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Frontline Supervisors' Strategies to Mitigate Employee Turnover

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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MA, Excelsior College, 2012

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Employee turnover consists of tangible and intangible costs that burden frontline supervisors and limit organizations' profitability. During turnover, frontline supervisors bear the costs of losing the outgoing employee and the expenses of replacing the employee, which can be double the employee's annual salary. Grounded in social exchange theory, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore strategies that six frontline supervisors used to mitigate employee turnover. The data collected from semistructured interviews were thematically analyzed, resulting in four major themes: (a) communication, (b) supervisor support, (c) employee engagement, and (d) rewards and recognition. The primary recommendation is for organizational leaders to establish an environment where frontline supervisors cultivate positive relationships with their employees to boost employee engagement and commitment. The implications for positive social change include opportunities for employees and organizational leaders to dedicate additional resources to their communities based on increased financial stability and reduced unemployment periods, which can benefit members of the community who need assistance.

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Dedication

For those who believe, all things are possible. I dedicate this doctoral study to my twin sister, the late Katrina LeReatha Amos. The culmination of this journey is the last item on our 13th birthday "Grownup Goals" list. It is finished! Your dreams, mine, and ours are alive and well.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee turnover is a growing problem for organizations. Although millennials will occupy 75% of the global workforce by 2025, 91% of millennials do not intend to remain with any employer for more than 3 years (Tenakwah, 2021). Buchman et al. (2020) approximated the direct cost to replace a departing employee at 150% of the annual salary of the departing employee. Leaders who understand the factors that impact employee turnover issues can develop strategies to mitigate the issues. Based on the results of this study, I offer practical insight into effective strategies to mitigate employee turnover.

Background of the Problem

Retaining skilled employees is a serious challenge for business leaders worldwide. More than half of employees surveyed in 2021 intended to look for a new job, while researchers also showed that once the COVID-19 pandemic subsided and recruiting efforts ramped up, a quarter of workers planned to quit their jobs outright (Maurer, 2021). Researchers have revealed there can be several reasons for employee turnover, from organizational to external factors (Alterman et al., 2021; Meduri & Jindal, 2021). Employee turnover may be influenced by supervisor and employee relationships or personal and psychological factors (Faupel & Helpap, 2021; Meduri & Jindal, 2021). Additional research is needed to determine how leaders impact employee turnover.

I used this study to fill a gap between prior studies and current organizational issues resulting from rapid changes. Furthermore, I recommend strategies frontline

supervisors can implement to mitigate employee turnover. Now that I have provided the background of the problem, I will shift the focus to the problem and purpose of the study.

Problem and Purpose

Organizational leaders are faced with challenges due to the rising costs of employee turnover. Researchers provided several reasons for employee turnover from organizational to external factors (Meduri & Jindal, 2021). Employees cited a variety of reasons for the turnover including disengagement (Maurer, 2021), leadership style, and job satisfaction (Dessalegn et al., 2021; Krishna et al., 2022). Frontline leaders significantly impact employee turnover, including their relationship with employees (Meduri & Jindal, 2021). The general business problem was that employee turnover can threaten organizational leaders' efforts to reach objectives. The specific business problem was that some frontline supervisors lack strategies to mitigate employee turnover. The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore strategies frontline supervisors use to mitigate employee turnover.

Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of frontline supervisors from multiple professional industries in Virginia who were interviewed using semistructured interviews constructed to obtain their perspectives on effective strategies to mitigate employee turnover. Additionally, I reviewed publicly available documents for relevant information. I used purposive sampling while leveraging my personal network and social media to recruit participants. Study eligibility requirements included participants who have

successfully used strategies to mitigate employee turnover in their organization. The sample size consisted of six interviews.

Nature of the Study

To address the research question in this study, I used a qualitative approach. The qualitative method was appropriate because a researcher chooses the qualitative research method to ask how, why, or what about business phenomena (Saunders et al., 2016). Qualitative studies are classified as social science research in which the researcher gathers and analyzes non-numerical data (Effat & Tahereh, 2022). Qualitative researchers use a variety of data collection techniques and analytical procedures to establish a theoretical contribution and conceptual framework based on study participants' meanings and relationships between them (Head et al., 2023; Saunders et al., 2016). In quantitative research, however, a researcher examines relationships between numerically measured variables that are analyzed using graphical and statistical techniques, which are objective and value neutral (Saunders et al., 2016; Zyphur & Pierides, 2020). I did not consider the quantitative method because the purpose of the study was not to examine characteristics, variables, or numerical measures concerning the phenomenon. Another viable method for conducting research is the mixed-method approach, which is a combination of the use of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques and analytical procedures (Fàbregues et al., 2021; Saunders et al., 2016). I did not select this method for the study because while mixed methods can help the researcher increase validity and provide rich insights into the research phenomena, mixed method studies can be difficult to analyze,

expensive, and time consuming (Dawadi et al., 2021). In the interest of time, a qualitative study was more appropriate than a mixed method study.

To address the research questions in this qualitative study, I used a pragmatic inquiry design. A pragmatic inquiry design was most appropriate to help me answer the research question. A researcher uses pragmatic inquiry design and analysis to strategically link and borrow from traditional qualitative methods to meet a study's needs, generally with guidance from an established framework with comprehensive research and practice change objectives (Ramanadhan et al., 2021). Ledger et al. (2023) expanded on how researchers can use pragmatic inquiry design, suggesting researchers use this design to address real-world issues and to offer an action oriented framework based on participants' experiences. I used pragmatic inquiry design to address the real-world issues of employee turnover. I used inductive research in the study and focused on individual decision makers' experiences with a real-world problem.

Another research design used in qualitative studies is ethnography. Researchers use this design to study the culture of groups of people, defined as beliefs, patterns of social interactions, language, behaviors, and ideation (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). I did not consider ethnography appropriate because it depends significantly on lengthy fieldwork or duration of contact with the culture being studied.

Research Question

What strategies do frontline supervisors use to mitigate turnover among employees?

Interview Questions

1. How do you track employee turnover?

2. How do you measure your employees' levels of engagement?

3. How do you manage absenteeism or other withdrawal behaviors?

4. What strategies have you used to reduce employee turnover?

5. How have you implemented employee retention strategies?

6. How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce turnover?

7. Which strategies were most effective to reduce employee turnover?

8. What key challenges did you experience, if any, when implementing successful strategies to reduce employee turnover?

9. How did you address or resolve any challenges of implementing successful strategies to reduce employee turnover?

10. What additional information would you like to provide about organizational strategies to reduce employee turnover?

Conceptual Framework

I used social exchange theory (SET) as the concept to help me ground the study. Blau (1964) is often credited as the theorist, although other theorists (Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958) are also largely responsible for SET. Homans (1958) borrowed SET from sociology, economics, and psychology constructs to understand the rewards and costs of relationships within economic networks based on exchanging hypothetical currency such as (a) recognition, (b) rewards, (c) communication, and (d) support. The main tenets of SET include reciprocity, interdependence, and self-interest. SET is based on the exchange

of nonmonetary and monetary benefits between the employee and the organization because of feelings of long-term focus, trust, obligation, and shared values (Haridas et al., 2022; Kemp et al., 2021). Using SET, I explored strategies frontline supervisors use to mitigate employee turnover.

SET applies to this study because I incorporated the theory to help me interpret supervisors' and employees' behaviors. Researchers consider SET one of the most useful frameworks for understanding organizational behavior (Ahmad et al., 2023; Dalgic & Akgunduz, 2022; McLeod et al., 2021; Meira & Hancer, 2021). Blau (1964) indicated that behavior is based on the rewards of an interaction or relationship minus the costs. The logical connection between SET and the nature of the study includes the in depth inquiry into the social exchange behaviors between supervisors and their employees, which was the foundation of the research.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions will help readers gain a common perspective concerning distinctive terms used in this study. The following terms are used within the study:

Employee engagement: a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by dedication, vigor, and absorption (Yucel et al., 2023).

Employee turnover: an employee's voluntary or involuntary permanent departure from the employing organization (Alterman et al., 2021).

Organizational commitment: an employee's identification with, involvement in, and dedication to the goals of the organization, and aspiration to stay in the organization (Bell & Sheridan, 2020).

Turnover intention: a deliberate and conscious willfulness to terminate the employment relationship between the individual and the organization (Yucel et al., 2023).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

This qualitative pragmatic inquiry includes four assumptions. Research assumptions are basically positions, ideas, or issues formed anywhere from the onset of the study design to the concluding report, that are taken for granted and recognized as creditable and universally accepted (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The first assumption was that the chosen population would be available and provide honest, reliable, and unbiased responses applicable to the research topic. The second assumption was that I would be able to provide sufficient data to address the research question by interviewing participants who work in Virginia. The third assumption was that participants would understand the study objectives and interview questions. The final assumption was that participants have actively created strategies to mitigate employee turnover.

Limitations

Limitations are restraints that are substantially beyond a researcher's authority. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) defined the limitations of any study as potential weaknesses that are customarily out of the researcher's control and are intimately

associated with the chosen research design. The first limitation was potential researcher bias. A qualitative researcher is subject to inevitable cultural biases, values, and beliefs (Baldwin et al., 2022; Lash et al., 2021). To alleviate researcher bias, I followed Baldwin et al.'s (2022) recommendations of remaining objective, impartial, and neutral during the research process. The second limitation was the inability to generalize the results due to the small sample size. I included six participants working in Virginia in the sample; therefore, the sample did not represent all industry leaders in the United States. I used purposive sampling to address this limitation. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability selection procedure in which the sample is made up of participants chosen based on a researcher's judgment and the participant's knowledge about the phenomenon (Gill, 2020; Saunders et al., 2016). I selected participants who could provide extensive information about the research topic. The third limitation was that participants' responses might be subjective. I incorporated reflexivity to address subjectivity.

Delimitations

Researchers can use delimitations to define the scope of a study. Delimitations are self-imposed constraints that the researcher consciously sets so that the researcher's objectives and aims do not become impossible to achieve (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The first delimitation was the geographical boundary, which is the state of Virginia. The information obtained from the target population may not apply to other locations. The second delimitation was the participants' employment category. I restricted the sample to frontline supervisors employed in the same organization for at least 5 years.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that the results include examples of successful strategies frontline supervisors in small and medium size organizations can use to mitigate employee turnover, which in turn may reduce organizations' costs of hiring and training new employees. Employee turnover strains organizations financially, disrupts organizational efficiency, and can threaten the development and sustainment of new initiatives (Buchman et al., 2020; Tyler, 2021). I expect this study to be of value to organizations because successful turnover mitigation strategies used by frontline supervisors can increase the organization's profitability, productivity, and competitiveness. Constant employee turnover can have a significant impact on the communities where organizations operate. Tyler (2021) postulated that high employee turnover compromises an organization's ability to support its community. Due to increased turnover costs, the organization will have less resources to dedicate to their community. Conversely, organizational leaders who boost their organization's performance can enhance economic development and growth in their communities.

The implications for positive social change include the potential of increasing employees' engagement and sense of purpose, enhancing employees' wellness, and improving organizational citizenship behaviors. Garsaa and Paulet (2022) analyzed the relationship between environmental, social, and governance disclosure and employee turnover. The researchers found that employee turnover can be decreased not only by investing in social responsibility but also by informing stakeholders about such efforts (Garsaa & Paulet, 2022). A significant implication for positive social change that may

arise from this study includes empowering organizational leaders with successful strategies that might help retain employees who contribute to an organization in partnership with the local community. Another implication is that organizational leaders can use the results to help positively alter the financial status of employees and the economic status of communities where the employees live and work.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore the strategies frontline supervisors use to mitigate employee turnover in their organizations. The literature review included 124 scholarly articles from (a) Business Source Complete, (b) ProQuest Central, (c) SAGE Journals, (d) Google Scholar, (e) Emerald Management Journals, and (f) ABI/INFORM Collection. I utilized sources that are aligned with the business topic and peer reviewed, seminal, or government sources that will be less than 5 years old at the completion of the study. I searched for literature using the following keywords: (a) *social exchange theory*, (b) *exchange relations*, (c) *employee turnover*, (d) *supervisor employee relationship*, (e) *employee engagement*, (f) *employee retention strategies*, (g) *workplace relationships*, (h) *job satisfaction*, (i) *organizational commitment*, (j) *labor turnover*, (k) *leadership styles*, (l) *leadership development*, (m) *participative leadership*, and (n) *management strategies*. Approximately 85% of the sources were peer reviewed as verified by Ulrich's Periodical Directory through Walden University. The total sources reviewed included 109 peer reviewed journals, six open journals, six seminal sources, two conference sessions, and one website. Furthermore, 86% of the sources were published between 2019 and 2024.

The literature review begins with an overview of employee turnover, during which I discuss turnover intention and actual turnover and highlight the costs of employee turnover. The next section includes an analysis of SET, which I used to form the foundation of the study. Furthermore, this section includes a discussion of two alternative theories. Next, I discuss the following potential themes: (a) leaders' role in mitigating turnover, (b) leadership development, (c) leadership styles and employee turnover, (d) diversity and employee turnover, (e) turnover and employee supervisor relationships, (f) supervisor support and employee turnover, (g) employee engagement and turnover, (j) organizational commitment and turnover, and (k) job satisfaction. In the final section, I discuss strategies frontline supervisors can use to mitigate employee turnover.

Employee Turnover

Employee turnover is a challenging issue for organizational leaders globally. Tenakwah (2021) shared the results of a Work Institute retention report and emphasized that 78% of turnover worldwide could have been prevented. Researchers have defined *employee turnover* as an employee's voluntary or involuntary permanent departure from the employing organization (Alterman et al., 2021; Garsaa & Paulet, 2022; Krishna et al., 2022). While the reasons vary based on the employees and their employers, researchers found that the main reasons employees left were compensation and benefits, career development, supervisor or manager behavior, well-being, work-life balance, job characteristics, work environment, relocation, retirement, and involuntary turnover (Alterman et al., 2021; Tenakwah, 2021). Oruh et al. (2020) investigated the relationship

between employee turnover and managerial employment relations. The researchers found that employee turnover was triggered by managerial employment relations. Oruh et al. (2020) classified the results into five themes: (a) nonparticipatory engagement, (b) crushing workload, (c) discontent with inflexibility, (d) silencing employee voice, and (e) centralized communication. Each of the issues is within the scope of what frontline supervisors can address to influence employee turnover behavior.

