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Challenges and Successes in Retaining Direct Support Professionals for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Group Home Settings

Erica Kay Evans
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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Erica Kay Evans

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

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Walden University

2025

Abstract

Challenges and Successes in Retaining Direct Support Professionals for People with

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Group Home Settings

by

Erica Kay Evans

MA, Walden University, 2016

BA, University of Phoenix, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2025

Abstract

Reports of low employee satisfaction and retention rates for direct support professionals (DSPs) in residential group homes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have raised concerns. The problem addressed in this study was the low retention of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in group home settings in the Southeastern region of the United States, compounded by high turnover rates and a growing demand for qualified professionals. Guided by Herzberg's two-factor theory of hygiene and motivational variables, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in residential group home settings. Data was collected using semistructured interviews with 10 group home managers and training specialists who knew the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs. Thematic analysis using three themes: the impact of organizational and structural challenges, the influence of supportive culture through recognition and professional growth, and the power of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness. The study highlighted the need for effective retention strategies for DSPs through supportive environments and recognition of their contributions by advocating a multifaceted approach, combining structural improvements and motivational strategies based on Herzberg's two-factor theory. By addressing challenges and encouraging collaboration, organizations can improve DSP retention, care outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and promote positive social change in residential group home settings.

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Dedication

I proudly dedicate this study to my children, Ramone and Racene Henry, who have continually endorsed my unwavering enthusiasm for learning and my steadfast commitment to academic success. I am grateful to the Lord, whose unwavering presence has continuously guided my academic pursuits.

Acknowledgments

I want to express my deep gratitude to my esteemed committee members, Dr. Yvette Myrick and Dr. Kathleen Kingston. Your guidance, support, and valuable insights have been instrumental in this accomplishment. Dr. Myrick, your unwavering support has been a significant source of motivation for me. Dr. Kingston, I acknowledge your patience and the development of my scholarly voice through your extensive knowledge and invaluable feedback. Your contributions are deeply appreciated.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Direct support professionals (DSPs) offer diverse and intricate services, such as administering medications, providing personal care, providing access to community resources, and aiding people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) with daily living skills (Friedman, 2021). People with disabilities receive frequent personal, one-on-one assistance from DSPs, also called personal care aids and direct care workers. Their work includes modeling, hand-over-hand prompting, and partial participation in daily client interactions (Perregrini, 2021). Their responsibilities as employees also include helping intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals develop socialization skills, manage their finances, and learn how to perform activities of daily living (Friedman, 2021; Keesler & Troxel, 2020).

Turnover among DSPs is prevalent, especially for individuals with IDDs requiring direct support. According to Pettingell et al. (2022), the turnover rate for DSPs has been steadily increasing since 2018, averaging about 48.4% across over 26 states (Pettingell et al., 2022). This underscores a crisis in maintaining consistent staff to support individuals with IDDs (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). Participation and work-based learning are vital components for DSPs and motivate individuals to utilize all resources to help individuals diagnosed with intellectual disability disorder (Brown, 2020; Pettingell et al., 2022). This study explores managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes of retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States over 5 years. Herzberg's two-factor theory of hygiene and motivational

variables applies to the study and contributes insight into the factors affecting DSPs' retention in group home settings.

This chapter will provide an in-depth history of the mental health workforce, the roles of direct care professionals, and problems faced within group home settings. It will also discuss the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the conceptual framework used to guide the study. The nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope and delimitation, limitations, and significance are presented in detail.

Background

DSPs are at risk for substantial stress due to excessive caseloads, low compensation, and complex work environments (Ryan et al., 2019). The workload of DSPs is significant, as it increases stress. Burnout, anxiety, and depression can result, which raises turnover (Friedman, 2021; Moyo et al, 2023). DSPs may experience a heavy workload, a lack of training, low compensation, and a hostile work environment (Ahmed Mohamed Ebrahim & Mubarak Ahmed, 2022). When faced with work-related stress and limited support, DSPs may resign, which may cause patients with IDD to lack adequate home support (Friedman, 2021).

It is vital to explore available resources and factors that influence a DSP's decision to quit and the potential effect that leaving may have on individuals with IDD in group home settings (Schalock et al., 2021). Many of these agencies already operate on a tight budget because they constantly need to hire new DSPs and train them while paying the current employees' overtime to cover vacancies (Friedman, 2021). In addition

to the requirement for more consistency in schedules, inadequate training may risk the health and the safety of individuals with IDD and limit their integration into society (National Direct Service Workforce Resource Center, 2013).

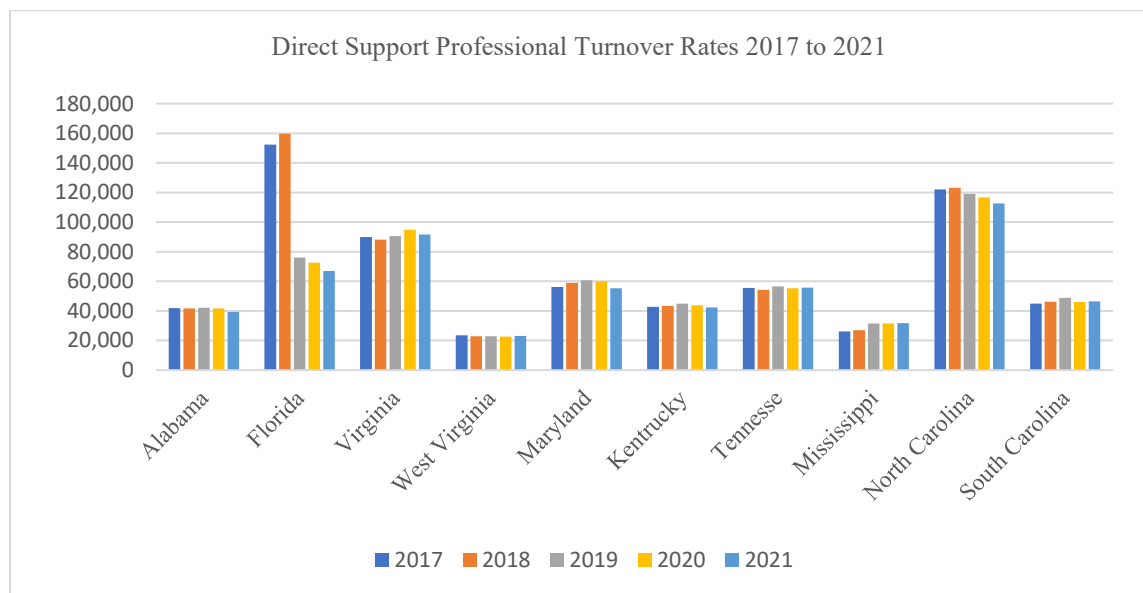
Ineffective corporate cultures, career paths, and advancement opportunities may also impact DSP training and are another factor in turnover (Friedman, 2021). Training a DSP is expensive, and the chances of losing one to competitors or other professions are also high. The direct support workforce is among the most in-demand in the United States, and demand for these workers is only estimated to continue growing (Han et al., 2022; Shemshack, 2021). Participation and work-based learning are vital components for DSPs and motivate individuals to utilize all resources to help individuals diagnosed with intellectual disability disorder (Brown, 2020; Pettingell et al., 2022). There is a problem with the low retention of DSPs in group home settings. This issue was exacerbated by a need for more education among DSPs on how to work with individuals with complex needs, which leads to burnout on the job. Unfortunately, there is limited literature available on this topic.

According to research, encouraging DSPs to engage in self-care may reduce their stress and burnout, as it is preventative, restorative, and empowering to encourage self-care among employees (Friedman, 2021). Friedman (2021) further stated that burnout, stress, and depression can result from the lack of self-care, which raises turnover. DSPs may experience a heavy workload, a lack of training, low compensation, and a hostile work environment in addition to their duties (Phillips, 2020). The difficulties encountered in the workplace and workplace culture, the industry's expansion, ongoing shortages, and

the need for DSPs to provide crucial services to individuals suffering from mental health disorders are characteristic of the mental health workforce (Castagnino & Blaskowitz, 2022). The chart in Figure 1 shows that there has been a low retention rate of DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States over 5 years.

Figure 1

Direct Support Professional Turnover Rates From 2017 to 2021



Note. Data provided in this figure came from Friedman (2021), Laws and Hewitt (2020), and Pettingell et al. (2023).

The National Direct Service Workforce Resource Center (2013) reported that 4.4 million direct care workers were employed in the United States. One-fourth of these professionals assist those who have IDD. There is a high annual turnover rate for DSPs, even though direct support is one of the industries in the labor force that is expanding the fastest in the United States (Friedman, 2021). DSPs' turnover rates in human service

organizations that help individuals with disabilities range from 30% to 70% yearly (Friedman, 2021).

