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Human Resource Professionals' Perceptions of Employee Recruitment and Retention Using Linking Total Compensation to Performance Theory

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Using Linking Total Compensation to Performance Theory

by

Roshanda Tipton Smiley

MPA, Texas State University, 2012

BS Management/Human Resources, Park University, 2009

BS Management, Park University, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Public Administration

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August 2023

Abstract

Public sector employers experience challenges with recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. The expectations of employees in today's market challenge traditional methods and practices of the conventional workplace and provide an opportunity for innovation. In this qualitative study, the lived experiences of seven public sector human resource professionals (HRPs) in employee recruitment and retention were explored using Weldon's linking total compensation to performance theory to frame the study. Data were collected from open ended, semi structured interviews with seven public sector HRPs. The collected data were thematically coded, resulting in the emergent themes of organizational culture, COVID-19 pandemic, work environment, recognition, performance, and compensation. Recommendations included that organizations need to genuinely listen and take positive action through policy decisions that provide recognition and support to those serving in the public sector when employees and HRPs share challenges and successes. The results of this study impact positive social change by providing HRPs and leaders of organizations with options to explore innovative opportunities that enhance employee recruitment and retention.

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Dedication

This journey is dedicated to the one who has given me the breath of life, hope, love, encouragement, and strength, who has shown me who I am because of Him in which I belong; there are no limits to what I can do. I am the daughter of Zion. I am blessed and highly favored. I am adding to my life's journey this additional chapter.

God gave me wisdom and guidance through every stage of this process. I often did not know what to do or how to do it, nor had the tools and resources needed. God opened doors, made provisions, introduced me to next levels of knowledge, wiped my tears, removed my fear of failure, and anxieties, allowing me to conquer and complete everything required.

God blessed me with a plenary of family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, students, and so many people throughout all the years of working through my educational journey. Whether they will ever know it or not, each of them is appreciated for providing words of encouragement, support, pushing me beyond my abilities, financial support, emotional support, kindness, and just knowing they cared. Thank you for believing in me and my ability to get this done. You could not do this for me, but your belief in me that I could, made the difference.

This is a part of my legacy, my story, and my journey. Thank you to the piece of my heart, Charlie Smiley, III, who called me Dr. Smiley before I had my first degree. I have the most suited and well-earned last name. I gift this excellent, most challenging work to my son, Samuel Allen Tipton, grandchildren, future grandchildren, and their

children beyond. This is a part of my past that I sustained and continued in pursuit of obtaining the highest level of education that my Big Mama Rosie Mae Punchard desired that each of her offspring have. May all my accomplishments remind my sons, Nana's daughter, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, mother, siblings, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and each person my life's journey has touched to be proud that we are strong, resilient, and we make our mark in this life while doing our absolute best. We overcome regardless because such is life and may we all be unique and wonderfully made in the image of God as we claim our space on this earth, above ground, walking in our destiny, running to our next adventure, living in abundance, peace, joy, and fullness of our best life, the dash between our birth and death. Thank you to the grand pups who faithfully provided comfort when visiting. Love conquers all.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to my former professors who taught me to write the paper and save the world later. Thank you to every staff person in the academic field who has provided tireless hours to assist students such as myself, thank you for being experts in what you do. Thank you to the folks who have assisted with my technological needs and lack of knowledge in this area.

A world of thanks to my academic advisors and committee for their guidance, patience, and caring support. Thank you to my colleagues who completed this journey and did not forget to look back, still lending a helping hand, and encouragement that one day, I, too, would finish successfully. Thank you to every professional job I have ever had that supported me in my efforts and allowed me the flexibility I needed to be a doctoral student. Thank you to all the students I have taught who encouraged me and let me know that I made a difference in their lives through my own life and academic experiences.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Employee recruitment and retention is an area of specialty that human resource professionals (HRPs) may choose in their careers. Public sector employers are having a problem recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. It may be particularly challenging for the public sector HRP because qualified talent may not consider public service due to budget constraints in competitive total compensation offerings, organizational cultures and norms, traditional behaviors, and limited staff resources. To engage and succeed in today's employee driven market, employers must holistically assess current practices and programs to seek innovative opportunities linking motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance. Events over recent years have changed HRP recruitment and retention strategies. The Great Resignation of 2021 impacted the workforce when millions of United States workers resigned voluntarily from their jobs (Tessema et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic changed the dynamics of the workforce in 2020, with 16.3 million U.S. workers separating from voluntary and involuntary employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

The expectations and essential work need of employees in today's market challenges traditional methods and practices of the conventional workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic catapulted the workforce into hybrid flexible work schedules and virtual ways of working individually and in teams. The shift has changed from a focus on employer needs a decade ago to an employee driven workforce with primarily satisfying employee needs (Davidescu et al., 2020). Employees may see themselves as independent agents having the autonomy to create and communicate openly in their comfortable

environments, and it is expected in today's workforce to receive competitive market compensation and remote telework with schedule flexibility.

Post pandemic, many employees take into consideration if they want to return to work or work at home, making personal career choices about where they want to work, what type of work and industry they want to engage, and with whom they want to work. Employees seek positions and positive opportunities that allow them flexibility, autonomy, advancement, competitive pay, engaging work, and a hybrid work environment that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive (Gill et al., 2018). The option to telework in this generation is the norm, and if organizations are unwilling to adjust, this may cause a barrier in recruitment and retention efforts.

Chapter 1 of this qualitative study addresses the background, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, the significance of the study, and a chapter summary.

Background

The public sector workplace is undergoing a fundamental shift that presents both challenges and opportunities to HRPs. Public sector employers are having a problem recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. Public sector organizations require a talented, multigenerational, diverse workforce and multiple occupational skill sets. The shift has changed from a focus on employer needs a decade ago to an employee driven workforce with primarily satisfying employee needs (Davidescu et al., 2020).

Public sector organizations are faced with budget constraints in competitive total compensation offerings, organizational cultures and norms, traditional behaviors, and limited staff resources. The expectations and essential needs of employees in today's market challenge traditional methods and practices of the conventional workplace and provide an opportunity for innovation in practices and programs linking motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance. The organization desires to focus on high-performance work practices (HPWPs), which foster an environment that allows and provides employees the support, tools, and resources necessary to perform services in a manner of best practices and increasing organizational performance (Guerci et al., 2019). Organizational best practices embrace efficient, effective, accountable, transparent, and professional delivery of services while maintaining integrity and ethical values.

However, in this employee driven talent pool environment, recruiting and retaining employees is challenging because the workforce and working conditions are ever-changing. Events over recent years have changed HRP recruitment and retention strategies. The Great Resignation of 2021 impacted the workforce when millions of U.S. workers resigned voluntarily from their jobs (Tessema et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic changed the dynamics of the workforce in 2020, with 16.3 million U.S. workers separating from voluntary and involuntary employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

To recruit and retain employees in the past decade, it was important that the employee was identified early on and found their place within the corporate culture-specific workgroups to meet the organization's objectives and goals. Today's employee

driven market supersedes organizational needs, and employees seek positions and positive opportunities that allow them flexibility, autonomy, advancement, competitive pay, engaging work, and a hybrid work environment that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive (Gill et al., 2018).

Employees' expectations are focused on immediate needs and may not be long term for the organization. The current talent pool of candidates is progressive and independent and requires flexibility and continual change by having autonomy and control of their career (Caggiano, 2022). The management of human resource (HR) relationships with current and future employees has an impact on the ability of organizations to acquire and retain the knowledge and talents needed to compete in this changing, competitive, economic market (Papa et al., 2018). It is up to HRPs within organizations to recognize progressive trends to be competitive in their hiring practices and programs.

HRPs must consider innovation in current processes and programs linking motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance to attract and retain qualified individuals while dealing with restrictive public sector budgets. Public sector budgets are limited and strategically used for both organizations and employees to receive the best possible return on their investment through total compensation to increase engagement and retention (Smith, 2012). Analysis conducted on public sector employees showed positives connected to job security and service-based promotions, regardless of employee performance, compared to private sector organizations (Jin & Rainey, 2019). However, this perceived security may not fulfill the needs of the new employee driven workforce.

Organizational culture is vital in the recruitment strategy for a person-organization fit. Organizations must hire smart and consider distractions due to a changing economy, the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work, new generational language, and employees and employers having similar goals and work culture. While some employers may be concerned with a person-work fit concept ("Recruitment Processes and Organizational Attraction," 2021), others may focus on the candidate experience (Miles & McCamey, 2018). In support of strategic hiring, Yamamoto (2013) identified that competition challenges for HR are rising, stating that, "Greater employment fluidity enhanced by increased job changes further intensifies the competition for securing capable, high performing individuals as well as those that may become the future core personnel for organizations" (p. 747).

Recruitment efforts must conjoin strategically with the end goal in mind of retention. When recruiting candidates, organizations must provide as much information at the beginning regarding the position beyond the job description. The work schedule, job performance, work-life balance, and benefits are areas of employment that may change drastically on the part of the employee once hired. Employees' perception of HR roles and practices shapes overall interactions, communication, and outcomes of the current and future employee experience (Wang et al., 2019). Employee retention tools include involving employees in decision making, two-way communication, and specified career mapping for employee development and growth (Shanker, 2019).

The results of this study may not only contribute to the body of knowledge on this topic, but they may also provide opportunities for further research and recommendations

based upon the sharing of information from multigenerational, public sector HRPs'

previously lived experiences regarding their current employee recruitment and retention

practices using the elements of motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance

in the theoretical framework of Weldon's linking total compensation to performance

(LTCP) theory.

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Problem Statement

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Public sector employers are having a problem recruiting and retaining qualified

candidates. The shift has changed from a focus on employer needs a decade ago to an

employee driven workforce with primarily satisfying employee needs (Davidescu et al.,

2020). Public sector organizations are faced with budget constraints in competitive total

compensation offerings, organizational cultures and norms, traditional behaviors, and

limited staff resources.

Employers face challenges that may hinder successful recruitment strategies and

result in turnover costs regardless of retention efforts. Identifying and addressing

challenges in a proactive manner may produce benefits in recruitment and retention.

What potential employees positively or negatively see an organization may lead them to

form a less favored impression than potential employees who have only seen positive

information, and this can impact the person to organization fit (Gardner et al., 2012).

Employees' perceptions of HR roles and practices shape overall interactions,

communication, and outcomes of the current and future employee experience (Wang et

al., 2019). To recruit and retain employees in the past decade, it was important that the

employee was identified early on and found their place within the corporate culture-specific workgroups to meet the organization's objectives and goals.

Today's current employee driven market supersedes organizational needs. Employees' expectations are focused on immediate needs and may not be long-term for the organization. The current talent pool of candidates is progressive and independent and requires flexibility and continual change by having autonomy and control of their career (Caggiano, 2022). Employees seek positions and positive opportunities that allow them flexibility, autonomy, advancement, competitive pay, engaging work, and a hybrid work environment that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive (Gill et al., 2018). It is up to HRPs within organizations to recognize progressive trends to be competitive in their hiring practices and programs. When employees seek an employer, they are looking for holistic programs that consider medical benefits, retirement, a safe workplace environment, work-life balance that includes flexible work schedules. Employees seek positive leadership, career advancement opportunities, mentoring, training, development, fair and equitable industry-based total compensation, pay for performance, and workgroups that foster teamwork and inclusiveness. Employees seek fulfillment in tangible and intangible rewards, so organizations that offer praise, appreciation, informal acknowledgment that give an employee social recognition may produce an attractive work environment (Yoon et al., 2015). Additionally, public sector agencies that offer flexible work arrangements may attract employees and reduce voluntary turnover (Choi, 2019).

Effective total compensation programs consider employee motivation, morale, total compensation structures, and their alignment to performance. Weldon (2012)

described total compensation as being a determination of identifying who gets what related to top performing employees, the amounts, and relationship to performance expectations. Many public sector organizations find it challenging to define, create, and implement strategic recruitment and retention programs because qualified talented, diverse candidates may not consider public service.

Purpose Statement

In this qualitative study, I explored the lived experiences of public sector HRPs in employee recruitment and retention using the elements of Weldon's (2012) LTCP theory: motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance. Public sector employers are having a problem recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. The Great Resignation of 2021, when millions of United States workers resigned voluntarily from their jobs (Tessema et al., 2022) and the COVID-19 pandemic changed the dynamics of the workforce in 2020, with 16.3 million U.S. workers separating from employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). The shift has changed from a focus on employer needs a decade ago to an employee driven workforce with primarily satisfying employee needs (Davidescu et al., 2020).

Although the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the World at Work previously examined employee recruitment and retention practices, they have not explored employee recruitment and retention in the context of Weldon's (2012) LTCP theory, which introduced and described roles of predictive behavior aligned with performance goals and rules of engagement as well as action steps introduced for successful programs. The qualitative approach is necessary to use when the need exists to

understand gaps not defined by previous research in the context of Weldon's (2012)

theory. This study was exploratory to determine what may exist because there was scant

empirical research in this context. The qualitative inquiry method was appropriate for this

study based upon the research questions and the data collected from seven HRPs

regarding their recruitment and retention experiences in one on one, semi structured,

virtual interviews with me as the researcher for this study.