Turnover Intention and Actual Turnover

Turnover intention and actual turnover are two different constructs. Al-Dalahmeh et al. (2020) referred to turnover intention as the possibility of an employee imminently departing from an organization. While some researchers (Richter et al., 2020) found no relationship between turnover intentions and actual turnover, Al-Dalahmeh et al. believed it to be the best indicator of turnover behavior. In support of Al-Dalahmeh et al., Oh and Chhinzer (2021) and Shin and Jeung (2019) also found a direct link between turnover intentions and actual turnover. Chu et al. (2022) investigated the association of strengths-based leadership with employee turnover intention and found that strengths-based leadership relates negatively to turnover intention and the relationship between strengths-based leadership and turnover intention is partially mediated by felt obligation for constructive change. Aggarwal et al. (2022), however, aligned with Yucel's (2021) suggestion that organizational leaders who evaluate turnover intentions can help mitigate actual turnover. Researchers suggested that organizational leaders identify and use factors that employees recognize and value such as benefits, rewards, and advancement opportunities to mitigate employees' turnover intentions (Aggarwal et al., 2022;

Alterman et al., 2021; Yucel, 2021). Muhammad et al. (2021) investigated the effect of job stress and workload on employee turnover intention. Unlike Meduri and Jindal (2021) and Chowdhury et al. (2022) who grounded their research on SET, Muhammad et al. grounded their research on person environment fit theory which assumes when persons identify misperceptions of the work environment reality, stress occurs. The researchers found a positive correlation between employee turnover intentions and job stress. In alignment with Chowdhury et al. and Meduri and Jindal, Muhammad et al. recommended business leaders create appropriate strategies for retaining employees. Organizational leaders can develop strategies to influence employee turnover behavior and decrease the probability of employees forming turnover intentions.

Cost of Employee Turnover

There are direct and indirect costs, which could be financial or nonfinancial, associated with employee turnover. Whereas Hultman (2019) estimated the annual cost of employee turnover could be approximately one million dollars annually, Hornickel (2019) suggested that organizational leaders could pay billions of dollars in employee turnover costs annually, and Tenakwah (2021) exceeded both estimates with a prediction of one trillion dollars annually as the cost of employee turnover. The difficulty organizational leaders face in pinpointing the cost of employee turnover involves the various indirect costs associated with turnover, such as reduced performance, loss of productivity, lower morale, and loss of organizational knowledge (Buchman et al., 2020; Hornickel, 2019; Tyler, 2021). Indirect employee turnover costs are difficult for organizational leaders to quantify, yet those costs have a significant impact on

organizations. The direct costs of employee turnover are more transparent for organizational leaders to quantify. Saverio et al. (2018) outlined some of the direct costs to the organization associated with employee turnover as vacancy advertisement, recruitment, interview, and training costs of new hires. Hultman (2019), Tenakwah (2021), and Zhang et al. (2022) supported Saverio et al. as they also included separation pay, recruiting new employees, and onboarding and training new employees as some of the financial costs of employee turnover. Saverio et al. posited that turnover costs could limit organizations' profitability. Organizational leaders who understand the direct costs of turnover can provide tangible benefits to their organizations. Researchers who understand the costs associated with employee turnover can use the information to offer strategies that mitigate the costly phenomenon.

SET as a Conceptual Framework

SET helps researchers describe and interpret the interactions between employees, their supervisors, and their employers. Blau (1964) differentiated between economic exchanges and social exchanges. Social exchanges generated perceptions of trust and duty rather than stipulations contingent upon contractual obligations based on economic exchanges (Blau, 1964). Emerson (1976) referred to SET as a frame of reference based on the social exchange restricted to behaviors that are conditional on rewards from others.

One of the principles of SET is reciprocity. Researchers use reciprocity to focus on mutual benefits of the exchange relationship. Quratulain et al. (2018) explained that reciprocity is the goal of individuals who develop a relationship with the mutual benefit of positive interactions. The strategies organizational leaders implement to improve

employee effectiveness and productivity and generate mutual benefit are referred to as organizational reciprocity (Meira & Hancer, 2021; Pu et al., 2024; Quratulain et al., 2018). The social exchange mutual benefit can be social or economic, with the rewards being intrinsic or extrinsic. Wei et al. (2019) explained extrinsic rewards are economic exchanges, which include bonuses and other financial compensation. Furthermore, Wei et al. emphasized that the rewards are social and intrinsic in terms of reciprocity. The researchers designated intrinsic rewards as social exchanges between individuals, indicating representations and perceptions of employees. According to Akpom and Ibegbulam (2023) and Wei et al., intrinsic rewards between employees meaningfully influence sharing intention. Further, reciprocity is based on each employee's self-interest and the interdependence of other employees, which heightens the need for communication, trust, and knowledge sharing.

Interdependence is another main principle of SET. Researchers can use interdependence to focus on acknowledging an employee's need for another employee to achieve their established goal. Zhang et al. (2022) defined *interdependence* as an individual's requirement of others to achieve set goals or tasks. Within social exchanges, interdependence relies upon the ability of individuals to continue learning and sharing their knowledge with other individuals to achieve an organizational goal (Moilanen & Ikäheimo, 2019). Using the principle of interdependence, trust improves the probability of employees engaging and sharing information with their frontline supervisors (Zhang et al., 2022). As employees and supervisors develop within organizations, communication and sharing improve, which improves efficiency in obtaining an organization's

established goal based on employees' interdependence. Interdependence impacts organizations' efficiency and productivity. Zhang et al. (2022) posited that interdependence prevails within organizational relationships due to the need to rely on and interact with organizational employees. Blau (1964) explained that relationship exchanges presume an interdependence between individuals to accomplish set expectations and goals, which are improved through reciprocity. Huang et al. (2018), Strik et al. (2021), and Zhang et al. furthered Blau's explanation and found that interdependence impacts extroversion positively and increases employee knowledge sharing, which enables employees to develop communication and trust with other employees. Further, Strik et al. postulated that negative interdependence behaviors impact knowledge sharing negatively. Researchers noted that establishing trust is significantly related to employee exchanges of knowledge and efficiency (Zakaria & Yusof, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). Although Strik et al. noted that trust and communication weaknesses in employee supervisor relationships take longer to develop knowledge sharing and trust exchanges, Wei et al. (2019) highlighted some of the incentives for employees who share knowledge as extrinsic rewards, trust, and self-values. In alignment with Wei et al., Pu et al. (2024) credited trust as a benefit of sharing knowledge in exchange relationships. Supervisors who understand the impact behaviors have on organizational interdependence and an employee's ability to develop communication and trust can impact an organization's ability to achieve organizational goals.

Self-interest is also an important principle of SET. Researchers can use self-interest to focus on the established expectation an employee identifies within the social exchange as their goal. Ting and Ahn (2023) referred to self-interest as the expectations and goals an individual establishes that cannot be accomplished without assistance. Muldoon et al. (2019) surmised that in relation to social exchanges, researchers (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958) initially focused more on altruism instead of self-interest. Furthermore, Muldoon et al. posited that self-interest helps individuals develop trust within social exchange. Employees who considered themselves better than their coworkers limited their communication and performance and had less job satisfaction than their coworkers who perceived themselves as equal (Zhang et al., 2022). However, Zhang et al. (2022) explained that employees still maintained working relationships with coworkers. Self-interest in job satisfaction was the recognized effect of the social exchange (Zhang et al., 2022). While self-interest is the goal of the relationship, the individual must recognize the need for help from other individuals to achieve the goal.

I selected SET for this qualitative pragmatic inquiry because I can use its flexibility to help me explain the nature of the relationship between frontline supervisors and their employees. Researchers have used SET to explore the relationship between the employee and the organization, providing a foundation for understanding employee organizational commitment, employee job satisfaction, and employee engagement (Choi et al., 2015; Kim & Beehr, 2020). Aggarwal et al. (2022) suggested that researchers use SET to study employee engagement and commitment, while Chowdhury et al. (2022) noted researchers' use of SET to study organizational and supervisory support behaviors.

Furthermore, Roch et al. (2019) demonstrated that researchers can use SET to analyze perceived justice while Kaur and Randhawa (2021a) posited that researchers incorporate SET to help analyze organizational citizenship behaviors. Ahmad et al. (2023) emphasized that SET is contingent upon the relationships between two or more individuals who depend on each other to achieve a predetermined goal, either individually or as a team. Moilanen and Ikäheimo (2019) supported Ahmad et al.'s point and noted that researchers use SET to explore the benefits of reciprocal relationships. In this study, I used SET as the framework for exploring the interactions between frontline supervisors and their employees and how those interactions impact the employees' job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment. Figure 1 is a graphical depiction of SET applied to employee turnover.

Figure 1

Graphical Depiction of Social Exchange Theory Applied to Employee Turnover
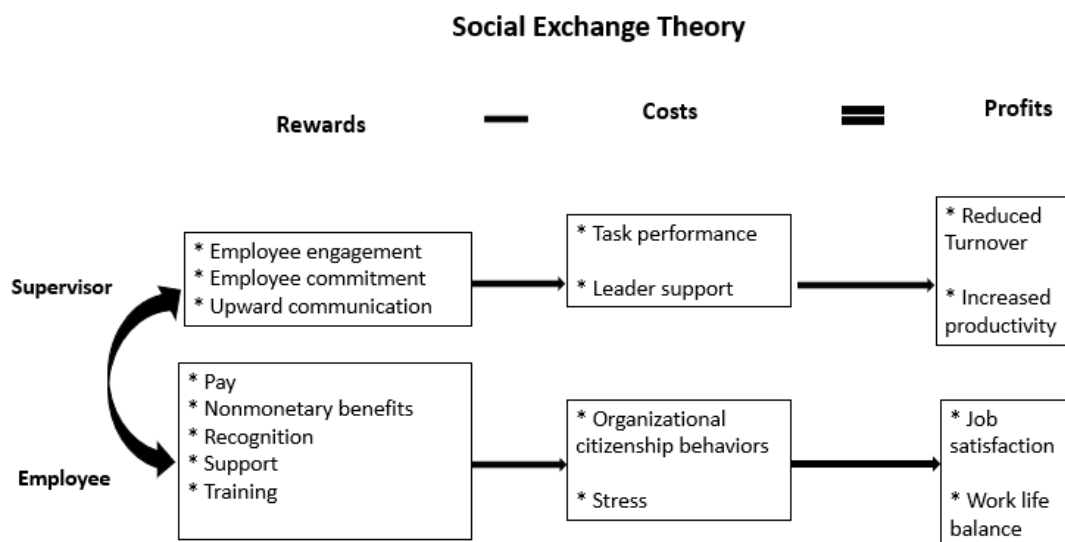
Note. Adapted from "Social Behavior as Exchange," by G. Homans, 1958, *American Journal of Sociology*, *63*(6), 597–606 (https://doi.org/10.1086/222355). In the public domain.

Criticisms of SET

There are two major criticisms of SET throughout the literature. One of the criticisms of SET is that the benefits of the theory can be undermined by the social behaviors of employees or leaders, which can impair trust and knowledge sharing (Al Halbusi et al., 2021). However, Hou and Zhang (2021) countered that SET benefits are measured based on employees' dedication to the organization and psychological ownership. Another criticism of SET is that it is not theoretically precise (Cooper-Thomas & Morrison, 2018). Although Ahmad et al. (2023) asserted that one of the primary objectives of SET is that researchers can use it to help understand how the

implications of reciprocity and interdependence can improve productivity and organizational cohesiveness, Cooper-Thomas and Morrison (2018) contended that SET lacks specificity regarding complex workplace relationships. In contrast, Hou and Zhang (2021) found that managers can improve employee commitment, which increases the benefits of SET. I weighed the rewards and costs of incorporating SET into the study and determined that the benefits of SET outweighed the criticisms. Supervisors can utilize SET principles to influence employee behaviors.

Alternative Theories

I analyzed two alternative theories for this study: Fiedler's (1964) contingency theory and Bass's (1985) transactional leadership theory. Contingency theory is a management theory about the effectiveness of leadership, whereas transactional leadership theory is a leadership behavior theory. While Cruz et al. (2011) emphasized that there are advantages and disadvantages to the contingency theory, Syaharudin et al. (2022) posited that transactional leadership has the weakest influence on employee performance. I selected SET as the conceptual framework for this study because the constructs of SET will help me provide a broad interpretation of the exchange relationship between employees and their supervisors.

Contingency Theory. I considered contingency theory to support the research on leaders' different leadership styles regarding interactions with their employees. Fiedler (1964) shifted the focus of leadership studies toward the study of different leadership styles. There is no single best way of leading and a leadership style that is effective in certain situations may not be successful in others (Popp & Hadwich, 2018). According to

Fiedler's (1964) contingency model, the best leadership style is contingent upon the tasks, and different external and internal constraints. One of the essential ideas of contingency theory is that the organization's needs are better satisfied when the management style is appropriate to both the tasks and the nature of the employees. Abedin (2022) used contingency theory as a theoretical lens for guiding organizations and decision-makers to manage the explicable effects of artificial intelligence. The four principles Abedin drew on included: (a) there is no universal or best way to do things, (b) the design of organizations must fit their environment, (c) effective organizations should fit their environments as well as their subsystems, and (d) the goals and needs of an organization are better satisfied when its management style fits both the nature of the work and the task. While the contingency theory does not help individuals improve their leadership skills, it can be useful to help leaders choose the most effective leadership style based on the situation.

When uncertainty exists in the environment due to rapid change, leaders who demonstrate a flexible leadership style may be better suited to deal with necessary changes. Shah (2020) proposed that managers implement a transformational leadership style and adopt affiliated human resource management practices contingent upon the level of leader-member exchange relationship which could lead to effective organizational leadership. If leader-member relations are good, a task-based leader will secure the best performance when the leader holds a significant amount of power, and the task is unstructured. Alternatively, a relationship-oriented leader will secure the best performance if leader-member relations are poor, the task is structured, and the leader

holds little power (Shah, 2020). Although Fiedler (1964) proposed that leadership styles are fixed, other psychologists (Popp & Hadwich, 2018) argued that leaders can adjust to a style that best fits their followers. Ellyson et al. (2012) used Fiedler's contingency theory to show that leadership styles are contingent upon the leaders' situation. Popp and Hadwich examined the effects of employee behavior in different types of service contexts, and the researchers supported Ellyson et al. and found that leaders choose leadership styles based on different situations. Additionally, the researchers (Ellyson et al., 2012; Popp & Hadwich, 2018) were aligned with Cruz et al. (2011) who found that leaders could adjust their style to fit the situation. To maximize engagement and performance, leaders should identify which leadership styles work best with their employees and use those specific styles when interacting with the employees.

  Transactional Leadership Theory. After I scrutinized the contingency theory, I analyzed the transactional leadership theory. Bass (1985) developed the transactional leadership theory on the notion that leaders prompt task completion by either rewarding or punishing followers. Bass provided the following constructs of the theory: (a) constructive transactions, (b) corrective actions, and (c) contingent rewards. Researchers can use transactional leadership to assist in developing and maintaining a situation in which employee capabilities are maximized. Kafetzopoulos and Gotzamani (2022) defined transactional leadership as a leadership approach based on a contractual agreement between a leader and his followers. Similarly, Thapa and Parimoo (2022) explained transactional leadership as an outcome-based leadership style contingent on an exchange of resources. Each side expects the other to fulfill the agreed upon terms of the

transaction to guarantee the survival of their relationship (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021; Kafetzopoulos & Gotzamani, 2022; Thapa & Parimoo, 2022). Transactional leaders focus more on the outcome of transactions and exchanges rather than on employees.

