et al. (2020), people who volunteer experience a stronger community identity and increased personal well-being. Church leaders should seize every opportunity to provide a healthy volunteer experience.

**Theme 6: Relational Leadership Practices**

The last theme that emerged was relational leadership practices. Church leaders manage and lead volunteers who forfeit their time and potential income-earning potential to advance an organization. P2 spoke to this concept by emphasizing the importance of the person volunteering rather than solely the volunteer label. P2 stated, “Our biggest strategy has been that we never want to consider any of our volunteers as a placeholder. Nobody is ever seen as merely filling a spot where we have a need, but rather everybody is a distinct individual.” All three participants agreed that church leaders should support and lead their volunteers through relationship and relational leadership practices. The primary relational leadership practice is the constant understanding that volunteers live outside the organization. By remembering this fact, leaders can ease the barriers to volunteering. For example, P2 stated,

> We want to condense down the curriculum for them as well. When we get our curriculum, it’s probably about 20 pages, and we condense it down to about three pages. Condensing allows us to hand over the curriculum and ask them to pray over that section during the week. We want them to be prepared for Sunday, so we condensed the curriculum and prepared the craft during the week.

Moreover, P3 stated, “Some volunteers we need to support by helping provide equipment for the job.” P1, referring to long-term, project-based volunteers, stated,

> So, we feed our volunteers, we house our volunteers and then they serve. We disciple our volunteers. We want to pour into our volunteers even though we can’t pour into them financially, we want to pour in with whatever we do have, silver and gold have we none but such as I have give I thee.

P2 also stressed the importance of the volunteers’ mental health, enabling the volunteers to feel welcome to take time off from volunteering without strings attached. Church leaders must remember that volunteers surrender a portion of their lives; therefore, each volunteer should be seen as an individual with personal value.

Other relational practices involved leadership skills such as delegation, autonomy, and accountability. These three skills go together when creating a supportive and empowering environment. P1 stated that they “divide up tasks into what we call jurisdictions.” The church leaders at P1’s organization created a tiered system of leadership. The higher-level volunteers focus on strategic vision planning and logistics. The lower-level volunteers are more directly involved in the operations. Each volunteer is given a jurisdiction in which they can make choices. P1 stated, “Our system is such that they’re going to come under someone who is going to convey that.” Although the church leaders delegate tasks to volunteers and the volunteers are free to make their own choices, the participants all stated that accountability still occurs. P2 mentioned supporting kid’s ministry volunteers on Sunday mornings, “Just come in, teach your heart out, love your kids, and we will do the rest. This way, they don't have to worry about any of the details when they get here." P3 mentioned an example of accountability by stating,

> It's a straightforward process without a lot of training required. For other teams, like the worship team, there is an audition process. For the security team, they must go through a rigorous application process. There are teams you may apply for and get rejected.

Regarding accountability and autonomy, a volunteer who selected people to lead devotionals, P1, stated, "We have to check off on the men. In other words, it's not just anyone, and yet we just sort of are giving them that position." Leadership delegated the responsibility of choosing a devotional leader to a volunteer, supported the volunteer in the decision-making process, but set guidelines and boundaries to ensure the volunteer followed the organizational vision, mission, and purpose. Church leaders can create a healthy balance of autonomy and accountability through empowerment to make decisions and organizational boundaries.

### *Relational Leadership Practices and the Literature*

Theme 6, relational leadership practices, aligned with the current literature. The codes in this qualitative analysis about leadership tasks seemed to represent relational tasks. For example, delegating empowers a volunteer to perform a task. Autonomy empowers a volunteer to make their own choices regarding task completion. Accountability empowers a volunteer to complete tasks with guidelines and support. All three codes have an underlying theme of how the leader relates to the volunteers when guiding them to complete tasks. In the literature I reviewed to explain this theme, I found this theme is like the relational leadership theory. Uhl-Bien (2006) created the relational leadership theory to express leadership behaviors in response to the relationship between organizational members. Therefore, relational leadership practices focus on the mutual relationship between the church leader and the volunteer. Both the leader and the volunteer work in tandem to achieve organizational goals.

Faith-based volunteers also need to be ministered by the church they are serving. Church leaders can implement relational leadership practices by caring for volunteers' mental health to show value and support to the employee. A church leader can show support by providing access to paid staff and ensuring a safe and healthy workplace (Tetui et al., 2023). Another way to support volunteers is to allow time off from ministry or a flexible schedule (Chen et al., 2023). Furthermore, autonomy increases workplace happiness and personal value (Galván Vela et al., 2021). When leadership delegates tasks to volunteers, they should enable the volunteers to have autonomy coupled with accountability. One strategy to offer accountability is to provide role clarity through job or role descriptions (Abrokwah et al., 2023). Church leaders should clearly define accountability in the ministry setting, outline the boundaries of the expectations, and develop a clear feedback cycle. Church leaders, whenever possible, should support volunteers by delegating tasks, trusting volunteer autonomy, and providing clear accountability.

### ***Relational Leadership Practices and Organizational Embeddedness***

Theme 6, relation leadership practices, can increase the job embeddedness components, link. Church leaders use relational leadership practices to empower the volunteers while performing organizational tasks. Relation leadership tasks create links by forming a relationship between the church leader and the volunteer so that the volunteer feels valued as a distinct individual within the organization (Roberson & Perry, 2022). Volunteers with high link embeddedness remain with the organization because they connect with the church leaders. The volunteers form their social identity based on the relationship that is created at the organization (Bharadwaj & Yameen, 2020). To continue to form the volunteers' social identity, church leaders should create genuine relationships (Roberson & Perry, 2022). The relational leadership practices outlined in this study can create genuine relationships. When church leaders delegate tasks to volunteers, embrace volunteer autonomy, and implement accountability, volunteers view this responsibility as increased organizational trust (Masoud & Basahal, 2023). Providing support to volunteers by implementing relational leadership practices increases links to leaders within the organization.

## Applications to Professional Practice

Generally, Protestant churches differ from for-profit organizations in vision, mission, and purpose. Leadership teams of for-profit organizations aim to achieve competitive advantage through innovation resulting in maximum profits whereas possibly desiring to be sustainable (Kharub et al., 2022). On the other hand, leadership teams in churches seek to positively impact the community around them by presenting holistic transformation through the preaching and teaching of the Christian Gospel, conducting worship services to create a weekly God encounter, and providing services to the local community to help meet their needs (Magezi & Nanthambwe, 2022). Since church leaders' primary goal is not to maximize profits, they must utilize volunteers to perform the organization's work. As a result, church leaders utilize volunteers to accomplish organizational goals; on the other hand, church leaders cannot accomplish organizational goals if volunteers leave. Therefore, church leaders must implement volunteer retention strategies to accomplish organizational goals. The findings from this study outline strategies that church leaders can use to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals.

In my interviews with church leaders from Protestant churches and organizational documents, I uncovered six themes that church leaders could use to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals. I used Mitchell et al.'s (2001) job embeddedness conceptual framework as a blueprint and lens to view the research problem and study. All six themes I uncovered align with the job embeddedness framework through the framework's fit, link, and sacrifice components. The volunteers from each church went through the organization's onboarding process, which involved an introduction to the church's vision, mission, and purpose. The participants also mentioned that a large majority of volunteers were church members, which means that the volunteers held similar, if not exact, views, beliefs, and values as the organization. All participants met this study's requirements of having managed volunteers in their current setting for at least 3 years and being at least 21. Other church leaders can implement the strategies outlined in this study to successfully retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals.

During the analysis of the interviews and organizational documents, six themes emerged. The themes were as follows: (a) organizational culture of excellence, (b) training and mentoring, (c) clear and effective communication, (d) rewards and recognition, (e) sense of belonging, and (f) relational leadership practices. I conducted this study to uncover strategies some church leaders from the Southwestern United States use to retain volunteers. The strategies I uncovered in this study are significant because the strategies might help Protestant church leaders retain volunteers. Protestant churches range from small (1-50 people) to mega (1000+ people and possible multicampus organizations); however, the strategies in this study are generalized, and church leaders may be successful regardless of size. Moreover, because these strategies are not religious, leaders from non-religious nonprofit organizations may also be able to implement these strategies.

The church leaders in this study recognized volunteers' impact on churches and the need to retain those volunteers. The three participants openly shared their experiences regarding volunteer retention. The three participants' strategies assisted their leadership teams in growing the churches from church plants to large or mega-churches. Over time, the nuances of the strategies may have changed with the culture and context, yet the core of the strategies remained the same. Church leaders can implement these strategies to develop new policies, systems, and procedures to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals.

I used Mitchell et al.'s (2001) job embeddedness framework to guide the research question and interview questions. This framework aims to identify the link, fit, and sacrifice related to an employee and an organization. Mitchell et al. (2001) stated that the greater the link, fit, and sacrifice for an employee, the greater the chance for that employee to remain with the organization. The findings of my study may be valuable to church leaders because I applied this framework to volunteers rather than employees. This study's findings focused mainly on link and fit because church leaders can directly impact link and fit. Sacrifice seems more personalized to the individual, and the literature usually equates sacrifice to a form of financial compensation such as salary or benefits. Sacrifice was an underlying component to link and fit because the volunteers would sacrifice the newly formed fit and link if they did not retain with the church. Church leaders can use the study's findings to increase the level of embeddedness by implementing strategies to increase link and fit.