Research Questions

RQ1: What do public sector HRPs experience as employee recruitment and

retention challenges?

RQ2: What do public sector HRPs perceive from lived experiences that would

resolve employee recruitment and retention challenges?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework comprised Weldon's (2012) LTCP theory. The theory

falls under the category of organizational behavior and organizational culture. In the

LTCP theory, Weldon identified the desired behaviors needed to meet specific business

goals and proactively drive employees toward those behaviors. In relation to the impact

of compensation to performance, Herwana et al. (2021) found that self-efficacy and

communication had positive impacts on employee performance; however, financial

compensation did not have a significant effect on performance (Herwana et al., 2021).

Additional organizational behavior theories have expanded on organizational

identification within an organization's culture. Employees get psychological needs, such

as safety, affiliation, self-enhancement, and self-actualization fulfilled, while the

organization retains the necessary HR needed to perform the job (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) suggested that individual's identities are influenced by the employee explicitly defining characteristics; identifying actions that define appropriate work through motives, morals, and skill sets; social relations by defining belongingness and differentiation; and fit with the social, organizational, and economic environment. Employees must be able to identify socially to develop commitment to a new organization's identity. Furthermore, individuals may identify and engage in multiple work modes (Caza et al., 2018).

The benefit of this theoretical framework is that it may provide insight as employees search for benefit, meaning, connectedness, empowerment, and fulfillment within organizations through linking total compensation to performance. Effective total compensation programs consider employee motivation, morale, compensation structures, and their alignment to performance. Total compensation is a determinate of identifying who gets what related to top performing employees, the amounts, and relationship to performance expectations (Weldon, 2012). 21st century performance management programs are essential to the success of total compensation programs. Clear communication must define the relationship of compensation to performance for both the employee and organization to benefit. Aligning performance with goals, the desired behavior must be explained, communicated, and exemplified by leadership and management. I will provide further explanation of the theoretical framework in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

In this qualitative research study, I examined human experiences and recognized that each experience is unique and meaningful (Creswell, 2002). I approached lived experiences in this study with a new lens based on HRP practices or program changes in the past decade. Open ended interview questions were asked of seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government to gather their live experiences regarding employee and recruitment challenges as well as their perceptions of would resolve employee recruitment and retention challenges.

Qualitative inquiry through semi structured interviews was an appropriate design for this study because the information received from participants provided descriptive details, in relation to human behavior, emotions, needs, and characteristics of individual and organizational performance, that a quantitative study would not have. In this qualitative study, I explored the lived experiences of seven public sector HRPs in employee recruitment and retention using the four elements of Weldon's (2012) LTCP theory: motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance. In the theory, Weldon introduced and described roles of predictive behavior aligned with performance goals and rules of engagement as well as action steps introduced for successful programs. The data were analyzed thematically to identify themes and patterns. I coded the data using Delve Tool software to assist and facilitate data analysis. The results from this study may shape public policy and impact social change by exploring innovative opportunities for HRPs to present to leadership, which may impact both short- and long-term organizational policies and decisions.

Assumptions

Assumptions are made in qualitative research by accepting information from interview participants as accurate with no tangible proof provided other than what is shared. Assumptions are defined as assuming that something is true (Merriam-Webster, 2016). Managing the quality of research in a study is essential to overall success or failure (Flick, 2018). The assumptions of this study were necessary and required to conduct the research through the creation and use of qualitative inquiry tools in the form of open ended interview questions.

The one-on-one interview setting for data collection from participants was audio-recorded virtual interviews using voice over internet protocol (VOIP) Zoom meetings software, which is reliable and valid. I conducted open ended, semi structured interviews with seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government that lasted at least 45 minutes. I assumed the participants' responses were honest, truthful, and without bias. The interview questions were aligned with the research questions and identified themes in the LTCP theory elements of motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance.

Scope and Delimitations

The data collected from interviews with seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government provided information on what they experienced regarding employee and recruitment challenges and what they perceived would resolve these challenges. The scope of this study was to gain information from the HRPs' experiences in employee recruitment and retention during the seven interviews. The delimitations of this study, which are defined as limits (Merriam-Webster, 2016), were the exclusion of

employees, the use of specific geographical locations, and the participants were required to be public sector HRPs over the age of 21 years old.

One of the research project goals achieved was to have a group of participants of diverse HR backgrounds, varied years of public service, position titles, and various organizational experiences. Qualitative research methods take time and energy, so setting boundaries and organizing research was vital, considering the amount of data collected and unanticipated challenges.

Limitations

Limitations are defined as limiting rules, circumstances, or restrictions (Merriam-Webster, 2016). Limitations are unknown, cannot be controlled, and may impact the overall study and the outcomes. This study was limited to data collected from scholarly sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and books related to the research topic of employee recruitment, retention, total compensation, and performance. Additional limitations presented themselves in the form of unavailable resources, technology issues, minimal responses for voluntary participants, and obtaining consent. There was possible researcher bias due to my HR background, but I mitigated this bias by using data collection tools, such as Delve Tool software, to assist and facilitate data analysis. I will discuss the actual imitations encountered in the study in the Findings and Summary sections of the study.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative, exploratory study is significant because it provides public sector HRPs with information describing challenges and suggestions for resolving the issues in

employee recruitment and retention, using the elements of motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance in LTCP theory. This information may provide insight into employee recruitment and retention and whether the use of LTCP theory might enhance the perceptions, practices, and innovative program implementation in HR management. The results from this study may shape public policy and impact social change by providing innovative opportunities for HRPs to present to leadership, which may impact short- and long-term organizational policies and decisions to resolve the issues identified through the data provided. The identified gap in the literature was that more research needed to be conducted to identify how data may contribute to HRP employee retention and recruitment policies by use of LTCP theory.

This study may impact positive social change by adding to the continuum of quality services to those served by the employees in the public sector. Smart city initiatives seek innovative ways to improve the quality of life for citizens and the environment through efficient public services (Appio et al., 2019). HRPs may find creative ways to recruit and retain talented, diverse employees by addressing and meeting the needs of both employer and employee in today's employee driven market. The results of this study may not only contribute to the body of knowledge on the topic but also provide recommendations based on the findings of previous employee recruitment and retention practices. Public sector administrators, HRPs, and leadership management teams may use this study as an additional resource to assess and analyze their current practices regarding attracting and retaining a talented, diverse workforce.

This study may also provide tangible information to policymakers when implementing rules and decisions beyond their appointed terms that improve the quality of life for civil and noncivil service employees in public sector organizations. Furthermore, it may provide a foundation for further research surrounding the importance of communicating with employees during the onboarding process when joining organizations to ensure employees begin to understand how they fit into the organization, expanding upon the TLCP theoretical framework and adding to the body of knowledge linking total compensation to performance and employee recruitment and retention.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced public sector agencies' challenges with recruitment and retention efforts. This qualitative study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of public sector HRPs in employee recruitment and retention using the four elements of Weldon's LTCP theory: motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance. In the literature review in Chapter 2, I analyze and synthesize literature from a collection of scholarly sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and books, about employee recruitment and retention challenges and the LTCP theory's elements of employee motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Public sector employers experience challenges with recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. The expectations of employees in today's market challenge traditional methods and practices of the conventional workplace and provide an opportunity for innovation. In this qualitative study, I explored the lived experiences of public sector HRPs in employee recruitment and retention using Weldon's LTCP theory to frame the study. In the literature review in Chapter 2, I analyze and synthesize literature from a collection of scholarly sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and books, about employee recruitment and retention challenges and the LTCP theory elements of employee motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance. This chapter includes a discussion of the theoretical foundation, employee recruitment, retention, perceived challenges of HRPs and employees, and comprehensive benefit programs before I conclude with a summary.

Many public sector organizations find it challenging to define, create, and implement strategic recruitment and retention programs because qualified talented, diverse candidates may not consider public service. The public sector workplace is undergoing a fundamental shift that presents both challenges and opportunities to HRPs. Public sector organization desire to focus on HPWPs, which foster an environment that allows and provides employees the support, tools, and resources necessary to perform services in a manner of best practices and increasing organizational performance (Guerci et al., 2019). Organizational best practices embrace efficient, effective, accountable,

transparent, and professional delivery of services while maintaining integrity and ethical values.

The past few years have changed the strategies of HRPs, with significant events such as the Great Resignation of 2021, when millions of U.S. workers resigned voluntarily from their jobs (Tessema et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic also changed the dynamics of the workforce in 2020, with 16.3 million U.S. workers separating from their employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). In this exploratory research study, I conducted open ended, semi structured interviews with seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government regarding their lived experiences of employee and recruitment challenges as well as their perceptions of what would resolve these challenges.

Although SHRM and the World at Work previously examined employee recruitment and retention practices, they have not examined employee recruitment and retention in the context of Weldon's (2012) LTCP theory, which introduced and described roles of predictive behavior aligned with performance goals and rules of engagement as well as action steps introduced for successful programs. In the theory, Weldon identified the desired behaviors needed to meet specific business goals and proactively drive employees toward those behaviors. To recruit and retain employees in the past decade, it was important that the employee was identified early on and found their place within the corporate culture-specific workgroups to meet the organization's objectives and goals; however, today's current employee driven market supersedes organizational needs.

I employed an exploratory design in this study to determine what may exist because there is scant empirical research in this area. The qualitative inquiry method was appropriate for the study because it aligned with the research questions and the desire to collect data from HRPs regarding their recruitment and retention experiences.

A literature review is conducted to provide the foundation of the research on a topic to establish and highlight gaps of information, identify variables that are relevant to a topic, and the relationship between theories (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2015). A broad base of literature was needed to explain employee recruitment and retention using the elements of LTCP theory. The main idea in LTCP theory is that compensation drives desired performance behavior in the workplace (Weldon, 2012). Previous literature has explained, defined, and identified challenges and benefits of employee recruitment and retention from an HRP perspective and an employee perspective. Familiar themes, such as workplace environment, rewards and recognition, mentoring, training and development, and attrition factors, may exist in the literature that encompasses employee recruitment and retention. Themes surrounding total compensation and performance may exist in pay for performance, merit pay, incentives, and benefits. Furthermore, theories surrounding motivation (Matheson, 2011), morale (Brophy, 2018), compensation (Warman et al., 2020), and performance (Weldon, 2012) are discussed in this chapter to lay the theoretical foundation that may contribute to employee recruitment, retention, employee compensation, and performance. Employees may be motivated beyond a need for basic survival when considering their career choices. The synthesis of extant literature

on this topic may further help explain and identify any gaps between the perceptions of HRPs and employees.

Literature Search Strategy

The Walden University Library was the primary source for scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles and books. I used the library to access the Google Scholar search engine and the following databases: ProQuest, SAGE Premier, Thoreau, Political Science Complete, and Academic Search Engine. The following keyword search terms were used: *attrition, benefits, qualitative studies, challenges, corrections, correctional population, compensation, compensation theories, employee recruitment, employee retention, exploratory research, incentives, law enforcement, literature review, management, mentoring, motivation, motivational theories, morale, morale theories, organizational behavior, organizational culture, perceptions, performance, productivity, psychological impact on correctional employees, qualitative study, recognition, retention, rewards, social identity, social change, social impact, training and development, wages, public sector agencies,* and *workplace safety.*

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study was Weldon's (2012) LTCP theory, which falls under the category of organizational behavior and organizational culture. In the theory, Weldon identified the desired behaviors needed to meet specific business goals and proactively drive employees toward those behaviors. Additional organizational behavior theories expand organizational identification within an organization's culture. Employees get psychological needs, such as safety, affiliation, self-enhancement, and

self-actualization fulfilled, while the organization retains the necessary HR needed to

perform the job (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Furthermore, individuals may identify and

engage in multiple work modes (Caza et al., 2018).

The benefit of using this theoretical framework was that it allowed me to examine

employees' search for benefit, meaning, connectedness, empowerment, and fulfillment

within organizations through linking total compensation to performance. Employees are

searching for environments that allow them the autonomy, financial wellness programs,

the ability to perform in a hybrid work environment, and holistic health programs all

while receiving competitive compensation and benefits, such as student loan repayment,

which are outside the realm of traditional offerings (Claudio, 2022). Employees must be

able to identify socially to develop a commitment to a new organization's identity by the

employee explicitly defining characteristics; identifying actions that define appropriate

work through motives, morals, and skill sets; social relations by defining belongingness

and differentiation; and fit with the social, organizational, and economic environment

(Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Effective total compensation programs consider employee motivation, morale,

compensation structures, and their alignment to performance. Total compensation is a

determinate of identifying who gets what related to top performing employees, the

amounts, and relationship to performance expectations (Weldon, 2012). In relation to the

impact of compensation to performance, Herwana et al. (2021) found that self-efficacy

and communication had positive impacts on employee performance; however, financial

compensation did not have a significant effect on performance (Herwana et al., 2021).