Researchers have noted several differences between SET and transactional leadership theories (Bass, 1985; Frangieh & Rusu, 2021). How organizational leaders reduce turnover through employees' commitment is one of the key differences between SET and transactional leadership theories. Transactional leaders, according to some scholars (Bass, 1985; Thapa & Parimoo, 2022), incorporate extrinsic reward systems to obtain commitment from followers, while some social exchange theorists (Dalgic & Akgunduz, 2022; McLeod et al., 2021) incorporate intrinsic motivational mechanisms to obtain commitment by engaging with followers. Dessalegn et al. (2021) suggested that transactional leadership can be helpful in stimulating employee engagement. In contrast, Itzkovich et al. (2020) asserted that transactional leadership can adversely alter an employee's engagement. The transactional leader inspires a modest degree of performance, dedication, engagement, and commitment by offering contingent rewards to followers (Odero, 2023). Frangieh and Rusu (2021) warned that if supervisors' relationships with their employees are based only on external reward systems it may not elicit organizational dedication, which could help leaders mitigate employee turnover. External rewards such as pay might not be able to help mitigate turnover because as Syaharudin et al. (2022) highlighted, employees can easily obtain details about what competitors pay for skills the employees possess. Another difference between SET and transactional leadership theories is how organizational leaders reduce turnover through

employees' trust. According to researchers (Lumbantoruan et al., 2020; Skopak & Hadzaihmetovic, 2022; Syaharudin et al., 2022), transactional leaders use the reward system to inspire employees and mitigate employee turnover. However, Frangieh and Rusu (2021) contradicted this beneficial effect and explained that an economic based relationship might not reduce employee turnover without nonmonetary incentive.

Organizational leaders can use transactional leadership in various ways and have different impacts on job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is important in the context of this study because DeLay and Clark (2020) found that employee turnover is significantly impacted by job satisfaction. Shah (2020) and Ullah and Khan (2019) recommended that organizational leaders incorporate the leadership style that is most appropriate for the situation to resolve organizational issues such as high turnover. Consequently, regarding the issue of employee turnover, I will use the principles of SET rather than the transactional leadership theory to support this study.

Leaders' Role in Mitigating Turnover

Organizational leaders play a significant role in mitigating employee turnover. Organizational leaders are responsible for developing strategies that support employees and reward employees' achievements and commitment. Fletcher et al. (2018) asserted that to their employees, leaders are the most influential individuals in an organization. Jun et al. (2023) demonstrated that perceived supervisor support completely mediates the relationship between employee turnover intention and authentic leadership. Researchers can use Jun et al.'s study to support their argument that by demonstrating superior level beliefs and values, authentic leaders can ensure followers know their leaders support

them through authentic and transparent acts. Authentic leaders focus on building trust in employee relationships.

Trust is also a significant factor in empowering leadership. Ouyang et al. (2020) examined the relationship between turnover intention and empowering leadership, finding that participants' turnover intention was significantly reduced by empowering leadership. In a similar study, Wibowo and Paramita (2022) investigated the impact of mindful and empathetic leadership on resilience and turnover intention. Wibowo and Paramita supported Ouyang et al. and acknowledged the significant relationship between leadership styles and turnover intention. According to Wibowo and Paramita, a leader's role is critical among employees to reduce turnover intention. Wibowo and Paramita found that mindful leadership reduces turnover intention but does not increase resilience. The authors also found that empathetic leadership increases resilience but does not lessen turnover intention (Wibowo & Paramita, 2022). Based on their findings, the authors speculated that employees need more action-oriented leadership styles to reduce turnover intention (Ouyang et al., 2020; Wibowo & Paramita, 2022). Supervisors should apply mindful leadership if they would like to reduce subordinates' turnover intention. Wibowo and Paramita also concluded that empathetic leadership is appropriate if supervisors would like to increase their subordinates' resilience.

Donkor et al. (2022) conducted a study to explore the impact of transformational leadership style on employee turnover intentions. Donkor et al. suggested that turnover intention was reduced when employees felt included and were rewarded for their performance. Donkor et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership inversely

relates to employee turnover intention. It was notable that the authors found that transformational leadership had an insignificant impact on turnover intentions. That finding was contrary to their initial hypothesis and Donkor et al. contradicted Richter et al. (2020) regarding turnover intentions. Donkor et al. concluded that building trust and confidence among employees would reduce turnover intentions. Leaders are responsible for building trust and confidence among their employees.

Robertson (2021) investigated the influence of organizational leaders on the high turnover rate during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown in 2021. Robertson found that by failing to identify and change aspects that contributed to pre pandemic employee turnover, organizational leaders missed a chance to retain their employees while the shutdown temporarily paused employee turnover. Robertson posited that leadership action is crucial for establishing lines of communication, creating trusting relationships, and promoting employee retention.

Leadership Development

Although many scholars have explored the study of leadership for centuries, a newer phenomenon is leadership development, which has received less attention than leadership in general (Swayze & Calvin, 2016). Leadership development is relevant to this study because organizational leaders use leadership development programs to strengthen employee engagement. Executive level organizational leaders must be capable of identifying the essential skills necessary for the various level of leaders within the organization and providing training, support, and development opportunities to employees who need the skills (Abraham et al., 2023). Wolper (2016) emphasized that

leadership development programs should include an expansive range of leadership skills and not only train the skills but also demonstrate how leaders should use the skills in practice. Organizational leaders who provide leadership development programs offer their employees resources that increase their satisfaction, engagement, and commitment.

Researchers have indicated a correlation between leadership development and employee engagement (Swayze & Calvin, 2016; Wolper, 2016). Furthermore, Wolper added that high employee turnover could become the norm if leadership development programs are unsuccessful. Larsson et al. (2020) presented a notable study on leadership development programs. The researchers explored the relationship between participation in leadership development programs and employee disengagement. Larsson et al. found that half of the participants reflected a sense of distancing themselves from their organizations. For other participants, an emotional disengagement with their home organization, which the researchers viewed as parallel to changes in social identity (Larsson et al., 2020). In addition to leadership development, leadership styles are significant factors in employee engagement.

Leadership Styles and Employee Turnover

Leaders practice different leadership styles based on the situation and the organization. Drzewiecka and Roczniewska (2018) defined leadership style as a repeated process of collecting information, establishing bonds, making decisions, and reacting. Further, Costa et al. (2023) noted that leaders use different styles of leadership to empower organizational innovation by influencing employees, which supports innovation processes. Frangieh and Rusu (2021) revealed that leaders can motivate employees and

increase employee productivity by adopting the appropriate leadership style. By varying their leadership styles, leaders can affect their financial performance as well as environmental and social performance. Leaders influence employees by using different leadership styles to make decisions (Thanh & Quang, 2022). A leader can aid or constrain their subordinates' performance and engagement within an organization based on how the leader displays and adapts their leadership style. Chaman et al. (2021), as well as Jan and Maulida (2022) highlighted that the leader's behavior and leadership style are impacted by motivation which can influence employees' performance. Delay and Clark (2020) supported and postulated that successful leaders use a combination of leadership styles that complement each other. Effective leaders vary leadership styles to maximize performance.

Some styles of leadership are more effective than others. Dessalegn et al. (2021) examined the effect of leadership style on employee commitment through the mediation of the role of employees' trust in the supervisor. Dessalegn et al. found that the significance of employees' trust in supervisors, all leadership styles, and commitment was high. While the achievement-oriented leadership style was the least practiced type, supportive leadership was the dominant type of leadership style. Dessalegn et al. confirmed that the relationships between employee commitment and leadership styles were mediated by employees' trust. The researchers concluded that employees' trust significantly mediates the connection between participative, directive, achievement-oriented leadership styles, and commitment. Employee trust partially mediates the linkage between commitment and a supportive leadership style. Conversely, Masood et

al. (2020) found that the transactional and transformational styles of leadership had an insignificant relationship with employee turnover. Researchers recommend business leaders apply the appropriate leadership style that will enable employees to build trust in their leaders which ultimately enhances their commitment level in the workplace (Dessalegn et al., 2021; Kafetzopoulos & Gotzamani, 2022; McKim & Goodwin, 2021).

In another leadership study, Kafetzopoulos and Gotzamani (2022) examined how different leadership styles impact talent management and how leadership styles and talent management impact organizations' performance. The researchers brought together differences among leaders in their personalities, values, experiences, and other human aspects, to improve understanding of different leadership styles (Kafetzopoulos & Gotzamani, 2022). Using a similar study, McKim and Goodwin (2021) discussed four main components of leadership that would be influenced by the leader's style. The primary components included disrupting challenges to sustainability, collaborating across differences, continuously learning, and becoming a flag around which all parties rally (McKim & Goodwin, 2021). Each of the components is a characteristic or capability that can be found within leaders who demonstrate transformational or participative leadership styles.

Transformational Leadership Style

The leadership style that leaders use can influence their followers' levels of commitment and engagement. Researchers found that transformational leadership plays a significant role in employee engagement (Bader et al., 2023; Sehanovic et al., 2022). Transformational leaders use positive interactions to build relationships that directly

affect the engagement levels of their followers (Bader et al., 2023). Transformational leadership plays an essential role in effectiveness and survival. Skopak and Hadzaihmetovic (2022) revealed that leaders use transformational leadership to help forecast job satisfaction while Kafetzopoulos and Gotzamani (2022) referred to transformational leadership as one of the most sought after approaches to leader behavior that leaders use to inspire and transform talents to build skills and knowledge and be more valuable to the organization. According to Domínguez et al. (2022), leaders use the transformational leadership style to increase awareness about shared interests in others. Transformational leaders focus on employees instead of targets or tasks and provide a friendly and conducive environment for them. Abbas and Ali (2023) and Ullah et al. (2021) shared the positive influences of transformational leadership including perceived work quality, employee job satisfaction, performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, commitment, cooperation, mission valence, and information use. The researchers demonstrated that organizational leaders use transformational leadership to play a positive role in the formation of social sustainability (Abbas & Ali, 2023; Ullah et al., 2021). Unlike some other leadership styles, transformational leadership is employee-oriented instead of task-oriented. Organizational leaders can use transformational leadership to enhance employee supervisor relationships.

Participative Leadership Style

Participative leaders can have a significant impact on employees' job satisfaction. House and Mitchell (1975) defined participative leadership as a style of leadership that leaders use to include followers in decision making, consult with followers about issues

related to work, collect ideas from followers, and attempt to incorporate ideas from followers into decision making. Banjarnahor et al. (2018) posited that leaders who use a participative leadership style foster improved performance and job satisfaction among their followers because they allow their followers to participate in formulating goals and requirements. Frega (2021) supported Banjarnahor et al.'s notion that participative leaders enhance followers' job satisfaction and performance. Frega further postulated that participative leaders directly tackle the issue of alienation by involving followers in decision making. Social involvement is an important aspect of SET. Chan (2019) supported Banjarnahor et al., Frega, and Usman et al. (2021) in finding that participative leadership is positively related to employees' job satisfaction and engagement. Furthermore, Usman et al. found that this leadership style positively influences workplace thriving and helping behaviors; and leaders' behavioral integrity moderates the association between participative leadership and workplace thriving so that the positive association is stronger for employees who recognize their leaders as possessing superior leader behavioral integrity. Leaders can use a participative leadership style to improve employee relations and enhance job satisfaction.

Diversity and Employee Turnover

Leaders must be able to effectively manage multicultural organizations to meet performance goals. Multicultural management is essential in establishing new skills and methods to solve problems such as employee turnover. Vora et al. (2019) found that the future workforce will include multiple generations and cultures. Hence, leaders need to be tolerant and flexible. The next generation of leaders must possess the skill to practice

critical thinking in complex situations (Vora et al., 2019). Researchers credit SET for its usefulness in helping organizational leaders improve cross-cultural relationships linked to the benefit of the exchanges (Chatzopoulou et al., 2022; Moilanen & Ikäheimo, 2019). Huertas-Valdivia et al. (2018) asserted that leaders should focus more on their employees. Leaders, according to Huertas-Valdivia et al., are responsible for their employees' engagement levels in relation to the success of the organizational goals. Pattnaik (2018) highlighted some of the benefits of diversity for individuals such as jobs, promotions, bonuses, training, networks, and knowledge. Majczyk (2022) aligned with Pattnaik and added that some of the benefits of diversity in social exchange relationships include greater business performance, employee commitment and satisfaction, a competitive advantage, enhanced relationships with multicultural communities, and higher profits.

Alshaabani et al. (2021) examined the impact of service businesses' diversity management systems on employees' engagement and the moderating role of job security and organizational trust in that relationship. Alshaabani et al. found that diversity management has a positive significant effect on employees' engagement and that the association is mediated by job insecurity and organizational trust. The researchers suggested that when employees perceive the operations of the management positively, they tend to be more engaged and inspired at their workplace as an exchange toward the positively perceived operations. Alshaabani et al. found that the relationship between employees' engagement and diversity management was negatively mediated by job insecurity, indicating that job insecurity could negatively reduce the effect of diversity

management on employees' engagement. Raithel et al. (2021) found that an important component of leaders' effectiveness in leading culturally diverse teams is the understanding of cultural diversity that leaders develop through experience with cultural diversity. Wood et al. (2023) supported the notion that cultural diversity broadens social identities and networks.

Jankelová et al. (2022) examined the link between best practices in diversity and inclusion in organizations and the rate of employee turnover, assuming that best practices are positively related to the rate of employee turnover through teamwork climate. Jankelová et al. incorporated gender, age, education, and length of manager practice as the control variables. Furthermore, the researchers focused on teamwork climate as a mediating variable, moderating the effect of best practices in implementing diversity management and its possible level of influence on employee turnover in the organization. Jankelová et al. found that the turnover rate is influenced by the manager's age, gender, and length of practice. The researchers showed that the involvement of women in corporate governance can have a positive impact on the level of staff turnover. Additionally, Jankelová et al. found that age, length of experience, and gender are significantly related to the variables of best practices in teamwork climate and diversity management. The researchers suggested diversity management can not only reduce individual performance and weaken employee morale if tools are incorrectly set, but it can also have a negative impact on employee satisfaction and increase turnover in organizations (Jankelová et al., 2022).

Ritz and Alfes (2018) investigated how diversity and dissimilarity measures affect public employees' attachment to employment in a multicultural public administration. The independent variables were language diversity, language dissimilarity, supervisor support for diversity, unit-level controls, and individual-level controls; and the dependent variable was an attachment to employment. Ritz and Alfes demonstrated that language diversity and the support for diversity from supervisors positively affected individuals' attachment. The researchers did not, however, find that individuals' language dissimilarity was related to the inclusion of minorities and did not support the assumed crowding out effect between dissimilarity and diversity. Regarding the crowding out effect, Ritz and Alfes theorized that as language differences decrease, communication bonds increase. The researchers demonstrated that supervisors' support is crucial for strengthening employees' experiences of inclusion and attachment (Ritz & Alfes, 2018). Diverse organizational leaders can have a positive impact on employee relationships.