An estimated 35% of DSP staff leave their jobs within 6 months whereas another 55% leave within a year, which makes recruiting new employees more difficult. A low salary is one reason for quitting, and other reasons include needing more supervision, lacking career advancement, and wanting better training and professional growth opportunities. As a result, there is a crisis in retaining staff to support individuals with IDD (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). The direct support workforce is highly in demand in the United States, and this demand is expected to keep growing. A gap in the literature exists regarding DSPs and perceived motivators that influence job satisfaction and retention (Staempfli & Lamarche, 2020). There is a significant gap in practice regarding the implementation of strategies that support managers' and training specialists' efforts in improving the DSPs' retention rates in group home settings in the southeastern United States (Friedman, 2021; Laws & Hewitt, 2020; Pettingell et al., 2023).

Problem Statement

This study addresses the low retention of DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States over 5 years. Separate evidence supports the problem and demonstrates that it is meaningful to the discipline. The population of individuals residing in group homes is rising, leading to an increased demand for more DSPs. Retaining current employees is crucial in this context (Friedman, 2021). Turnover among DSPs is prevalent, especially for individuals with IDD requiring direct support. The turnover rate for DSPs has been steadily increasing since 2018, averaging about

48.4% across over 26 states (Pettingell et al., 2022). This underscores a crisis in maintaining consistent staff to support individuals with IDD (Laws & Hewitt, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. I employed a basic qualitative approach and systematically explored and compared phenomena from the participants' real-life experiences. The participants were from different group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States.

Research Questions

This basic qualitative study focused on the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. The evidence reviewed thus far has shown that increased job dissatisfaction is a significant cause of low retention of DSPs. Other aspects include insufficient resources and organizational support, and they are resulting in DSPs not having the required training and knowledge to care for individuals with IDDs (Friedman, 2022a). The findings may provide stakeholders with insight into the experience of DSPs in the group home settings. The following qualitative research questions guided the study and addressed the low retention of DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States.

- RQ1: What are the managers' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?

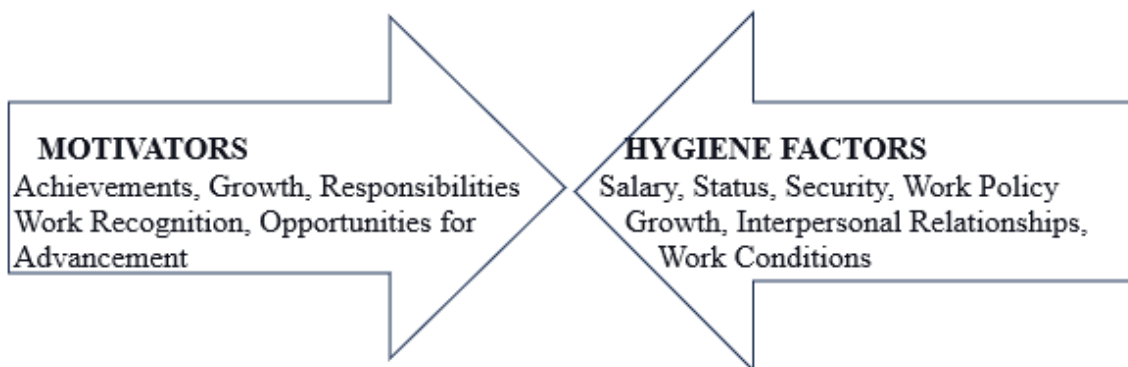
- RQ2: What are the training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the Herzberg two-factor theory, developed by Herzberg et al. (1959). This theory contends that employee job satisfaction and discontent are influenced by elements related to hygiene and motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959). The hygiene and motivational aspects comprise the two variables shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Herzberg's Hygiene and Motivational Variables (Herzberg et al., 1959)



The two factors, motivating factors and hygiene factors, were differentiated. The motivating factors, satisfiers or motivators, which are the leading causes of job satisfaction, include achievements, growth, responsibility, work recognition, and opportunities for advancement (Herzberg et al., 1959). Hygiene factors are viewed as the conditions that ensure the employees' physical, emotional, and mental health and focus on lowering dissatisfaction. They include salary, status, security, work policy, growth,

interpersonal relationships, and work conditions. Employees will be satisfied when both hygiene and motivating factors are adequate (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Herzberg et al. (1959) found that when compared to improved working conditions, employee motivation and productivity were highly associated with positive reinforcement or feelings of achievement. While improved working conditions, such as increased income, may increase productivity, the rate is much lower than other factors, such as high feelings of achievement or fulfillment. Positive reinforcement is a fundamental aspect of improving performance, as Sharma and Stol (2020) outlined. In the context of DSPs, motivation plays a crucial role in ensuring job satisfaction and retention, given the demanding nature of their roles. I used a basic qualitative research design to understand this phenomenon through managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings (see Staempfli & Lamarche, 2020). Expressing opinions and perceptions seldom considered or spoken about will also benefit leaders in other mental health agencies. The design allows for obtaining descriptive findings from data through codes, categories, and themes (Sharma & Stol, 2020).

Nature of the Study

This study's most appropriate research design is the basic qualitative design, which aligns with the research questions, purpose, and problem. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the basic qualitative study involves interpreting a phenomenon based on individuals' experiences. Burkholder (2016) explained that qualitative research involves examining human experiences to gain descriptions and create meaning and

knowledge of a phenomenon. This design enabled me to understand the values, experiences, and managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings. It also helped to give voice to views that are rarely heard. The basic qualitative research design allows researchers to obtain descriptive findings from data through codes, categories, and themes (Guetterman, 2020). Therefore, this research study systematically explored and compared in-depth phenomena drawn from the participants' real-life experiences within the group home settings.

Definitions of Key Terms

For this study, the following definitions of terms are used:

Direct support professionals (DSPs): Employees in group homes who have direct contact with individuals affected by IDD (Chiat & Panatik, 2019).

Employee retention: Refers to an organization's ability to keep productive and exceptionally talented workers by enabling a positive work environment and lowering employee turnover through competitive pay, appreciation, benefits, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance (Cvenkel, 2021).

Extrinsic motivators (Hygiene Factors): These include the physical working conditions, company policies, quality supervision, salary, status, security, work policy, growth, interpersonal relationships, and work conditions (Herzberg, 1966).

Intrinsic motivators: These factors lead to positive attitudes toward jobs because they satisfy the needs for growth and self-actualization. They are seen as satisfiers (Herzberg, 1966).

Job satisfaction: The degree of pleasure or enjoyment a person feels when completing a task and the overall sense of success they have regarding their job are both indicators of job satisfaction (Chinyio et al., 2018).

Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) refer to significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. A disability usually forms during the developmental period before age 22 (Schalock et al., 2021).

Assumptions

Research assumptions are suggested to be correct or likely to occur even if not confirmed (Diamond et al., 2020). The initial assumption in this study is that the participants would be honest and respond with integrity to the interview questions. Another assumption is that the participants would understand the benefits of the study, as there is a gap in the research regarding DSPs' retention in group home settings.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations are intentional boundaries set by researchers to narrow the focus of their study, defining the context and parameters for the investigation (Gossel, 2024). This helps ensure clarity and allows researchers to concentrate on specific variables, while recognizing that other related factors are excluded from the analysis. This study was only conducted in group home settings in the southeastern United States, which is its first geographical delimitation. As a preliminary prequalification for study participation, all participants were selected from this area.

This qualitative research study limited the sample to 10 participants. Sufficient participants improve the depth of the basic qualitative study rather than the breadth by creating sufficient time for each participant and expanding the depth of the questions asked in the semistructured interviews. Another delimitation in this study was that all participants were expected to have had at least 1 year of managerial or training experience to ensure they could respond to the questions focused on their individual experiences (Gossel, 2024; Patton, 2015; Plano Clark, 2019). Furthermore, the scope of the study was limited to the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States.

Limitations

There are various limitations to the study that could impact the results. The participants included five managers and five training specialists from group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States, comprising the study's small sample size. The small sample size may constrain the generalizability of the results to other contexts or areas. The selection criteria may also create biases and omit critical perceptions from different stakeholders, including DSPs themselves or patients. As a qualitative study, the conclusions may not readily apply to other contexts or populations because they are context-specific.

Biases may be introduced during data gathering, analysis, and interpretation due to the researcher's experiences and viewpoints as a direct care provider. However, applying a basic qualitative design is beneficial, as it is appropriate for exploring people's

attitudes, opinions, beliefs, or experiences without framing research within an explicit conceptual, philosophical, epistemological, or ontological tradition. It is also appropriate when research questions focus on discovering the “who,” “what,” and “where” of lived experiences or when information about a poorly understood situation is required (Gossel, 2024; Patton, 2015; Plano Clark, 2019).

Significance of the Study

There is a significant gap in practice regarding the implementation of strategies that support managers’ and training specialists’ efforts in improving the DSPs’ retention rates in group home settings in the southeastern United States. It can be challenging for organizations to retain DSPs (Cvenkel, 2021). It can foster employee retention by utilizing effective leadership methods that enhance employee loyalty and job satisfaction. According to Scales (2022), the United States has 4.6 million DSPs. The quality of services offered to people with IDD suffered as a result of the high turnover rate (Alblooshi et al., 2021).