Compensation plans must be holistic and consider pay for a person, position, and performance through merit and bonus pay outlined for employees as they advance in their careers (Ashraf, 2020).

Employees may be attracted to public sector governance because salary ranges are communicated annually with budget approvals. Opportunities for growth in the public sector may align with organizational succession planning. Grade increases and promotions may also be incentives for tenured employees and employees who take advantage of tuition reimbursement programs, where offered, to attend educational institutions in which an employee may pursue a job-related degree or obtain certifications. 21st century performance management programs are essential to the success of total compensation programs.

Employee Recruitment and Retention Defined in Literature

Employee recruitment, defined from an HR perspective, provides an organization with a pool of candidates with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform specific jobs. The process of recruitment must be strategic to seek out qualified candidates. Work analysis is a defined process that gathers information about the tasks, duties, responsibilities, and personal attributes that a person or candidate must have to succeed in a job, which produces a job description ("Recruitment Processes and Organizational Attraction," 2021). The intent and goal of having a job description specific to a position is to clearly state the expectations for the job, which is crucial for the employer and the employee.

It is up to HRPs within organizations to recognize progressive trends to be competitive in their hiring practices and programs. Miles and McCamey (2018) stated that the recruitment process begins with a requisition for an open position and is closed once completed. The focus is on the candidate's experience and the impact on the image and future relationship of the employee and employer within the organization (Miles & McCamey, 2018). In contrast, the organizational culture is a person-work fit "that focuses on the job description derived from the workforce analysis ("Recruitment Processes and Organizational Attraction," 2021).

The workforce and working conditions are ever-changing; therefore, HRPs must find creative ways to attract and retain qualified individuals while dealing with restrictive public sector budgets. While some employers may be concerned with a person-work fit concept ("Recruitment Processes and Organizational Attraction," 2021), others may focus on the candidate experience (Miles & McCamey, 2018). Innovation is critical in the management of HR programs because relationships with current and future employees have an impact on the ability of organizations to acquire and retain the knowledge and talents needed to compete in this changing, competitive, economic market (Papa et al., 2018). Organizational culture is vital in the recruitment strategy for a person-organization fit; however, the personalities of employees must also fit organizational cultures. According to the people-organization literature, fit is positive in employee job satisfaction, performance, organizational commitment, and workplace behaviors (Gardner et al., 2012). Successful recruitment, no matter what the strategy, is only successful when an organization can retain the new employee through retention strategies.

Retention is the goal of HR's people management to motivate and encourage employees to stay in a position for the maximum period or until the assignment is complete. Retention is beneficial both to the employee and employer. To retain employees, organizations must develop retention efforts to reduce turnover. Employees may be motivated by many factors to remain in a position related to compensation, benefits, work-life flexibility, career development, manager-employee communication, and workplace safety.

Job specialty commitment is one method of retention when an employee may work in a specific position that provides them with the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors (Yamamoto, 2013). Although job specialty commitment may be attractive, other factors, such as family life changes and health issues, may deter employees from remaining in positions unrelated to their specific job. In addition, employees seek a work environment that meets the most critical needs, which may not be as crucial to the employer (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017). Fahim (2018) stated that retention requires additional research to find holistic strategies surrounding the central tenets of attrition to address turnover effectively.

HR analytics can be used to provide insights from internal data on turnover rates. Analyzing an organization's internal data may provide HR with a retention strategy to keep in mind when screening and hiring (Journeyfront, 2022). When seeking data, HR must be innovative, becoming predictive and proactive in introducing trends to organizational leaders and leading metrics instead of utilizing historical data that are redundant from regular surveys, polls, and benchmarks (Sage, 2021).

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment efforts must conjoin strategically with the end goal in mind of retention. Organizations, when recruiting candidates, must provide as much information at the beginning regarding the position beyond the job description. The work schedule, job performance, work-life balance, and benefits are areas of employment that may change drastically on the part of the employee once hired. Employees' perception of human resources roles and practices shapes overall interactions, communication, and outcomes of the current and future employee experience (Wang et al., 2019). Additionally, employee retention tools include involving employees in decision-making, two-way communication, and specified career mapping for employee development and growth (Shanker, 2019). Furthermore, employees who are most likely to remain in a position have identified traits that impact turnover in emotional stability, engagement, job satisfaction, job fit, coping ability, life and career satisfaction, and availability of alternatives (Journeyfront, 2022).

An employer may have a culture with policies and procedures, set benefit offerings, performance expectations, and unspoken organizational rules that may benefit the organization but contradict an employee. HRP must be people leaders and managers, not people manipulators on behalf of organizations, treated as mere means to accomplish job responsibilities and duties. In support of employee fairness and equity, Kant's principle of humanity suggests that people are not to be manipulated or used as means; we always treat humanity as an end in having worth and dignity equal to that of their peers (Brophy, 2018).

Employees may have life changes during their tenure, and if an organization is not flexible to adjust to the employee's needs, the employer-employee arrangement conflicts. Many organizations are changing their workplace culture to introduce retention opportunities. Additionally, public sector agencies that offer flexible work arrangements may attract employees and reduce voluntary turnover (Choi, 2019). Employees have had to relearn and adapt to new work environments, processes emotionally, and practices post the COVID-19 pandemic (Goleman, 2006, p. 207). The talent shortage has introduced new ideas in modern compared to traditional organizations and how they recruit diverse talent. Independent employee personalities versus a conformance employee personality perform better in modern organizations where employees feel they can control their work environment, set their schedules for task completion, and have a quality-of-life alternatives (Graham, 2022).

When candidates seek to join an organization, they may have needs and wants that do not align with what the organization is seeking. In turn, an organization may not know what a candidate truly has to offer to benefit the organization until a person is hired and in the job. Various interviews and skills assessment levels may be conducted during the recruitment process to assist an employer with analyzing candidates. However, there is no exact match in hiring. In addition, employees may or may not remain in the job for an extended period voluntarily or involuntarily if an employer chooses to end the work assignment.

Communication is imperative for both employee and employer. HRP bridges the gap in effective communication through timely, relevant sharing of information in all

forms of media. Employee retention tools include involving employees in the decision-making process, two-way communication, and specified career mapping for employee development and growth (Shanker, 2019). In addition, organizations must be creative in recruiting, incorporating social media and technology, and retaining employees. In contrast, despite developing retention tools, the benefit may be the reduction of the cost of turnover, in many instances that may exceed the compensation for the actual position (Bryant & Allen, 2013).

The public sector may tend to rely upon traditional feelings of pride in serving; this is no longer the interest of today's workforce. Public sector budgets are limited and strategically used in a manner both organizations and employees must receive the best possible return on their investment through total compensation to increase engagement and retention (Smith, 2012). Total compensation includes a strategy to address all factors of the employee experience and not just pay for performance (Smith, 2012). Other literature introduced that pay is not the most critical driver of employee turnover (Bryant & Allen, 2013).

Pay is not the focus for employees. Instead, employer and employee relationships, effective communication, work environment, and clear roles and expectations contribute to retention (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Additionally, analysis conducted on public sector employees shows positives connected to job security and service-based promotions, regardless of employee performance, compared to private sector organizations (Jin & Rainey, 2019). However, this perceived security may not fulfill the needs of the new employee driven workforce.

Technology impacts the type of talent HRP may attract to an organization. Social media provides an opportunity to reach candidates globally. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media platforms are e-recruitment processes ("The Impact of Technology on Recruitment Process," 2020). Before technology, HR relied heavily on word of mouth, company reputation-brand name, employee referrals, and print media.

HRP are data driven and analytical in seeking innovative opportunities based upon data outcomes. Automation has saved HR time and valuable human capital in the administration duties of HR (Dickinson, 2011). For technology to succeed in organizations, a shift must occur to become more agile and keep up with digital changes (Sage, 2021). Technology allows HR to implement strategies that empower employees using the cloud with self-service options, and mobile applications aid HRP with real-time information (Sage, 2021). Furthermore, having and using technology has added to the independence and autonomy that employees desire, contributing to self-management in one of the four core skills of an employee's emotional intelligence (Garron, 2018).

Challenges and Benefits of Recruitment and Retention

Employers and HR may face expectations and perceptions from employees that may hinder successful recruitment strategies and result in turnover costs regardless of retention efforts. In 2021, labor shortages, legal and compliance concerns, and health and safety factors ranked top among the challenges faced by HR (SHRM, 2022). The Great Resignation and COVID-19 impacted HR's ability to find and recruit talent, retain top talent, and create succession plans (SHRM, 2022). In 2020, 30 million Baby Boomers retired and left a skill gap in employment (Graham, 2022).

Identifying and addressing challenges in a proactive manner considering resolutions to the issues may produce benefits in recruitment and retention efforts. The private sector has recovered 93 percent of its workforce, and the public sector is lagging with a recovery of only 53 percent, attributed to slow wage growth (Mueller, 2022). HRP must become people leaders, think outside of the box, and enhance or develop skills of innovation, influence, collaboration, compassion, agility, critical thinking, resilience, and analytics (Sage, 2021).

Employers must ensure they present current and prospective employees with total rewards, compensation, and employee engagement programs that are equitable, diverse, and inclusive. HRP consider potential barriers to achieving future success due to limited resources and continual resistance to change from a decade of traditional work practices, leadership styles, and organizational cultural norms (SHRM, 2022). In similar recruitment studies, how potential employees positively or negatively see an organization may form a less favored impression than potential employees who have only seen positive information impact person to organization fit (Gardner et al., 2012). In support of recruitment efforts, The State of Oklahoma's Department of Corrections partnered with local universities to analyze retention data from random surveys of over 1,035 employees in support services to address recruitment challenges (Survey Summary, 2001). This continues to be the case in an employee performance analysis resulting in the business failure of an organization due to the lack of offering employee incentives (Campbell, 2014).

Organizational HRP seeks to recruit prospective employees to bring to divisions and departments within their work environments the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet internal and external customer service needs. However, beyond the knowledge, skills, and abilities, organizational culture weighs heavily on the retention and success of prospective employees. Organizations must adjust hiring practices while remaining ethical to recruit, hire and retain in a strategic, flexible, innovative mindset considering the fundamental changes in the current economy due to the Great Resignation and COVID-19 Pandemic (Fuller & Kerr, 2022). HR must consider employees' perceptions that embrace flexible and hybrid working schedules.

The expansion of talent through entrepreneurship has created compensation inequities and a continual issue in recruiting talent to meet the expectation of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce. In support of strategic hiring, Yamamoto (2013) identified that competition challenges for human resources are rising. "Greater employment fluidity enhanced by increased job changes further intensifies the competition for securing capable, high performing individuals as well as those that may become the future core personnel for organizations" (Yamamoto, 2013, p. 747). Additionally, the authors agreed that as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, challenges remain as the employee to employer bonds break, continuing the damage to the economy and workforce (Handwerker et al., 2020).

Human Resources Perceptions

HR perceptions and employee perceptions may vary based upon individual, organizational, management, and service needs. Therefore, the overarching design of

total rewards, compensation, and employee engagement benefit offerings must be comprehensive. When developing total rewards, compensation, and engagement programs, the goal of HR is to provide comprehensive benefit offerings with the organization and employee in mind. More importantly, HR practices are essential in promoting better job performance by ensuring that employees are an excellent fit for the job, feel connected to others within the organization, and feel they receive and give something of value (Tian et al., 2016). However, innovation in critical areas of the management of the human resource is required, as relationships with current and future employees have an impact on the ability of organizations to acquire and retain the knowledge and talents needed to compete in this changing competitive economic market (Papa et al., 2018).

Themes exist throughout program design. For example, holistic programs consider medical, retirement, a safe workplace environment, work-life balance that includes flexible work schedules. Positive leadership provides career advancement opportunities, mentoring, training, development, fair and equitable industry-based compensation, pay for performance and workgroups that foster teamwork and inclusiveness through diversity management. Many organizations go above and beyond by creating Affinity group programs to address inclusiveness and diversity in the workplace. Contrarily, many training programs designed to reduce bias among those making hiring and promotion decisions have not worked, given that stereotypes have been challenging to eliminate, which may impact an equitable and diverse workforce (Dobbin et al., 2007).

Employee Perceptions

When employees seek an employer, they are looking for holistic programs that consider medical benefits, retirement, a safe workplace environment, and a work-life balance that includes flexible hybrid work schedules. They seek positive leadership, career advancement opportunities, mentoring, training, development, fair and equitable industry-based compensation. Holistic compensation that not only pays for the person but also the performance in the position (Ashraf, 2020). Employees seek workgroups that foster teamwork and expect a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce (Gill et al., 2018). Employee's perception of human resources roles and practices shape overall interactions, communication, and outcomes of the current and future employee experience (Wang et al., 2019).