Turnover and Employee Supervisor Relationships

The relationship between a subordinate and supervisor is significant. Bajaba et al. (2024) used SET to emphasize the reciprocal aspect of supervisor employee relationships and highlight the need for respect and mutual trust. Organizational goals, employee efficiency, and productivity can increase in a healthy subordinate supervisor relationship (He & Zhou, 2023). A tense subordinate supervisor relationship may constitute cause for the subordinate to terminate their job (Xu et al., 2020). He and Zhou (2023) suggested that incompetent supervision could forge undesirable turnover. According to Meduri and

Jindal (2021), employees often specified their supervisors' behavior as the main rationale for departing their organizations.

Supervisors can demonstrate poor communication behavior. Faupel and Helpap (2021) explained that subordinates are likely to imitate their supervisor's attitudes and behaviors, which are treated as valid authorities of workplace conduct. One example is the variance in types of communication. Supervisors and subordinates use different types of communication in their relationships. Supervisors use supervisory communication and subordinates use upward communication. Mikkelson et al. (2019) explained that supervisory communication transpires when a supervisor shares information with their subordinates on work related issues, assignments, performance, objectives, and work schedules. Effective communication between subordinates and supervisors can enhance skills and professional knowledge (He & Zhou, 2023; Mikkelson et al., 2019). However, Herr et al. (2022) countered that poor communication between subordinates and supervisors can result in high employee turnover and reduced employee morale.

Faupel and Helpap (2021) referred to upward communication as the exchange of information, in an organizational hierarchy, from subordinates with supervisors. Supervisors use upward communication to identify changes and needs from the employees' viewpoint (Mikkelson et al., 2019). Subordinates can use upward communication to help establish an environment of respect and trust between supervisors and subordinates (He & Zhou, 2023). Faupel and Helpap (2021) suggested that when upward communication is not apparent, organizational leaders can enhance their communication networks and processes to prevent high turnover rates.

Guan and Frenkel (2019) asserted that positive communication transpires when messages between a subordinate and a supervisor are shared in a supportive and informal manner. Faupel and Helpap (2021) indicated that supervisors can use their communications with employees to help influence job satisfaction and commitment. Guan and Frenkel shared similar findings and added that supportive supervisor communication in the workplace helped organizational leaders reduce voluntary employee turnover. A healthy relationship between supervisors and employees bolsters the employees' dedication to the organization.

Supervisor Support and Employee Turnover

Supervisor support is an essential factor that influences employee engagement. Kaur and Randhawa (2021a) examined the relationship between supervisor support and organizational citizenship behavior. The authors also examined how participation and job involvement mediate the relationship between supervisor support and organizational citizenship behavior. The authors framed their study in SET to explore the role supportive supervisors play in developing organizational citizenship behavior. According to the researchers, supervisor support has a significant positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior, and the relationship is mediated by participation (Kaur & Randhawa, 2021a). Furthermore, Kaur and Randhawa found that the relationship between supervisor support and organizational citizenship behavior is partially mediated by job involvement. Meduri and Jindal (2021) shared similar findings in their examination of the relationship between the manager's role and employee turnover during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meduri and Jindal concurred with Kaur and Randhawa

that subordinates' turnover would be less if managers were more involved. The researchers stipulated that support from supervisors and managers plays a major role in the social exchange relationship, which in turn affects the employees' level of organizational commitment (Kaur & Randhawa, 2021a; Meduri & Jindal, 2021). The researchers (Kaur & Randhawa, 2021a; Meduri & Jindal, 2021) contradicted earlier researchers (Teoh et al., 2016) who found that while supportive manager behavior did not predict engagement, it successfully predicted job satisfaction and turnover intentions. According to the researchers, the relationship between supportive manager behavior and turnover intention is mediated by job satisfaction but not engagement, and unsupportive manager behavior predicted job dissatisfaction only. The relationship between unsupportive manager behavior and turnover intention was not mediated by either job satisfaction or engagement. While Teoh et al. demonstrated that the positive relationship between turnover and supportive manager behavior is undermined by unsupportive manager behavior, Haridas et al. (2022) found that turnover is indirectly and directly affected by perceived informal organizational career management in a negative way. Teoh et al. highlighted the reciprocal interdependence established when one party acts in a beneficial manner towards a second party. Only the indirect effect was significant regarding perceived formal organizational career management. The relationship between turnover and both types of organizational career management is mediated by trust in management (Haridas et al., 2022). Using the principle of reciprocity, supervisors and other leaders can provide support to their employees in exchange for organizational commitment and other rewards.

Employee engagement is an important component of supervisor support. Kaur and Randhawa (2021b) investigated the role of work-life balance and employee engagement in anticipated supervisor support and turnover intentions relationships. The authors grounded their research on SET by including a model of a comprehensive structure with turnover intentions, employee engagement, and work-life balance as the individual variables, and an organizational variable of perceived supervisor support. Kaur and Randhawa found that the effect of perceived supervisor support has an indirect rather than direct effect on turnover intentions. The authors did demonstrate, however, that employee engagement acts as a mediator in the perceived supervisor support and turnover intentions relationship. However, Chowdhury et al. (2022) investigated the role of social support in the prediction of turnover and found, contrarily, that the association between coworker support and turnover intentions was fully mediated by affective commitment, while the relationship between supervisory support and the intention to leave was only partially mediated by affective commitment. Yucel et al. (2023) aligned with Chowdhury et al. and concluded that the actions and behaviors of supervisors play an essential role in their subordinates' attitudes. As such, if employees receive supervisor support, the issue is less likely to affect the employees' work engagement and probability of leaving. Yucel et al. also found that work engagement and work-family conflict are moderated by supervisor support, and supervisor support has a moderated mediation role in the model in which turnover is dependent and work-family conflict is independent and the mediator variable is work engagement (Yucel et al., 2023). Supervisors can have a significant impact on employee engagement, which is linked to employee turnover.

Employee Engagement and Turnover

Employees who work for supportive supervisors are more likely to have higher levels of employee engagement. Simbula et al. (2023) defined employee engagement as a positive, gratifying, work-related psychological state that emanates from dedication, absorption, and vigor. Meira and Hancer (2021) recognized engagement as an essential element affecting employees' behavior. Furthermore, Meira and Hancer suggested engagement is key to organizational leaders achieving improved performance and increased profitability. Organizational leaders who promote employee development and demonstrate support should expect to have more engagement with their employees (Spoor et al., 2022). Additionally, Spoor et al. recommended frequent communication from supervisors with employees to establish trust. Spoor et al. found that employee engagement was positively affected by supervisors' support. The employee's level of engagement, satisfaction, and commitment is affected by social exchanges and the perception of the employee's personal value to the organization (Chowdhury et al., 2022). Organizational leaders can help mitigate employee turnover by positively influencing employee engagement.

Huang et al. (2021) examined the effect of higher levels of transformational leadership, ethical leadership, and participative leadership on employee engagement. The researchers proposed that more positive growth in employee engagement will cause more negative growth in counterproductive work behaviors (Huang et al., 2021). Furthermore, Huang et al. noted that communication vastly influences employees' engagement levels, as a process of social exchange. The researchers suggested that the social exchanges

between a supervisor and an employee impact the relationship between the employee and the organization, which is a demonstration of the employee reciprocating engagement (Bhatti, 2022; Meira & Hancer, 2021). Bhatti (2022) investigated the action of employee engagement as a mediator between perceived organizational identity, the high-performance work system, and organizational commitment. Further, I investigated the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between perceived organizational identity, high-performance work systems, and employee engagement. Bhatti found that the relationship between organizational commitment and high-performance work system is fully mediated by employee engagement. Alternatively, the relationship between commitment and perceived organizational identity is only partially mediated by employee engagement. Further, Bhatti posited that corporate culture moderates the relationship between employee engagement and high-performance work systems. However, the researcher did not observe moderating effects between employee engagement and perceived organizational identity. The researcher suggested that leaders advance inclusivity throughout their organizations to build employee engagement and commitment (Bhatti, 2022). Ly (2023) shared similar findings in a study investigating the impact of inclusive leadership on employee work engagement and affective organizational commitment. Ly found a significant positive relationship between inclusive leadership and employee work engagement, with affective organizational commitment serving as a partial complementary mediator. The researchers emphasized the importance of promoting inclusive leadership and cultural identity to increase employee work engagement and affective organizational commitment, contributing to

enhanced organizational outcomes (Bhatti, 2022; Ly, 2023). Shuck et al. (2021) explored

the engagement and satisfaction enigma and found that job satisfaction was an antecedent

of employee engagement. Shuck et al.'s study is significant because the researchers

validated the use of SET within an employee engagement environment. Oliveira and

Najnudel (2023) found that employee engagement is negatively influenced by abusive

supervision. The researchers also found that abusive supervision contributes to increasing

subordinates' stress and turnover intention. Further, Oliveira and Najnudel found that

engagement mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover

intention. Although employee engagement is an essential component of job satisfaction,

another important element is organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment and Turnover

Employees who are engaged in their work and satisfied with their jobs are more

likely to commit to their organizations. Bell and Sheridan (2020) defined organizational

commitment as an individual's identification with, involvement in, dedication to the

organization's goals, and desire to stay in the organization. Pepple et al. (2023) supported

the definition and asserted that extrinsic rewards such as pay and fringe benefits are

critical factors in influencing levels of commitment. The business leaders proposed that

the performance of the business is based on the level of their employees' commitment

(Pepple et al., 2023). Organizational leaders who obtain high levels of employee

commitment achieve higher levels of job satisfaction and increased employee longevity

(Aggarwal et al., 2022; Bell & Sheridan, 2020; Pepple et al., 2023). According to SET, an

employee's commitment to an organization can be determined by the employee's

perception of support (Meira & Hancer, 2021; Roch et al., 2019). Other researchers indicated employees' organizational commitment is contingent upon their perceived level of support (Bhatti, 2022; Dessalegn et al., 2021; Ly, 2023). Tsen et al. (2022) compared SET and border theory to differentiate the reasoning behind flex leave, flex time, and homeworking. Work-family conflicts and organizational commitment were the two mediators that represented each theory's mechanism. The researchers found that flex time, flex leave, and homeworking are all positively associated with organizational commitment (Tsen et al., 2022). Furthermore, the researchers demonstrated a negative association between organizational commitment and turnover intention (Tsen et al., 2022). Similarly, Chatzopoulou et al. (2022) found that only external corporate social responsibility is associated with increased levels of employee commitment through the improvement of job satisfaction. Panaccio et al. (2023) examined the importance of perceived supervisor support and supervisor promotion of the organization for employee commitment and retention. In alignment with Tsen et al., Panaccio et al. found that positive supervisor behavior can enhance employee commitment and reduce turnover. Frangieh and Rusu (2021) and Spoor et al. (2022) agreed with Chatzopoulou et al., Panaccio et al., and Tsen et al. that organizational commitment is a major component that impacts employee turnover. Mampuru et al. (2024) also supported the researchers while noting the close relationship between employee commitment and retention. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs feel loyalty to remain in the organization, which can positively impact employee turnover.

Job Satisfaction

Researchers studied multiple factors that influence job satisfaction among employees. Some of the factors that influence job satisfaction include supervision, promotions, pay, benefits, co-workers, and communication. Johnson and Rohde (2022), Ullah and Khan (2019), and Widyatama et al. (2021) agreed with DeLay and Clark (2020) about the significance of workplace relationships on job satisfaction. DeLay and Clark (2020) suggested that employees who were satisfied with supervision, promotions, pay, benefits, communication, and co-workers were emotionally connected with the organization. DeLay and Clark found that job satisfaction is positively correlated with transformational leadership qualities. The researchers demonstrated significant positive correlations between transformational leadership styles and the following four elements of job satisfaction: contingent rewards, supervision, communication, and nature of work (DeLay & Clark, 2020). Ullah and Khan (2019) found that both transactional and transformational leadership styles have a significant and positive correlation to job satisfaction, work performance, and organizational commitment. The researchers also showed that compared to the transactional leadership style, the transformational leadership style has a greater influence on organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Ullah & Khan, 2019). Johnson and Rohde (2022) examined whether the relationship between job stress, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions is mediated by emotional exhaustion. Another purpose of the study was to determine if the relationship between job satisfaction, job stress, and turnover intentions as well as emotional exhaustion and job stress is moderated by servant leadership. Johnson and Rohde found

that emotional exhaustion partially mediated the relationship between job satisfaction, job stress, and turnover intention. Furthermore, the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job stress as well as job satisfaction and turnover intention is not moderated by servant leadership (Johnson & Rohde, 2022). The variance in both job satisfaction and turnover intention is a direct result of job stress. Additionally, job stress indirectly contributes to the variance in both job satisfaction and turnover intention by increasing feelings of emotional exhaustion. According to the authors, the effects of both job stress on job satisfaction and turnover intention are partially mediated by emotional exhaustion (Johnson & Rohde, 2022). While Johnson and Rohde (2022) used emotional exhaustion as a mediator, Widyatama et al. (2021) used job satisfaction as a mediator to explore how employee performance is affected by leadership style. Widyatama et al. found that employee performance is not directly influenced by the transactional leadership style or mediated by job satisfaction. The researchers demonstrated that transformational leadership style, on the other hand, has a significant influence on employee performance. Further, Widyatama et al. found that the transformational leadership style has an even stronger impact on employee performance by mediating job satisfaction. In alignment with Widyatama et al., Pu et al. (2024) suggested that job satisfaction may be indirectly or directly impacted by employees' interpersonal interactions, personal development, and the workplace culture. Job satisfaction has a significant impact on employees' decisions to stay with an organization or quit.

Strategies to Mitigate Employee Turnover

Frontline supervisors have an active role in mitigating employee turnover. There are multiple strategies available that frontline supervisors can use to mitigate turnover. Providing supervisor support, two way communication, and a recognition and rewards system are some strategies frontline supervisors can use to help mitigate employee turnover. Kumar (2022) explored strategic techniques and talent management practices for employee retention, to control employee turnover, and to analyze how employee retention and turnover are impacted by talent management practices. Kumar found that employees prefer to stay in an organization that allows them to develop and elevate on the career ladder. The author also found that compensation plans are very helpful in attracting and retaining employees. Kumar's findings validated prior researchers (Bell & Sheridan, 2020; Larsson et al., 2020) who found that employees will remain in an organization longer when they are given regular training and chances to develop. The author highlighted the benefits of talent management in terms of job satisfaction, performance improvement, and employee retention (Kumar, 2022).

Yue et al. (2023) found that the magnitude to which supervisors practiced empathetic communication had substantial consequences on their employees' trust in their supervisors, organizational perception, and eventually, their turnover intentions. When employees have the freedom to communicate with supervisors and a supportive team, employees are more satisfied and want to stay in the organization longer. Patil (2022) aligned with Kumar (2022), and identified skill utilization, rewards and recognition system, setting clear expectations, career and succession planning, and two-

way communication as retention strategies. Donkor et al. (2022) also agreed with Kumar (2022) and Patil (2022) and suggested that turnover was reduced when employees felt included and were rewarded for their performance. Rewards and inclusion lead to job satisfaction and positive affection toward the organization.