## Implications for Social Change

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore strategies that some church leaders used to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals. This study may contribute to positive social change by assisting church leaders in retaining their volunteer workforce, which is needed to accomplish the organizational goal and holistic transformation of members within the church and those in the local community. By implementing the strategies found in this study, church leaders could embed volunteers into the organization and may have the human capital to effect positive social change. Protestant churches are generally committed to the Great Commission and instructions in the Olivet Discourse. The Great Commission refers to making Christlike disciples in the nations (*Holy Bible: New American Standard Bible*, 1995, Matt. 28:16-20). The Olivet Discourse refers to churches feeding the poor, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison, and healing the sick (Matt. 25:31-46). Church leaders can empower volunteers to accomplish these organizational goals.

When Protestant churches fulfill the Great Commission and invest in local communities through the instructions in the Olivet Discourse, positive social change can occur. People with religious beliefs are typically more prone to help reduce poverty and provide health and social services (Schweiger, 2019). Embedded volunteers gain an identity that mirrors the organization's vision, mission, and purpose (Zollo et al., 2019). When church leaders retain volunteers, they can accomplish organizational goals with human capital that supports the organization's vision, mission, and purpose. Though the services may look different for each church, church leaders and volunteers typically want to follow the commands in the Protestant Bible to love one another. Therefore, by implementing the strategies in this study, embedded volunteers will deliver services congruent to their church's vision, mission, and purpose. For example, volunteers will deliver services through a lens of excellence. Embedded volunteers will adapt and learn new skills to assist hurt and broken people because they receive mentoring delivering the services. The volunteers will be able to act quickly and compassionately due to clear and effective communication. Furthermore, because the volunteers experienced a sense of belonging, they could welcome people from all backgrounds and demographics into their church. Finally, because church leaders lead the volunteers relationally, the volunteers can transfer those relational leadership practices when directing new volunteers. Church leaders can use these strategies to positively impact their local communities and transform the lives of those in need.

## Recommendations for Action

The recommendations for action in this study might interest Protestant church leaders who want to retain employees to accomplish organizational goals. Different religions may also benefit from these strategies, but these strategies were geared toward the organizational structure of Protestant churches. In a culture where pastoral blogs, podcasts, and social media postings are flooded with cries for help retaining volunteers in a church setting, the findings from this study gathered strategies outlined by church leaders from growing, thriving, and volunteer-retaining churches. If Protestant church leaders implement the strategies found in these findings, they may be able to accomplish their organizational goals.

The strategies in this study's findings were framed around the job embeddedness conceptual framework (Mitchell et al., 2001). Therefore, I recommend church leaders increase the fit, link, and sacrifice of volunteers in their churches so that the volunteers will be embedded within the organization. The uncovered strategies primarily focus on how to increase fit and link. I, therefore, recommend the following:

### Create a Welcoming Environment Where Everyone Can Participate in the Church's Vision, Mission, and Purpose

People want to belong somewhere, preferably with positive, ethical standards of excellence. Volunteers may respond well to team camaraderie. Church leaders should value each volunteer who wants to offer their time and efforts to help the organization accomplish goals. Although logistics, skills, and legal restrictions may prevent a volunteer from serving in a particular role, church leaders should invest time and effort to determine which role is best for that volunteer. When church leaders do their due diligence, volunteers will likely see they are valued. In every way possible, church leaders should accommodate personal needs such as ADA-compliant ramps for wheelchairs and walkers, food allergies during volunteer team meetings (not necessarily food preferences), and personal schedules. These thoughts can signal to the volunteers that they are valued and important to the church leaders.

**Create a Church Brand and Frequently Communicate the Vision, Mission, and Purpose of the Brand**

By creating a church brand, church leaders can contribute to clear and effective communication whereas marketing a church that strives for organizational excellence. Church leaders should align all messaging and documentation to reflect the brand. Before potential volunteers commit to the church, they experience its online presence and recipient testimonies. When the interested volunteers dig deeper, they experience the mission, vision, purpose, beliefs, and values lived out through the church leadership team and marketed through worship service information, assimilation classes, and small group introductions. When committed volunteers help accomplish organizational goals, the culture's messaging should complement rewards and recognitions.

**Implement Relational Mentoring Programs for Each Ministry**

Church leaders should implement relational mentoring programs for each ministry within the church. By creating a relational mentoring program, church leaders foster opportunities for volunteers to create links to other volunteers and leaders. Through established links, mentors can impact the volunteers' lives professionally and personally.

For example, mentors can share best practices with volunteers because they have experienced field troubleshooting. Additionally, mentors can share life experiences with personal issues or goals that the volunteers experience in their personal lives.

Moreover, mentors, who are typically seasoned volunteers, can also learn new perspectives from newer volunteers. Finally, mentoring programs can be a catalyst for succession planning. Whereas complete volunteer retention is ideal, organizations will experience turnover of volunteers due to sickness, age, death, relocation, or other factors. Mentors can help mitigate some of these concerns by having multiple volunteers able and ready to step into roles if other volunteers leave.

**Highlight and Celebrate the Wins of Accomplishing Organizational Goals**

Stories of wins tend to inspire people to achieve more, especially stories of people who moved from unimaginable conditions to a thriving life. Church leaders should utilize volunteers and paid staff to create emotionally moving and motivating media in response to accomplishing organizational goals. Additionally, the media should reference church branding of the organizational vision, mission, and purpose. This can emotionally link the vision, mission, and purpose. Therefore, volunteers will recall the emotional link when leaders discuss the organizational vision, mission, and purpose.

**Dissemination of Retention Strategies**

Church leaders may use the findings of this study to improve volunteer retention so that they can accomplish organizational goals. First, through Walden University, I will publish this study through Walden’s online database or other available databases. I will then distribute the findings of this study to the participants in this study. Furthermore, I will seek to adapt this study to a peer-reviewed article format and publish it in a related journal. Furthermore, I will work with my denomination, in which I am a pastor, to implement these strategies in struggling churches. I will do this through workshops, training sessions, webinars, and possibly conferences. I will also network through social media to connect with other pastors who are interested in retaining volunteers. Finally, I will create a one-page quick reference guide for those who have limited time to read a full peer-reviewed article.

## Recommendations for Further Research

This study's findings outlined strategies that church leaders can use to retain volunteers and accomplish organizational goals in their local church setting. Reviewing the literature for this study area, I noticed that much of the job embeddedness literature referred to paid employees. Moreover, the literature I reviewed did not link the job embeddedness framework to Protestant churches. When I wrote this study, to my knowledge, there were no studies that linked the job embeddedness framework to volunteers in Protestant churches. As I reviewed other literary mediums not included in this study, pastors and church leaders seem to use blogs, podcasts, social media, and denominational documents to discuss strategies and trends within a church setting. This study was a qualitative, multiple-case study that produced in-depth and rich data; however, to generalize the findings, a researcher should conduct a similar study but from a quantitative methodology. By doing so, the results may be able to be generalized.

Another limitation of this study was the geographical and church size limitations. As mentioned in the limitations section of this study, geographical bias may occur in studies narrowed to a specific geographical location (Skopec et al., 2020). I conducted this study with participants residing in the Southwestern United States. Church leaders in this region may be exposed to different cultures and demographics than church leaders in other areas, such as the Northeast region of the United States. The Protestant church is a global set of various denominations; therefore, researchers should conduct further research in other areas in the United States and worldwide. Moreover, I allowed any Protestant denomination to participate in this study. Further research should limit interviews with church leaders from a single denomination so that researchers can compare similar studies, which would add to the validity of the findings.

Another limitation was this study was the lack of perspective from the volunteers. Although church growth and volunteers' longevity can validate church leaders' perspectives, volunteers may not echo everything that church leaders responded to. For example, church leaders mentioned that volunteers mostly value transcendental rewards; however, volunteers may not expect financial recognition because they think the church cannot afford to compensate. The volunteers may prefer monetary forms of recognition, such as a gift card. Through this study, I only interviewed the church leaders. Further research should address the volunteers' perspectives which may or may not corroborate the church leaders' perspectives.

The last limitation was the lack of defined terminology. In the literature I reviewed, I did not find a definition of a successful volunteer retention rate relating to volunteers within a Protestant church. Additionally, church leaders utilize some volunteer positions daily or weekly whereas only utilizing others quarterly or yearly. Some positions may be held in high esteem, such as the main singer of the worship team, whereas others seem like a position many would not desire, such as cleaning toilets. Therefore, researchers should standardize terminology so that future research is congruent and measurable.