An organization that experiences high employee turnover struggles financially and experiences an overall reduction in work satisfaction and performance. The intended delivery of services to people with intellectual disabilities may be achieved if DSP retention is increased. Understanding what motivates and discourages employees may also improve job satisfaction and retention (Staempfli & Lamarche, 2020). The implications for positive social change include increasing DSP retention rates by supporting and providing the needed resources for employees to care for individuals with IDD in group home settings. Effective leadership methods could improve an

organization's ability to keep skilled workers from leaving. Leaders who understand their staff's needs can create a more stable workforce (Richards, 2020). They may do this by improving job satisfaction and retention.

Summary and Transition

The problem addressed in this study is the low retention of DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. Previous literature has shown that employee behaviors and perceptions of motivators are crucial factors in organizational job satisfaction and retention (Bianchini & Copeland, 2021). The key highlights included explaining Herzberg's two-factor theory and how it applies to the study and the research questions. Additionally, the section highlighted the nature of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations, which were also examined. The research's significance and relevance to the study in filling the gap in practice were discussed. In Chapter 2, scholarly literature on the mental health sector will be reviewed. The information in this chapter will also provide a unique perspective of the mental health workforce and the challenges DSPs face in the work environment.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. This qualitative study drew upon Herzberg's two-factor theory as its conceptual framework. In this literature review, I discuss prior research exploring job satisfaction and retention across diverse sectors, including personal care workers (PCWs), personal care assistants (PCAs), assistants in nursing (AINs), and DSPs, among other mental health professionals. Existing literature highlights the pivotal role of employee behaviors and attitudes in fostering motivation and influencing job satisfaction and retention rates. The study explored factors contributing to a research gap by exploring managers' and training specialists' perceptions of retaining DSPs in the southeastern region of the United States.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search technique for the literature review involved researching scholarly books, government documents, reports, and peer-reviewed journal articles from Walden University Library's electronic databases. The researcher used electronic databases from ProQuest, EBSCO, Emerald Insights, ScienceDirect, and Taylor & Francis Online, as well as Google Scholar, Scholarly Work, Semantic Scholar, Academic Search Complete, ABI/INFORM Collection, Research Complete, Education Source, ERIC, SpringerLink, PsychInfo, SAGE Journals, and Google Scholar. Relevant sources, such as the American Network of Community Options and Resources, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and websites run by municipal and state governments, were researched.

Peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, government publications, historical data, and other published works regarding satisfaction and retention in healthcare systems and other organizations were also examined.

The relationship between job satisfaction and DSPs' retention was examined using Herzberg's two-factor theory. This basic qualitative study sought to discover perceived motivators contributing to DSPs' job satisfaction and retention. The keywords and descriptors I used in my search to gather information included *direct support professionals, employee satisfaction, employee retention, turnover intention, and retention strategies*. The following search terms were used to find articles on the research topic: *Herzberg's two-factor theory, motivation-hygiene theory, motivator, job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, motivation, organizational commitment, leadership on turnover intention, employee compensation, organization culture, and turnover. The study will utilize Herzberg's two-factor theory to examine the factors influencing the retention of direct support professionals in group home settings.*

Conceptual Framework

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg, Mauser, and Snyderman's two-factor theory provided the conceptual framework for this study (Herzberg et al., 1959). According to Homberg et al. (2024), Herzberg's two-factor theory is known for its application in the study of workplace motivation. Herzberg's two-factor theory further explored that workers are motivated through rewards such as achievements, growth, responsibility, work itself, recognition, opportunities for advancement, or increased flexibility between work and rest, allowing

them to enhance their well-being. Herzberg et al. (1959) also stated that motivators and hygiene factors are not opposed concepts but two distinct ones. Motivators, classified as job satisfiers or intrinsic motivators, pertain to the specific aspects of the job itself, such as achievement, growth, and recognition.

On the other hand, hygiene factors, classified as job dissatisfiers or extrinsic factors, relate to the workplace environment, including salary, status, job security, policies, growth opportunities, interpersonal relationships, and working conditions. Following a study of more than 200 employees, Herzberg identified two motivating factors: satisfiers and dissatisfiers (Herzberg et al., 1959). Satisfiers include achievements, growth, responsibilities, work recognition, and opportunities for advancement. Dissatisfiers include salary, status, security, work policy, growth, interpersonal relationships, and work conditions. These factors cause dissatisfaction among employees (Herzberg et al., 1959). This management aspect was explored by Ghafoor and Haar (2020) in the moderated mediated model with supervisor support. They highlighted how building self-esteem, creative behaviors, and meaningful work enhances employee relationships and performance, according to Alfayad and Arif (2017). Furthermore, Herzberg's two-factor theory serves as an instrument for evaluating employee satisfaction and low retention rates, as discussed by Bhatt et al. (2022).

Herzberg's Theory in Use

Herzberg's theory suggests that each employee's hygiene factors and motivators are distinct (Herzberg et al., 1959). Therefore, this theory provides a suitable framework for understanding what drives and hinders employees, potentially improving job

satisfaction and retention (Velardo et al., 2022). Hygiene factors are different from motivators and exist separately from motivating factors. Motivators include achievements, growth, responsibility, work itself, recognition, and opportunities for advancement (Ann & Blum, 2020). Hygiene factors include salary, status, security, work policy, growth, interpersonal relationships, quality of supervision, and work conditions. Employees will be satisfied when hygiene factors are adequate (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

According to different combinations of motivation and hygienic variables, employees may perform well, have few complaints, or develop a habit of complaining (Homburg et al., 2024). Herzberg outlines two dimensions of job satisfaction: job dissatisfaction and job contentment (Herzberg et al., 1959). The two-factor approach offers a method for determining employee outcomes—favorable or unfavorable—and assessing overall satisfaction levels. Herzberg’s two-factor theory suggests that satisfiers and dissatisfiers cause employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These factors affect employee retention rates (Zámečník & Kožíšek, 2021). The following sections will explore these factors in more detail.

Satisfiers

The satisfiers identified in Herzberg’s two-factor theory are those factors that cause employee motivation. Herzberg et al.’s (1959) theory identified significant motivating factors: achievements, growth, responsibilities, work recognition, and opportunities for advancement. Career advancement comes with or is due to training and upskilling (Li, 2018). Herzberg found that these factors boost job satisfaction and

employee performance, leading to higher productivity and morale in the workplace (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Herzberg defined motivation through achievement as a factor of opportunity, whereby achievements are possible only if opportunities exist within which employees can demonstrate their skills through proper guidance (Herzberg et al., 1959). The nature of an individual's work determines their motivation levels. Motivation is at the heart of work and extends to the environment within which such work is undertaken (Shannon, 2019). Well-curated work environments are associated with increased motivation and, consequently, increased productivity. Herzberg determined that the nature of work or motivation directly impacts morale, absenteeism, and relationships among employees within the workplace (Herzberg et al., 1959). Further, Herzberg explained that making positive progress at the workplace was a motivator. Positive achievement, as referred to in theory, was a direct reflection of employees' motivation level and was equally a motivator that inspired employees to do even better in their work (Herzberg et al., 1959). Notably, failing to achieve the desired results would motivate the employees negatively.

Dissatisfiers

Herzberg referred to dissatisfiers in his theory as hygiene factors. Those factors are not directly associated with the work but are extrinsically connected to the job and affect employee satisfaction. Herzberg used the term hygiene in this case, as these factors are needed in the workplace to avoid dissatisfaction; they do not motivate employees. Hur (2017) stated that hygiene factors required to prevent employee dissatisfaction include salary, status, security, work policy, growth, interpersonal relationships, quality of

supervision, and work conditions. The organization's mishandling of these factors results in an employee's suffering (Zámečník & Kožíšek, 2021).

As a result, decreased employee satisfaction often correlates with low retention rates. Pettingell et al. (2023) view dissatisfiers, such as wages, as highly associated with retention levels among service providers dealing with people with IDD. The article also showed the inclusion of the national core indicators of the staff stability survey (Pettingell et al., 2022). Those factors reinforced the credibility of the findings on the relationship between incentives, such as wages, and retention in the southeastern region of the United States. In their analysis, Park and Johnson (2019) examined the factors that enhance or improve retention among home health nurses who equally deal with people with high dependency levels on their providers. It is important to note that these cases are unique, given the level of personal care required from the providers (Park & Johnson, 2019; Zeidan & Itani, 2020). In addition, Kocman and Weber (2018) explained that accountability is one of the main factors associated with responsibilities.

Application of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

A framework for improving retention is provided by Herzberg's two-factor theory, which highlights the significance of improving satisfiers and addressing hygiene aspects (Herzberg et al., 1959). Because of how the organization uses its retention tools, decisions made by managers have a major impact on employee happiness. To increase retention rates, there are strategies to improve the working environment for employees. The role that managers and training specialists play in making sure that workers are comfortable and have the opportunity to grow in their careers is important for retention,

according to Thompson and Nygren (2020). Herzberg's two-factor theory looks at how managers go about accomplishing this goal.