Frequent employee turnover is a significant challenge for organizational leaders. In the literature review, I evaluated and synthesized available literature on employee turnover, including turnover intentions and the costs of employee turnover. I analyzed SET as the conceptual framework then contingency theory and transactional leadership as alternative theories. Further, I included a discussion on the leader's role in turnover, leadership development, and leadership styles. Next, I discussed diversity and multicultural management, employee supervisor relationships, supervisor support, employee engagement, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. I concluded the literature review with strategies that frontline supervisors can use to mitigate employee turnover. In the next section, I will summarize Section 1 and provide an overview of Sections 2 and 3.

Transition

In Section 1, the foundation of the study, I introduced the specific business problem emerging due to increased turnover and identified that some frontline supervisors lack strategies to mitigate employee turnover. Furthermore, I explained the purpose and nature of the study, shared the research question and interview questions, and provided operational definitions to help readers gain a common perspective. In Section 1, I also discussed assumptions, limitations, and delimitations as well as the

significance of the study. Further, I reviewed professional and academic literature to support SET as the conceptual framework and to explain various factors that impact employee turnover.

In Section 2, I will reiterate the purpose of the study and explain the role of the researcher. I will describe eligibility requirements for participants and expand on the research method and design. I will also include justifications for the population and sampling criteria and a discussion about the procedures for ethical research. Furthermore, I will discuss the processes used for data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis. I will close Section 2 by detailing the procedures I included to address dependability, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation to ensure reliability and validity. In Section 3, I will restate the purpose of the study and present data analysis findings. I will identify specific themes and explain the findings in relation to the themes. I will end the report with recommendations to mitigate employee turnover and summarize opportunities for future research.

Section 2: The Project

Sustainable organizations require leaders with strategies to maintain organizational commitment and retain employees. Leaders need strategies and skills to improve employee behaviors such as communication and engagement. An appropriate leadership style can result in higher levels of trust, increased work performance, and improved efficiency. The purpose of Section 2 is to establish the role of the researcher, eligibility criteria for participants, research method and design, data collection and analysis, and the reliability and validity of the study to understand the strategies that some frontline supervisors utilize to mitigate employee turnover. This section includes the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore strategies frontline supervisors use to mitigate employee turnover.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary instrument for this study. I researched frontline supervisors' strategies to mitigate employee turnover. My essential task as the researcher in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to act as the main instrument for collecting data to fulfill the intended study results. Other roles qualitative researchers fill include assessing the literature, determining the sample, enlisting participants, and gathering and analyzing data (Yin, 2018). In addition to enlisting the participants, I served as the interviewer, analyzed the data gathered from all sources, and authored the final study.

My relationship with the topic encompassed previous experience as a frontline supervisor in multiple organizations. The study was conducted in Virginia where I have resided for 7 years. Therefore, I may have included participants or organizations that I have interacted with or have been affiliated with professionally. I complied with *The Belmont Report* to administer the research ethically while protecting and respecting the research participants. *The Belmont Report* has been a pillar in the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects since it was signed into law in 1979 (Siddiqui & Sharp, 2021). Respect for persons, justice, and beneficence are the three fundamental principles of *The Belmont Report* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Researchers can use *The Belmont Report* to help with the following tasks (Paxton, 2020): (a) depicting the distinction between procedure and analysis, (b) determining the role of risk-benefit assessments in research on human subjects, (c) delineating acceptable guidelines for choosing subjects, and (d) highlighting standards for what comprises informed consent. I leveraged *The Belmont Report's* principles and followed the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines.

I notified participants via the informed consent form of possible risks. Further safeguards I incorporated include using codes to protect the participants' identities and other demographic information and using password-secured files during and after data collection to protect data. During data collection and analysis, I mitigated any personal bias so that the data would not be skewed or disrupted. I mitigated bias by following interview protocols, member checking, and reaching data saturation. Some of the ways I mitigated bias include carefully listening to all participants, recording interviews, and

tracking the participants' opinions and beliefs. Further, I detected and decoded data, identified patterns and themes, and reached conclusions to mitigate biases. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined an interview protocol as the process and guidelines to help the researcher create questions to produce valuable data. Yeong et al. (2018) expanded the definition by adding that researchers use an interview protocol to facilitate the interview process involving various groups of people in a comprehensive, consistent, and systematic way. I assured participants that I would not disclose their names and that identities and organizations would be confidential. I used a reflective journal to track my personal opinions and record my relationship with the data and analysis.

Participants

The eligibility criteria for participants consisted of frontline supervisors who implemented strategies to mitigate employee turnover. Eligible participants were also required to have worked within the same organization for at least 5 years. Additionally, participants must directly supervise four or more subordinates. I used LinkedIn to access participants to verify their ability to meet the minimum requirements. Some participants were from my comprehensive financial management network. I secured professional working relationships over the past 30 years while interacting during meetings and conferences as a financial manager.

I contacted each potential participant via LinkedIn or email, including the informed consent form and an introduction (invitation email) asking the individual to participate in the study. Informed consent and trust are imperative for all research participants, according to Mozersky et al. (2020), who highlighted the significance of

participants' providing explicit consent for researchers to share data from qualitative

studies. After receiving an affirmative response from a participant agreeing to participate,

I sent them a calendar invitation to coordinate meetings to administer the study. I

attached a copy of the consent form and the participant's confirmation email to the

calendar invite.

Researchers interact with participants to create qualitative data. I used purposive

sampling to recruit six participants from various small and medium sized enterprises

located in Virginia for this study. Researchers use purposive sampling to select

respondents who are most likely to yield useful and appropriate information (Campbell et

al., 2020; Denieffe, 2020). The participants' characteristics align with the overarching

research question: What strategies do frontline supervisors use to mitigate turnover

among employees?

I used both the research question and the objectives of the study as the basis for

selecting participants. Further, participation was contingent on the assumption that certain

people may hold essential and alternative perspectives about the issue being studied and

should therefore be included in the sample.

Research Method and Design

Researchers should consider all available research methods and designs to decide

which will be most appropriate to address their research question. I considered multiple

research methods and designs for this study. House (2018) suggested that the research

question and research goal must determine the choice of the research method; and that the

appropriate method means that any research design should be evaluated on the extent to

which it is able to answer the research question. The methods I considered include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods; and the research designs are pragmatic inquiry, ethnographic, and phenomenological.

Research Method

I selected the qualitative research method for this study. Researchers can provide theoretically sound, rigorous, and realistic techniques for the analysis of subjective, ambiguous, and challenging-to-pinpoint phenomena by using a qualitative research method (Bhangu et al., 2023). Researchers use qualitative research methods to describe, interpret, verify, and evaluate issues (Head et al., 2023; Hendren et al., 2023). Further, Albert and Csizér (2022) suggested researchers can use the qualitative method to explore an array of data sources including interviews, participant observations, and organizational records, to understand why a conceptual framework within an identified business problem exists. Researchers can gain awareness of business problems through the views of the participants by using the qualitative research method (Bhangu et al., 2023). In qualitative studies, researchers offer participants opportunities to share their viewpoints, using human understanding within the relationship between the participant and the researcher. Qualitative research was most appropriate for this study because I intended to describe and interpret supervisors' strategies related to employee turnover.

Quantitative was another research method I considered for the study. House (2018) and Saunders et al. (2016) noted that researchers use the quantitative research method to test objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. Quantitative researchers use surveys and experiments as inquiry strategies; as well as

closed-ended questions, numeric data, and predetermined approaches (Batt & Kahn, 2021), which did not align with the intent of this study. In quantitative studies, researchers gather scientific data and test the data against a theory (House, 2018). Quantitative researchers establish a relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables by employing a theory for the foundation of the hypotheses. I was not measuring the relationships between variables; therefore, I did not select the quantitative research method.

When researchers combine qualitative and quantitative research, it is considered mixed methods. For research to be defined as mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative data should be purposely integrated or connected (Schoonenboom, 2023; Taguchi, 2018). Researchers use concurrent, sequential, and transformative strategies of inquiry for mixed methods studies (Liu, 2022). Mixed methods researchers employ both open and closed-ended questions, both predetermined and emerging approaches, and both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis (Schoonenboom, 2023). Mixed methods researchers support philosophical conventions and validation of the conventions to be quantified scientifically (Liu, 2022). Researchers use mixed methods to share business phenomena from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives (Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, testing a hypothesis from variable angles is a requirement of mixed methods research. This study did not have a quantitative element; therefore, I did not use mixed methods research because it exceeded the purview of my inquiry.

Research Design

I selected a pragmatic inquiry design for this study. Dixon (2019) and McDermid (2023) defined pragmatic inquiry design as a philosophical tradition researchers use to assert that truth may be interpreted in terms of the practical effects of what is believed and the usefulness of the effects. Pragmatic researchers combine beliefs and actions in a course of inquiry that guides any search for knowledge (Ledger et al., 2023; McDermid, 2023). A pragmatic inquiry design was appropriate for this study because I was able to explore individual experiences, concepts, and processes related to employee turnover. Furthermore, I used pragmatic inquiry design to describe the understanding of meanings and purposes frontline supervisors give to their own actions and interactions with employees.

I also considered ethnographic and phenomenological qualitative research designs for this study. Ethnographic researchers seek to explore the meaning individuals place on the values and beliefs of their cultural group (Celikoglu & Hamarat, 2022; Smith et al., 2011). I did not select ethnographic research because I was not observing participants with shared experiences to collect data. In a phenomenological study, researchers explore a phenomenon to understand its meaning and relevance by those experiencing it (Arnout et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2011). Arnout et al. (2020) asserted that phenomenological researchers describe and attempt to depict participants' interpretations of the phenomenon. I did not select a phenomenological design because although I could use first-hand experiences to describe the meaning of experiences, the phenomenological

design was inadequate to help me explore the motives and justifications of participants'
behaviors.

Data saturation is an important aspect of research. Chitac (2022) and Fofana et al.
(2020) referred to data saturation as the point when data collected is adequate to cover the
themes of interest and that collecting additional data will not provide new applicable
information. For this study, I continued asking multiple participants the same interview
questions until the information became repetitive. I considered the data as saturated and
stopped collecting data when no new themes emerged during analysis.

Population and Sampling

I used purposive sampling for this study. Bullard (2023) defined purposive
sampling as a method of deliberately selecting participants to reflect specific
characteristics. Ellis (2020) shared a similar definition and added that purposive sampling
is a process researchers use to provide rich data to observe and analyze issues. I mitigated
ethical concerns by using purposive sampling to select participants.

This qualitative pragmatic inquiry included six frontline supervisors from various
industries in the Hampton Roads area who work for different organizations. Hampton
Roads is an area in the southeastern corner of Virginia that includes seven core cities.
Using various organizations allowed selected participants within the population to
provide different perspectives on employee turnover. Ellis (2020) explained the lack of
sense it made to study the entire population to understand the answer to a question,
whereas Boddy (2016) recommended qualitative researchers refer to the nature of the
topic and scope of the study, the contact time to be spent on each individual research

participant, and the similarity of the population under consideration to justify the sample size. The selection of six participants was appropriate for this study to help me support data adequacy, according to Sarfo et al. (2021), who posited that researchers could achieve data saturation by using as few as six participants.

The sample size was a significant component of data collection. According to Busetto et al. (2020), the more useful data collected from each participant, the fewer participants will be needed. Both Ellis (2020) and Yin (2018) explained that researchers can use the appropriate sample size to achieve data saturation and sufficiently answer the research question. To enable themes to emerge, I conducted interviews either in-person, through Zoom, or Microsoft Teams as data collection techniques. To achieve data saturation, I conducted interviews until no new themes emerged.

I used specific criteria to select from a group of participants. Mozersky et al. (2020) recommended defining inclusion and exclusion criteria for study participants to establish quality research standards. In this study, participants were required to work at their current organization for a minimum of 5 years and directly supervise a minimum of four employees. Another requirement was that participants must have implemented successful strategies that mitigated employee turnover.

I recorded in-person interviews with a voice recorder and other interviews using the meeting record option on the online meeting platforms Zoom or Microsoft Teams, which I then uploaded and transcribed to the computer following the interviews. The backup plan was to use a voice recorder to record every interview, which I would then upload and transcribe to the computer. Mozersky et al. (2020) highlighted the importance

of providing research participants with a sense of comfort and control. I allowed participants to interview in a setting that was comfortable and convenient for the participants.

Ethical Research

The informed consent process is an essential component of research inquiry. Farrugia (2019) explained that for consent to be valid researchers should give participants sufficient and relevant details about the research goals, what participation entails, and the magnitude of any associated risks. Facca et al. (2020) referred to consent as an ongoing ethical obligation when conducting research with human participants. I obtained approval from the Walden University IRB for the study prior to collecting any data. The IRB approval number for this study is 12-19-23-1169360. It expires on December 18, 2024. After receiving IRB approval, I emailed the consent form to prospective participants. Prior to conducting interviews, I ensured all participants had signed and returned their consent form agreeing to participate in the study. Both Farrugia (2019) and Ngozwana (2018) expressed the importance of participants being able to voluntarily choose to participate in the research process. The participants in this study had 2 days to review the consent form information such as the participants' rights and the intent of the research. Additional details I included on the consent form were the type of information to be collected, frequency of participation and duration, the right to not answer certain questions, the right to withdraw from the study, protecting the participants' anonymity and privacy, storing and accessing the data, and that the research process did not involve any conflicts or deception (Farrugia, 2019). I adhered to all principles of *The Belmont*

Report established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections (1979) to ensure respect, justice, and protection by receiving participant consent and incorporating an interview protocol. I used ethical principles to help conduct responsible research.

Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point. Facca et al. (2020) noted the relevance of autonomy, which is the capacity to understand pertinent information about the study to make a knowledgeable voluntary decision, a necessary condition of consent. Josephson and Smale (2020) and Ngozwana (2018) emphasized the significance of the researcher frequently telling participants about their freedom to withdraw without consequences at any time they feel like doing so. I instructed participants that they could notify me of their intent to withdraw by contacting me either verbally or in writing via phone, email, or in person.

Researchers use incentives as a method to recruit participants. While Roa and Biller-Andorno (2022) asserted that incentives compromise the integrity of the research process and its results, Farrugia (2019) proclaimed the researcher can use incentives to help access targeted participants because incentives stimulate participation. Farrugia also warned that incentives can become unethical inappropriate leverage if they are used to persuade or coerce individuals to participate. I did not offer any participation incentives for this study.