Employees seek fulfillment in tangible and intangible rewards. Organizations that offer praise, appreciation, informal acknowledgment that give an employee social recognition may produce an attractive work environment (Yoon et al., 2015). Additionally, public sector agencies that offer flexible work arrangements may attract employees and reduce voluntary turnover (Choi, 2019). Smolkin (2016) contributes that rewards and recognition should engage employees' hearts and not just their minds. Millennials are seeking experience beyond compensation. Pandey (2019) argued that job-hopping is normal when Millennials receive from employer's low pay, low career growth opportunities, unfair treatment from supervisors or co-workers, and many other negative factors.

Comprehensive Benefit Programs

HR must work with key organizational stakeholders when developing employee benefits programs. To remain attractive to talented, diverse candidates, HRP forecast fiscal increases in employee compensation, benefits, and professional development (SHRM, 2022). Organizations often retain the services of a third-party vendor to assist with comprehensive programs in analyzing the need to reduce out-of-pocket costs and revamping benefit packages for employees (Caggiano, 2022). Industry, economic and social standards change, and having analytical data to use when making decisions is helpful when determining what benefits to offer and at what levels. Benefits are costly and may include employee contributions of a certain percentage.

Medical benefits include health, dental, vision, flexible spending plans, prescription coverage, and employees' vital offering and sought after. Work-life balance and the opportunity for a remote work environment may contribute to a safe and healthy work environment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, both employees and employers faced new challenges never experienced. Compensation plans must be holistic and consider pay for a person, position, and performance through merit and bonus pay outlined for employees as they advance in their careers (Ashraf, 2020). Employees may be attracted to public sector governance because salary ranges are communicated annually with budget approvals. Non monetary rewards and perks exist in the form of employee recognition programs, wellness programs, and employee assistance programs customized to an organization's practices. Employee Affinity workgroups may initiate rewards and recognition activities—entry and mid level management based upon the

team's performance goals set and achieved. Training and development opportunities, internal and external, are essential to both organizations and employees to ensure updated information is being shared and provided through service.

Regulatory and compliance rules may change and require communication with the entire organization. Employees find value when organizations invest in their professional membership associations by paying for job-relevant fees and conferences. One of the most significant factors of not being able to retain employees lies within leadership and management. Employees typically leave managers and not positions.

When employees are uncomfortable with the lack of communication, style of leadership, lack of support, and appreciation, they feel disvalued and lose interest in an organization. Leadership at all levels of an organization must foster an environment that is communicative and inclusive beyond compensation letting employees know that they care (Caggiano, 2022). Additionally, learning, and high-performing organizations through their work practices offer regular feedback outside of an annual performance evaluation and provide opportunities to receive employee feedback through confidential surveys, divisional and departmental (Guerci et al., 2019).

Linking Total Compensation and Performance Theory Defined

Linking total Compensation to Performance theory (LTCP) (Weldon, 2012) falls under the category of organizational behavior and organizational culture. The theory identifies the desired behaviors needed to meet specific business goals and proactively drive employees toward those behaviors. The benefit of this theoretical framework may provide insight as employees search for benefit, meaning, connectedness, empowerment,

and fulfillment within organizations through linking total compensation to performance. Weldon's (2012) LTCP introduced and described roles of predictive behavior aligned with performance goals and rules of engagement, as well as action steps introduced for successful programs.

Effective total compensation programs consider employee motivation, morale, compensation structures and their alignment to performance. Weldon (2012) described total compensation as being a determination of identifying who gets what related to top performing employees, the amounts, and relationship to performance expectations. Shifts emerged into total package consideration, rather than the method of previously examining each individual component of base salary, short-term and long-term incentives, and benefits (Dolmat-Connell & Cardinal, 1992). Organizations seek tangible opportunities to fully vest employees in business success and recognize that total compensation packages must mirror human resources and business strategies of the organization (Abbott, 1993).

For total compensation to happen that is balanced it must be well planned and inclusive of employee's needs and interest beyond a paycheck. The 21st century hierarchy of needs is quite different than the needs and desires of previous workforce generations. The fundamental changes in the current economy due to the Great Resignation and COVID-19 Pandemic (Fuller & Kerr, 2022) have created a need to re-evaluate comprehensive compensation offerings.

Motivation

Organizational behavior theories expand organizational identification within an organization's culture. Employees get psychological needs such as safety, affiliation, self-

enhancement, and self-actualization fulfilled (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), while the

organization retains the necessary human resources needed to perform the job. Alvesson

and Willmott (2002) suggested that an individual's identities are influenced by the

employee explicitly defining characteristics; identifying actions that define appropriate

work through motives, morals, and skill sets; social relations by defining belongingness

and differentiation; and fit with the social, organizational, and economic environment.

Employees must be able to identify socially to develop a commitment to a news

organization's identity. Organizational programs in the areas of employee wellness,

employee assistance, and employee recognition influence and impact employee's

decision to engage and find motivation to perform their jobs (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008).

     Employee engagement requires that an employee be motivated to engage. This

has more to do with the internal motivators that drive a person rather than external

influences put forth by the company (Journeyfront, 2022, p. 6). Matheson (2011) argued

work motivations have both psychological and social foundations. A person's innate

needs direct what type of motivation they receive from relevant job benefits (Matheson,

2011). Furthermore, Olafsen et al. (2015) contributed employees pay was not the direct

factor of employee motivation. Employees have intrinsic motivation when provided

autonomy and management support (Olafsen et al., 2015).

     Motivation is not a theory of learning but one that impacts what we learn.

Schreiber (2016) defined motivation as being the internal state as a causal mechanism

that must be activated for us to move. Employees are motivated by their desires and

needs. It is not enough to offer compensation, and an organization expects the desired

performance standards to be fulfilled by the employee if employee internal motivation does not exist. However, organizations may motivate employees by recognizing changing needs and revisiting benefit packages (Caggiano, 2022). The employee must desire to perform regardless of what employee compensation or benefits are offered as incentives.

The type of job an individual may have based on their education, skill set, talent, gift, and opportunities, whether operating as an employee, manager-supervisor, business owner, self-employed, or entrepreneur, determines their level of income. When an organization sees a person beyond just an employee, value is sensed, they are more likely to go above and beyond in all areas, including their job (Alhassan & Greene, 2020). Job security is a top motivational factor. If an employee feels that his or her job is not secure, he or she may not be motivated to perform (Haque, 2010).

For individuals to achieve their desired rewards, money is required. Any tangible items must be purchased, and the exchange of currency is a part of society. Society has presented a picture of the more money held, wealth, and acquisition of tangible items provide personal satisfaction to individuals by meeting needs. Furthermore, Matheson (2011) contributed those individuals develop wants for their desired rewards relating to lifestyle, job security, exciting work, and an opportunity to increase their skills which satisfy their personal needs. The employee wants and needs to provide the foundation that motivates them to work to reach those desired rewards. Taormina and Gao (2013) identified that tangible things themselves are not a need; the things become a need and felt when they are not present. Organizations derive appropriate and equitable compensation plans to attract and retain a consistent workforce.

Morale

Organizational culture and norms that are present impact employee morale. Morale and motivation are different. Morale focuses on the internal feeling of the employee's work environment and the attitude and outlook of a person (Surbhi, 2020). At the same time, employee benefit programs designed by organizations are to motivate employees. Similarly, Organizational Performance Group (2020) suggests that signs of low morale are high turnover, low productivity, excessive absences, lack of communication and honesty, fear of job loss, lack of recognition and rewards, and micromanagement of employees.

Employees are looking for organizations that provide comprehensive benefit programs, a safe workplace environment, and a work-life balance that includes flexible hybrid work schedules. They seek positive leadership that is communicative and provides career advancement opportunities, autonomy, mentoring, training, development, fair and equitable industry-based compensation, pay for performance, and workgroups that foster teamwork that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. The Hawthorne studies contributes to scholarly research of morale showing employees work performance is dependent on social issues and job satisfaction (Organizational Performance Group, 2020). Furthermore, Lee (2017), adds to scholarly research of morale that public sector employees have emotionally intense work duties when serving the public and must be emotionally intelligent to handle stress and burnout (Lee, 2017).

Organizations that offer holistic wellness and employee assistance programs recognize the work-life balance needed to retain employees and positively support the

workforce. Mental health and emotional intelligence reference a person's ability to manage their emotions as well as the emotions of others, therefore impacting morale (Garron, 2018, p. 21). Understanding the five main categories of emotional intelligence and providing programs or benefits may assist employees and organizations in reducing burnout. Understanding self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills provides support and connectedness within the organization when dealing with people (Garron, 2018).

Compensation

Employees may be attracted to public sector governance because salary ranges are communicated annually with budget approvals. Opportunities for growth in the public sector may align with organizational succession planning and provide a sense of job security. Compensation plans must be holistic and consider pay for a person, position, and performance through merit and bonus pay outlined for employees as they advance in their careers (Ashraf, 2020). Grade increases and promotions may also be incentives for tenured employees and employees who take advantage of tuition reimbursement programs, where offered, to attend educational institutions in which an employee may pursue a job-related degree or obtain certifications.

When employees join an organization, they are typically motivated to perform based upon the initially agreed compensation offered. During the first six to 12 months, employees seek feedback from employers on their performance and it is imperative that employers provide feedback in a positive and timely manner (Larsson et al., 2021). In turn, employees are also seeking opportunities for their compensation to increase,

whether in base pay, merit pay, bonuses, or some incentive. In this instance, employers may have offered employees a compensation package that includes, upon initial onboarding, a base rate of pay or commission, health benefits, non-monetary rewards, and job security. However, the employer perception may differ from the employee perception of offering and what is received, based upon employees changing life needs and job interests (Caggiano, 2022). Employees may expect that the total compensation provided should increase over tenure, based upon performance.

The expansion of talent through new autonomy created has inspired entrepreneurship and created compensation inequities. With the flexibility in schedules and virtual ways of working in teams these past few years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employees may see themselves as independent agents having the autonomy to create and communicate openly in their comfortable environments (Choi, 2019). Employees can now negotiate their value in terms of compensation offered by organizations compared to their ability to produce income for themselves and maintain their freedom.

Weldon (2012) discusses that organizations must model these programs to identify and compensate or reward top organizational performers when developing total compensation programs. Once identified, communication throughout the entire organization of the type of performance expected is necessary. The communication needs to be clear to employees and outline the timeframe, goals, and steps to increase earnings (Weldon, 2012, p. 150).

Retention strategies must align with total compensation linking pay-for-performance. When employees become dissatisfied with their current level of compensation, lack of performance feedback, lack of guidance or communication regarding future increases in earnings, or obtaining increases, this is the foundation on which employees seek out new employment opportunities (Alhassan & Greene, 2020). Additionally, the combination of lack of communication from the employer to the employee is a missed opportunity for organizations to retain employees and, in turn, increases organizational turnover and reduces retention efforts (Fahim, 2018).

Performance

Clear communication must define the relationship of compensation to performance for both the employee and organization to benefit. Aligning performance with goals; the desired behavior must be explained, communicated, and exemplified by leadership and management. 21st century performance management programs are essential to the success of total compensation programs. Weldon (2012) introduced the theory of linking compensation to performance and that a better alignment is needed to reach organizational goals.

The model of performance influences and provides direction to employees creates expectations and rewards for achieving the desired types of behavior. Supporting Weldon's emphasis on communication, Lombardi (2011) contributed that the absence of consistent, timely ongoing communication between managers and employees may result in performance issues that contradict a successful performance management program. Effective performance management programs have a life cycle. Organizations that invest

in employees identified core competencies reap the benefits of desired performance outcomes (Ashraf, 2020). The foundation of successful performance requires goal setting, communicating expectations, and providing the necessary tools and resources, consisting of employees, timelines, and money for goal achievement and desired behaviors to achieve expectations.

Monitoring goals is essential to assess ongoing performance at various stages and provide an opportunity to adjust as needed. Adjustments on behalf of the employee's actions and behaviors and the employer provide updated information, or additional tools and resources may be required. Emerging trends surrounding performance management have been researched and provided by scholarly authors. Locke and Latham (2020) introduced influences of performance surrounding clarity, challenges, feedback, complexity, and commitment. Rock (2008) supports motivation to performance through scholarly research that introduced performance management and appraisals as a perceived threat to employees, which impacts status, certainty, loss of autonomy, relatedness, and fairness. Furthermore, Frederickson (2012) contributes those employees perform better when they are much happier.

Summary

Chapter 2 analyzed and synthesized literature from a collection of scholarly sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles and books about employee recruitment and retention challenges and the elements of employee motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance in the theoretical framework of Weldon's (LTCP) theory. Chapter 3 described the protocol and methodology for collecting and coding data from

seven public sector HRP using qualitative research methods. This exploratory research study administered open ended interview questions to seven public sector HRP in federal, state, and local government. The data collected provided information on what public sector HRP experienced in employee and recruitment challenges. Additionally, what public sector HRP perceived from lived experiences that would resolve employee recruitment and retention challenges.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Public sector employers experience challenges with recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. The expectations of employees in today's market challenge traditional methods and practices of the conventional workplace and provide an opportunity for innovation. In this qualitative study, I explored the lived experiences of public sector HRPs in employee recruitment and retention using Weldon's LTCP theory to frame the study. I conducted open ended interviews with seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government to gather their lived experiences regarding employee and recruitment challenges as well as their perceptions of what would resolve these challenges.