## Reflections

The Doctor of Business Administration – Leadership program at Walden University was rigorous and challenging. The authors of the articles I read throughout the program usually wrote thought-provoking literature that helped open my mind to different points of view. Although I disagreed with some content, most of the curriculum provided clear and convincing arguments backed by empirical data. Throughout this process, I learned how to author scholarly literature in a way that could further discussion on topics. I learned that the purpose of scholarly work is not to prove a topic is true but to allow the author's compilation of literature and data to help supplement what scholarly practitioners experience in the field. With this reflection in mind, I can now understand how to contribute to a discussion rather than dominate or enter closed-mindedly. Academic and professional writing aims to offer new knowledge that creates various points of view so that others can grasp and expand that knowledge.

I first decided to pursue this journey because it was a terminal degree. By earning this degree, I thought the experience would provide closure to my academic yearning; however, as this journey comes to completion, I aspire to continue researching topics within the Protestant church to help pastors and church leaders become more effective, efficient, and understanding. During my program, I decided on volunteer retention within

Protestant churches. My experience in ministry helped form the passion needed to complete this journey; however, more doors of passion have also opened. With over 10 years in ministry, I desire to research how to recruit volunteers, mitigate burnout for pastoral staff, and empower bi-vocational pastors.

This journey inspired me to enter the realm of academia. I enjoyed the interactions I had with my classmates and the assistance I was able to provide them. I desire to help and guide others through their doctoral programs as they embark on their educational journey. I also desire to gain more experience in the field so that by implementing these retention strategies, I can show the proof of concept by attaining high volunteer retention rates where I serve.

When I started writing my topic, I was unaware of all the working pieces to complete this doctoral project. If I were to complete another doctoral degree, I would focus on my literature from the beginning. It is imperative in a doctoral program that the researcher thoroughly review the literature about the topic. I had to transition from trying to make the literature support my argument to my argument being formed by the literature. Moreover, I did not realize the potential increased time it would take for participants to complete the necessary forms, along with aligning schedules to interview the participants. I appreciate the participants' willingness and the support of those who cheered me on.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore strategies that some church leaders use to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals. Mitchell et al. (2001) determined that the greater an employee's embeddedness within an organization, the greater the chance the employee will remain with the organization. I used a multiple-case study to conduct semistructured interviews with church leaders from the Southwestern United States. I asked 10 open-ended questions about strategies the church leaders use to retain volunteers in their churches. I reviewed organizational documents to gain increased insight into the participants' responses. I sent both transcripts to the participants and used member checking to verify I accurately captured the nature of the participant's responses. I then assigned codes to the interviews and documents, which I then sorted into categories. I then conducted a thematic analysis to identify themes that identified strategies church leaders could use to retain volunteers. The themes that emerged were (a) organizational culture of excellence, (b) training and mentoring, (c) clear and effective communication, (d) rewards and recognition, (e) a sense of belonging, and (f) relational leadership practices. The findings of this study determined that this framework can be applied to volunteers in Protestant churches in the Southwestern United States.

Volunteers are the backbone of Protestant churches in terms of accomplishing organizational goals. Moreover, organizationally embedded volunteers are valuable allies to have within an organization. Although employees may work for an organization because they value the vision, mission, and purpose, volunteers sacrifice their time and resources and therefore have a greater buy-in of the vision, mission, and purpose. Without volunteers, many communities would lack essential products and services that increase the standard of living (Neely et al., 2022). It is imperative and vital that church leaders implement strategies to retain volunteers. Church leaders, therefore, must explore and examine strategies to retain volunteers. They can increase volunteer retention by increasing contributing to volunteer embeddedness. Church leaders should use strategies that increase a volunteer's links to people in the church, communicating and showing how the volunteer fits with the organization and their role and creating a positive, supportive, and empowering environment.

References

Abrokwah, E., Rachayeeta, P., Affum-Osei, E., Yeboah, G., Agyare, C., & Boadi, E. A. (2023). Engaging in unpaid jobs out of free will: An attribution theory perspective on the effects of supervisor support attributions on volunteers' service quality. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *74*, Article 103386. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103386

Adeoye, A. O., & Hope, O. (2020). Organizational culture, employee retention and employee loyalty: Empirical evidence from Nigeria. *Academic Journal of Economic Studies*, *6*(3), 139–145.

Adiguzel, Z. (2019). Relationships among leader effectiveness, learning orientation, effective communication, team creativity and service innovation in the service sector. *Business & Economics Research Journal*, *10*(1), 131–148. https://doi.org/10.20409/berj.2019.159

Afari-Asiedu, S., Asante, K. P., Senah, K., Abdulai, M. A., Afranie, S., Mahama, E., Anane, E. A., Abukari, M., Darko, M. L., Febir, L. G., & Owusu-Agyei, S. (2018). Volunteering for health services in the middle part of Ghana: In whose interest? *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, *7*(9), 836–846. https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2018.38

Afshari, L., Young, S., Gibson, P., & Karimi, L. (2019). Organizational commitment: Exploring the role of identity. *Personnel Review*, *49*(3), 774–790. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-04-2019-0148

Aguinis, H., & Solarino, A. M. (2019). Transparency and replicability in qualitative research: The case of interviews with elite informants. *Strategic Management Journal*, *40*(8), 1291–1315. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3015

Ainsworth, J. (2020). Feelings of ownership and volunteering: Examining psychological ownership as a volunteering motivation for nonprofit service organisations. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *52*, Article 101931. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101931

Ajzen, I. (1988). *Attitudes, personality, and behavior*. Dorsey Press.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*(2), 179–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Prentice-Hall.

Alam, Md. K. (2020). A systematic qualitative case study: Questions, data collection, NVivo analysis and saturation. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, *16*(1), 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-09-2019-1825

Aldiabat, K. M., & Le Navenec, C.-L. (2018). Data saturation: The mysterious step in grounded theory methodology. *The Qualitative Report*, *23*(1), 245–261. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.2994

Alegre, I., Berbegal-Mirabent, J., Guerrero, A., & Mas-Machuca, M. (2018). The real mission of the mission statement: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of*

*Management and Organization*, *24*(4), 456–473. http://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2017.82

Allen, D. G., & Griffeth, R. W. (1999). Job performance and turnover: A review and integrative multi-route model. *Human Resource Management Review*, *9*(4), 525–528. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822(99)00032-7

Almas, S., Chacón-Fuertes, F., & Pérez-Muñoz, A. (2020). Direct and indirect effects of transformational leadership on volunteers' intention to remain at non-profit organizations. *Psychosocial Intervention*, *29*(3), 125–132. https://doi.org/10.5093/pi2020a17

Alt, D., Raichel, N., & Naamati-Schneider, L. (2022). Higher education students' reflective journal writing and lifelong learning skills: Insights from an exploratory sequential study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.707168

Ambrosini, M., & Artero, M. (2023). Immigrant volunteering: A form of citizenship from below. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations*, *34*(2), 252–262. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-022-00454-x

Ames, H., Glenton, C., & Lewin, S. (2019). Purposive sampling in a qualitative evidence synthesis: A worked example from a synthesis on parental perceptions of vaccination communication. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *19*(1), 26. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-019-0665-4

Ampofo, E. T., & Karatepe, O. M. (2021). The effects of on-the-job embeddedness and its sub-dimensions on small-sized hotel employees' organizational commitment, work engagement and turnover intentions. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *34*(2), 509–533. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-07-2021-0858

Ampofo, E. T., Karatepe, O. M., Mensah, I., & Wilberforce, M. T. (2023). The effect of employee recognition on restaurant employees' job embeddedness, knowledge sharing and service orientation: Abusive supervision as a moderator. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. Advance publication online. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-01-2022-0036

Ashfaq, F., Butt, M., & Ilyas, S. (2020). Volunteering: What drives and retains it? An analysis of motivational needs together with organizational policies and practices. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *21*(2), 189–205. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-04-2020-0024

Audenaert, M., Carette, P., Shore, L. M., Lange, T., Van Waeyenberg, T., & Decramer, A. (2018). Leader-employee congruence of expected contributions in the employee-organization relationship. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *29*(3), 414–422. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.09.003

Azeem, M., Ahmed, M., Haider, S., & Sajjad, M. (2021). Expanding competitive advantage through organizational culture, knowledge sharing and organizational innovation. *Technology in Society*, *66*, Article 101635. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2021.101635

Basnyat, S., & Clarence Lao, C. S. (2019). Employees' perceptions on the relationship between human resource management practices and employee turnover: A qualitative study. *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, *42*(2), 453–470. https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-04-2019-0182

Bass, A. E., & Milosevic, I. (2018). The ethnographic method in CSR research: The role and importance of methodological fit. *Business & Society*, *57*(1), 174–215. https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650316648666

Bauer, S., & Lim, D. (2019). Effect of communication practices on volunteer organization identification and retention. *Sustainability*, *11*(9), 2467. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11092467

Behnia, B. (2021). Role commitment and role maintenance strategies: A symbolic interactionist approach to volunteering. *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit & Social Economy Research*, *12*(1), 23–37. https://doi.org/10.29173/cjnser.2021v12n1a370

Benevene, P., Buonomo, I., & West, M. (2020). The relationship between leadership behaviors and volunteer commitment: The role of volunteer satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.602466

Bergen, N., & Labonté, R. (2020). “Everything is perfect, and we have no problems”: Detecting and limiting social desirability bias in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, *30*(5), 783–792. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732319889354