Alternatives to Herzberg's Conceptual Framework

Both Herzberg's two-factor theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs are well-known theories of motivation that have parallels and contrasts. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, people are driven to satisfy their most basic needs (Allen et al., 2019). As each need is met, individuals progress to the next stage and continue progressing to a new need (Martyn et al., 2022). In contrast, Herzberg's two-factor theory proposes that hygiene factors and motivators are essential for employee motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959). While Maslow's theory focuses on the hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's theory emphasizes the importance of workplace factors that drive employee motivation (Allen et al., 2019). Herzberg's two-factor theory posits that hygiene factors, such as compensation and working conditions, must be met to prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). While Maslow's theory emphasizes the progression of needs, Herzberg's theory highlights the importance of job satisfaction in employee motivation. In contrast, motivators, such as job recognition and growth opportunities, are necessary to drive employee satisfaction and motivation. Both theories relate to management techniques, organizational culture, employee benefits, and compensation.

Even though PCWs are expected to function as the eyes and ears of other health professionals, expanding their pre-service training and ongoing education is essential. From the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, enhancing their professional development addresses their esteem needs by fostering competence and achievement

(Allen et al., 2019; Herzberg et al., 1959; Martyn et al., 2022). Additionally, well-trained PCWs are better equipped to ensure their patients' safety and psychological needs, aligning with the foundational levels of Maslow's pyramid, emphasizing safety and belonging. The PCWs specified the education they should pursue to achieve the most significant achievement on the job (Martyn et al., 2022).

From the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a person's present state and future aspirations are crucial in determining their commitment to a workplace. Employees may only partially appreciate their current positions. However, if these roles align with their aspirations and reflect who they aim to become, it could motivate them to stay with their current employer. Additionally, their current job may represent what they feel they deserve, linking to Maslow's concepts of esteem and self-actualization, where achieving potential and feeling recognized are key drivers of satisfaction and loyalty (Allen et al., 2019; Martyn et al., 2022). When that happens, people are less inclined to change jobs. Job satisfaction and turnover intention are inversely correlated, according to Thompson and Nygren (2020). Their higher level of job satisfaction leads to a lower intention to leave, and vice versa. Increasing job satisfaction through the implementation of elements like job advancement, which enables workers to develop within their workplace and reach the anticipated level of self-actualization, is crucial to the organization's attempts to manage turnover intention (Sharma & Stol, 2020).

Challenges Experienced by DSPs

Emotional Impairment

Typically, DSPs work in demanding environments, leading to chronic stress and emotional impairment. Existing literature has revealed that DSPs showing empathy towards IDD patients will experience emotional impairment. Numerous scholars have directed their focus on examining the effects of emotional impairment on DSPs caring for individuals with IDD. For example, Keesler and Troxel (2020), through an online survey of 153 DSPs, established that the demanding nature of DSPs' work often causes them to endure significant stress and burnout, leading to chronic emotional impairment. Boamah et al. (2023) recruited 406 participants and found that DSPs are at considerable risk of experiencing secondary traumatic stress, which could lead to emotional impairment. Related findings were reported by Chafouleas et al. (2020), who found that DSPs caring for children with IDDs revealed mental exhaustion and emotional fatigue as the most shared challenges encountered.

DSPs experience emotional impairment when caring for individuals with IDD. Witnessing traumatic events while collaborating with individuals with disabilities can lead to emotional difficulties, including PTSD symptoms, for DSPs. Through a qualitative study, Boamah and Barbee (2022) reported that DSPs encounter traumatic experiences, with a notable correlation observed between a higher caseload of clients with IDDs and the manifestation of symptoms associated with secondary traumatic stress, ultimately contributing to emotional impairment among DSPs. Referring to previous findings, Keesler (2020) conducted an online survey of 380 DSPs and established that

emotional attachment to IDD patients caused psychological impairment among DSPs. In short, DSPs are at risk of emotional impairment from emotionally and physically taking care of IDD patients. The emotional difficulties experienced by individuals with disabilities can harm DSPs, making it challenging to uphold their emotional well-being (Keesler et al., 2023).

Past research has shown that DSPs' emotional attachment to IDD patients is a risk factor for developing emotional impairment. Through a systematic literature review, Trip et al. (2022) determined that DSPs face many challenges, including emotional impairment from experiencing mental health challenges such as stress and depression. Due to DSPs' challenges, the need for organizations to support DSPs has been highlighted by Wille et al. (2022). Additionally, Nevill and Havercamp (2019) reported that DSPs caring for aggressive individuals with IDD were more likely to experience job attrition and emotional fatigue, leading to psychological impairments. These findings highlight the frequent emotional challenges that DSPs face when caring for individuals with IDDs.

Lack of Training

Insufficient training for DSPs can result in a lack of comprehension regarding disabilities, person-centered care, effective communication methods, behavioral management tactics, and other vital aspects. Through a qualitative study, researchers such as Kim and Gray (2021) determined that insufficient training for DSPs negatively impacted their work in offering comprehensive care to individuals with IDD. Adopting similar views, LoPorto (2020) interviewed 12 DSPs and established that inadequate

training for DSPs limited their comprehension of ethical and legal requirements in caring for patients suffering from IDD. Friedman (2021), through secondary data analysis, found that a lack of training among DSPs affected their knowledge of the requirements needed for effective care of IDD patients, leading to high turnover rates. The studies underscore that insufficient training for DSPs affected their understanding of care for IDD patients and the need for self-care.

Without adequate training, DSPs may have limited knowledge about legal safeguards, the rights of individuals, and the significance of fostering self-determination and community integration for people with IDD. Expounding further, Laws and Hewitt (2020) reported that the increase in demand for DSPs had brought challenges such as inadequate training, which adversely impacts the operation ability of DSPs in care for individuals with IDD. Supporting the findings, Friedman (2021), by recruiting 251 participants, revealed that lack of training and tenure for DSPs was associated with low self-efficacy and high turnover witnessed among DSPs. Other researchers, such as Aller et al. (2023), established that inadequate training of DSPs may lead to wrong diagnosis. Overall, evidence indicates training challenges with DSPs to do their jobs working with individuals with IDD.

Increased Workload and Need for Specialized Care to Different IDDs

Higher workloads for DSPs result in limited time for tasks, potentially compromising the quality of care because of the rushed and inadequate attention to individual needs. Multiple studies have shown that DSPs' workload negatively affects their work. For example, Hall et al. (2022) reported that DSPs are responsible for taking

care of multiple cases of individuals with IDD, often required to provide specialized care, thus increasing their workload and leading to high turnover. Friedman (2022b) and Johnson et al. (2021) reached similar conclusions. They revealed that DSPs encounter various job challenges because of heavy workloads, unrealistic expectations, limited involvement in decision-making, and the complexity of specialized client care. Thus far, the studies show that DSPs experience high workloads because of the need for specialized care for patients with IDD. DSP turnover significantly affects patients with IDDs and those who offer human services. For instance, turnover can have a negative fiscal impact on disability groups. Many of these organizations already operate on a tight budget because of the constant need to replace positions, find new DSPs, train new DSPs, and pay overtime to current DSPs to cover vacancies (Friedman, 2021).

The increased workload faced by DSPs, which includes administrative tasks and specialized care for individuals with IDD, has been extensively studied. For example, Flynn et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study involving 133 DSPs, highlighting how the demanding nature of job duties can lead to reduced job satisfaction and potentially impact on the quality of specialized care provided. Similar findings were reported by Roesler and Probst (2023), who analyzed secondary data and found that low staffing ratios, inadequate training, and support resulted in burdensome workloads for DSPs. The studies examined collectively corroborate the hypothesis that an elevated workload presents a notable difficulty for DSPs responsible for caring for individuals with IDDs.

Inadequate Resources and Support Needed to Care for IDD

Insufficient financial backing for organizations and programs serving individuals with IDD can result in restricted resources, presenting challenges in providing DSPs with comprehensive training, competitive wages, and the necessary equipment. Extensive research has shed light on the impact of inadequate resources and support for DSPs in the IDD field. For instance, a study conducted by Desroches and Tyo (2023), where 10 DSPs were interviewed, revealed that lack of funding and organizational support were the primary obstacles faced by DSPs in caring for IDD patients. The findings align with the research conducted by Gould (2019), who, through a qualitative study, discovered that low wages posed difficulties for professional caregivers, leading to high turnover rates, recruitment challenges, and persistent job vacancies. Similarly, Friedman (2022c) also highlighted that DSPs, personal care employees, and nurses, who are essential for providing direct support to individuals with IDD, face limitations in their work because of inadequate resources (Langer et al., 2021). These studies demonstrate that DSPs need more resources and organizational support, as lacking such support hinders their ability to perform their duties effectively (Storey & Wright, 2023).

The literature review indicates that an organization's physical working environment, encompassing elements like office space, furniture, seating arrangements, and filing systems as part of its financial investment, can impact employees' intentions to remain with the company. Pingo et al. (2020) introduced a mindfulness-based design for acceptance and commitment therapy-based training programs. They found that organizations with crowded office spaces and informal filing systems had high employee

turnover rates due to increased stress and burnout. In contradictory the findings of Pingo et al. (2020) and Zarska et al. (2021) examined the association between working conditions, employee outcomes, and turnover and revealed that the working environment did not have any effect on employee turnover among DSPs because of the different environment in which services are provided. Problem-working conditions limit DSPs' opportunities to work effectively without stress, resulting in low retention (Billingsley et al., 2020). The results highlighted suggest that organizations should improve their physical working environment to enhance the longevity of employees as part of their financial support.