In this chapter, I present the research design and rationale, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. The chapter also includes a discussion of the participant recruitment process, the role of the researcher, and ethical considerations and participants' rights.

Qualitative Study Design

In this qualitative study, I approached the participants' lived experiences with a new lens based on HR practices or program changes in the past decade. In qualitative research, human experiences are examined, and the researcher recognizes that each experience is unique and meaningful (Creswell, 2002). I conducted open ended interviews to collect data, which were then analyzed thematically to identify themes and patterns. A researcher must determine the best coding type to benefit the data collection and analysis (Saldana, 2015). Using Weldon's (2012) LTCP theory, I employed

deductive coding based on the predetermined a priori codes of motivation, morale, compensation, and performance as a strategy to align the interview and research questions. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What do public sector HRPs experience as employee recruitment and retention challenges?

RQ2: What do public sector HRPs perceive from lived experiences that would resolve employee recruitment and retention challenges?

The following six interview questions were asked of each participant:

1. Please describe your overall experience with employee recruitment, retention, and motivation programs.

2. Which programs or practices were effective in engaging and retaining employees?

3. What do you perceive are the biggest challenges in recruitment and retention?

4. What do you perceive from your lived experiences that would resolve these issues?

5. In your experience, how have HR practices or programs changed in the past decade?

6. What would you like to share with other HRPs and managers in public sector organizations?

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of public sector HRPs regarding employee recruitment and retention using the elements of Weldon's (2012) LTCP theory: motivation, morale, total compensation, and

performance. Weldon developed the LTCP theory to address the roles of predictive

behavior aligned with performance goals and rules of engagement as well as action steps

for successful programs. Use of the qualitative approach in this study allowed me to gain

information from semi structured interviews with seven HRPs about their experiences in

recruitment and retention using the LTCP theory elements of motivation, morale,

compensation, and performance. Qualitative inquiry through semi structured interviews

was an appropriate qualitative design for this study because the information received

from participants provided descriptive details, in relation to human behavior, emotions,

needs, and characteristics of individual and organizational performance, that a

quantitative study may not have not. The qualitative approach is an appropriate method

for gathering the meanings people relate to on the events, processes, structures, and

connecting meanings to the social world they encounter daily (Miles et al., 2013). The

number of qualitative interview questions may range from five to 10, considering the

amount of time for each open ended, semi structured interview (Creswell, 2002).

Role of the Researcher

As a new qualitative researcher, it was imperative for me to understand the role

and responsibility of the researcher in preparing to access information from study

participants. Qualitative research includes asking questions that may involve the thoughts

and feelings of others as they choose to share information that at times may be personal

and very meaningful to the participants. Creswell (2002) defined a researcher's role as

primarily a data collection instrument necessary to identify personal values, assumptions,

and biases at the outset of a study. There was possible researcher bias in this study from

my HR background, but I took steps to mitigate this potential bias by using data collection tools, such as Delve Tool software, to assist and facilitate data analysis.

Seeking to recruit HRPs to voluntarily participate in a one-on-one, virtual, semi structured interview, lasting at least 45 minutes, I sent an email invitation to individuals in my professional network of HRP. One of the research project goals was to have a group of participants with diverse HR backgrounds, varied years of public service and position titles, and various organizational experiences. The seven participants all provided informed consent before taking part in interviews.

It was my responsibility as the researcher to protect the information provided by study participants and secure their confidentiality through the management of the research process, which included the storage of collected data, my interpretations of data through analysis, and the sharing and production of findings by not intentionally or unintentionally harming any participants. The data and all research-related material will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office for 5 years. This study was conducted for research purposes only, and the benefit to me as the researcher was an earned Ph.D. degree upon completion.

Methodology

The qualitative approach is necessary when the need exists to understand gaps not defined by previous research. Qualitative research methods take time and energy and may open doors for future conversation, which may be difficult when total compensation is involved. Total compensation perceptions gained from a qualitative study may impact employee performance and positively or negatively link to an organization's recruitment

and retention. A researcher must determine the best coding type to benefit the data collection and analysis (Saldana, 2015). Using Weldon's (2012) LTCP theory, I employed deductive coding based on the predetermined a priori codes of motivation, morale, compensation, and performance as a strategy to align the interview and research questions.

Population and Instrumentation

It is imperative to be professional and inviting when collecting data in qualitative research from voluntary study participants. As a new researcher, I had to remind myself that I was dealing with people and not quantitative numbers. The interview setting for data collection from participants must be in their usual environments. COVID-19 restrictions impacted my ability to meet face-to-face with study participants; however, conducting virtual interviews gave me the opportunity to meet with the participants using VOIP, such as Zoom meeting software.

The interviews were video recorded. Technology challenges need to be addressed in advance, when possible, to avoid inadequate internet service, devices malfunctioning during an interview, and securing a quiet professional environment for the interview to avoid creating an uncomfortable setting for the study participant. Before starting the interviews, I shared the purpose of recording the session and sought their permission to do so. I designed the semi structured qualitative instrument, in the form of interview questions, to prevent any discomfort of the participants while conducting the one-on-one virtual interviews. The questions were formulated around the elements of the LTCP theory.

Data were collected individually from each participant and analyzed immediately after each interview while the conversation was still fresh in my mind. Participants were asked the same questions during each interview, which lasted at least 45 minutes. Participants took part in the interviews in their own environment through recorded, virtual interviews VOIP. The interview protocol and questions are provided.

The delimitations of this study excluded employees, specific geographical locations, and the participants inclusion criteria were being a public sector HRP over the age of 21 years old. I used a nonprobable, purposive sampling strategy in selecting the research participants based upon the research questions to provide ease of access, a convenience sample, and individuals who were not specific to one organization (see Babbie, 2006). Seven participants voluntarily responded to my email invitation to participate in the study that was sent to my professional network of HRP. Participants that responded were provided with the required informed consent form, that contained an outline of the participation process and explanation of the anonymity that would be granted to the participants. One of the research project goals was to have a group of participants of diverse HR backgrounds, varied years of public service and position titles, and various organizational experience. Both verbally and in writing, I communicated the purpose of the research, the time requirements of voluntary participants, how the study may benefit the HR community and their organizations, and potential outcomes of the study to prospective participants.

Data Collection

I developed the interview questions to have an open ended structure and discussion type format. Data collection included information received from notes I took during the interviews and the recorded transcripts from the semi structured interviews. Interview methods are a valuable technique for collecting data that would not be available if questionnaires or surveys were only used (Blaxter et al., 2010). Use of one-on-one interviews for data collection places the participant in a focused environment of self-reflection on their personal experiences (Zeleeva, 2019). The interviews were virtual, lasted at least 45 minutes, and consisted of only me as the researcher and the participant.

Before the interviews, the study participants provided their basic demographic information and consent to participate. The semi structured interview questions gained information aligned with the elements of the LTCP theory. I tested the data collection methods prior to actual implementation by asking colleagues to voluntarily participate in mock interviews.

I coded the data using qualitative software to assist and facilitate data analysis. A code in qualitative research may be a word or short phrase that assigns data from interview transcripts, field notes, and survey responses a summative attribute (Saldana, 2015). Deductive coding was used based on the predetermined a priori codes of motivation, morale, compensation, and performance as a strategy to align the interview and research questions. Data were collected individually from each participant and analyzed immediately after each interview. I began conducting interviews and reached data saturation in the Spring of 2023. The amount of time needed to analyze data was

determined by the amount and nature of data collected and receiving data saturation approval from my committee chair.

The benefits of qualitative coding are that it increases validity, decreases bias, accurately represents participants, and enables transparency in research. Qualitative software allowed me to type text and upload transcripts into the system and assisted with organization as well as finding themes and patterns in primary and secondary coding cycles. Qualitative coding software helped me considerably, considering the amount of data received from study participants. It is the responsibility of the researcher to protect the information provided by study participants by securing confidentiality through the management of the research process, which includes the storage of collected data, interpretations of data through analysis, and the sharing and production of findings by not intentionally or unintentionally harming any participants. The data and all research-related material will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office for 5 years.

Data Analysis

The questions asked during the semi structured interviews aim to gain information surrounding the elements of LTCP and connect the research questions that seek information on what public sector HRP experience as employee and recruitment challenges. Additionally, what public sector HRP perceived from lived experiences that would resolve employee recruitment and retention challenges. Using the LTCP theory (Weldon, 2012), data collected from the interview questions in this cross-sectional study was first cycle descriptive coded and second cycle pattern coded to analyze and identify patterns and themes connected to the research questions (Saldana, 2015). The first cycle

of descriptive coding assigns labels, words, or phrases to the data (Miles et al., 2013),

identifying primary elements of motivation, morale, compensation, and performance of

LTCP theory. Second cycle pattern coding further analyzes and summarizes categories,

themes, relationships, and explanations (Miles et al., 2013).

Table 1

Preliminary Coding Framework

Primary code	Secondary code	Interview questions
Motivation	Employee engagement	all
Morale	Work/life balance	1, 2, 3
Compensation	Benefits	1, 2, 3, 5
Performance	Goals/expectations	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Data analysis was thematic, identifying themes and patterns from information

collected. Data was coded by me using qualitative software to assist and facilitate data

analysis. Documented are lived experiences, views, and opinions from the participant's

responses. The researcher attempts to persuade the readers of their interpretation.

Scholars describe thematic analysis as a combination of analytical approaches containing

different methods, beliefs surrounding what we can know about the nature of the world,

and ways of knowing that are inclusive of a researcher's knowledge (Ayre & McCaffery,

2022).

Data analysis was an ongoing process throughout the entirety of the research.

Data organization was critical to properly reviewing and interpreting findings that may

come from multiple qualitative inquiry sources. The proper use of data analysis software

such as Delve Tool was beneficial to ensure the information is relative to a researcher

while assisting with and facilitating data management (Akujuobi & Zhang, 2017).

Interview notes were transcribed from recordings. A legend was developed as a guide to explain the labeling used to identify data collected from study participants. Labeling protects the participants' identity and ensures the data's validity. I wanted to avoid misquoting or confusing data collected from incorrect sources.

The amount of time needed to analyze data was determined by the amount and nature of the researcher who has collected data. Time is a major factor not only in the design of the research but also in the time it takes to conduct the research (Babbie, 2006). The qualitative software program allowed me to type text into the system and upload transcripts to assist with organization, finding themes, and patterns. Qualitative software helped me, considering the amount of data research may receive from study participants. The analysis process is rigorous (Blaxter et al., 2010).

Validity

Possible bias from the researcher due to HR background but mitigating using data collection tools such as Delve Tool software to assist and facilitate data analysis. It is vital to practice reflexivity and identify any personal beliefs, practices, or judgments that may unintentionally affect the research regardless of the coding type (Delve Tool, 2022). The research must be valid and protected from the potential bias of the researcher and the participants. The data were collected and interpreted by a researcher with over 25 years of human resource and management experience, credibility in the knowledge of total compensation and rewards as a practitioner, and pracademic.

Collecting data from multiple HRP during the semi structured interviews provided validity of information based upon common themes and patterns identified. The way the

data were collected and analyzed using qualitative software provided credibility and eliminated concerns about whether the research is valid. The researcher maintains records for five years in a secure home office.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to any research data collection taking place, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was required for submission. It included proof of basic training completed by me through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. The origins of ethical research that include fundamental principles of beneficence, respect for persons, and justice come from *the Belmont Report* (Cozby & Bates, 2012). Once the IRB application was submitted, reviewed, and approved, the data collection began.

Study participants must be protected, and the research process includes the collection of data, interpretations of data through analysis, and the sharing and production of findings that do not intentionally or unintentionally harm any participants for the researcher. The data and all research-related material are stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office for five years. This study was for research purposes only, and I will benefit from earning a Ph.D. degree upon completion.

Study participants were assigned labels to protect their identity as voluntary participants and to ensure the validity of the data received, avoiding misquoting or confusing data collected from incorrect sources and report incorrect findings.

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Summary

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Chapter 3 provided information on the methodology used for this qualitative study to collect data from HRP asking interview questions to seek information on what

public sector HRP experienced as employee and recruitment challenges. Additionally, what public sector HRP perceived from lived experiences that would resolve employee recruitment and retention challenges. This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of public sector HRP in employee recruitment and retention using the elements of Weldon's (LTCP) theory. These elements include motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance. The chapter provided population selection, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis. The validity of the research and ethical considerations discussed.