Measures that I used to ensure that the ethical protection of participants was adequate include complying with the Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) principles and guidelines for confidentiality, anonymity, and

participant safety. Researchers maintain confidentiality by not revealing any information they obtain during the research process under any circumstances unless the participant grants permission (Facca et al., 2020; Farrugia, 2019). According to Farrugia, since the researcher's goal is to generate new knowledge and disseminate it, researchers anonymize data to disguise participants' identities. I ensured participants their identities would be protected and not shared without authorized consent.

To safeguard the rights of the participants, I stored the data in a secure location where it will remain for 5 years. Othman and Hamid (2018) identified the narrow proximity between informed consent and confidentiality and emphasized the significance of researchers maintaining trust with participants. Farrugia supported Othman and Hamid's premise and recommended researchers allow participants to select their own pseudonyms as a way of showing respect. I adopted a process like Farrugia (2019) and Ngozwana (2018) who both described giving participants codes when transcribing and translating the data. Ilyas et al. (2020) also supported the use of assigning codes to participants to ensure confidentiality. I assigned numbers to participants and pseudonyms to organizations, such as P1, P2, P3, Tiger1, Tiger2, and Tiger3.

Data Collection Instruments

As the researcher in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, I was the principal data collection instrument. Gathering specific data that addresses the research problem is essential for a qualitative researcher (Saracho, 2017; Yin, 2018). As the principal data collection instrument, I gathered information from frontline supervisors to understand the strategies to mitigate employee turnover. I conducted semistructured interviews using

open ended questions as the primary source of data collection. Researchers use semistructured interviews with open ended questions to help participants respond in their own words based on their personal experiences and views (Buys et al., 2022; Husband, 2020; McGrath et al., 2019). Using the semistructured format, I built trust and rapport with participants and incorporated open ended questions to probe deeper into employee turnover.

I incorporated an interview protocol (see Appendix) containing details I used to specify the interview phases, timeline, and procedures. Yin (2018) explained that researchers use interview protocols to establish an acceptable technique for conducting interviews. Yeong et al. (2018) added that the interview protocol helps ensure the researcher asks the same questions to all participants and obtains and sustains participants' cooperation while interviewing. I used the interview protocol to develop a suitable means to conduct semistructured interviews that will include 10 open-ended and follow-up questions as necessary (see Appendix).

I used the interview protocol as a guide to assist me before, during, and after each interview. Some factors Buys et al. (2022) recommended researchers consider when establishing the interview protocol include arranging the questions logically to progress from general to more complex and preparing the interview schedules. Buys et al. (2022) and Sandvik and McCormack (2018) advised that while the interview timing must be long enough to collect sufficient data, the timing should also suit the participants. The duration of interviews for this study was 45-60 minutes, and I scheduled the discussions at a time and location preferred by the participants.

I used a reflective journal to ensure accuracy and bolster the reliability and validity of data collection. The reflective journal contained literature references written in the first person detailing the research process, emails, methodological decisions, moments of clarity, and personal notes (Buys et al., 2022). Researchers can use reflective journals to establish linkages and brainstorm questions and ideas that emerge during interviews (Rhodes & Brook, 2021). Buys et al. (2022) emphasized the need for qualitative researchers to maintain reflexivity because interviewing is subjective. After each interview, I wrote down brief notes in a reflective journal about my observations and interview experience.

Member checking is another method I used to ensure accuracy and improve the reliability and validity of the data collection process. Member checking is the process of soliciting participant feedback about one's data or interpretations (Motulsky, 2021). Yeong et al. (2018) attributed the trustworthiness of researchers' interview findings to member checking. Wallwey and Kajfez (2023) proclaimed that member checking is a way to establish communicative validation when collecting and creating data. After conducting the interviews, I summarized the data and emailed the participants, asking them to check my interpretation of their responses.

Data Collection Technique

There are multiple data collection techniques available for qualitative researchers to explore research phenomena. Some of the techniques include interviews, observations, focus groups, and document review (Yin, 2018). A key factor for qualitative researchers to consider in determining the data collection technique is alignment (Chu & Ke, 2017;

Yin, 2018). Chu and Ke (2017) and Yin (2018) encouraged researchers to select data collection techniques that align best with the researchers' study. The research question for this study was "What strategies do frontline supervisors use to mitigate employee turnover?" I determined a semistructured interview would be the best technique to gather data from frontline supervisors across various industries who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon. After I received both IRB and ethics approval, I began the following data collection steps that are approved for qualitative pragmatic inquiries (Walden University, 2016):

1. I obtained participant contact information from the researcher's professional network, public sources, or social media. I used purposive sampling to identify potential participants, mainly relying on my professional network and LinkedIn.

2. I invited individual interviewees via email or asked people to distribute the invitation to their peers (not subordinates) who meet the inclusion criteria. Placing ads was also acceptable. I sent potential participants an introductory email that included the purpose of the research study and participant requirements.

3. I shared the consent form prior to the interview so they could respond, "I consent" for my records. After participants responded positively to the initial invitation, I emailed the informed consent form for them to read and respond with "I consent."

4. I conducted interviews either remotely (telephone, Zoom, or similar) or in person. Once I received a participant's signed consent form, I contacted the participant about interview dates and time availability. I used email and phone communications to schedule a location, date, and time for the interview with each participant.

5. I obtained any publicly available documents. I collected secondary data from publicly available documents such as peer reviewed articles and books, and data including public websites, publicly disseminated reports, and news media.

Collecting data in qualitative studies can be challenging for novice researchers. Sandvik and McCormack (2018) and Yin (2018) noted the importance of researchers having the necessary training and skills in pragmatic qualitative inquiry to develop the interview protocol. Yeong et al. (2018) supported the use of interview protocols and added that researchers use interview protocols to increase the effectiveness of interviews and ensure quality data is collected consistently. Yin posited that researchers should focus the interview on the research question with relevant questions when interviewing the participants. I used the interview protocol (see Appendix) to guide the interviews I conducted.

The interview protocol (see Appendix) included the introduction, interview stage setup, and interview questions. In qualitative interviews, researchers should establish comfortable interactions and build rapport from the start of the interview to evoke cooperation (Husband, 2020; Sandvik & McCormack, 2018). The interview stage setup

consisted of sharing details about the interview procedures and expectations. I scheduled each interview for 45–60 minutes with participants. I conducted all interviews through Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Mirick and Wladkowski (2019) underscored the significance of researchers meeting participants wherever they are most comfortable, either geographically or virtually. I audio recorded the interviews using a portable recorder and the computer platform's recording device. I asked a set of 10 interview questions and follow-up questions (see Appendix). All interview questions were aligned with the original research question so that the responses from participants would be relevant to the objectives of the study. Immediately after the interview, I transcribed the recording to a Word document.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using semistructured interviews. One of the advantages of semistructured interviews is flexibility. Researchers use semistructured interviews to help the researcher collect rich and direct information while expressing their ideas within a specific range (Weller et al., 2018). Furthermore, I could probe participants for deeper responses and clarify misunderstandings if needed. Another advantage of semistructured interviews is the interaction between the researcher and the participant. Husband (2020) suggested that researchers use conversational exchange to establish rapport. Disadvantages of using semistructured interviews include the small sample size; the researcher depending on participants' subjective experiences; potentially not establishing trust with the participant; and misinterpreting the participants' responses, which could cause incorrect theme analysis (Buys et al., 2022; Husband, 2020; McGrath et al., 2019). Managing biases and data collection instrumentation rigor are significant

challenges for qualitative researchers (Chenail, 2011). Techniques to mitigate the challenges include field testing the interview protocol, conducting a pilot study, and interviewing the investigator.

Researchers consider pilot studies to test study instruments and techniques. I did not conduct a pilot study. Instead, I relied on the interview the investigator approach Chenail recommended. I assumed the role of a study participant and enlisted a colleague to conduct the interview using the same questions I used in the study. I recorded the interview and reviewed the contents to evaluate the information obtained via the questions (Chenail, 2011). I solicited guidance and support as needed from my doctoral committee chairperson.

One week after the initial interview, I scheduled a second meeting to conduct member checking. During this follow up meeting, I allowed participants to make any necessary changes to the summary of their initial interview transcripts or make corrections to ensure the answers reflected the participants' views on the interview questions. Researchers use member checking to allow participants to verify their responses, which can reduce data misinterpretations (Motulsky, 2021; Thomas, 2017; Wallwey & Kajfez, 2023). I incorporated member checking to enhance the validity and reliability of the study.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers use data organization to keep track of the data collected during research studies. Broman and Woo (2018) and Yin (2018) explained that researchers use data organization to manage access to research materials and to support data analysis. I

used (a) Microsoft Excel, (b) Microsoft Word, (c) a reflective journal, and (d) a research log to keep track of data; and Dedoose data analysis software to organize the data. I transcribed the recorded interviews from each participant into a Microsoft Word file, highlighting initial themes and codes. I used Microsoft Excel to keep track of all codes and themes. I used a reflective journal to keep track of personal observations and feelings. Researchers use reflective journals to mitigate bias and enhance transparency (Rhodes & Brook, 2021). Mayernik (2019) encouraged researchers to keep written journals to discover, capture, assess, manage, and preserve data from participants. I also maintained a research log in Microsoft Excel to track all communications with participants. After I transcribed the data, I imported each Microsoft Windows file into Dedoose for coding. When coding was finished, I labeled and categorized the data to search for notable themes.

I saved the exported information from Dedoose and all data related to the study from Microsoft Windows onto a password protected USB drive and portable hard drive. At the end of the research study, I will store the USB, portable hard drive, and raw data such as field notes and the reflective journal in a secured file cabinet for 5 years. Bender et al. (2017) explained the importance of researchers ensuring the confidentiality of the participant's identity and safeguarding the data collected. At the end of 5 years, I will shred and delete all study files to safeguard participants.

Data Analysis

There are multiple data analysis processes available for qualitative research. Some of the data analysis processes qualitative researchers use are analytic induction, thematic

analysis, and template analysis. For this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, I used Braun and

Clarke's (2006) six step thematic analysis process to analyze the research data. Thematic

analysis is a theoretically flexible process researchers use to describe, analyze, and report

qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Roberts et al.

(2019) noted that thematic analysis comprises identifying issues pertinent to the research

question, background, and theoretical framework. I completed the following steps:

1. I reviewed and transcribed the data. Researchers immerse themselves in the

   data by reviewing transcripts continually to familiarize themselves with the

   content (Oluwafemi et al., 2021; Sheard, 2022). I read each transcript

   repeatedly to determine recurring patterns and to enhance my understanding

   of the phenomenon.

2. I created codes. Researchers use coding to describe large portions of text and

   segments of information in new ways (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are

   several computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software systems that

   researchers use to support coding and data analysis such as Dedoose, Atlasti,

   and NVivo. Huynh (2021) explained that researchers can use Dedoose to

   support the development of codebooks to organize and analyze research data.

   I used Dedoose to efficiently organize the data and classify the codes and

   themes that emerged.

3. I searched for themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) and Sheard (2022)

   emphasized the significance of researchers looking across the data to locate

   recurring meanings. Researchers use patterns to describe themes and analyze

interrelationships that the researcher summarizes to establish thematic

statements (Sheard, 2022). I classified patterns from the codes and developed

categories to identify dominant themes and subthemes.

4. I reviewed all the themes developed in the previous step. Researchers use

theme identification to determine the significance of the data in relation to the

research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this step, I consolidated all

similar themes. I ended this step by clarifying and reorganizing themes.

5. I characterized and labeled the themes I identified during step 4. Researchers

use themes to help classify new data to explore (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Mattimoe et al. (2021) advised that after establishing codes, the researcher

must group similar codes and then characterize and label themes. This step,

according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is a continuing analysis to characterize

each theme's details, identify each theme's meaning, and determine what

element of the data each theme represents. I thoroughly analyzed each theme

to determine its applicability to the research question.

6. I created the report. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested researchers develop

the thematic analysis as a succinct, comprehensible, probable, nonrepetitive

report across themes in the sixth step. The researcher, using this step, develops

an analytical assertion regarding the research question in the framework of

extant literature (Mattimoe et al., 2021). After I completed the thematic

analysis process, I presented exhaustive findings regarding the key themes and

the correlations among the themes, the conceptual framework, and the

literature, including new studies.

Reliability and Validity

A major difference between qualitative and quantitative research is the criteria

researchers use to establish reliability and validity. Researchers (Coleman, 2021;

Langtree et al., 2019; Rose & Johnson, 2020) defined validity and reliability from a

qualitative research perspective as various techniques that qualitative researchers use to

support investigative rigor. Qualitative researchers focus on techniques that enhance

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to establish reliability and

validity.

Reliability

Reliability is an essential construct researchers use to ensure trustworthiness in a

qualitative research study. Spiers et al. (2018) explained that in qualitative research,

researchers ground reliability in the concept of data adequacy, which makes it possible

for researchers to demonstrate consistent support for one's analysis among participants.

Watts and Finkenstaedt-Quinn (2021) offered a similar definition and added that research

is reliable when qualitative researchers use a repetitive process to respond to the same

phenomena despite the circumstances of the research implementation. Qualitative

researchers use methods such as member checking, content analysis, and triangulation to

establish reliability (Madill & Sullivan, 2018; Watts & Finkenstaedt-Quinn, 2021). For

this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, I used member checking during data collection and

data analysis to support the study's reliability. Madill and Sullivan (2018) referred to

member checking as a flexible process researchers use to consult with participants at different points in the research. I used the interview protocol (see Appendix) to solicit feedback from participants after I transcribe the interviews and after analyzing themes and codes.

Dependability

Qualitative researchers use dependability to measure the reliability of the data analysis process. Researchers achieve dependability when the researchers produce a thoroughly documented, logical, and traceable research procedure (Galli et al., 2021; Moon et al., 2016). Korstjens and Moser (2018) suggested researchers use an audit trail as a strategy to address dependability. Researchers use audit trails to describe their research procedures transparently from the beginning of a research project to the reporting of the results (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Galli et al. recommended researchers use a log to record the procedures used to collect, organize, and analyze data to increase the data's reliability. I maintained a research log throughout the data collection and data analysis process to keep data organized and address dependability.

Validity

Researchers use validity to support trustworthiness in a qualitative study. Validity is achieved when researchers answer their study's research question and truthfully record the findings (Coleman, 2021; Morse, 2015). Coleman shared that researchers use validity to ensure that the research data correctly reflects the phenomenon. Rose and Johnson (2020) opined that member checking is the most popular form of enhancing validity in qualitative research. I incorporated member checking as an iterative process throughout

the study. Rose and Johnson underscored the need for researchers to conduct member checking continually for the data to be proven. I conducted member checking during the data collection and data analysis phases of the study.