Berndt, A. E. (2020). Sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, *36*(2), 224–226. https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334420906850

Bettini, E., Gilmour, A. F., Williams, T. O., & Billingsley, B. (2020). Predicting special and general educators’ intent to continue teaching using conservation of resources theory. *Exceptional Children*, *86*(3), 310–329. https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402919870464

Bharadwaj, S. (2023). Influence of training and development interventions on employee retention – an employer brand-based agenda. *LBS Journal of Management & Research*. Advance publication online. https://doi.org/10.1108/LBSJMR-12-2022-0080

Bharadwaj, S., & Yameen, M. (2020). Analyzing the mediating effect of organizational identification on the relationship between CSR employer branding and employee retention. *Management Research Review*, *44*(5), 718–737. https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-05-2020-0298

Bloomfield, J., & Fisher, M. J. (2019). Quantitative research design. *Journal of the Australasian Rehabilitation Nurses' Association (JARNA)*, *22*(2), 27–30. https://doi.org/10.33235/jarna.22.2.27-30

Bougie, R., & Sekaran, U. (2019). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach, enhanced eText* (8th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Bowe, M., Gray, D., Stevenson, C., McNamara, N., Wakefield, J. R. H., Kellezi, B., Wilson, I., Cleveland, M., Mair, E., Halder, M., & Costa, S. (2020). A social cure in the community: A mixed-method exploration of the role of social identity in the experiences and well-being of community volunteers. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *50*(7), 1523–1539. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2706

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales.

*Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *13*(2), 201–216. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1704846

Brear, M. (2019). Process and outcomes of a recursive, dialogic member checking approach: A project ethnography. *Qualitative Health Research*, *29*(7), 944–957. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318812448

Burrows, D. N., Porter, C. O. L. H., & Amber, B. (2022). Beyond choosing to leave: The interactive effects of on- and off-the-job embeddedness on involuntary turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *107*(1), 130–141. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000881

Buttery, M., Johnson, L. W., & Campbell, G. E. (2023). How does organisational culture affect employees' perception of the brand in service industries? *Businesses*, *3*(1), 52–66. https://doi.org/10.3390/businesses3010004

Campbell, R., Goodman-Williams, R., Feeney, H., & Fehler-Cabral, G. (2020). Assessing triangulation across methodologies, methods, and stakeholder groups: The joys, woes, and politics of interpreting convergent and divergent data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *41*(1), 125–144. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214018804195

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, *25*(8), 652–661. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206

Candela, A. G. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *The Qualitative Report*, *24*(3), 619–628. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3726

Carlos, C. (2021). Planning, implementing and reporting: Increasing transparency, replicability and credibility in qualitative political science research. *European Political Science: EPS*, *20*(2), 270–280. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-020-00299-2

Carnochan, S., McBeath, B., Chuang, E., & Austin, M. J. (2019). Perspectives of public and nonprofit managers on communications in human services contracting. *Public Performance & Management Review*, *42*(3), 657–684. https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2018.1495085

Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, *10*(6), 807–815. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.03.019

Chan, W. L., Ho, J. A., Sambasivan, M., & Ng, S. I. (2019). Antecedents and outcome of job embeddedness: Evidence from four and five-star hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *83*, 37–45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.04.011

Chen, X., Al Mamun, A., Hoque, M. E., Hirwani Wan Hussain, W. M., & Yang, Q. (2023). Work design, employee well-being, and retention intention: A case study of China's young workforce. *Heliyon*, *9*(5), Article e15742. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e15742

Cho, H., Wong, Z., & Chiu, W. (2020). The effect of volunteer management on intention to continue volunteering: A mediating role of job satisfaction of volunteers. *SAGE Open*, *10*(2), 2158244020920588. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020920588

Choi, S. (2020). Flexible work arrangements and employee retention: A longitudinal analysis of the federal workforces. *Public Personnel Management*, *49*(3), 470–495. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091026019886340

Choi, Y., Ingram, P., & Han, S. W. (2023). Cultural breadth and embeddedness: The individual adoption of organizational culture as a determinant of creativity. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *68*(2), 429–464. https://doi.org/10.1177/00018392221146792

Coetzer, A., Inma, C., Poisat, P., Redmond, J., & Standing, C. (2018). Job embeddedness and employee enactment of innovation-related work behaviours. *International Journal of Manpower*, *39*(2), 222–239. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-04-2016-0095

Cohen, A. (1995). An examination of the relationships between work commitment and nonwork domains. *Human Relations*, *48*(3), 239–263. https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679504800302

Collins, C. S., & Stockton, C. M. (2018). The central role of theory in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918797475

Conlon, C., Timonen, V., Elliott-O'Dare, C., O'Keeffe, S., & Foley, G. (2020). Confused about theoretical sampling? Engaging theoretical sampling in diverse grounded theory studies. *Qualitative Health Research*, *30*(6), 947–959. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732319899139

Cox, V., & Overbey, J. A. (2022). Generational knowledge transfer and retention strategies. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*, *37*(4), 10–13. https://doi.org/10.1108/DLO-03-2022-0055

Crowe, S., Cresswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *11*, Article 100, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-11-100

Dadzie, J., Runeson, G., Ding, G., & Bondinuba, F. K. (2018). Barriers to adoption of sustainable technologies for energy-efficient building upgrade—Semi-structured interviews. *Buildings*, *8*(4), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings8040057

DeCino, D. A., & Waalkes, P. L. (2019). Aligning epistemology with member checks. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *42*(4), 374–384. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2018.1492535

DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, L. M. (2019). Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigour. *Family Medicine and Community Health*, *7*(2), Article e000057. https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057

Denning, S. (2021). Persistence in volunteering: An affect theory approach to faith-based volunteering. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *22*(6), 807–827. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2019.1633685

Denny, E., & Weckesser, A. (2019). Qualitative research: What it is and what it is not. *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, *126*(3), 369–369. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0528.15198

Dury, S., Brosens, D., Smetcoren, A.-S., Van Regenmortel, S., De Witte, N., De Donder, L., & Verté, D. (2020). Pathways to late-life volunteering: A focus on social connectedness. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *49*(3), 523–547. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764019881509

Dutta, T., & Dhir, S. (2021). Employee loyalty: Measurement and validation. *Global Business Review*, *0*(0), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150921990809

Dzwigol, H. (2020). Methodological and empirical platform of triangulation in strategic management. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, *19*(4), 1–8.

Eakin, J. M., & Gladstone, B. (2020). "Value-adding" analysis: Doing more with qualitative data. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *19*, 1609406920949333. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920949333

Ebneyamini, S., & Sadeghi Moghadam, M. R. (2018). Toward developing a framework for conducting case study research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918817954

National Council of Nonprofits. (2014). *Economic impact*. https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/economic-impact

Edeigba, J., & Singh, D. (2022). Nonfinancial resource management: A qualitative study of retention and engagement in not-for-profit community fund management organisation. *Asia Pacific Management Review*, *27*(2), 80–91. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmrv.2021.05.005

Employee retention and the effects of supportive work environment. (2022). *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*, *36*(4), 35–37. https://doi.org/10.1108/DLO-07-2021-0133

Ergul Sonmez, E., & Koc, M. (2018). Pre-service teachers' lived experiences with taking courses through learning management systems: A qualitative study. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, *19*(2), 101–116. https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.415823

Errasti-Ibarrondo, B., Jordán, J. A., Díez-Del-Corral, M. P., & Arantzamendi, M. (2018). Conducting phenomenological research: Rationalizing the methods and rigour of the phenomenology of practice. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *74*(7), 1723–1734. https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13569

Ertas, N. (2019). Turnover intentions of volunteer resource managers: The roles of work motivations, person–organization fit, and emotional labor. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *42*(9), 741–752. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2018.1506935

Fahim, M. G. A. (2018). Strategic human resource management and public employee retention. *Review of Economics and Political Science*, *3*(2), 20–39. https://doi.org/10.1108/REPS-07-2018-002

Fait, M., & Sakka, G. (2020). Knowledge sharing: An innovative organizational approach to engage volunteers. *EuroMed Journal of Business, 16*(3), 290–305. https://doi.org/10.1108/EMJB-10-2019-0131

Faletehan, A. F., & van Burg, E. (2023). “We will not pay you, but God will remunerate”: The paradox of volunteer transcendental rewards in faith-based organizations. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, *42*(2), 238–258. https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2022.2138681

Featherston, R. J., Shlonsky, A., Lewis, C., Luong, M.-L., Downie, L. E., Vogel, A. P., Granger, C., Hamilton, B., & Galvin, K. (2019). Interventions to mitigate bias in social work decision-making: A systematic review. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *29*(7), 741–752. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731518819160

Filstad, C., Traavik, L. E. M., & Gorli, M. (2019). Belonging at work: The experiences, representations and meanings of belonging. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *31*(2), 116–142. https://doi.org/10.1108/JWL-06-2018-0081

Fischer, J., & Van de Bovenkamp, H. M. (2019). The challenge of democratic patient representation: Understanding the representation work of patient organizations through methodological triangulation. *Health Policy*, *123*(1), 109–114. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthpol.2018.11.011