Chapter 4 provides the research setting details, the demographics of the research participants, data collection methods, data analysis, and emerging themes, evidence of trustworthiness, results of the final study, and a summary. Chapter 5 provides a discussion, conclusion, and recommendations for future research. This study may impact social change by exploring innovative opportunities for HRP to present to leadership, which may influence short-term and long-term organizational policies and decisions to resolve the issues identified through the data provided. The results of this study impact social change by providing HRP's and organizations leaders with options to explore innovative opportunities that enhance employee recruitment and retention, thereby stabilizing the sector.

Chapter 4: Results

Public sector employers experience challenges with recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. The expectations of employees in today's market challenge traditional methods and practices of the conventional workplace and provide an opportunity for innovation. In this qualitative study, I explored the lived experiences of seven public sector HRPs regarding employee recruitment and retention using Weldon's LTCP theory to frame the study. I conducted open ended interviews with seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government to collected their lived experiences with employee and recruitment challenges and their perceptions of what would resolve these challenges. In this chapter, I present the research setting details, demographics of the research participants, data collection methods, data analysis, emerging themes, evidence of trustworthiness, results of the final study, and a summary.

Setting

Prior to the interviews, I emailed the participants a meeting invitation to schedule an interview time that was convenient for the voluntary participant, the required consent form of their willingness to participate voluntarily, an outline of the participation process, a description of steps taken to ensure the anonymity of the participants and the interview questions. As a new qualitative researcher, it was imperative for me to understand the role and responsibility in preparing to access information from study participants. Qualitative research includes asking questions that may involve the thoughts and feelings of others as they choose to share information that at times may be personal and very meaningful.

The open ended virtual interviews with seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government were recorded in Zoom and lasted at least 45 minutes. The virtual setting allowed the participant to select an environment from which to take part in the interview that would be comfortable for them so they could focus and self-reflect on their lived experiences.

Demographics

One of the research project goals was to have a group of participants of diverse HR backgrounds, varied years of public service and position titles, and various organizational experiences. Seven participants voluntarily participated in the study. The participant inclusion criteria were that the individual must be a public sector HRP over the age of 21 years old. I used a screening tool to validate that the study participants' met these criteria.

Each of the seven voluntary participants had at least 5 years of professional HR experience. Their professional experiences ranged from federal, state, and local government agencies. The positions held by the seven participants ranged from midlevel to executive level HR roles, and each had supervisory and management experience. The voluntary participants were comprised of seven females and one male. Two of the seven participants had retired from the public sector, and the other five continue to work in the federal, state, and local public sector. The voluntary participants were diverse in generations, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millenials.

For participant confidentiality in the data analysis process, I referred to the voluntary participants as VPA through VPG. For example, the annotation for Voluntary Participant B, the second participant to be interviewed, was VPB.

Data Collection

Once my Walden University IRB application was submitted, reviewed, and approved in March 2023, I began data collection. The Walden University IRB approval number for this study was 03-31-23-0417724 I followed the established research protocol set by Walden University to ensure ethical compliance and research study validity.

I received completed consent forms via email from the voluntary participants and validated that they met the inclusion criteria with the screening tool prior to the virtual interviews being conducted. The beginning of each interview started with a thank you to the participants for their consent, an introduction to the study, and an explanation of the data collection and analysis processes. Participants were reminded that they were not obligated to continue their voluntary participation and they could choose to withdraw their consent at any time during the process. No objections were received, and the interviews were administered successfully. I asked each of the participants the same interview questions.

Participants chose their own setting to take part in the one-on-one interviews. The virtual interviews were recorded using VOIP Zoom meetings. Data were collected individually from each participant and analyzed immediately after each interview while the conversation was still fresh in my mind. I will share an administrative summary of the

findings with any participant that requests it. The interviews took place without any technical issues.

The interview protocol is provided in the Appendix. I reviewed the recorded transcripts for accuracy and coded them to protect participants' privacy during data analysis. A Zoom license was required to receive transcripts. Data saturation was reached in the Spring of 2023 during data collection when the responses provided by the final voluntary participant mirrored the previous data collected. I uploaded the transcripts into Delve Tool qualitative software to assist with organizing data for analysis. A Delve Tool license was required to utilize the qualitative software.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis consisted of reviewing the uploaded transcripts and creating codes utilizing qualitative software to assist with organizing emerging themes. The benefits of qualitative coding are that it increases validity, decreases bias, accurately represents participants, and enables transparency in research. Qualitative coding software helped me by assisting with organizing the large amount of data received from study participants. The possible researcher bias due to my HR background was mitigated by using tge qualitative software to assist with data analysis.

Applying the LTCP theory, I used deductive coding based on the predetermined a priori codes of motivation, morale, compensation, and performance as a strategy to align the interview and research questions. During the line-by-line coding and analysis of the data, the primary and secondary codes presented themselves in the participants' responses and produced emerging codes. Six consistent themes emerged: organizational culture,

COVID-19 pandemic, work environment, recognition, performance, and compensation.

Table 2 shows the frequency of participant responses (in snippets) of the themes.

Table 2

Coding Frequencies for Snippets Related to Themes

Themes	Snippet frequencies (f)	Subthemes	Snippet frequencies (f)
Organizational culture	10	Cultural humility	3
		Generational differences	19
COVID-19 pandemic	22	Recruitment challenges	20
Work environment	15	Autonomy	9
		Work/life balance	10
		Hybrid/remote	13
Recognition	10	Rewards	9
		Motivation	11
Performance	11	Training and development	7
		Performance appraisals	18
Compensation	5	Benefits	7
		Salary	8

Note. Snippet frequencies = the number of participant responses connected to themes and subthemes.

The analysis of the data collected validated a connection as described in Chapter 1 in the theoretical framework providing insight into employees searching for benefits, meaning, connectedness, empowerment, and fulfillment within organizations through linking total compensation to performance. VPB stated, "It's a tricky dynamic because when it comes down to team cohesion it is the comradeships. Just waking up for work and wanting to go there and being fulfilled when they get to these organizations." Effective total compensation programs consider employee motivation, morale, compensation structures and their alignment to performance. Total compensation is a

determinate of identifying who gets what related to top performing employees, the amounts, and relationship to performance expectations (Weldon, 2012).

21st century performance management programs are essential to the success of total compensation programs. Clear communication must define the relationship of compensation to performance for both the employee and organization to benefit. VPG stated, "I think managers in their ability to lead, their ability to mentor, their ability to communicate with their team helps with retention." When aligning performance with goals, the desired behavior must be explained, communicated, and exemplified by leadership and management.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Prior to data collection taking place, I had to have an IRB application approved that included proof of completed basic training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. The origins of ethical research that include the fundamental principles of beneficence, respect for persons, and justice come from *the Belmont Report* (Cozby & Bates, 2012). Once the IRB application was submitted, reviewed, and approved, I began data collection for the study.

Study participants' confidentiality was always maintained during the research process, which included the collection of data, interpretations of data through analysis, and the sharing and production of findings that do not intentionally or unintentionally harm any participants. I assigned study participants labels to protect their identity as voluntary participants and ensure the validity of the data received by avoiding misquoting or confusing data collected from incorrect sources and reporting incorrect findings.

Participants were reminded that they were not obligated to voluntarily continue their participation and could choose to withdraw their consent at any time during the process.

Furthermore, I followed the established research protocol set by Walden University to ensure ethical compliance and trustworthiness. No changes were made to the previously discussed validity and ethical considerations outlined in Chapter 3. Every effort was made during the research study to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. It is vital to practice reflexivity and identify any personal beliefs, practices, or judgments that may unintentionally affect the research regardless of the coding type (Delve Tool, 2022). There was the potential for researcher bias due to my HR background, but this was mitigated by using qualitative software to assist and facilitate data analysis. The way the data were collected and analyzed using qualitative software provided credibility and eliminated concerns about whether the research is valid. Collecting data from the semi structured interviews of multiple HRPs provided valid information based upon the common themes and patterns identified. I collected and interpreted the data and have over 25 years of HR and management experience as well as credibility in my knowledge of total compensation and rewards as a practitioner and academic.

The data and all research-related material will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office for five years after the completion of the study. Once I am confirmed as a doctoral graduate, the study results will be automatically posted online in Scholarworks (a publication of Walden University research). I will share an administrative summary

with any participant that requests it. This study was conducted for research purposes only, and I will benefit from earning a Ph.D. degree upon completion.

Results

The qualitative inquiry method was appropriate for this study because it addressed the research questions. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What do public sector HRPs experience as employee recruitment and retention challenges?

RQ2: What do public sector HRPs perceive from lived experiences that would resolve employee recruitment and retention challenges?

The following six interview questions were asked of each participant:

1. Please describe your overall experience with employee recruitment, retention, and motivation programs.

2. Which programs or practices were effective in engaging and retaining employees?

3. What do you perceive are the biggest challenges in recruitment and retention?

4. What do you perceive from your lived experiences that would resolve these issues?

5. In your experience how have HR practices or programs changed in the past decade?

6. What would you like to share with other HRP and Managers in public sector organizations?

Data collected was thematically coded and analyzed utilizing qualitative software from the interview transcripts creating emerging themes and patterns. Six consistent themes produced from the data collected and analyzed exist including: organizational culture, COVID-19 pandemic, work environment, recognition, performance, and compensation. Some concepts were noted by the researcher but were not noted in the data which included collective bargaining, government, and mandate. These concepts will be further discussed in Chapter 5. Table 2 shows the frequency of participant responses or snippets of themes and subthemes.

Theme 1: Organizational Culture

The first theme that was identified by the research participants focused on organizational culture (see Table 2). Based upon the participants responses organizational culture included cultural humility, taking into consideration generational differences that may challenge traditional perspectives versus norms. Additionally, the culture of the organization relied heavily on management and leadership styles of operating, communicating, and how performance expectations were set and measured.

Leadership at all levels of an organization must foster an environment that is communicative and inclusive beyond compensation letting employees know that they care (Caggiano, 2022). It is important for organizations to take the time to connect to employees and show genuine concern. VPB shared from lived experiences the importance of taking the time to care. VPB stated,

I could see that you know the lady at the front that she either had a bad day or she was really, you know, not at work mentally, so I asked her how she was, and she

said, thank you for at least asking. Everybody else just needs to get something

done, and it is a business, and you know people are going there for a service.

They're not going there to check on people, but it wouldn't have hurt, you know,

out of 100 people that came into that building for 30 people to say, or have asked

her how she was doing, and maybe that would have enhanced her spirit.

Management and leadership styles are essential in the retention of employees. VPF

stated, "Well, I think you do have to have good managers, because people don't leave

their jobs because they don't want to work. People leave their jobs because they have

awful managers." The attitude and outlook of leadership impacts morale and motivation

of employees, VPA stated,

You decide how your day is going to be. You either want to wake up and say, oh,

my gosh! These two blessings! I got another day. I got another chance, or you

could wake up and be mad with the world.

Organizational cultures that contain positive attitudes make a difference in the

workforce, whether hybrid, remote, or onsite. Recognizing within organizational culture

cultural humility being a personal lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-

critique, whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts

with an examination of their own beliefs and cultural identities taking into consideration,

generational differences that may challenge traditional perspectives versus norms.

Multigenerations are present in the workforce. VPC stated,

They're coming literally. They're coming as they are. You get what you get.

Whereas, growing up, and then being established in my career. You're supposed

to be so poised and so professional because that's what I was taught, not just in

my career, but by my family this is what you do. Now it hit me because when I

was interviewing a couple of months ago. I have people showing up with tongue

rings, green hair, and tattoos but when I tell you they are the most articulate, the

most professional, and the most hardworking people.

Theme 2: COVID-19 Pandemic

The second theme that was identified by the research participants focused on the

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 2). Based upon the participants responses

COVID-19 impacted HRPs ability to recruit and retain talented employees. VPG stated,

Before Covid, recruiting worked very well because for one posting you could get

150 candidates in the beginning. Now it is quite different after the Covid

pandemic we might get 10 applications for a job posting that is open for 10 days.

Additionally, VPG stated,

So, it's quite different, and I honestly think it is due to the pandemic people don't

want to come into the office. They don't want to work in an office environment

and so it's difficult to hire when the position requires you to come into the office.

Furthermore, the lack of interest and professionalism displayed during the

interview process was identified. VPG stated,

I think that it has become so casual, the interview process today, because you

know we are not coming into the office they don't have the opportunity to dress to

impress and they're just casual. Some candidates aren't even aware that they're

going to show their video so, I must wait until they get a dress shirt on or

something, because they're just not. They're not coming in the office to interview

face to face, so I think they're very casual about it and it just isn't a serious

process, as it used to be.

The shift changed from a focus on employer needs a decade ago to an employee

driven workforce with primarily satisfying employee needs (Davidescu et al., 2020). The

COVID-19 pandemic catapulted the workforce into hybrid, flexible, remote work

schedules, and virtual ways of working individually and in teams. VPE stated,

It's changed, I think you know what people are willing to accept from an agency

has changed. I feel like since Covid people don't want to be in the office all the

time. People don't want to work from 8 to 5. They want to have that work-life

balance, and I feel like the younger generation is all for that. And if they feel like

you can't offer that then they're willing to go someplace else regardless of what

else you're offering.