Insufficient financial support hampers the ability to offer comprehensive specialized care to IDD patients by DSPs. Through a mixed-method online survey of 24 DSPs, Keesler et al. (2023) reported that inadequate resources and funding were associated with limited trauma training for DSPs who cared for trauma-affected IDD individuals. Supporting this finding, Friedman (2022a) established that the lack of adequate resources for DSPs limited the continuity of care and negatively impacted the quality of care in most organizations providing services to individuals with IDD. Similarly, Erickson (2023), through an online survey of 89 DSPs, established that inadequate organizational support denied DSPs the required training and knowledge to care for patients with IDDs effectively. Based on the evidence reviewed, it is evident that insufficient resources and organizational support have hampered DSPs from getting all the required training and knowledge in caring for individuals with IDD.

Adverse Effects of DSP Turnover

Increased Recruitment, Training, and Development Costs for the New DSPs

High staff turnover increases recruitment costs for DSPs in the organization. Researchers such as Dishop et al. (2019) and Hoeve et al. (2019) indicated that employee turnover can lead to high recruitment costs, such as hiring and training new staff. Hoeve et al. demonstrated that high employee turnover rates contribute to increased recruitment costs, including hiring and training inexperienced staff. Hoeve et al. further suggested that reducing turnover in an organization decreases recruitment costs, unlike a high turnover rate, which leads to increased recruitment costs for recruiting and hiring costs, vacancy advertisement, and training and development of newly hired staff. Further, Chiat and Panatik (2019) explained that organizations with high staff turnover incur costs of recruiting inexperienced staff by spending much time and money training new employees. The authors agreed that turnover increases recruitment costs for new DSPs.

Organizations with an increased turnover rate experience high training and development costs due to recruiting inexperienced staff. Other studies, such as Mirzaei et al. (2021) and Fukui et al. (2019), show that they have limited talent and skills after high voluntary turnover compels organizations to recruit inexperienced staff for replacement, making it challenging to find the right skills and talent. In a systematic review, Guzeller and Celiker (2020) found a negative relationship between staff turnover and company performance because of increased recruitment costs, including training and development costs, and high compensation required by new staff.

Though Zaheer et al. (2019) concentrated on staff perception of hospital staff turnover in the health sector, replacing DSPs because of employee turnover comes with the increased cost of recruiting new employees. Wang and Wang (2020) concurred with Shelton et al. (2020) findings in identifying corporate hiring and training costs because of the high turnover rate. Although research indicates high turnover leads to increased recruitment costs, McMullen et al. (2020) found no effect on talent and skill levels of previous staff on recruitment costs. The research demonstrates that organizations incur massive recruitment expenses because of the time it takes to replace an employee with specific skills.

Staff Shortages and Low Morale due to Increased Workload.

DSP turnover has demonstrated substantial disparity in its impact on staff shortage and low morale because of increased workload. Some argue that turnover contributes to staff shortage and low motivation because of increased workloads in organizations where employees must work extra hours to compensate for the lost staff (Kovacs & Lagarde, 2022). In contrast, others elucidate that although a high turnover rate may lead to staff shortage, it does affect employee morale (Kovacs & Lagarde, 2022).

In a qualitative study, Hall et al. (2022) analyzed staff turnover and organizational performance. They established that organizations with high turnover rates experience high staff shortages and low morale among remaining staff, meaning the remaining employees are more likely to be exposed to increased workload and burnout. McKenna and Jeske (2021) refuted Hall et al.'s (2022) findings by linking high turnover in which talented and high-performing employees leave the company to staff shortage, low morale,

and subordinate staff performance because of increased workload. Despite disagreement in the findings' conclusions, it can be demonstrated that high turnover contributes to a correlation between staff shortage and low morale among DSPs.

Loss of talent and skills through increased staff turnover also contributes to low morale and staff shortage. Recent research indicates that losing talented and skilled employees through a high turnover rate leads to a low-skilled workforce with inadequate skills in each production line and department, thus negatively affecting other employees' morale because of the increased workload at the staff's disposal (Boamah, 2020). Emery (2021) found that unsatisfied, talented, skilled employees voluntarily leave the organization, resulting in production crises due to staff shortages and low morale.

Other authors, such as Pandey et al. (2021), reported similar findings to Emery (2021), demonstrating the loss of talented and skilled staff who left the organization because of unsatisfactory working conditions and job dissatisfaction, resulting in staff shortages and reduced employee morale. Pandey et al. (2021) refuted the results of Hongal and Kinange (2020), who reported that an organization's productivity level depends on staff performance level irrespective of their talent and skills or their number, meaning staff shortage does not affect the work morale of other staff.

Increased DSP turnover contributes to staff shortages and reduced employee morale because of more job responsibilities in organizations. Multiple studies, such as Davis et al. (2019), indicate that after more staff leave an organization, the motivation and morale of the remaining staff decrease because of a staff shortage. Verma and Kesari (2020) found that most organizations experience increased turnover, leading to staff

shortages and low morale among employees compelled to accept more organizational responsibilities. However, Simmons et al. (2023) contradicted Verma and Kesari (2020) by stating that staff shortage caused by losing low-performing staff has no impact on organizational operations and does not affect services offered by DSPs. The disagreements in the findings indicate the need for more research on the impact of employee retention strategies.

Health, Safety, and Quality of Life for People With IDD

Inadequate direct support staff contributes to limited services to IDD individuals because of a high turnover rate. Some studies, such as Gould (2021) and Thompson and Nygren (2020), indicated that staff shortages for people with critical conditions, such as IDD, have resulted in compromised health and safety and a diminished quality of life for people with IDD. Rich et al. (2021) investigated trauma care in intellectual and developmental disability services. They established that a shortage of DSPs threatens service provision and endangers the health and safety of vulnerable people. In a research study conducted by DeCarlo et al. (2019), it was found that the shortage of DSPs is a great challenge and results in a lack of essential services that threaten the health, safety, and quality of life of IDD individuals. Several studies, including Balogun et al. (2020), Friedman (2021), and Robinson and Graham (2019), have shown a significant relationship between turnover and quality of life among IDD individuals.

However, McMullen et al. (2020) found that DSPs are not obligated to provide services to people with IDD. It has been observed that limited DSPs may threaten the health and safety of individuals with IDD due to the high turnover rate among

employees. According to Balogun et al. (2020), the increased turnover among DSPs resulted in inadequate services, which also compromised the health, safety, and quality of life of people with IDD. Researchers Nevill et al. (2022) conducted a study investigating the effects of turnover and found that individuals with IDDs require support services from professional caregivers to ensure their well-being. However, Qian et al. (2019) observed no significant association between health and safety and turnover intention among DSPs. Despite the contradictory conclusions, it is evident that staff shortages resulting from turnover threaten the health, safety, and quality of life of people living with IDD.

Strategies to Reduce Turnover in DSPs

Training and Improving DSPs' Self-Efficacy

It has been observed that providing increased training to DSPs can lead to improved self-efficacy. This can result in reduced staff turnover and promote professional growth by providing opportunities for career advancement. Recent research conducted by Pettingell et al. (2022) suggests a positive relationship between enhanced training, the development of DSPs, and improved self-efficacy, reducing staff turnover. Another study conducted by Flynn et al. (2020) found that training programs can improve self-efficacy and job satisfaction among DSPs, leading to a low turnover rate. As per Friedman's research in 2021, jobs that require more qualifications tend to offer higher benefits and wages. Therefore, training programs for DSPs can increase their chances of earning better salaries and benefits, increasing loyalty towards their services. In 2019, Davis et al. systematically reviewed capacity building and self-efficacy among DSPs. The study found that training and development programs can enhance the self-efficacy of DSPs,

which can lead to better wages and benefits and reduce turnover intention. Hence, consistent training and development programs can improve staff retention and reduce turnover intention.

Still, other studies, such as Onyejose (2021) and Zaheer et al. (2019), indicate that providing staff with training that enhances their talent and skills can increase their self-efficacy, enabling them to perform complex organizational tasks more effectively. Boamah and Barbee (2022) reported a positive relationship between employee turnover and company staff training, demonstrating that training employees can increase their skills and competencies, resulting in improved self-efficacy when caring for people with IDD. According to Walters et al. (2018a), training and development might not affect highly skilled DSPs due to their competency. Instead, they can only be retained through management support. However, the reviewed empirical research suggests that improving training and development programs can enhance staff's self-efficacy in caring for people with IDD, reducing turnover intention.