FitzPatrick, B. (2019). Validity in qualitative health education research. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, *11*(2), 211–217. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.11.014

Forero, R., Nahidi, S., De Costa, J., Mohsin, M., Fitzgerald, G., Gibson, N., McCarthy, S., & Aboagye-Sarfo, P. (2018). Application of four-dimension criteria to assess rigour of qualitative research in emergency medicine. *BMC Health Services Research*, *18*(1), Article 120, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-2915-2

Galván Vela, E., Mercader, V., Arango Herrera, E., & Ruíz Corrales, M. (2021). Empowerment and support of senior management in promoting happiness at work. *Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business in Society*, *22*(3), 536–545. https://doi.org/10.1108/CG-05-2021-0200

Gaur, A., & Kumar, M. (2018). A systematic approach to conducting review studies: An assessment of content analysis in 25 years of IB research. *Journal of World Business*, *53*(2), 280–289. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2017.11.003

Gilbert, G., Turner, M., & Holdsworth, S. (2021). Understanding volunteer commitment to a project: Testing a conceptual model. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, *14*(6), 1406–1421. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMPB-06-2020-0200

Gillies, K., Duthie, A., Cotton, S., & Campbell, M. K. (2018). Patient reported measures of informed consent for clinical trials: A systematic review. *PLOS ONE*, *13*(6), Article e0199775. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0199775

Grant, A. D., Wolf, G. I., & Nebeker, C. (2019). Approaches to governance of participant-led research: A qualitative case study. *BMJ Open*, *9*(4), Article e025633. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-025633

Grant, C., & Osanloo, A. (2016). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your "house." *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, *4*(2), 12–26. https://doi.org/10.5929/2014.4.2.9

Gray, D., & Stevenson, C. (2020). How can "we" help? Exploring the role of shared social identity in the experiences and benefits of volunteering. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *30*(4), 341–353. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2448

Greene, J., Mero, N., & Werner, S. (2017). The negative effects of job embeddedness on performance. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *33*(1), 58–73. https://doi.org/10.1108/jmp02-2017-0074

Groza, M. P., & Groza, M. D. (2021). Enhancing volunteer pride and retention rates: The role of organizational reputation, task significance, and skill variety. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, *0*(0), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2021.1926043

Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. *PLoS ONE*, *15*(5), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232076

Haldorai, K., Kim, W. G., Phetvaroon, K., & Li, J. (2020). Left out of the office "tribe": The influence of workplace ostracism on employee work engagement. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *32*(8), 2717–2735. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-04-2020-0285

Hameduddin, T., & Fernandez, S. (2019). Employee engagement as administrative reform: Testing the efficacy of the OPM's employee engagement initiative. *Public Administration Review*, *79*(3), 355–369. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13033

Hammersley, M. (2018). What is ethnography? Can it survive? Should it? *Ethnography and Education*, *13*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2017.1298458

Hayashi, P., Abib, G., & Hoppen, N. (2019). Validity in qualitative research: A processual approach. *The Qualitative Report*, *24*(1), 98–112. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3443

Hayes, M. S., & Stazyk, E. C. (2019). Mission congruence: To agree or not to agree, and its implications for public employee turnover. *Public Personnel Management*, *48*(4), 513–534. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091026019829847

Heaslip, E. (2020, March 30). *Nonprofit, not-for-profit & for-profit organizations explained*. U.S. Chamber of Commerce. https://www.uschamber.com/co/co/start/strategy/nonprofit-vs-not-for-profit-vs-for-profit

Heesen, R., Bright, L. K., & Zucker, A. (2019). Vindicating methodological triangulation. *Synthese*, *196*(8), 3067–3081. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-016-1294-7

Henderson, A. C., & Sowa, J. (2023). Creating cohesive volunteer groups: The role of group identification in volunteer fire services. *Public Administration Quarterly*, *47*(2), 223–246. https://doi.org/10.37808/paq.47.2.7

Henderson, M., Hughes, M., Hurley, J., & Smith, G. (2022). Voluntary male mentors' lived experience of social engagement with men in their community. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, *30*(6), e6286–e6293. https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.14067

Hendren, K., Luo, Q. E., & Pandey, S. K. (2018). The state of mixed methods research in public administration and public policy. *Public Administration Review*, *78*(6), 904–916. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12981

Hennink, M. M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science & Medicine*, *292*, Article 114523. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523

Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Weber, M. B. (2019). What influences saturation? Estimating sample sizes in focus group research. *Qualitative Health Research*, *29*(10), 1483–1496. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318821692

Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *The American Psychologist*, *44*(3), 513–524. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.44.3.51

Hollstein, B. (2019). What autobiographical narratives tell us about the life course. Contributions of qualitative sequential analytical methods. *Advances in Life Course Research*, *41*, Article 100248. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2018.10.001

Holtom, B. C., & O'Neill, B. S. (2004). Job embeddedness: A theoretical foundation for developing a comprehensive nurse retention plan. *JONA: The Journal of Nursing*

*Administration*, *34*(5), 216–227. https://doi.org/10.1097/00005110-200405000-00005

*Holy Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (1995). The Lockman Foundation.

Hopkins, B., & Dowell, D. (2021). Recruitment and retention in not-for-profit organisations: Tailored strategies for younger and older volunteers. *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, *44*(1), 259–273. https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-10-2020-0450

Huang, Y., Bortree, D. S., Yang, F., & Wang, R. (2020). Encouraging volunteering in nonprofit organizations: The role of organizational inclusion and volunteer need satisfaction. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, *32*(2), 147–165. https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2019.1589624

Hughes, P. (2021). Do religion and spirituality make a contribution to the public good? The association of religion and spirituality with volunteering. *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*, *34*(1), 96–121. https://doi.org/10.1558/jasr.19466

Hussain, T., & Deery, S. (2018). Why do self-initiated expatriates quit their jobs: The role of job embeddedness and shocks in explaining turnover intentions. *International Business Review*, *27*(1), 281–288. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2017.08.002

Iivari, N. (2018). Using member checking in interpretive research practice: A hermeneutic analysis of informants' interpretation of their organizational realities. *Information Technology & People*, *31*(1), 111–133. https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-07-2016-0168

Internal Revenue Service. (n.d.). *Churches, integrated auxiliaries, and conventions or Associations of Churches.* Retrieved June 29, 2022, https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/churches-integrated-auxiliaries-and-conventions-or-associations-of-churches

Iqbal, J., Asghar, A., & Asghar, M. Z. (2022). Effect of despotic leadership on employee turnover intention: Mediating toxic workplace environment and cognitive distraction in academic institutions. *Behavioral Sciences (2076-328X)*, *12*(5), 125. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12050125

Janis, I. (2022). Strategies for establishing dependability between two qualitative intrinsic case studies: A reflexive thematic analysis. *Field Methods*, 1525822X211069636. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X211069636

Johnson, D. R., Scheitle, C. P., & Ecklund, E. H. (2021). Beyond the in-person interview? How interview quality varies across in-person, telephone, and skype interviews. *Social Science Computer Review*, *39*(6), 1142–1158. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439319893612

Jones, J. M. (2022, January 11). *U.S. charitable donations rebound; Volunteering still down*. Gallup. https://news.gallup.com/poll/388574/charitable-donations-rebound-volunteering-down.aspx

Jovanovic, B. (1979). Job matching and the theory of turnover. *Journal of Political Economy*, *87*(5), 972. https://doi.org/10.1086/260808

Kane, V. E. (2020). Using Lean Six Sigma implied assumptions. *The TQM Journal*, *32*(6), 1561–1575. https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-11-2019-0271

Kegler, M. C., Raskind, I. G., Comeau, D. L., Griffith, D. M., Cooper, H. L. F., & Shelton, R. C. (2019). Study design and use of inquiry frameworks in qualitative research published in health education & behavior. *Health Education & Behavior*, *46*(1), 24–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198118795018

Kelly, A., Tymms, K., Fallon, K., Sumpton, D., Tugwell, P., Tunnicliffe, D., & Tong, A. (2021). Qualitative research in rheumatology: An overview of methods and contributions to practice and policy. *The Journal of Rheumatology*, *48*(1), 6–15. https://doi.org/10.3899/jrheum.191368

Khan, A. N., Khan, N. A., & Bodla, A. A. (2021). The after-shock effects of high-performers turnover in hotel industry: A multi-level study. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *33*(10), 3277–3295. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-12-2020-1439

Kharub, M., Mor, R. S., & Rana, S. (2022). Mediating role of manufacturing strategy in the competitive strategy and firm performance: Evidence from SMEs. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, *29*(10), 3275–3301. https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-05-2021-0257

Kiazad, K., Kraimer, M. L., Seibert, S. E., & Sargent, L. (2020). Understanding organizational embeddedness and career success: Who and what you know. *Journal of Organizational Behavior (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)*, *41*(7), 678–693. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2464

Kim, B. J., Kim, M. H., & Lee, J. (2019). Congruence matters: Volunteer motivation, value internalization, and retention. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, *19*(5), 56–70. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2019.11234abstract

Kollmann, T., Stöckmann, C., Kensbock, J. M., & Peschl, A. (2020). What satisfies younger versus older employees, and why? An aging perspective on equity theory to explain interactive effects of employee age, monetary rewards, and task contributions on job satisfaction. *Human Resource Management*, *59*(1), 101–115. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21981

Komisarof, A. (2022). A new framework of workplace belonging: Instrument validation and testing relationships to crucial acculturation outcomes. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, *15*(3), 311–332. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2021.1897152

Koo, B., Yu, J., Chua, B.-L., Lee, S., & Han, H. (2020). Relationships among emotional and material rewards, job satisfaction, burnout, affective commitment, job performance, and turnover intention in the hotel industry. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, *21*(4), 371–401. https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2019.1663572

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, *24*(1), 120–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Kramer, M. W., Austin, J. T., & Hansen, G. J. (2021). Toward a model of the influence of motivation and communication on volunteering: Expanding self-determination theory. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *35*(4), 572–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/08933189211023993

Kurniawan, B. P. Y., & Galushasti, A. (2021). Effectiveness of fine-moving value in developing theoretical model of organizational performance: A perspective of the theory of planned behavior. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, *20*(3), 1–13.