Credibility

Credibility is an essential element of qualitative research. Researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) defined credibility as the confidence readers of the research can place in the truth of the research findings. Further, credibility determines whether the research findings depict logical information inferred from the participants' original data and is an accurate interpretation of the participants' original views (Holter, 2022; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Rose & Johnson, 2020). Some strategies qualitative researchers use to ensure credibility are triangulation, persistent observation, prolonged engagement, and member checking (Holter, 2022; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Rose & Johnson, 2020). For this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, member checking was the most suitable strategy to ensure credibility. The member checking process strengthens the credibility of the data because the respondents and researcher view the data with different eyes (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers feed data, interpretations, analytical categories, and conclusions back to members of the groups from whom the data was originally obtained (Holter, 2022; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I used member checking by having participants corroborate my interpretations of the data collected from the semistructured interviews and my transcriptions and codes incorporated during data analysis to ensure the summaries accurately represented what the participants intended to communicate.

Transferability

When other researchers can conduct the same study in different locations with other participants and achieve the same results, one has met the criteria for transferability. Tuval-Mashiach (2021) defined transferability as the ability of researchers to apply the findings of one study to another. Korstjens and Moser (2018) emphasized that the reader makes the transferability judgement, not the researcher. A strategy Korstjens and Moser suggested researchers use to enable readers to determine if findings are transferable to their own setting is for the researcher to provide a rich and thick description of the research process. To support transferability, researchers should describe their behavior and experiences, as well as the context and setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). I submitted detailed descriptions of the research problem, procedures, analysis, and findings. Furthermore, I provided the interview protocol (see Appendix) that readers can use to judge whether the study is transferable to their own settings.

Confirmability

Confirmability is another element researchers use to ensure the validity of qualitative research. Qualitative researchers use confirmability to demonstrate objectivity during the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Langtree et al., 2019). Abdalla et al. (2018) posited that a researcher who maintains objectivity during qualitative research helps protect the findings from personal bias. I interpreted the data collected from each participant's interview and validated the data using the Dedoose software application. Further, I maintained a reflective journal and a detailed record of all procedures to support the confirmability of the research data.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is a critical component of the validity of qualitative research. Qualitative researchers do not achieve validity if they do not reach data saturation. Braun and Clarke (2021), Fofana et al. (2020), Guest et al. (2020), and Yin (2018) referred to data saturation as the research point when no new themes or information emerge and there is sufficient data to replicate the research. I continued to gather data from all sources until no additional themes or codes emerged. Data saturation can be reached with as few as two participants (Yin, 2018). Chitac (2022) and Yin noted that data saturation, which must be achieved by collecting thick and rich data, cannot be ensured by the number of participants alone. To achieve the data saturation point for this study, I used the interview protocol (see Appendix) to conduct semistructured interviews with six frontline supervisors until no new information was collected and no new themes or codes emerged.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore the strategies that frontline supervisors use to mitigate employee turnover. In Section 2, I focused on the researcher's role and detailed the process of identifying and selecting participants. Next, I discussed the research method and design followed by the information I used to determine the population and sample size. To address ethical research and comply with IRB requirements, I focused on practices I incorporated to ensure strict ethical standards such as implementing member checking and reflexivity, which enhance reliability and validity. I also discussed procedures for data collection instruments, data collection

techniques, data organization techniques, data analysis, and specific steps I took to ensure reliability and validity. In Section 3, I will use data triangulation of interviews, publicly available documents, and field journal information to provide an analysis of the data. I will use the findings to highlight the study's relevance and application to real-world circumstances. I will demonstrate how frontline supervisors learned from the events and how applying the findings could support social change. I will also provide recommendations for future research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore strategies frontline supervisors use to mitigate employee turnover. I explored the successful employee turnover mitigation strategies for frontline supervisors from various professional industries in southern Virginia. Data were collected from six frontline supervisors using semistructured interviews. I analyzed the interview data thematically and organized my analysis using Dedoose qualitative software. Identification codes for the frontline supervisors were P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6. I found that frontline supervisors primarily use (a) communication, (b) supervisor support, (c) employee engagement, and (d) rewards and recognition to mitigate employee turnover successfully. Furthermore, frontline supervisors applied 15 strategies as part of their approaches to employee turnover. The main themes support the conceptual framework, which was SET. The themes also align with the research topic, the objectives, and the overarching research question for this study. In this section, I will present detailed findings and describe how business leaders can apply employee turnover mitigation strategies to professional practice. Additionally, I will specify implications for social change, offer recommendations for action and further research, provide my reflections, and present the study's conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question guiding this study was: What strategies do frontline supervisors use to mitigate employee turnover? To answer the research question, I

conducted semistructured interviews and collected data from frontline supervisors

discussing strategies to mitigate employee turnover. Four primary themes that emerged

from the data were (a) communication, (b) supervisor support, (c) employee engagement,

and (d) rewards and recognition. From the primary themes, 11 subthemes emerged.

Theme 1: Communication

Communication emerged from the data as a strategy frontline supervisors use to

mitigate employee turnover. All six participants identified communication as an essential

employee turnover mitigation strategy. Furthermore, the literature supported the findings

that communication is crucial for healthy employee supervisor relationships. Duarte and

Silva (2023) identified organizational communication as one of the most important

reasons behind employees' intention to remain in their jobs. Vercic et al. (2023)

connected higher levels of internal communication satisfaction to increased job

satisfaction and commitment, increased employee engagement, and perceived

organizational support. Three subthemes related to communication emerged from the

data: (a) open environment, (b) technology, and (c) multiple communication methods.

Open Environment

Participants described creating an environment where employees feel comfortable

enough to speak about their concerns. Morelli (2022) recommended supervisors build a

culture that nurtures stakeholder relationships, demonstrating transparency and promoting

inclusiveness. P2 shared that creating "a no judgement zone where employees can discuss

issues and take responsibility for mistakes" was intentional. P3 discussed using effective

body language, listening intently, and aligning the appropriate communication style with

the needs of her employees to establish an open environment. P5 stated, "Offering a space for employees to speak openly and feel supported is one strategy for maintaining employee commitment to the organization." Furthermore, P5 added, "It's important for supervisors to be walking around interacting up close with their employees to learn verbal and nonverbal behaviors."

Technology

Using the appropriate technology is an essential element of a communication strategy. Kim and Chon (2022) noted that organizational leaders increase access to communication among employees to boost work effectiveness. The researchers credited communication technologies such as social media, email, video messaging, mobile, and intranet with strengthening employees' communication and performance. In my study, each participant described how they incorporated technology to communicate with remote employees due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One hundred percent of the participants credited Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and group messages as "helpful team-building tools during the pandemic." P4 discussed bridging communication gaps by encouraging technologies other than email as the main channels for everyday communication. P4 stated, "The more personal interaction possible with phone, chat, and video technology helps ensure employees are able to build trust and develop informal relationships that improve collaborations and build a sense of teamwork."

Multiple Communication Methods

Employees have different communication styles and skills. Using multiple methods of communication can help convey messages to diverse teams in the workplace.

The findings are consistent with Zarei et al. (2024), who noted that human interactions, such as communication, create social networks and promote diversity. Men et al. (2023) emphasized that due to the increase in workforce diversity in most industries, it is essential for organizational leaders to establish practices that engage employees from diverse backgrounds. When asked about what strategies were most effective to reduce turnover, P1 identified the need to increase lines of communication. P1 stated, "In addition to email communication, I used phone calls, video calls, group messaging, in person team meetings, and one on one sessions." P3 responded,

> My team consists of millennials, Generation X, and baby boomers. Some team members prefer a phone call, some prefer an email, and others prefer a text message. I use different lines of communication to send the same message to make sure it is received, and everybody feels included.

In response to the challenges experienced when implementing successful strategies to reduce turnover, P6 described "difficulties communicating with geographically dispersed employees who had diverse methods of communication." P6 credited technology and providing resources and support to employees with helping resolve the challenges.

Theme 2: Supervisor Support

The supervisor support theme was consistent with the literature. Jun et al. (2023) postulated that employees' relationships with their supervisors directly influence employee turnover, and supervisor support is effective at retaining employees through the establishment of trust. All six participants identified supervisor support as a significant employee turnover mitigation strategy. According to the participants, employees are more

satisfied with their jobs and want to stay in the organization longer when the employees have supportive supervisors. Three subthemes related to supervisor support emerged: (a) assist employees with career development, (b) provide feedback, and (c) offer empathy and motivation.

Assist Employees With Career Development

Supervisors helping employees improve their careers was a subtheme related to supervisor support that emerged from the data. Participants identified supervisors assisting employees with career development as essential for building positive relationships. Ng et al. (2022) posited that when supervisors implement career development practices with their employees, the employees reciprocate with productivity and loyalty. P1 discussed the benefits of implementing a career development program, noting the growth in skills and the exchange of new information among employees. Regarding career development, P2 described establishing a mentorship program that started during the employee onboarding process. P3 stated, "I provide opportunities for employees to attend developmental training, seminars, and career workshops." P5 mentioned having formal and informal career progression discussions with her employees, sharing career resources, and creating a mentoring program for employees.

Provide Feedback

The subtheme of providing feedback was supported by the literature and 100% of the participants. Each participant encouraged frequent feedback between supervisors and employees as a strategy to mitigate employee turnover. Zhu et al. (2023) opined that based on its role as both a basic top-down communicative style to contribute evaluative

information on employees' job performance and a common workplace scenario, supervisor feedback is considered a principal component in predicting employee voice. P1 shared, "A major aspect of establishing and maintaining work relationships is providing and accepting feedback, which enables me to identify negative behaviors and reinforce positive behaviors so the appropriate changes can be made." P6 added that developmental feedback was part of her employee retention strategy geared toward growth.

Offer Empathy and Motivation

The subtheme of offering empathy and motivation emerged from the data as an important factor for supervisors to continually explore with their employees in routine interactions. According to Yue et al. (2023), empathy entails expressing support and concern for employees. Empathetic leaders should assist employees to deal with logistical and emotional challenges while also helping organizational leaders navigate uncertain political, financial, and social issues that they encounter (Yue et al., 2023). Participants shared that when supervisors offered empathy and motivation employees were more likely to be engaged and focused on accomplishing their tasks. P2 stated, "Practicing empathy created a culture where employees are motivated to be good to others because they consider how they wish to be treated and think about what it would be like to be in the other person's position." P4 discussed showing concern for her employees' families and personal interests outside of the organization. P4 added, "Implementing empathy into my routine employee interactions was one of the most rewarding practices for engaging and motivating employees. Regularly checking in with my employees, listening to them,

and inquiring about them and their loved ones paid huge dividends." P6 discussed the importance of listening to employees even if it was not about work. P5 shared, "Sometimes employees just need to vent so they can clear their minds in order to focus on work," while adding that listening and being empathetic helps build a trusting relationship with employees.

Theme 3: Employee Engagement

Employee engagement emerged from the data as an important component of employees' behavior. Men et al. (2023) posited that workplace factors such as social support, rewards and recognition, and job characteristics can positively influence employee engagement. All six participants identified employee engagement as an essential strategy to mitigate employee turnover. Three subthemes related to employee engagement emerged: (a) trust-based relationships, (b) training opportunities, and (c) flexibility.

Trust-Based Relationships

The subtheme of trust-based relationships emerged from the data as a significant factor for employee engagement related to social support. Jun et al. (2023) postulated that supervisor trust positively impacts individual and organizational effectiveness. P3 stated, "When my employees trust me, that generates a wide range of positive outcomes … like better work performance, more satisfaction in their jobs, and less intent on leaving the organization." P5 shared that establishing relationships based on trust with her employees "created a path for a better exchange of ideas and knowledge in the workplace."

Training Opportunities

The subtheme training opportunities emerged from the data as an essential component of employee engagement. All six participants identified training opportunities as an effective strategy to mitigate employee turnover. The findings aligned with Martini et al. (2023), who used SET to demonstrate that when organizational leaders take care of their employees by investing in their development and training, employees reciprocate with increased dedication to the organization. The participants shared a common approach to mitigating employee turnover related to training, which included developing employees' technical skills and improving employees' decision making processes. P3 described implementing small group staff training sessions:

> Every Thursday, I would close the office to customers and our team would get together in the conference room to have training for an hour. The topic was usually based on upcoming policy changes or anything employees were having systemic troubles with. Sometimes, I picked the training topic and instructor, and other times, one of the employees recommended a topic and volunteered to teach the training. The training was great for team building because the employees learned from each other, and I didn't have to provide a lot of extra resources.

P5 credited her employee training program, which included (a) new employee orientation, (b) technical skills training, (c) employee cross training, and (d) soft skills training, with improving employee commitment and teamwork.

Flexibility

The subtheme flexibility emerged from the data as an important factor for employee engagement related to job characteristics. Sekhar and Patwardhan (2023) found that supervisors' support mediated the relationship between flexible working arrangements and job performance. The researchers postulated that employees feel more valued and perform their jobs better when they are supported by their supervisors (Sekhar & Patwardhan, 2023). Flexible working arrangements include remote or telework options, flexible hours, and compressed or adjustable work weeks. Although P1 described offering telework options as an effective employee retention strategy, this participant also mentioned several challenges:

> It's difficult to know when employees need support, challenging to evaluate their performance, and hard to provide feedback. … Even though employees appreciated the freedoms and options of teleworking, it came with its own set of challenges … but working through and overcoming them helped us grow as a team, so the benefits made it a worthwhile policy.

P1 described implementing increased communication and employee monitoring to overcome the challenges of teleworking. P1 added, "I created virtual training and team building activities to ensure regular interactions due to less frequent in-person interactions." P3 discussed implementing a compressed work week for her employees as a strategy to mitigate employee turnover. P3 shared,

> I allowed each employee to select their own regular day off or RDO each pay period. It increased morale, team cohesion, and loyalty; but at times, I had to

adjust the schedule to accommodate changes in employees' personal lives.

Adjustments required employees to engage with me and each other regularly,

which established a culture of trust and communication to work through friction

… like when two employees requested the same RDO and only one could be

approved.

P5 discussed using flexibility as a strategy to support employees dealing with work life

balance conflicts, such as adjustments to childcare schedules.

Theme 4: Rewards and Recognition

Rewards and recognition emerged from the data as a strategy frontline supervisors

use to mitigate employee turnover. According to Martini et al. (2023), when

organizational leaders demonstrate a responsibility toward their employees' needs and

provide sufficient nonmonetary and monetary rewards, employees develop greater

commitment toward their organization. One hundred percent of the participants credited

rewards and recognition as an essential employee turnover mitigation strategy. Two

subthemes related to rewards and recognition emerged: structured rewards and

incentives, and informal recognition.

Structured Rewards and Incentives

The subtheme of structured rewards and incentives emerged from the data as

positively impacting employee turnover. Compensation and incentives play important

roles in employee retention because employees expect appropriate rewards for work well

done (Sorn et al., 2023). The findings were consistent with the literature. Chand et al.

(2022) noted that rewards, which can be financial or nonfinancial, play a pivotal role in

improving employees' performance and motivation. P1 described incentivizing employees with "performance bonuses, tuition coverage, time off awards, and early promotions." P2 discussed the use of rewards and incentives to increase employee commitment. P2 stated, "Performance bonuses and annual raises keep my team motivated and dedicated to the organization." P6 mentioned creating guidelines for performance bonuses and incentives for cash awards. P6 added, "The guidelines encouraged employees to strive for excellence."