Research shows that providing career development opportunities like training can enhance self-efficacy and decrease turnover intentions among DSPs. LaVeglia (2021) undertook comprehensive research to increase staff development, discovering that collaborative staff development programs boost self-efficacy and motivation, thereby diminishing employee turnover. Similarly, Mbaio et al. (2023) focused on enhancing self-efficacy in human service providers. They found that DSPs with advanced training experience have high self-efficacy and low turnover intention. Conversely, Randall et al. (2022) suggested that formal training had no significant effect on employee self-efficacy

but had a greater impact on positive turnover intention through increased motivation and commitment to the company by the DSPs. Overall, training and development programs, when encouraged, can improve employee self-efficacy and reduce turnover rates.

Social and Emotional Support Through Self-Care Participation

Organizations can improve the well-being of DSPs by encouraging them to participate in self-care activities. Studies have shown that self-care programs can reduce stress levels and burnout, promote staff retention, and prevent turnover intentions among DSPs. For instance, Houseworth et al. (2020) found that self-care initiatives can help reduce staff burnout. Keesler and Troxel (2020) demonstrated that self-care is associated with better emotional and social well-being among DSPs. According to Martin (2021), self-care can also increase self-efficacy, improve motivation, and reduce staff turnover. Similarly, Desroches and Tyo (2023) suggested that self-care practices such as spirituality, humor, and fun can contribute to lower stress levels and better social and emotional well-being among DSPs. By implementing self-care programs, organizations can create a supportive and healthy work environment that reduces burnout and turnover intentions among their staff.

Competitive Wages or Compensation

Staff compensation will affect the turnover rate of DSPs within organizations. Existing research suggests that salaries and wages significantly impact staff turnover, indicating that competitive wages are crucial in retaining DSPs (Remund et al., 2022). However, the relationship between competitive pay and turnover intention is unclear, with mixed results reported in previous studies. Some researchers, such as Serna-Olander

(2022), suggest that offering competitive salaries is integral to rewarding employees and promoting high retention rates among DSPs.

Conversely, Crane and Havercamp (2020) argued that inadequate pay can lead to employee dissatisfaction and potentially have adverse outcomes, including increased turnover intention. Hanson's (2021) study supported the argument for offering competitive wages, as it found that such wages can lead to high motivation and low turnover intentions, but only when other factors, such as organizational support and working conditions, are favorable. The literature suggests that offering improved pay can enhance staff motivation and reduce turnover intention among DSPs. However, considering other factors influencing staff retention, such as organizational support and working conditions, is essential.

Promotions and Career Advancement Opportunities

More promotions and career advancement opportunities may reduce turnover intentions among DSPs. As empirical research suggests, promotions and career advancement opportunities create a positive perception of the organization, reducing turnover (Shelton et al., 2020). Organizations with increased opportunities for promotions and career growth are likelier to experience low staff turnover than companies with limited promotion and career advancement opportunities (LoPorto, 2020). It has been established that more career advancement and promotion opportunities contribute to enhanced commitment and low turnover intention among DSPs (Romeo et al., 2020).

Chordiya (2022) underscored that organizational fairness, staff empowerment, and supportiveness resulted in low turnover. However, contrasting findings emerged from

a study by Dodanwala and Santoso (2022), which found that insufficient promotion opportunities contribute to higher turnover among direct service providers. Remund et al. (2022) also contributed to this discourse by demonstrating no significant relationship between career growth opportunities and turnover among DSPs. The reviewed literature indicates that organizations offering better career growth and promotion opportunities tend to have lower employee turnover rates.

Recognition for Outstanding Performance and Achievements

Recognition of employees for outstanding performance and organizational attainment also reduces turnover. Research indicates that organizations where management supports and recognizes their employees for their exemplary performance and achievement experience low turnover rates (Hur, 2017; McMullen et al., 2020; Vlachopoulos, 2021). In a quantitative study, Johnson et al. (2021) analyzed the perspective of DSPs on workplace support and turnover intention. They found that companies that provide fair compensation and recognition based on employee performance and achievement have higher staff retention rates than those with low employee recognition programs.

Contrary to the claim by Laws and Hewitt (2020) indicating a positive relationship between employee recognition and turnover intention, Briand et al. (2022) found that recognizing employees based on their performance only increased their motivation and not their intent to leave the organization. The results of Briand et al. (2022) and Johnson et al. (2021) were refuted by Tassé, et al. (2020), who claimed that rewarding exceptional employee performance and productivity increases staff loyalty and

lowers the turnover rate among direct support workers. Several study results indicate a correlation between employee turnover and recognition, suggesting employers should provide better recognition for their highly performing employees.

Challenges in Retaining DSPs

Increased Work Complexities in Working With People With IDD

People with IDD often experience verbal and non-verbal communication challenges, which can hinder their ability to express and comprehend information, increasing work complexities (Chakravarti & Chakraborty, 2020). Through a qualitative study, Scott and Kendall (2023) interviewed 24 DSPs and established that communication challenges with IDD patients discouraged DSPs from continuing their care work and thus quitting their jobs. Similarly, Velardo et al. (2022) found that DSPs have been under constant strain by trying to provide specialized care to different patients with different forms of IDD, leading to attrition and resignation. Other researchers, such as Caler (2023), reported that considering the complex nature of DSPs' job responsibilities, the insufficient compensation they receive, and the absence of standardized practices, most leave their jobs early because of attrition. The reviewed studies indicate that DSPs' complex job descriptions and demands have led to high attrition and turnover.

Individuals with IDD are cognitively impaired and require personalized approaches for training, task assignments, and clear instructions, which are complex for DSPs. Existing research has posited that IDD individuals need complex, specialized care that affects the job engagement of DSPs. Blumenthal and DeMico (2022) found that the turnover rate for DSPs has reached unprecedented levels because of the job complexities

encountered. Reducing resources and support makes it increasingly challenging and stressful for those who remain on the job. In addition, the complex nature of case management among individuals with IDD has proven difficult for most DSPs, who need more help and support, thus increasing turnover. As per the findings of the reviewed studies, job complexities have hindered the effectiveness of DSPs, thus causing high turnover.

Limited Social Support

DSPs who work with individuals with IDD often face challenges due to a lack of adequate social support. Numerous studies have shown that high turnover rates among DSPs are linked to limited social support. For instance, Houseworth et al. (2020) analyzed secondary data to identify factors contributing to high DSP turnover rates. They found that inadequate social support from organizations and families played a significant role. Similarly, Crane and Havercamp (2020) discovered that DSPs with minimal community support and social contact were more likely to consider leaving their jobs. Kelley et al. (2023) systematically reviewed 15 articles in another study. They reported that high turnover rates among qualified health workers were associated with insufficient community and organizational support for DSPs providing specialized care to IDD patients. These studies highlight the negative impact of inadequate social support on DSP turnover rates and the importance of addressing this issue for the well-being of DSPs and the individuals they serve.

The absence of social support in the work of DSPs caregiving for IDD individuals is a causal factor in the high turnover rates witnessed in many organizations. Several

studies have determined that minimal support for frontline nurses working with IDD patients is a significant cause of job attrition and turnover. Tabur et al. (2022), through a cross-sectional study of 403 DSPs, reported that frontline healthcare workers with minimal social support quit their jobs, citing an unfriendly working environment and lack of organizational support. Daouda et al. (2021) established a similar point. They reported that nurses working in IDD settings had high annual turnover rates because of minimal social support from the organizations and the community. The studies support the hypothesis that limited social support is a causal factor in DSPs' high turnover rates.

Increased Job Dissatisfaction

Job dissatisfaction often leads DSPs to actively search for new job opportunities or leave their current field through a qualitative study. Chen et al. (2019) reported that poor organizational culture and unfriendly working environment exacerbated job dissatisfaction among DSPs, leading to a turnover. Additionally, intellectual disability nursing students cited stressful working environments and aggressive patients as significant causes of job dissatisfaction, leading to attrition and turnover (Rasouli et al., 2022). Similarly, through a qualitative study, Kennedy et al. (2020) determined that psychiatric illness was linked with a notable increase in turnover among certified nursing assistants who cited poor work engagement and job dissatisfaction as probable causes of job attrition (Nurie, 2019). Together, the reviewed studies provide important insights into the effect of job dissatisfaction in escalating DSPs' turnover rates.

Job dissatisfaction can result in reduced employee engagement, decreased attentiveness to individual needs, and an increased likelihood of turnover among DSPs.

Research has shown that job dissatisfaction is a causal factor in DSPs' turnover. Cho and Wee (2023) recruited 214 nurses to examine the factors affecting the retention of healthcare workers and established that job dissatisfaction was the leading cause of healthcare worker turnover, including DSPs. Murray et al. (2022) highlighted that job dissatisfaction among social care workers, including DSPs and nurses, was a significant cause of turnover in many healthcare institutions.

Other researchers, such as Han et al. (2022), through a survey of 14,264 participants, reported that most DSPs in psychiatric institutions are subjected to workplace violence by their peers and patients. The researchers also revealed that workplace violence was characterized by high job attrition and high dissatisfaction rates, leading to turnover of DSPs. Combining the evidence reviewed thus far, we can conclude that increased job dissatisfaction is a significant cause of high DSP turnover, and that insufficient resources and organizational support have denied DSPs the required training and knowledge in caring for individuals with IDD.