Lancaster, K. (2017). Confidentiality, anonymity and power relations in elite interviewing: Conducting qualitative policy research in a politicised domain. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *20*(1), 93–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2015.1123555

Lee, S., Hameduddin, T., & Lee, G. R. (2023). Organizational image and employee engagement: Exploring the inter-relationships between construed external image and perceived organizational identity. *The American Review of Public Administration*, *53*(2), 82–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/02750740221147573

Lehner, M., Mattes, A., van Breugel, I., Reeger, U., & Scholten, P. (2022). Where I belong: Identification processes of young volunteers in super-diverse cities. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations*, *33*(4), 766–776. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-021-00404-z

Loomba, A. P. S., & Karsten, R. (2018). Self-efficacy's role in success of quality training programmes. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, *51*(1), 24–39. https://doi.org/10.1108/ICT-06-2018-0058

Lowe, A., Norris, A. C., Farris, A. J., & Babbage, D. R. (2018). Quantifying thematic saturation in qualitative data analysis. *Field Methods, 30*(3), 191–207. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X17749386

Lukman, M., Ibrahim, K., Yani, D. I., Prista Sari, S., & Juniarti, N. (2019). Strategies to improve the performance of community health volunteers for tuberculosis care and prevention: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Community Based Nursing & Midwifery*, *7*(4), 270–278. https://doi.org/10.30476/ijcbnm.2019.81353.0

Lynch, H. F. (2018). Opening closed doors: Promoting IRB transparency. *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, *46*(1), 145–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/1073110518766028

Lyons, P., & Bandura, R. (2019). Employee turnover: Features and perspectives. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*, *34*(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.1108/DLO-02-2019-0048

Lyons, P., & Bandura, R. (2021). Coaching to enhance learning and engagement and reduce turnover. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *34*(3), 295–307. https://doi.org/10.1108/JWL-08-2021-0106

Magezi, V., & Nanthambwe, P. (2022). Development and the role of the church: Exploring public pastoral care positioning within congregational ministry. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, *43*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v43i1.2414

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*(1), 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Masoud, R. Y., & Basahal, A. S. (2023). Leadership competencies in non-profit organizations: Insights from qualitative research. *Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies*, *11*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.4236/jhrss.2023.112016

Matović, N., & Ovesni, K. (2021). Interaction of quantitative and qualitative methodology in mixed methods research: Integration and/or combination. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *0*(0), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2021.1964857

Matta, C. (2021). Philosophical paradigms in qualitative research methods education: What is their pedagogical role? *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *0*(0), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2021.1958372

McClean, E., & Collins, C. J. (2019). Expanding the concept of fit in strategic human resource management: An examination of the relationship between human resource practices and charismatic leadership on organizational outcomes. *Human Resource Management*, *58*(2), 187–202. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21945

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J., & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, *41*(9), 1002–1006. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149

McNarry, G., Allen-Collinson, J., & Evans, A. B. (2019). Reflexivity and bracketing in sociological phenomenological research: Researching the competitive swimming lifeworld. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *11*(1), 138–151. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2018.1506498

Merrilees, B., Miller, D., & Yakimova, R. (2020). Volunteer retention motives and determinants across the volunteer lifecycle. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, *32*(1), 25–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2019.1689220

Mitchell, T. R., Holtom, B. C., Lee, T. W., Sablynski, C. J., & Erez, M. (2001). Why people stay: Using job embeddedness to predict voluntary turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, *44*(6), 1102–1121. https://doi.org/10.5465/3069391

Mohajan, H. K. (2018). Qualitative research methodology in social sciences and related subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, *7*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.26458/jedep.v7i1.571

Monrouxe, L., & Ajjawi, R. (2020). Ethnography, methodology: Striving for clarity. *Medical Education*, *54*(4), 284–286. https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.14129

Moon, M. D. (2019). Triangulation: A method to increase validity, reliability, and legitimation in clinical research. *Journal of Emergency Nursing*, *45*(1), 103–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jen.2018.11.004

Moore, J. R., & Hanson, W. (2022). Improving leader effectiveness: Impact on employee engagement and retention. *Journal of Management Development*, *41*(7/8), 450–468. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-02-2021-0041

Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European Journal of General Practice*, *24*(1), 9–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091

Mullan, B., Liddelow, C., Charlesworth, J., Slabbert, A., Allom, V., Harris, C., Same, A., & Kothe, E. (2021). Investigating mechanisms for recruiting and retaining volunteers: The role of habit strength and planning in volunteering engagement. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *161*(3), 363–378. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2020.1845113

Myers, M. D. (2019). *Qualitative research in business and management* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Naicker, N., & Maharaj, M. S. (2020). *Investigating agile requirements engineering practices in South African software development market*. *28*(1), 33–58.

National Center for Charitable Statistics. (2020). *The nonprofit sector in brief 2019*. https://nccs.urban.org/publication/nonprofit-sector-brief-2019#highlights

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1979). *The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html

Neely, A. R., Lengnick-Hall, M. L., & Evans, M. D. (2022). A process model of volunteer motivation. *Human Resource Management Review*, *32*(4), Article 100879. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2021.100879

Neves, P., Almeida, P., & Velez, M. J. (2018). Reducing intentions to resist future change: Combined effects of commitment-based HR practices and ethical leadership. *Human Resource Management*, *57*(1), 249–261. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21830

Ngah, N. S., Abdullah, N. L., & Mohd Suki, N. (2021). Servant leadership, volunteer retention, and organizational citizenship behavior in nonprofit organizations:

Examining the mediating role of job satisfaction. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *51*(5), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640211057409

Noble, H., & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, *22*(3), 67–68. https://doi.org/10.1136/ebnurs-2019-103145

Nogueira, M., Santarém, F., & Gomes, S. (2020). Volunteer brand equity? Exploring the adoption of employee brand equity (EBE) dimensions to understand volunteers' contributions to build nonprofit organizations' brands. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, *32*(1), 73–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2019.1689222

Noranee, S., Som, R. M., Adam, N. A., Aziz, R. A., & Shahruddin, S. (2021). The relationship between human resource practices and employee retention at a private university: Work environment as a moderator. *Global Business & Management Research*, *13*(4), 299–311. http://www.gbmrjournal.com/pdf/v13n4/V13N4-24.pdf

Ocampo, L., Acedillo, V., Bacunador, A. M., Balo, C. C., Lagdameo, Y. J., & Tupa, N. S. (2018). A historical review of the development of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and its implications for the twenty-first century. *Personnel Review*, *47*(4), 821–862. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-04-2017-0136

O'Kane, P., Smith, A., & Lerman, M. P. (2021). Building transparency and trustworthiness in inductive research through computer-aided qualitative data analysis software. *Organizational Research Methods*, *24*(1), 104–139. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428119865016

Olubiyi, O., Smiley, G., Luckel, H., & Melaragno, R. (2019). A qualitative case study of employee turnover in retail business. *Heliyon*, *5*(6), Article e01796. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e01796

Osborne, T. L., & Luoma, J. B. (2018). Overcoming a primary barrier to practice-based research: Access to an institutional review board (IRB) for independent ethics review. *Psychotherapy*, *55*(3), 255–262. https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000166

Paais, M., & Pattiruhu, J. R. (2020). Effect of motivation, leadership, and organizational culture on satisfaction and employee performance. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, *7*(8), 577–588. https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2020.vol7.no8.577

Paquin, J. D., Tao, K. W., & Budge, S. L. (2019). Toward a psychotherapy science for all: Conducting ethical and socially just research. *Psychotherapy*, *56*(4), 491–502. https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000271

Paul, C. J., Paul, J. E., & Anderson, R. S. (2019). The local food environment and food security: The health behavior role of social capital. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *16*(24). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16245045

Pennerstorfer, A., & Rutherford, A. C. (2019). Measuring growth of the nonprofit sector: The choice of indicator matters. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *48*(2), 440–456. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764018819874