Theme 3: Work Environment

The third theme that was identified by the research participants focused on the

work environment (see Table 2). Based upon the participants responses, a work

environment that supportively meets the needs of the employee supports recruitment and

retention strategies. Employees seek positions and positive opportunities that allow them

flexibility, autonomy, advancement, competitive pay, engaging work, and a hybrid work

environment that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive (Gill et al., 2018).

VPF highlighted the importance of a work environment that allows creativity and

autonomy. VPF stated,

They want flexibility, they want to work from home and be able to have the

latitude to go and come as they please. They want some autonomy and to be able

to share ideas. That is what they want and if a manager or leader does not

understand, if they're operating from the baby boomer mindset, they're not going

to stay. Employees do not want to be micromanaged.

VPF stated,

I would say, Stop, micromanagement. It's not your way. It's not your way. It's the

best way. You know this your way, my way, and the best way and the best way

depends on the climate you want to create in your organization, a productive

climate that you want to create in your organization that is inclusive in the sense

of everybody's ideas. Count it does and you have to build those opportunities for

that to happen.

Technology is important to this current generation. It is expected that

organizations will operate in a digital manner and if this is not the case this may lead to

challenges in the recruitment and retention of talented employees. VPE stated,

I think what I've seen is maybe we didn't have technology. You know, technology

has changed so much. and having the tools that they felt like they needed to work

smarter not harder. I find it very challenging when we're bound by budget

constraints.

VPE also stated,

Young folks are like, you know I can go somewhere else that have all the little

bells and whistles with technology versus sitting here, and we're still using

handheld devices such as the telephone and not iPads. You know there's a lot of

organizations that you can walk into, and it takes a picture of your face. It

automatically matches you to who you are, and the door opens, whereas you can

be at another organization, and you're using badges.

Participants also acknowledged the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion

within organizations. VPA stated,

Well, we've always been diverse right? I will give the organization that and

rightfully so, I think, because it's a federal organization. So, whether by choice or

by mandate we've always been diverse, never been an issue with that inclusivity,

not an issue. Equity is a little bit challenging.

Contrarily, many training programs designed to reduce bias among those making

hiring and promotion decisions have not worked, given that stereotypes have been

challenging to eliminate, which may impact an equitable and diverse workforce (Dobbin

et al., 2007).

Theme 4: Recognition

The fourth theme that was identified by the research participants focused on

recognition (see Table 2). Based upon the participants responses recognition includes

rewards, incentives, activities, events, and programs that afford opportunities for

extending praise for successes and acknowledges challenges. VPF stated,

We had a recognition and reward program. We were always trying to figure out

ways to reward people. We even had in the reward program where we allowed the

employees to work on a list of ways they would like to be rewarded and

monetarily. I think the employees are very important to the organization. I think

that retaining good employees you must have something.

Furthermore, participants shared that appreciation is important and a form of

recognition. VPB stated,

A lot of the time all the employees wanted to hear you did a good job, proud of

you, but that wasn't the case. You know a lot of supervisors had their plates full,

so they just think you go do your job, you get your pay, you go home. An aspect

to keep people wanting to come back is creating appreciation. We went out there,

we kicked it, we knocked it out the park today and I really appreciate what you

guys have done, even if you're getting paid for it. It still doesn't hurt anybody to

show a little bit of appreciation, and I think that that goes a long way in the

retention process. You would not have people recruiting or attrition rate wouldn't

be so high, if we just showed a little bit more appreciation for the simple things.

Recognition impacts employee morale, motivation, and performance.

"Organizations that offer praise, appreciation, informal acknowledgment that give an

employee social recognition may produce an attractive work environment (Yoon et al.,

2015). Employees seek fulfillment in tangible and intangible rewards. Rewards and

recognition programs must consider the needs and wants of the employees and not what

the organization may perceive will meet those needs. It is important for leadership to

listen and actively respond when feedback is received.

VPD found innovative ways despite budget constraints to still recognize

employees' needs. VPD stated,

I could not forget about the administrative group as well, because they felt like why all your attention is going here. What about us? Who's thinking about us? I'm not seeing the turnover there and if I must pick and that's what I felt like it was and what I had to focus on was this industrial group. We were losing them every week like crazy. I still had to create programs for them as well, but it wasn't always about compensation. Their needs and wants were a little bit different. They wanted to, just as we were beginning to talk about the end of the pandemic and returning to the office, to continue teleworking working from home. So, that's the tool I used to keep them informed and happy because I could not necessarily do anything to increase their compensation.

VPC shared a lived experience regarding a proposed recognition activity from new leadership that joined their work group.

This is our second one and has been with us for like 2 years and came aboard and was like whoever makes the most placements this month can get a pizza party. I had to pull him to the side and say, sir, these are adults. We don't like pizza parties, you can't pizza party any professional to death. Would they want money? So, in turn we put in where I can nominate a staff member. They may get $150. They may get $500. It's heavily taxed, but still that piece of incentive has helped, but when we report it to our corporate office it sometimes falls on deaf ears, and it's up to us at the state level to do something.

Theme 5: Performance

The fifth theme that was identified by the research participants focused on performance (see Table 2). Based upon the participants' responses, performance is important to the organization and communicating performance in a timely manner is essential to employee success. VPG shared,

So, with the State we have a six month probationary period in our group, and an annual review, and so those are performance measures at that point. I make sure that I get my six month probationary period performance evaluations done in that period and get them uploaded into the system. The same with the annual reviews. It is important that as a manager you meet with your team, if not regularly or weekly, that you at least meet with them when their evaluations are ready. Also, as a manager you need to understand in the system if an employee doesn't have a performance evaluation uploaded, then they're not eligible for merit increases. So, as a manager you're limiting their salaries.

The culture of the organization relied heavily on management and leadership styles of operating, communicating, and how performance expectations were set and measured. VPF stated,

Well, I think accountability comes in through the performance evaluation system. I think performance evaluation is a tool for performance. Evaluation is a tool that managers can use to their benefit. They could see the gaps, and they can close those gaps within so that by the time you have their 6 months evaluation you have a baseline. You have a baseline of what they can do based on those standards.

You know. That's the one thing we emphasize during the management training.

So, all our managers had to go through training. They first had to go through the

interview training, performance, and evaluation training that was in their

management track. They knew how to write those standards. They knew how to

evaluate against those standards.

Additionally, management participated in 360-degree appraisals conducted for

leadership accountability. VPF stated,

I like the 360-degree process, but I think the 360-degree process depends on how

the CEO or the director implements it because you're holding the managers and

supervisors accountable through their direct reports in their management

improvement plans. You can't use it as a tool against the managers. It needs to be

used as a tool just like you use performance evaluation as a tool to help the person

the employee be successful. The 360-degree process should be used as a tool to

help the manager be successful.

Providing employees with the tools necessary to perform their jobs in conjunction

with training and development is mandatory. The organization desires to focus on HPWP.

HPWP fosters an environment that allows and provides employees the support, tools, and

resources necessary to perform services in a manner of best practices and increasing

organizational performance (Guerci et al., 2019). To do so organizations must reevaluate

training and learning programs. VPC stated,

I think it's better now because the organization, in my opinion, the training was

very antiquated. It was not with the current events. It's not one size at all, and we

have different learning styles. So, the organization was notorious for I'm going to

send you a link and the email that was the size of a dissertation, or I'm going to

send you a video, and I expect you to be expert level by tomorrow. I am proud to

say I put an end to that. You must make sure that you accommodate all learning

styles and that's part of that engaging. So, because of that, we have our training

check list. We have training that they have to have completed within 30 days, 60

days, 90 days. We have a checklist, we have tests.

Theme 6: Compensation

The last theme that was identified by the research participants focused on

compensation (see Table 2). Based upon the participants' responses compensation

includes benefits, incentives, bonuses, and it is more than just pay. Effective total

compensation programs consider employee motivation, morale, total compensation

structures and their alignment to performance.

Millennials are seeking experience beyond compensation. VPF stated,

So, the ones coming in know the reality of it is that they want the money. They

want a job that matches what they want to do. If they can't express their ideas

about their job this will impact motivation and retention.

Pandey (2019) argued that job-hopping is normal when Millennials receive from

employer's low pay, low career growth opportunities, unfair treatment from supervisors

or co-workers, and many other negative factors.

Employees are searching for environments that allow them the autonomy,

financial wellness programs, the ability to perform in a hybrid work environment, holistic

health programs all while receiving competitive compensation and benefits such as student loan repayment, which are out of the realm of traditional offerings outside of the traditional offerings (Claudio, 2022). VPC stated,

> It sometimes falls on deaf ears and it's up to us at the State Level to do something. Raises are maybe once every 5 years and it's not much so there, you know, we're going to have to do something, even though it's dependent upon the legislative budget. We, as an agency, are going to have to do something. One thing like I said, we're offering sign-on bonuses but then, when they're here after a year or 2 years, then what? The pay has been a challenge.

Benefits are costly and may include employee contributions of a certain percentage. Medical benefits include health, dental, vision, flexible spending plans, prescription coverage, and employees' vital offering and sought after. VPG stated,

> So really working with the State, it's the benefits that really help push our positions, or push a candidate to come and work with the State. The state benefits are awesome and amazing, and that's how I sell it to anybody that's coming from the public. If they work in the private industry, they don't understand how awesome the state benefits are because generally they're paying half of their insurance premiums, but the State pays 100% employee premiums. So, I boost our benefits because state benefits are amazing. I boost our time off our paid time off. I boost the longevity pay.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided the research setting details, the demographics of the research participants, data collection methods, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results of the final study, and a summary. This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of public sector HRP in employee recruitment and retention using Weldon's LTCP to frame the study. Chapter 5 provides interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion. The results of this study impact social change by providing HRP and organizations leaders with options to explore innovative opportunities that enhance employee recruitment and retention, thereby stabilizing the sector.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Public sector employers experience challenges with recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. The expectations of employees in today's market challenge traditional methods and practices of the conventional workplace and provide an opportunity for innovation. In this qualitative study, I explored the lived experiences of public sector HRPs regarding employee recruitment and retention using Weldon's LTCP theory to frame the study. I conducted open ended interviews with seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government to collect their lived experiences with employee and recruitment challenges as well as their perceptions of what would resolve these challenges. In this chapter, I provide my interpretation of the findings, describe the limitations of the study, make recommendations, discuss implications, and conclude the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

Analysis of the data collected in this study from the seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government validated the connection described in Chapter 1 with the theoretical framework providing insight into employees searching for benefits, meaning, connectedness, empowerment, and fulfillment within organizations through linking total compensation to performance. The types of public sectors were significantly the same in their recruitment, retention practices, and benefit offerings with the exception being in pay differences geographically. The six themes that emerged from data analysis were organizational culture, COVID-19 pandemic, work environment, recognition, performance, and compensation.

The six themes derived from data analysis confirm the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. Employees are searching for environments that allow them the autonomy, financial wellness programs, the ability to perform in a hybrid work environment, and holistic health programs all while receiving competitive compensation and benefits, such as student loan repayment, which are out of the realm of traditional offerings outside of the traditional offerings (Claudio, 2022).

Each of the seven voluntary participants had at least 5 years of professional HR experience. Their professional experiences ranged from federal, state, and local government agencies. Positions held by the seven participants ranged from midlevel to executive level HR roles, and each had supervisory and management experience. The voluntary participants were comprised of seven females and one male. Two of the seven participants had retired from the public sector, and the other five continue to work in the public sector. The voluntary participants were diverse in generations, including members of the Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millenial generations.

Participants shared from their lived experience that the negative culture of an organization presents employee and recruitment challenges. Leadership at all levels of an organization must foster an environment that is communicative and inclusive beyond compensation letting employees know that they care (Caggiano, 2022). It is important for organizations to take the time to connect to employees and show genuine concern when employees express their wants and needs. The findings demonstrated dissatisfaction in the organization when employees are not heard, training and development needs are not met, when employees are being micromanaged, and when the compensation is not

comparable to private sector agencies. The participants shared the management style of leadership is important to retain employees. Employees seek communication and want to contribute their skill sets in a way that is autonomous.

The LTCP theory falls under the category of organizational behavior and organizational culture and identifies the desired behaviors needed to meet specific business goals and proactively drive employees toward those behaviors (Weldon, 2012). Additional organizational behavior theories expand organizational identification within an organization's culture. Participants recommended that not micromanaging employees, providing opportunities for employees to be heard, understanding cultural humility, and respecting generational differences would ensure diversity, equity, and inclusiveness in resolving employee recruitment and retention challenges within the organizational culture.

The COVID-19 pandemic catapulted the workforce into hybrid, flexible, remote work schedules and virtual ways of working individually and in teams. Participants shared their experiences that the COVID-19 pandemic had changed the workforce environment impacting employee recruitment and retention. VPG stated,

Before COVID, recruiting worked very well because for one posting you could get 150 candidates in the beginning. Now it is quite different after the COVID pandemic we might get 10 applications for a job posting that is open for 10 days.