Job dissatisfaction leads to decreased employee engagement, resulting in disinterest, lack of motivation, and reduced dedication to their work, thus increasing DSPs' turnover. Researchers such as Alsubhi et al. (2020) reiterated that the job dissatisfaction experienced by nurses has led to significant issues within the nursing profession, including missed nursing care, high nurse turnover rates, and an intention to leave work. Similarly, Kagwe et al. (2019), through a descriptive study with 125 participants, established that DSPs serving patients with IDDs are likely to experience complex and harsh working environments, leading to high turnover rates. The view was

supported by Pennbrant and Dåderman (2021), who conducted a cross-sectional study of 807 healthcare workers and established that job dissatisfaction caused by work-life conflicts and complex job demands caused high turnover intentions among the DSP nurses. Overall, the studies illustrate the many causes of job dissatisfaction and DSPs' role in turnover.

Limited Opportunities for Professional and Career Growth

Insufficient professional and career growth opportunities contribute to high turnover rates among DSPs as they seek better prospects elsewhere. Earlier research has determined that DSPs without professional growth prospects will quit their jobs. By conducting a mixed-method study, Doody et al. (2022) revealed that the roles and career prospects in intellectual disability nursing are constrained, and turnover rates are notably impacted when nurses reach a specific stage in their careers. In addition, Kox et al. (2020) also highlighted that the lack of comprehensive career progression and professional growth among DSP nurses caused job attrition and, subsequently, turnover. Wilson et al. (2019) found that most DSPs reported feeling uncertain about their career prospects, reducing enthusiasm for their work, and resulting in high turnover rates. Studies have shown that the lack of opportunities for professional growth and career advancement has led DSPs to consider leaving their jobs.

Limited career advancement prospects and a lack of growth opportunities can frustrate DSPs, leading them to seek new opportunities elsewhere. Research has shown that the government's failure to promote the career growth of IDD nurses would result in high attrition rates and turnover (Carey et al., 2023). Similarly, a qualitative study by

Green (2022) found that the DSPs' crisis, worsened by the pandemic, impacts employee retention and turnover in diverse care settings, such as nursing facilities, home health, and community-based programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The crisis is primarily attributed to a scarcity of professional career development prospects.

Furthermore, a study by Randall et al. (2022), which involved secondary data analysis of 481 DSPs, reported that organizations' lack of tenure, career training programs, and professional growth oversaw high DSP turnover rates. The research indicates that a lack of professional development and career advancement in IDD fields significantly contributes to employee turnover among DSPs.

Summary and Conclusions

Herzberg's two-factor theory serves as the basis for the research presented in Chapter 2. This conceptual framework informs early and recent studies, offering various methods for analyzing job satisfaction. The literature review encompasses significant concepts in mental health, perspectives on job satisfaction and retention, and research pinpointing motivators that enhance satisfaction among DSPs. The review revealed a lack of studies on the driving forces of DSPs' job satisfaction and retention (Smith, 2022). The research study aims to fill this knowledge gap by exploring the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. Their perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs are intrinsic motivators that might contribute to job satisfaction and retention (Smith, 2022). The literature review analyzed past

research on job satisfaction and retention among mental health professionals in group home settings.

While there are studies on psychiatrists, social workers, nurses, and other mental health workers, few studies have been done on DSPs and the challenges they face in group home settings. Previous literature has shown that employee behavior and motivators are crucial in job satisfaction and organizational retention (Bianchini & Copeland, 2021). Employees often exhibit unique motivations for leaving a job, which suggests that while common reasons for turnover are similar across various organizations, the actual motivations for leaving are frequently based on employees' personal and often undisclosed plans. Therefore, organizations should implement a conceptual framework that helps analyze these factors to optimize productivity. The managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings will be documented.

Chapter 3 includes various study components. I will describe the research design and rationale, the researcher's role, participant selection, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and analysis procedures. I will conclude with statements on the study's trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. The problem addressed in this study is the low retention of DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. In this chapter, the methodology, which is the basic qualitative research design, will be described. The research design and rationale, along with the role of the researcher, will be examined. Additionally, the chapter will address the participant selection, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and the measures taken to ensure trustworthiness and ethical integrity.

Research Design and Rationale

This study used a basic qualitative research design to guide the exploration of the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States (Smith, 2022). I analyzed findings from the data using codes, categories, and themes to create a rich, detailed description of the managers' and training specialists' perceptions. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are managers' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?
- RQ2: What are training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?

According to Burkholder (2016), qualitative research is valuable because it provides an understanding of human experiences and perspectives. It entails delving into participants' perspectives, objectives, and encounters to grasp the research issue (Guetterman, 2020). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explained that the basic design of qualitative research involves analyzing data to find descriptive findings, such as codes, categories, and themes. On the other hand, the quantitative methodology would not have been suitable for this study because quantitative research focuses on obtaining objective numerical data to explain phenomena of interest rather than subjective narratives found in qualitative studies (Astroth & Chung, 2018). In short, quantitative research has already shown an issue of losing DSPs but has not delved into why employees leave and the circumstances that can be changed to attempt to retain more of those employees.

Several approaches in qualitative research studies may be utilized, but none were more appropriate for this study than a basic qualitative method. Phenomenological design results in the notion that reality is socially and personally constructed and should not be quantified but understood (Slettebø, 2021). Phenomenological research aims to describe people's firsthand encounters with phenomena. Perceptions of individuals serve as the foundation for the facts gathered regarding the phenomenon. Utilizing a phenomenological approach would yield more significant benefits if the research prioritized the experiences of DSPs over the perceptions and experiences of managers and training specialists.

A case study design is an exploratory qualitative study that helps determine the best strategy for limiting the study to a small sample bounded by shared experiences and

gives the researcher direct access to participants (Slettebø, 2021). A case study was not used because the research emphasizes managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the encounters and accomplishments in retaining DSPs in group home settings. These research methodologies were inappropriate for the study. Ethnography involves the examination of cultures through the direct observation and immersive participation of participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). The focus in this study was on exploring the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings. The data were collected privately via semi-structured interviews using a researcher-designed interview protocol that supports the research questions.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in a basic qualitative study involves interpreting a phenomenon based on individuals' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research methods rely heavily on the researcher, who plays a crucial role in data collection (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). As the primary researcher, biases may arise from proximity to the study focus; however, reflexivity can minimize potential biases by keeping a reflective journal (Mackieson et al., 2019). To conduct this research study, I used semistructured questions and, as a facilitator, allowed participants to share their perceptions as managers and training specialists in group home settings. The study's participants were given \$25 gift cards immediately after completing the interview. Drawing upon my experience in the mental health field for over 18 years, I remained mindful of any professional biases I may have as a result of my professional relationship

with managers and training specialists. Because of my experiences, I am more likely to encounter research prejudice. Documenting the study process helped control researcher biases by increasing the research's transparency, and the documentation lessened prejudice (Farmer et al., 2022). To examine and confirm any bias, I utilized self-reflection to recognize possible biases and maintain thorough records of my research procedures, choices, and data analysis

During the data collection process, my role as a researcher included conducting semistructured interviews with five managers and five training specialists from mental health agencies in the southeastern region of the United States. I had no personal or professional relationship with the participants. The participants were selected based on the services provided to individuals with IDD in group home settings. I identified managers and training specialists from the email list available publicly on the organization's websites and requested their participation in the study. The email outlined the study's specific goals and the requirements for participation. Before reaching out to the participants, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University to conduct research involving human participants. I adhered to trustworthiness and ethical practices throughout the research process. The IRB ensured that ethical procedures were established, which included reviewing the informed consent process and assessing how participant confidentiality would be safeguarded. Further, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix) to conduct the interviews.

Methodology

As a qualitative research study, the conclusions may not readily apply to other contexts or populations because they are context-specific. Exploring the managers' and training specialists' different perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States is vital in understanding the elements influencing job retention. It is essential to comprehend the factors that impact job retention. Within the methodology section of this dissertation, I delineate the procedures and methodologies employed in exploring the perceptions and experiences of managers and training specialists regarding the challenges and successes in retention. This encompasses participant selection, instrumentation, recruitment processes, participation, data collection methods, the data analysis framework, measures ensuring trustworthiness, and ethical considerations, with comprehensive elaboration on their application throughout the research (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Participant Selection

Qualitative studies involve small sample sizes, and the selection of participants is centered on the research purpose and questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). After securing approval from the IRB at Walden University to proceed with my study, I acquired a roster of managers and training specialists from mental health agencies situated in the southeastern region of the United States who are responsible for supervising and training DSPs within group home settings. Subsequently, I employed a purposive sampling approach to identify participants from this population with the requisite knowledge about the research objectives. Campbell et al. (2020) and Rutberg

and Bouikidis (2018) articulated that purposive sampling enables researchers to choose information-rich cases closely associated with the research objectives. In the case of qualitative research, the aim is for the findings to be more transferable rather than generalizable (Moustakas, 1994). Conversely, participants are intentionally chosen based on specific experiences, as leaders with these experiences may be best equipped to provide insights into a particular phenomenon. Several criteria were used to choose participants for the qualitative research process. The participants were from different group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. In addition, they had to have directly interacted with DSPs and have served in their positions for at least 1 year. These criteria were essential as I sought to explore the experiences of those who have firsthand knowledge of working with DSPs.