Philip, J., & Medina-Craven, M. N. (2022). An examination of job embeddedness and organizational commitment in the context of HRD practices. *Management*

*Research Review*, *ahead-of-print*(ahead-of-print). https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-03-2021-0224

Pollman, E. (2021). The history and revival of the corporate purpose clause. *Texas Law Review*, *99*(7), 1423–1452. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/history-revival-corporate-purpose-clause/docview/2568032549/se-2

Porter, C. M., Posthuma, R. A., Maertz, C. P. Jr., Joplin, J. R. W., Rigby, J., Gordon, M., & Graves, K. (2019). On-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness differentially influence relationships between informal job search and turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *104*(5), 678–689. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000375

Poucher, Z. A., Tamminen, K. A., Caron, J. G., & Sweet, S. N. (2020). Thinking through and designing qualitative research studies: A focused mapping review of 30 years of qualitative research in sport psychology. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *13*(1), 163–186. https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2019.1656276

Pratt, M. G., Sonenshein, S., & Feldman, M. S. (2022). Moving beyond templates: A bricolage approach to conducting trustworthy qualitative research. *Organizational Research Methods*, *25*(2), 211–238. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428120927466

Prestholdt, P. H., Lane, I. M., & Mathews, R. C. (1987). Nurse turnover as reasoned action: Development of a process model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *72*(2), 221–227. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.72.2.221

Price, J. L., & Mueller, C. W. (1981). A causal model of turnover for nurses. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *24*(3), 543–565. https://doi.org/10.2307/255574

Provance, T. W., Ramisetty, S. B., Urick, M. J., & Wieczorkowski, K. A. (2022). Building and evolving a culture of excellence: A conceptual exploration. *Measuring Business Excellence*, *26*(2), 197–209. https://doi.org/10.1108/MBE-05-2021-0067

Randall, N. L., Sanders, C. E., Lamm, A. J., & Berg, A. C. (2023). Qualitative exploration of cultural influence on a rural health-promotion initiative. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, *55*(4), 255–265. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2022.10.011

Rangachari, P., & L Woods, J. (2020). Preserving organizational resilience, patient safety, and staff retention during COVID-19 requires a holistic consideration of the psychological safety of healthcare workers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(12). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17124267

Rasool, S. F., Wang, M., Tang, M., Saeed, A., & Iqbal, J. (2021). How toxic workplace environment effects the employee engagement: The mediating role of organizational support and employee wellbeing. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(5). Article 2294, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052294

Raymond, C., Profetto-McGrath, J., Myrick, F., & Strean, W. B. (2018). Process matters: Successes and challenges of recruiting and retaining participants for nursing education research. *Nurse Educator*, *43*(2), 92–96. https://doi.org/10.1097/NNE.0000000000000423

Reichers, A. E. (1985). A review and reconceptualization of organizational commitment. *Academy of Management Review*, *10*(3), 465–476. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1985.4278960

Reid, A.-M., Brown, J. M., Smith, J. M., Cope, A. C., & Jamieson, S. (2018). Ethical dilemmas and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, *7*(2), 69–75. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-018-0412-2

Reitz, O. E., & Anderson, M. A. (2011). An overview of job embeddedness. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, *27*(5), 320–327. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2011.04.004

Ridder, H.-G. (2017). The theory contribution of case study research designs. *Business Research*, *10*(2), 281–305. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40685-017-0045-z

Ripley, K. R., Hance, M. A., Kerr, S. A., Brewer, L. E., & Conlon, K. E. (2018). Uninformed consent? The effect of participant characteristics and delivery format on informed consent. *Ethics & Behavior*, *28*(7), 517–543. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2018.1456926

Roberson, Q., & Perry, J. L. (2022). Inclusive leadership in thought and action: A thematic analysis. *Group & Organization Management*, *47*(4), 755–778. https://doi.org/10.1177/10596011211013161

Roberts, R. E. (2020). Qualitative interview questions: Guidance for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, *25*(9), 3185–3203. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4640

Ross, P. T., & Bibler Zaidi, N. L. (2019). Limited by our limitations. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, *8*(4), 261–264. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-00530-x

Rubenstein, A. L., Peltokorpi, V., & Allen, D. G. (2020). Work-home and home-work conflict and voluntary turnover: A conservation of resources explanation for contrasting moderation effects of on- and off-the-job embeddedness. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *119*, Article 103413. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103413

Russell, A. R., Storti, M. A. H., & Handy, F. (2019). Managing volunteer retirement among older adults: Perspectives of volunteer administrators. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, *5*(1), 95–109. https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.5.1.95-109

Rutberg, S., & Bouikidis, C. D. (2018). Focusing on the fundamentals: A simplistic differentiation between qualitative and quantitative research. *Nephrology Nursing Journal*, *45*(2), 209–213.

Same, A., McBride, H., Liddelow, C., Mullan, B., & Harris, C. (2020). Motivations for volunteering time with older adults: A qualitative study. *PLOS ONE*, *15*(5), Article e0232718. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232718

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, *52*(4), 1893–1907. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2015). *Research methods for business students* (7th ed.). Pearson Education Unlimited.

Sawatsky, A. P., Ratelle, J. T., & Beckman, T. J. (2019). Qualitative research methods in medical education. *Anesthesiology*, *131*(1), 14–22. https://doi.org/10.1097/ALN.0000000000002728

Schweiger, G. (2019). Religion and poverty. *Palgrave Communications*, *5*(1), Article 59, 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0272-3

Sebele-Mpofu, F. Y. (2020). Saturation controversy in qualitative research: Complexities and underlying assumptions. A literature review. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *6*(1), Article 1838706, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1838706

Sender, A., Rutishauser, L., & Staffelbach, B. (2018). Embeddedness across contexts: A two-country study on the additive and buffering effects of job embeddedness on employee turnover. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *28*(2), 340–356. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12183

Shah, I. A., Csordas, T., Akram, U., Yadav, A., & Rasool, H. (2020). Multifaceted role of job embeddedness within organizations: Development of sustainable approach to reducing turnover intention. *SAGE Open*, *10*(2), 2158244020934876. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020934876

Shibiti, R. (2019). Satisfaction with retention factors in relation to job embeddedness of public school teachers. *South Africa Journal of Human Resource Management*, *17*(0), Article a1161, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v17i0.1161

Shields, K. M., Eiland, L. S., Zitko, K. L., & Wagner, J. L. (2023). Developing authentic mentorship through professional organizations. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *87*(3), Article 9006, 287–290. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe9006

Shipman, C., & Siemiatycki, M. (2022). Building in common: (Re)integrating social services and community space in church redevelopment projects. *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2022.2054852

Skopec, M., Issa, H., Reed, J., & Harris, M. (2020). The role of geographic bias in knowledge diffusion: A systematic review and narrative synthesis. *Research Integrity and Peer Review*, *5*(1), Article 2, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-019-0088-0

Slade, K. (2020). Innovation management in a multicultural context: A practitioner's guide to the impact of societal culture on innovation. *Research Technology Management*, *63*(6), 31–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/08956308.2020.1813495

Slatten, L. A., Bendickson, J. S., Diamond, M., & McDowell, W. C. (2021). Staffing of small nonprofit organizations: A model for retaining employees. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, *6*(1), 50–57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2020.10.003

Smith, J. G. (2018). The nurse work environment: Current and future challenges. *Journal of Applied Biobehavioral Research*, *23*(1), Article e12126. https://doi.org/10.1111/jabr.12126

Smith, P. R. (2018). Collecting sufficient evidence when conducting a case study. *The Qualitative Report*, *23*(5), 1043–1048. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3188

Sogunro, O. A. (2002). Selecting a quantitative or qualitative research methodology: An experience. *Educational Research Quarterly, 26*(1), 3.

Staller, K. M. (2022). Confusing questions in qualitative inquiry: Research, interview, and analysis. *Qualitative Social Work*, *21*(2), 227–234. https://doi.org/10.1177/14733250221080533

Statista Research Department. (2021). *Nonprofit organizations in the U.S. - statistics & facts*. Statista. https://www.statista.com/topics/1390/nonprofit-organizations-in-the-us/

Stefanick, L., Best-Bertwistle, R., & Race, L. S. (2020). Retaining volunteers in the age of precarious work. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, *32*(2), 124–146. https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2018.1526747

Steindórsdóttir, B. D., Nerstad, C. G. L., & Magnúsdóttir, K. Þ. (2021). What makes employees stay? Mastery climate, psychological need satisfaction and on-the-job embeddedness. *Nordic Psychology*, *73*(1), 91–115. https://doi.org/10.1080/19012276.2020.1817770

Stoecker, R., & Avila, E. (2021). From mixed methods to strategic research design. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *24*(6), 627–640. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1799639

Strijker, D., Bosworth, G., & Bouter, G. (2020). Research methods in rural studies: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *78*, 262–270. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.06.007

Sundram, F., Corattur, T., Dong, C., & Zhong, K. (2018). Motivations, expectations and experiences in being a mental health helplines volunteer. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *15*(10). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15102123

Taguchi, N. (2018). Description and explanation of pragmatic development: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research. *System*, *75*, 23–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.03.010