Informal Recognition

The subtheme informal recognition emerged from the data as an effective strategy to enhance employee performance and retention. According to Chand et al. (2022), leaders can use recognition as a tool to acknowledge employee performance based on true feedback. There was a consensus among the participants that informal recognition is one of the easiest employee turnover mitigation strategies to implement. P2 described routinely expressing gratitude to employees for completed tasks, offering written and verbal praise to employees, and hosting employee appreciation luncheons as part of her employee recognition program. Regarding the most effective strategies, P4 added,

> Having a peer recognition program is just as important as having a cash award program because not everybody is motivated by money … But the key thing is finding out what motivates your employees. … I implemented a peer-to-peer recognition program that boosted positive behaviors, encouraged dialogue, and helped with the sharing of suggestions and opinions among employees.

Relevance of the Findings to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was SET. Blau (1964) established SET as the exchange of monetary and nonmonetary benefits between the employee and the organization based on feelings of long-term focus, trust, obligation, and shared values. I used SET to interpret the interactions between frontline supervisors and their employees. The findings indicated that all participants implemented strategies based on SET to mitigate employee turnover. Proponents of SET argued that based on the principles of reciprocity, interdependence, and self-interest, social exchanges create a sense of trust and duty related to behaviors that are contingent on rewards from others (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976). Participants described how their employees reciprocated positive behaviors in exchange for rewards and benefits. P3 shared that practices she implemented to retain employees enhanced communication and trust from employees. P5 emphasized the positive benefits of supervisor support stating, "My employee retention practices focus on developing and supporting employees, which encourage them to perform better and commit more to the organization." Further, there was a consensus among the participants that employee engagement increased when supervisors listened to employees and offered opportunities for career development within the organization.

The primary relevance of the findings to the conceptual framework is that the four main themes that emerged from the data: (a) communication, (b) supervisor support, (c) employee engagement, and (d) rewards and recognition align with the main principles of SET. The findings indicated that organizational communication improves as frontline supervisors' and employees' relationships develop. This aligned with Zhang et al. (2022)

who noted that communication improves efficiency in obtaining an organization's established goal based on employees' interdependence. Using the principle of reciprocity, frontline supervisors may support their employees in exchange for organizational commitment and other rewards. All six participants described practices they used to support their employees with career development and work life balance issues. Trust, established through positive communication, improves information sharing and employee engagement (Zhang et al., 2022). The findings indicated frontline supervisors who promote employee development and provide support can expect to have more engaged employees. The participants also concurred that rewards and recognition can be used to encourage employee commitment and reduce turnover. The findings aligned with Martini et al. (2023), who noted that when organizational leaders offer sufficient rewards and recognition, employees develop greater commitment toward their organization. Hammond et al. (2023) postulated that an employee's level of engagement and commitment is affected by social exchanges. The participants' use of (a) communication, (b) supervisor support, (c) employee engagement, and (d) rewards and recognition to mitigate turnover is consistent with the literature on SET.

Applications of the Findings to Effective Business Practice

The findings are applicable to current business practices. Furthermore, the findings were consistent with Yue et al. (2023) who used SET to show that employee turnover is contingent on supervisors communicating with their employees, developing their employees, and establishing trusting relationships with their employees. The findings may apply to effective business practice in four ways. First, organizational

leaders may use the findings to establish employee retention strategies to improve productivity and increase profits. Dwivedi et al. (2023) used SET to examine the influence of human relations on organizational sustainment. In alignment with the participants I interviewed, the researchers showed that organizational productivity, profits, and sustainability are improved by appropriate investment in the development of the employees (Dwivedi et al., 2023). The second practical use of the findings is that organizational leaders may use the findings to implement employee training and development programs that improve the relationships between supervisors and their employees. The third practical use of the findings is that organizational leaders may use the findings to understand frontline supervisors' essential roles in establishing and implementing employee engagement strategies. According to SET, employees' engagement and commitment to their tasks and organization is a repayment of how they are treated by their supervisors (Yin et al., 2023). The fourth practical use of the findings is that organizational leaders may use them to understand the significance of frontline supervisors effectively communicating with their employees to build trust and cultivate employee engagement in employee supervisor relationships.

Applications to Professional Practice

Business leaders from various industries in small and medium sized organizations can use the findings to develop strategies that mitigate employee turnover. The applicability of the findings regarding employee turnover business practices is reducing the cost of employee turnover and maximizing organizational sustainability. Organizational leaders rely on employees to achieve sustainment. According to the

findings, in exchange for organizational commitment employees expect to be empowered, engaged, and rewarded. Frontline supervisors need effective strategies to identify, understand, and address issues related to employee turnover. Employee turnover negatively impacts organizations' profits and productivity. Organizational leaders fail to achieve sustainability without retaining committed and engaged employees (Desmarais & Grenier, 2023). Organizational leaders across various industries can apply this study to improve their communication, supervisor support, employee engagement, and leadership development programs.

The findings indicated that leaders should leverage their communication skills, know their employees as individuals, and be able to determine which engagement factors and strategies will be most effective in each situation. In addition to using the findings to improve trust and employee well being, organizational leaders can apply the findings to improve the employee talent management processes. Yildiz and Esmer (2023) described talent management as a combination of seven main functions: 1 = talent planning, 2 = talent identification, 3 = talent attraction, 4 = talent acquisition, 5 = talent development, 6 = talent deployment, and 7 = talent retention. Organizational leaders can positively impact turnover by actively engaging in the employee experience, from talent planning to talent retention.

Implications for Social Change

The main positive social change implication is the potential to help business leaders offer better strategies to mitigate employee turnover, which can improve organizational sustainability. According to Singh et al. (2023), organizational leaders

may profit from investing in CSR initiatives in multiple ways, including cost reduction,

organizational identification, risk reduction, job performance, customer loyalty, firm

reputation, increased total quality and productivity, ethical culture, and goodwill creation.

Additionally, Singh et al. (2023) emphasized that in addition to improving society's well

being, improving businesses' reputations and overall organizational performance is a

CSR benefit. Business leaders who understand how to mitigate employee turnover can

provide tangible benefits such as reducing hiring costs, training costs, and administrative

and productivity costs for their organizations. Mitigating employee turnover is crucial

because employees who help drive innovation and enhance productivity are

organizational leaders' most invaluable assets. The benefits of mitigating employee

turnover extend from employees, employers, and their organizations to their

communities. When organizational leaders reduce employee turnover costs, they have

more resources to dedicate to their communities (Tyler, 2021). Business leaders can use

the results of this study to provide frontline supervisors with methods to increase

employee commitment and mitigate employee turnover.

Recommendations for Action

It is important for organizational leaders to pay attention to strategies that can

successfully mitigate turnover. Jun et al. (2023) noted that high employee turnover can

negatively impact organizational performance. Other negative implications of turnover

include reduced productivity and increased costs (Jun et al., 2023). I concluded that

frontline supervisors primarily use (a) communication, (b) supervisor support, (c)

employee engagement, and (d) rewards and recognition to mitigate employee turnover

successfully. Based on the results, the recommendations for action include organizational leaders focusing on four major tasks to mitigate employee turnover.

First, organizational leaders must ensure that frontline supervisors communicate appropriately with their employees. In the employee supervisor relationship, communication should flow up and down. Some examples of effective forms of communication include one-on-one meetings between supervisors and their employees, organizational town halls, and employee surveys. Communication is more than the words that are said among individuals. Participants noted the importance of supervisors tailoring communication to their specific employees, such as knowing when to use social media, other technology, or different culturally respectful ways to convey messages effectively.

The second recommendation for action is that organizational leaders offer leadership development programs that address communication, employee development, and supervisor support. Participants shared that certain roles are specific to their organization and have systems and processes that routinely change. Organizational leaders can use leadership development programs to improve organizational communication, teach employees new skills, and cross train employees. Several researchers (Ohlsson, 2023; Vongswasdi et al., 2023) credit such programs with improving leaders' decision making, increasing productivity, and training future organizational leaders.

The third recommendation for action is for organizational leaders to emphasize to frontline supervisors the importance of employee engagement. According to a Gallup poll (Harter, 2023), the employee's relationship with his or her managers accounts for 70% of

the variance in employee engagement. Hammon et al. (2023) described employee

engagement as helping employees focus, sustain energy, remain invested in their work,

and stay motivated. Based on SET, when employees are empowered, they reciprocate

with increased engagement and organizational commitment.

The final recommendation for action is for organizational leaders to promote the

use of rewards and recognition to mitigate employee turnover. Participants described

successfully incorporating rewards and recognition during performance evaluations.

Mehak and Batcha (2024) noted a direct correlation between rewards and employee job

performance. Business leaders from various industries can use the findings to help

improve their organizations. I will submit this study to the ProQuest Dissertations and

Theses database upon final approval. Furthermore, I will share this study with other

professionals for dissemination via business publications, scholarly journals, and

conferences.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research contributes to the literature on strategies for mitigating employee

turnover. Based on the findings, I recommend further research into employee turnover

focused specifically on industries with the highest turnover rates. Brunau (2023) reported

that the industries with the highest turnover rates include (a) leisure and hospitality, (b)

retail trade, and (c) transportation. The literature review indicated more employees will

remain in their organization if they are satisfied with their jobs, supported by their

supervisors, and offered regular opportunities to develop (Jun et al., 2023; Martini et al.,

2023; & Romao et al., 2022). Organizational leaders need to understand how to retain their employees, and further research would help to identify effective strategies.

Although I kept a detailed research log to help me remain impartial, neutral, and objective, the findings are limited by potential researcher bias. Furthermore, I used a sample size of six participants, which limited my ability to generalize the results. The participants all worked in Virginia; therefore, the participants' views do not represent all industry leaders in the United States. Future researchers should expand the geographic boundary of this study to include other areas in the United States. The focus of this study was on frontline supervisors. Future researchers could expand the target population's scope to include leaders other than frontline supervisors, such as executive or middle level leaders.

<div align="center">**Reflections**</div>

During the DBA doctoral study process, I experienced several challenges. Some challenges were unplanned distractions, and others required me to address personal biases and preconceived ideas about the study. Some of the unplanned distractions that made the process difficult included the death of two close family members, one of my two toddlers transitioning from a full time to part time student, and my spouse deciding to start a business 6 months after I started the program. Furthermore, I submitted my voluntary resignation to my employer 1 year before beginning my doctoral study. My experience made it challenging to remain objective and free of bias and preconceived ideas. During the study, I used a reflective journal, challenged my assumptions, and incorporated other checks to avoid confirmation bias. Additionally, I had to consider my values and their

possible effects on interactions with the participants. While I approached all interviews with an open mind, listening intentionally with the purpose of collecting data was more difficult than I expected. In reflection, I spent too much time focused on how my values influenced the interviews and not enough time recording the participants' nonverbal body language and other observations about their values. Despite the distractions and challenges, commitment and having a support system helped me achieve my goal of completing the study.

Meeting the expectations of an independent scholar and overcoming the challenges required commitment. It was easy to commit to the project during the pre-prospectus stage because I was passionate about the topic I chose and was eager to search for literature. After getting overwhelmed with literature, my motivation decreased because I was not retaining the information I was reading. I was doing too much reading and not enough writing. It was a frustrating experience completing the prospectus, additional coursework, and working on the proposal until I committed to the process of making daily routines and organization part of the doctoral study process. I overcame the frustration and loss of motivation by committing to the daily routines and accomplishing small tasks that advanced the process.

Having a support system was a significant factor in helping me overcome challenges and celebrate accomplishments during this program. My support system consisted of my spouse, my best friend, and two professional mentors, as well as a group called Team Dooley. My spouse and best friend frequently reminded me to enjoy life and care for myself. My mentors often reminded me to stay focused on my deadlines and

goals. Team Dooley comprised current and graduated scholars who were phenomenal in every capacity of support needed. I was fortunate to be surrounded by others going through a similar process on Team Dooley, which set the standard for success. Team Dooley encouraged me to keep writing even when difficult and inconvenient. Seeing the success of various scholars demonstrated that effort was the primary difference between scholars who graduated and those who did not. I could either raise or lower my standards. After completing this study, I can think more clearly because I feel physically, mentally, and academically stronger and faster. I lost 31 pounds and gained an invaluable amount of confidence, self-awareness, and knowledge.

Conclusion

Organizational leaders must find ways to mitigate employee turnover, given that it can negatively impact productivity and organizational sustainability. I concluded that frontline supervisors establishing and executing employee turnover mitigation strategies that include (a) communication, (b) supervisor support, (c) employee engagement, and (d) rewards and recognition, can bolster sustainability. Blau's (1964) SET and the literature provided in this study supported the four themes, which emerged in response to the research question on employee turnover. When frontline supervisors practice positive and supportive behaviors, employees reciprocate with positive behaviors such as increased engagement and commitment to their organizations. Frontline supervisors who establish and implement effective employee turnover mitigation strategies can help their organization improve productivity and increase sustainability.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Preparing for interviews. Upon receiving approval from the Walden University IRB, I contacted potential participants through social media using an approved introduction letter. Once a participant agreed to the interview, I requested the individual provide me with a date, time, and location convenient for the participant to be interviewed.

Informed consent. Prior to starting each interview, I required the participant to sign a prepared consent form. I remind the participant that the interview would be audio recorded. I started the recording device and recorded the time, date, and participant's name and numeric code to open the interview.

Opening interviews. I started each interview by greeting the participant, introducing myself, and explaining the purpose and benefits of the study. I then thanked the participant for agreeing to the interview process and ensured the participant was comfortable before asking if the participant was ready to proceed with the interview.

Conducting interviews. I conducted semistructured interviews using the following 10 open-ended questions:

1. How do you track employee turnover?

2. How do you measure your employees' levels of engagement?

3. How do you manage absenteeism or other withdrawal behaviors?

4. What strategies have you used to reduce employee turnover?

5. How have you implemented employee retention strategies?

6. How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce turnover?

7. Which strategies were most effective to reduce employee turnover?

8. What key challenges did you experience, if any, when implementing successful strategies to reduce employee turnover?

9. How did you address or resolve any challenges of implementing successful strategies to reduce employee turnover?

10. What additional information would you like to provide about organizational

strategies to reduce employee turnover?

I allowed sufficient time for the participant to thoroughly respond to each question. If necessary, I asked follow-up probing questions.

Recording reflective notes. During the interview, I took notes to document observations, thoughts, or potential follow up probing questions that emerged.

Member checking. I asked the participant about the major themes the participant discussed during the interview to ensure I correctly interpreted the participant's response. Furthermore, I allowed the participant to validate the interview transcript later.

Closing interviews. At the end of the interview, I thanked the participant for their time and information and reminded the participant that I would contact the participant later to validate the accuracy of the transcript and to obtain additional information the participant might offer. I concluded the interview by reminding the participant that the contents of the interview would remain confidential and that neither the participant's name nor the name of their organization would be revealed in the published study.

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