Post pandemic, many employees take into consideration if they want to return to work or work at home, making personal career choices about where they want to work, what type of work and industry they want to engage, and with whom they want to work.

The findings confirm the shift has changed from a focus on employer needs a decade ago to an employee driven workforce with primarily satisfying employee needs (see Davidescu et al., 2020). Employees see themselves as independent agents needing the autonomy to create and communicate openly, and they expect to receive competitive market compensation, hybrid, flexible, and remote work schedule. VPE stated,

> It's changed, I think you know what people are willing to accept from an agency has changed. I feel like since COVID people don't want to be in the office all the time. People don't want to work from 8 to 5. They want to have that work-life balance, and I feel like the younger generation is all for that. And if they feel like you can't offer that, then they're willing to go someplace else regardless of what else you're offering.

The expectations of employees in today's market challenge traditional methods and practices of the conventional workplace and provide an opportunity for innovation. Participants recommended a gradual shift from the traditional expectations of pre-COVID-19 times to considering the post-COVID-19 employee expectations versus employee experiences.

Organizations that offer praise, appreciation, and informal acknowledgment that give an employee social recognition may produce an attractive work environment (Yoon et al., 2015). Additionally, public sector agencies that offer flexible work arrangements may attract employees and reduce voluntary turnover (Choi, 2019). Participants shared that if the option to telework does not exist in the workplace environment and organizations are unwilling to adjust from traditional expectations and norms, this may

cause a barrier to recruitment and retention efforts. Employees seek positions and positive opportunities that allow them flexibility, autonomy, advancement, competitive pay, engaging work, and a hybrid work environment that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive (Gill et al., 2018).

Participants recommended that leadership consider the impact of traditional expectations that would demand employees to return to work. Leadership should remain open and communicative while seeking to meet business needs and balancing employee expectations for work-life balance. The participants recommended communicating in advance with potential applicants regarding the telework policy in the job posting and adding specific availability questions to the applications.

Recognition includes rewards, incentives, activities, events, and programs that afford opportunities for extending praise for employee successes and acknowledging challenges. Participants shared the importance of recognition and how the lack of recognition can present challenges to retention efforts. Recognition impacts employee morale, motivation, and performance. "Organizations that offer praise, appreciation, informal acknowledgment that give an employee social recognition may produce an attractive work environment (Yoon et al., 2015). Employees seek fulfillment in tangible and intangible rewards. Participants recommended experiences that rewards, and recognition programs must consider the needs and wants of the employees and not what the organization may perceive will meet those needs.

Participants shared that when performance evaluations are not completed in a timely manner, training and development are not reevaluated for effectiveness, and

technology is not implemented, it contributes to challenges in employee recruitment and retention. The model of performance influences and provides direction to employees and creates expectations and rewards for achieving the desired types of behavior. Supporting Weldon's (2012) emphasis on communication, Lombardi (2011) stated that the absence of consistent, timely, ongoing communication between managers and employees may result in performance issues that contradict a successful performance management program. VPG shared,

> It is important that as a manager you meet with your team, if not regularly or weekly, that you at least meet with them when their evaluations are ready. Also, as a manager you need to understand in the system if an employee doesn't have a performance evaluation uploaded, then they're not eligible for merit increases. So, as a manager you're limiting their salaries.

Effective performance management programs have a life cycle, and organizations that invest in employees identified core competencies reap the benefits of desired performance outcomes (Ashraf, 2020). The foundation of successful performance requires goal setting, communicating expectations, and providing the necessary tools and resources, consisting of employees, timelines, and money for goal achievement and desired behaviors to achieve expectations. VPC stated,

> I think it's better now because the organization in my opinion, the training was very antiquated. It was not with the current events. It's not one size at all, and we have different learning styles. You must make sure that you accommodate all learning styles and that's part of that engaging.

Participants recommended that organizations must reevaluate training and learning programs to resolve employee recruitment and retention challenges.

Participants also shared that the lack of offering competitive salaries hinders employee and recruitment efforts. Compensation plans must be holistic and consider pay for a person, position, and performance through merit and bonus pay outlined for employees as they advance in their careers (Ashraf, 2020). Although employers may feel they offer an excellent benefit package, the employer's perception may differ from the employee's perception of the offering and what is received based upon employees' changing life needs and job interests (Caggiano, 2022). VPG stated,

> So really working with the state, it's the benefits that really help push our positions, or push a candidate to come and work with state. The state benefits are awesome and amazing, and that's how I sell it to anybody that's coming from the public. If they work in the private industry, they don't understand how awesome the state benefits are because generally they're paying half of their insurance premiums, but the state pays 100% employee premiums.

Employees may expect that the total compensation provided should increase over tenure based upon performance. Pandey (2019) argued that job hopping is normal when millennials receive low pay, low career growth opportunities, unfair treatment from supervisors or coworkers, and many other negative factors from employers. Participants recommended that conducting market studies to analyze any pay disparities and keep up with current market trends can resolve employee recruitment and retention challenges.

Limitations of the Study

I did not encounter any limitations during this study. The open ended interview questions were successfully administered to seven public sector HRPs in federal, state, and local government without technical difficulties. The data collected and analyzed provided information on what the participants experienced regarding employee and recruitment challenges as well as their perceptions of what would resolve these challenges.

There was potential for researcher bias due to my HR background, but this was mitigated with the use of qualitative software to assist me with the organization and analysis of data.

Recommendations

Organizational culture is essential to employees that are joining new organizations, and for employees that are part of an existing organization understanding and having cultural humility is key when multiple generations are working together in the workforce environment as are diversity, equity, and inclusion. HRPs and leadership must ensure equity when recruiting and screening employees for required knowledge, skills, and abilities. HRPs and leadership must not only consider internal employee referrals but also consider the full applicant panel to expand the culture of an organization.

Organizations must acknowledge that all generations are essential and bring a different skill set to the work environment, whether from the Boomers', Generation X, or Millennial perspectives. When servicing constituents in the public sector, all varied experiences must be present to share diverse experiences to effectively relate to and meet

the needs of those we serve. To accomplish diversity, equity, and inclusion within an organization, organizations must continue to invest in leadership and development training to understand the elements and characteristics of different generations, the importance of understanding cultural humility, and how to implement innovative recruitment practices.

Positive management and leadership styles that provide mentoring, coaching, timely communication, and respect are recommended and essential in employee retention. Employees do not respect nor respond to being micromanaged. Having a genuine concern for employees beyond just an employee ID number and trying to connect with employees contribute to the overall morale and motivation of the workforce.

As we are in a post-COVID-19 pandemic, organizations must gradually transition from traditional expectations of the work environment and the needs of employees post-COVID. Before COVID-19, employees were used to the traditional 8-5 work environment, which may or may not have included work-life balance. Now a hybrid, remote, or flexible schedule is desired. In many cases, it is one of the significant barriers to the recruitment and retention of employees. Organizations must evaluate if it is vital for the business need for employees to be onsite or if it is a management tool of control. Meaningful work is essential to employees performing work that contributes to the greater goal and seeing the results of their contributions and applied skill sets.

The effectiveness of management should not be determined by whether employees are seen physically sitting at a desk. Technology today via Zoom or Teams allows us to have the same face-to-face interactions without the stress of cultural norms.

When employees are allowed to have the flexibility and freedom to meet the needs of their family still, find opportunities to balance their compensation, still provide skill sets needed in the work environment, and have a greater sense of peace within themselves to perform at a high level because they have work-life balance. Effective management can manage remotely by incorporating the same skills as great managers, including communication, team building, sharing processes seeking feedback, providing praise, and timely performance evaluations.

Policymakers, leadership, and managers must continue to escalate the need for equitable employee compensation beyond the standard benefits that employees receive in public sector government. All full-time regular employees and some temporary employees receive health and dental benefit programs; however, employees seek more than just benefits and compensation. Employees seek positive leadership, career advancement opportunities, mentoring, training, development, fair and equitable industry-based total compensation, pay for performance, and workgroups that foster teamwork and inclusiveness. Employees seek fulfillment in tangible and intangible rewards.

Employees are seeking a fair base salary that includes incentives that already exist. However, management may not extend those incentives to employees. Opportunities exist within each agency to recognize and reward employees for their successes and contributions to meeting the expectations of the assignments. Management is required to conduct performance evaluations, which must be entered into the system for employees to receive merit increases. Often, managers are not conducting those

evaluations, limiting employees' ability to receive additional compensation. Directors and leaders must proactively build into their budget's compensation incentives, rewards, and recognition activities for employees at the beginning of each fiscal year. When budget planning takes place, it needs to be proactive and not an afterthought. The legislative sessions receive proposals from agencies proposing salary increases for public sector employees.

Organizations beyond that must continue to seek alternative ways of non-monetary and monetary rewards to remain competitive in the marketplace for talented employees. Future qualitative studies may be conducted surrounding the challenges and benefits of telework in public sector government and the impact on recruitment and retention in a hybrid work environment. Additional studies may be conducted surrounding public sector compensation and benefits and the impact on employee recruitment and retention in union environments where collective bargaining agreements are mandatory.

Implications

Social determinants of health of constituents' lives are impacted through the quality of services received by those who work and serve in the public sector government. As an example, social support services, access to resources and health care services via government funded Health and Human Service agencies. The morale and attitude of employees impact the level of service provided.

This study provides information to assist Smart City initiatives that seek innovative ways to improve the quality of life for citizens and the environment through

efficient public services (Appio et al., 2019). HRPs may find creative ways to recruit and retain talented, diverse employees by addressing and meeting the needs of both employer and employee in today's employee driven market. When employees' needs are met within organizations, they find fulfilment in their positions. They are more likely to extend a positive attitude, willingness to help, and go above and beyond when administering services to constituents.

Employees get psychological needs such as safety, affiliation, self-enhancement, and self-actualization fulfilled (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), while the organization retains the necessary human resources needed to perform the job. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) suggested that individual's identities are influenced by the employee explicitly defining characteristics; identifying actions that define appropriate work through motives, morals, and skill sets; social relations by defining belongingness and differentiation; and fit with the social, organizational, and economic environment. Employees must be able to identify socially to develop commitment to a new organization's identity. Furthermore, individuals may identify and engage in multiple work modes (Caza et al., 2018).

The results of this study may not only contribute to the body of knowledge of scholarly writing but also provide recommendations based on findings of previous versus current employee recruitment and retention practices. Public sector administrators, HRP, and leadership management teams may use this study as an additional resource to assess and analyze their current practices regarding attracting and retaining a talented, diverse workforce.

This study provides tangible information to policymakers when implementing rules and decisions beyond their appointed terms that improve the quality of life for civil and non-civil service employees in public sector organizations. The results of this study impact social change by providing HRP and organizations leaders with options to explore innovative opportunities that enhance employee recruitment and retention, thereby stabilizing the sector.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of public sector HRP in employee recruitment and retention using Weldon's LTCP to frame the study. Public sector employers are having a problem recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. The results of this study impact social change by providing HRP and organizations leaders with options to explore innovative opportunities that enhance employee recruitment and retention, thereby stabilizing the sector. Recommendations include the organization's need to genuinely listen and take positive action through policy decisions that provide recognition and support to those serving in the public sector when employees and HRPs share challenges and successes. HRP and organizations must work together to not only find innovative ways to address challenges with recruiting and retaining qualified candidates but to act strategically beyond a conversation.

The expectations of employees in today's market challenge traditional methods and practices of the conventional workplace and provide an opportunity for innovation outside of the bias of tradition pre COVID-19 and incorporate multigenerations that share and communicate ideas in a diverse, equitable, and inclusive manner. Utilizing and

appreciating employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities are crucial to employee development within workforce planning. Motivation and morale run through every aspect of the employee's experience and the organization. When efforts are positive, and both employee and organization communicate successes and challenges, there is motivation to find ways to work better together as a team, a unit focused on visions, missions, and goals that the organization has set, as well as employees being able to focus on their personal vision, mission, and goals set. Both are important, and both deserve the same attention and investments.

This study was for research purposes only, and the benefit to me is an earned Ph.D. degree upon completion once I am confirmed as a doctoral graduate, the study's results will be automatically posted online in Scholarworks (a publication of Walden University research).

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

This interview protocol lists the step-by-step process and provides the interview questions used in this qualitative study. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of public sector human resource professionals (HRP) employee recruitment and retention using the elements of Weldon's linking total compensation to performance theory (LTCP). These elements include motivation, morale, total compensation, and performance. The semi structured interview process asks open ended questions developed in a discussion-type format formulated around the elements of LTCP. Topics of employee motivation, morale, recruitment, retention, total compensation, and performance. Data were collected one time from each participant and analyzed immediately after each interview while the conversation was still fresh in the researcher's mind. Participants were asked the same questions during the interview, which lasted at least forty-five minutes. The one-on-one interview setting for data collection from participants was in their own environment through recorded virtual interviews using voice over internet protocol (VOIP) such as ZOOM meetings.