Takahashi, A. R. W., & Araujo, L. (2019). Case study research: Opening up research opportunities. *RAUSP Management Journal*, *55*(1), 100–111. https://doi.org/10.1108/RAUSP-05-2019-0109

Teng, H.-Y., Cheng, L.-Y., & Chen, C.-Y. (2021). Does job passion enhance job embeddedness? A moderated mediation model of work engagement and abusive supervision. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *95*, 102913. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102913

Tetui, M., Tennant, R., Patten, A., Giilck, B., Burns, C. M., Waite, N., & Grindrod, K. (2023). Role satisfaction among community volunteers working in mass COVID-

19 vaccination clinics, Waterloo Region, Canada. *BMC Public Health*, *23*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15597-9

Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, A. (2018). Limitations and delimitations in the research process. *Perioperative Nursing*, *7*(3), 155–163. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2552022

Thoits, P. A. (2021). Motivations for peer-support volunteering: Social identities and role-identities as sources of motivation. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *50*(4), 797–815. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764020983897

Thome, M. J., & Greenwald, J. M. (2020). Job and community embeddedness on voluntary turnover. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *35*(10), 1573–1580. https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-01-2019-0021

Tian, H., Iqbal, S., Akhtar, S., Qalati, S. A., Anwar, F., & Khan, M. A. S. (2020). The impact of transformational leadership on employee retention: Mediation and moderation through organizational citizenship behavior and communication. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00314

Traeger, C., Alfes, K., & Fürstenberg, N. (2023). Perceived organizational support and volunteer outcomes: Evidence from a German environmental nonprofit organization. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *52*(3), 763–786. https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640221103292

Treuren, G. J. M., & Fein, E. C. (2021). Off-the-job embeddedness as a moderator of the relationship between work and life conflict and turnover intention. *The*

*International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *32*(6), 1251–1272. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1510847

Turner, D. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The Qualitative Report*, *15*(3), 754–760. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2010.1178

Uhl-Bien, M. (2006). Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *17*(6), 654–676. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.007

Usadolo, S. E., & Usadolo, Q. E. (2019). The impact of lower level management on volunteers' workplace outcomes in South African non-profit organisations: The mediating role of supportive supervisor communication. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations*, *30*(1), 244–258. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-018-9970-5

van Ruler, B. (2018). Communication theory: An underrated pillar on which strategic communication rests. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *12*(4), 367–381. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2018.1452240

van Schie, S., Gautier, A., Pache, A.-C., & Güntert, S. T. (2019). What keeps corporate volunteers engaged: Extending the volunteer work design model with self-determination theory insights. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *160*(3), 693–712. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3926-y

Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S., & Young, T. (2018). Characterising and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: Systematic analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *18*(1), Article 148, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7

Walk, M., Scott, C., & Littlepage, L. (2021). It's not all the same: Implemented and perceived HR practices in the volunteer context. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X21994631

Walk, M., Zhang, R., & Littlepage, L. (2019). "Don't you want to stay?" The impact of training and recognition as human resource practices on volunteer turnover. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *29*(4), 509–527. https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21344

Wegner, C. E., Baker, B. J., & Jones, G. J. (2021). Organizational identity development in sport volunteers. *Journal of Sport Management*, *35*(4), 325–337. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2020-0042

Weller, S. C., Vickers, B., Bernard, H. R., Blackburn, A. M., Borgatti, S., Gravlee, C. C., & Johnson, J. C. (2018). Open-ended interview questions and saturation. *PLOS ONE*, *13*(6), Article e0198606, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198606

White, M. G. (2020). Why human subjects research protection is important. *Ochsner Journal*, *20*(1), 16–33. https://doi.org/10.31486/toj.20.5012

White Smith, D. (2020). Ministerial training on consumer culture and volunteer management may prevent burnout for small-church clergy. *Pastoral Psychology*, *69*(3), 225–248. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-020-00905-6

Wiley Online Library. (2021). Volunteerism takes big hit due to pandemic. *Nonprofit Business Advisor*, *2021*(376), 5–8. https://doi.org/10.1002/nba.30913

Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review*, *15*(1), 45–55. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/art-coding-thematic-exploration-qualitative/docview/2210886420/se-2

Windon, S., Robotham, D., & Echols, A. (2023). Importance of organizational volunteer retention and communication with volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Community Development*, *0*(0), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2023.2186457

Woolford, M., Joyce, C., & Polacsek, M. (2022). Strategies to optimize aged care volunteer recruitment and retention: A systematic review. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, *65*(1), 45–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/01634372.2021.1923605

Yan, W., Wu, X., Wang, H., Zhang, Y., Cheng, L., Zhou, X., Chen, H., Song, C., & Ye, J. (2023). Employability, organizational commitment and person–organization fit among nurses in China: A correctional cross-sectional research. *Nursing Open,* *10*(1), 316–327. https://doi.org/10.1002/nop2.1306

Yeong, M. L., Ismail, R., Ismail, N. H., & Hamzah, M. I. (2018). Interview protocol refinement: Fine-tuning qualitative research interview questions for multi-racial populations in Malaysia. *The Qualitative Report*, *23*(11), 2700–2713. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3412

Yildiz, D., Temur, G. T., Beskese, A., Bozbura, F. T., & Kahraman, C. (2020). A spherical fuzzy analytic hierarchy process based approach to prioritize career management activities improving employee retention. *Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems*, *39*(5), 6603–6618. https://doi.org/10.3233/JIFS-189122

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE.

Young, J. C., Rose, D. C., Mumby, H. S., Benitez-Capistros, F., Derrick, C. J., Finch, T., Garcia, C., Home, C., Marwaha, E., Morgans, C., Parkinson, S., Shah, J., Wilson, K. A., & Mukherjee, N. (2018). A methodological guide to using and reporting on interviews in conservation science research. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, *9*(1), 10–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-210X.12828

Yu, J., Ariza-Montes, A., Giorgi, G., Lee, A., & Han, H. (2020). Sustainable relationship development between hotel company and its employees: Linking job embeddedness, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, job performance, work engagement, and turnover. *Sustainability*, *12*(17), Article 7168, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12177168

Zhang, L., Fan, C., Deng, Y., Lam, C. F., Hu, E., & Wang, L. (2019). Exploring the interpersonal determinants of job embeddedness and voluntary turnover: A conservation of resources perspective. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *29*(3), 413–432. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12235

Zhang, M., Fried, D. D., & Griffeth, R. W. (2012). A review of job embeddedness: Conceptual, measurement issues, and directions for future research. *Human*

*Resource Management Review*, *22*(3), 220–231. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2012.02.004

Zollo, L., Ciappei, C., Faldetta, G., & Pellegrini, M. M. (2022). Does religiosity influence retention strategies in nonprofit organizations? *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations*, *33*(2), 284–296. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-020-00293-8

Zollo, L., Laudano, M. C., Boccardi, A., & Ciappei, C. (2019). From governance to organizational effectiveness: The role of organizational identity and volunteers' commitment. *Journal of Management & Governance*, *23*(1), 111–137. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10997-018-9439-3

# Appendix: Interview Protocol

Hello, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. As a doctoral student in the Doctor of Business Administration program at Walden University, I, Anthony Brown, will be conducting this study. I appreciate your willingness to share your experiences. To reiterate, the purpose of this study is to explore strategies that some church leaders use to retain volunteers to accomplish organizational goals. Your participation will help uncover these strategies. Participation in this study, as outlined in the consent form, is voluntary. This means that you can let me know if you do not want to answer a question, stop the interview at any time, or withdraw from the study.

I will record this interview so I can capture your response exactly as presented so I can ensure the preservation of your response. After I transcribe this interview, time will be scheduled with you to review my interpretation of your response for accuracy. With these details outlined, do you wish to proceed with the recorded interview? *{Wait for verbal agreement from the participant}.*

During this interview, no recording devices will be allowed other than the method in which I am recording this interview. The interview should last no longer than 60 minutes unless you desire to expound upon your responses. Please feel free to let me know if you need clarification on a question. Before we begin, do you need anything to prepare for the interview such as water or a restroom break? *{Wait for confirmation}.*

If you do not have any other questions, I will begin recording. Would you like to start the interview at this time? *{Wait for confirmation}.*

**Interview Questions:**

1. How do you define volunteering in your church setting?
2. What strategies do you use to retain volunteers?
3. What are the key barriers or obstacles to implementing these strategies?
4. How do you communicate with your volunteers?
5. What do your volunteers sacrifice if they stopped volunteering?
6. How do you connect your volunteers to the church, leaders, and other members?
7. What support does your church offer to your volunteers?
8. What type of training do your volunteers go through?
9. What type of rewards system do you have in place?

What else, if anything else, would you like to add?

**Conclusion of Interview**

This concludes our interview. Thank you for your time and the valuable and important information you shared today. As I mentioned, I will send you a copy of the transcripts of this interview for your review. The transcription process will take about 1-2 weeks to complete. When is a good day and time to schedule the follow-up transcription review meeting?

Follow-up Date: ____________________ Time: _________________________

Are there any remaining questions you have? Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any additional questions. Thank you.