Approximately 10 managers and 10 training specialists were contacted, selected from the agency's website, all meeting the sampling criteria. They received an email outlining the study's objectives along with an invitation to participate. From those who responded, I selected the first five managers and five training specialists who accepted the invitation. A sample-sized group of 10 individuals provided sufficient breadth to collect in-depth qualitative data, offering detailed insights into the research problem. Selected participants were given informed consent forms detailing the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits associated with their involvement. Participants indicated their consent by affirming their agreement and had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality was strictly maintained, with pseudonyms replacing

real names in the study report. Consent was also obtained before any recording or note-taking during the interviews.

Instrumentation

Semistructured interviews were the primary data collection method, with me as the principal instrument. Semistructured interviews are fundamental in qualitative research as they facilitate the elicitation of in-depth responses from participants (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). This interviewing approach involves probes, questions, and comments to encourage participants to share comprehensive information (Alam, 2021; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). This method gives researchers insights into specific events, experiences, and participants' viewpoints (Hennink et al., 2020; Pozzo et al., 2019). The research questions are formulated based on the purpose of the study and are used to complement the existing literature and conceptual framework. Additionally, the interview protocol questions are tailored to align with the research questions and to enrich the data obtained during interviews (Bayeck, 2021).

Crafting qualitative interview questions requires careful consideration to mitigate biases (Young et al., 2021). To ensure their appropriateness and clarity, I developed the interview protocol and conducted a pilot test with a small sample of professionals not involved in the study. Feedback from this test resulted in adjustments to the protocol. The interview questions, which served as the study's sole data collection instrument, were designed to align closely with the research questions and underwent a thorough assessment to verify their appropriateness.

Effective data analysis involves organizing data for efficient collection, storage, processing, and application using computer software (Liang & Zhang, 2021). For this study, I used Microsoft Word to document interview notes and participant responses. Microsoft Excel was used to organize and analyze the data. To ensure data security, all electronic documents were stored on a USB flash drive and have been kept in a locked storage cabinet (see Tassé et al., 2020). After the study's completion, the documents will be securely destroyed after 5 years.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.

After obtaining IRB approval from Walden University, I developed a list of mental health agencies in the southeastern United States where DSPs are employed. A sample size of 10 individuals afforded me sufficient breadth to gather in-depth qualitative data, providing detailed insights into the research problem. The selected participants received informed consent forms detailing the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits associated with their involvement. Participants indicated their consent by affirming their agreement. The semistructured interview appointments were scheduled at mutually convenient times and dates using a video conferencing platform, such as Zoom, enabling me to record the sessions and obtain transcripts.

Each semistructured interview was expected to last approximately 45–60 minutes. Participants could withdraw from the research study at any point if they chose to do so. Participants' consent was also obtained before recording or note-taking occurred during the interviews. Effective data analysis involves organizing data for efficient collection,

storage, processing, and application using computer software (Liang & Zhang, 2021).

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis plan is used as a framework for data collection, how the collected data is used, for what purpose the data is used, and how the data is finally analyzed (Richards, 2020). The data analysis plan guarantees the comprehensive collection and utilization of all relevant data in the study. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze and interpret the data. The primary research questions explored the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. According to Saldana (2018), coding establishes a connection between a study's qualitative data collection and analysis phases. I used an open-coding technique where the data were broken down into small units of meaning.

Subsequently, I organized the data into categories, forming thematic clusters. These themes were integrated into a cohesive framework that summarizes the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining employees within group home settings. Any discrepancy cases were scrutinized through a re-examination of the data and a re-analysis of pertinent information. The following procedures were used to as part of the thematic analysis approach, and utilized to efficiently examine the data from these semi-structured interviews: (a) getting acquainted with the data, (b) applying initial codes for assessing the material, (c) looking for themes and patterns in the data, (d) going over the themes, and (e) identifying and labeling the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The research findings were communicated in a narrative

format. Moustakas (1994) and Maguire and Delahunt (2017) delineated a comparable six-step process for thematic analysis, which can yield themes directly addressing the research questions. The credibility of the research findings is validated through trustworthiness in qualitative research (Slettebø, 2021).

Trustworthiness

Korstjens and Moser (2018) and Lemon and Hayes (2020) delineated four primary components of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Trustworthiness is fundamental to any research endeavor, ensuring the findings' accuracy, consistency, and reliability. In this study, trustworthiness pertains to the extent to which the results are of high quality and authenticity. The concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are examined in the following sections.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate the validity of the study findings, which must reflect the participants' independent opinions and be correctly interpreted. Data triangulation is a technique employed to enhance the trustworthiness of a study by collecting information from diverse sources to reinforce conclusions. This method validates a study's findings, corroborates a particular perspective, or ascertains the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. It is posited that employing multiple data sources that vary in location, time, or other variables enhances the study's convergent validity and instills greater confidence in the results (Farquhar et al., 2020).

To guarantee the accuracy of the analysis, once I transcribed the data from the participant interviews, I sent the transcription to be reviewed by the participant before being used in the research, a process known as member checks or participant validation (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Allowing participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences during an interview may allow them to get original, unfiltered comments that result in better in-depth answers (Ballena, 2021).

Transferability

Transferability pertains to the degree to which the findings of a study can be applied to different settings or populations. This thoroughly depicts experiences and contexts, making them understandable to external audiences (Hamilton & Finley, 2020). To bolster the transferability of the study, a comprehensive account of the research context, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures will be detailed. Further, the participants' demographics and characteristics will be detailed to allow readers to assess the transferability of the study to their specific settings or populations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Furthermore, I determined whether the literature and conceptual framework support the study and findings while helping readers assess the potential applicability of the results in various contexts. Additionally, the study will delineate its limitations, empowering readers to evaluate the transferability of its findings to their settings or populations. Moustakas (1994) stated that generalizing findings to other contexts is not a goal of qualitative research.

Dependability

Dependability is paramount to establish the reliability and reproducibility of the research findings. Méndez-Sánchez et al. (2022) suggested that a study attains trustworthiness when its methodology is thoroughly documented, enabling it to be easily replicated. The methods used in the study must be thoroughly documented to address dependability in qualitative research. This will enable a future researcher to replicate the work. Korstjens and Moser (2018) asserted that an audit trail ensures dependability by encompassing comprehensive research notes, meetings, reflective processes, sampling techniques, research materials, results, and data organization, providing a clear and transparent research trajectory. I kept an audit trail documenting all the activities during the research process, such as participant selection, participant correspondence, interview notes, ongoing thoughts, and any other information that I considered pertinent to ensure the study's dependability (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

As a result, the thorough discussion of the research design in this work enables readers to evaluate the degree to which appropriate research protocols were followed. Throughout the study, member checks with participants were carried out to guarantee an objective interpretation of the data codes, themes, and results. Researchers can participate in reflexivity that dictates how a study is built, designed, and portrayed by understanding their subjectivity and interpretation (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Before the transcripts were permitted for use, the participants examined them. The study's authenticity was confirmed via member verification and transcript analysis. According to Creswell and

Creswell (2018), member checking is one technique to guarantee the veracity of study findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which research outcomes reflect information acquired from participants rather than the researcher's understanding or biases (Amankwaa, 2016). The researcher must confirm and articulate to the reader that the results are grounded in and represent the data acquired from participants rather than influenced by the researcher's interpretations or biases (Johnson et al., 2020). To ensure confirmability in this study, I provided a detailed description of the research steps taken from the start of the research project to the development and reporting of the findings.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical protocols were implemented to mitigate potential harm to participants. Before the study commenced, I secured all requisite institutional permissions, including approvals from the IRB. Any ethical considerations regarding recruitment materials and procedures were addressed by offering clear and succinct information to prospective participants and ensuring informed consent. Participants retained the autonomy to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage. Measures were taken to keep data confidential, as previously mentioned. The research incorporated pseudonyms to protect participants' identities. Data storage procedures were in place to protect personal data. Access to the data is limited to me. The data from this study will be kept for at least 5 years and then destroyed by shredding any paper documents and deleting electronic records. Ensuring informed consent from every participant, granting them full rights to

withdraw from the study, and safeguarding the confidentiality of participants will guarantee adherence to all research principles.

Summary

The chapter is divided into several sections, including research design and rationale, research questions, role of the researcher, methodology, and participant selection. The methodology section described the steps I took to conduct my study. The participant selection section highlighted the criteria used to select participants. The chapter also showed how the various data collection instruments would be designed and used to collect the data and described how each tool would enable me to collect the data necessary to respond to each research question. The role of the researcher focuses on ensuring that the research meets all the ethical criteria put in place to protect human participants and ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative study. The trustworthiness factors include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. By ensuring that the study meets these four criteria, I ensured the study's trustworthiness.

Finally, the data analysis plan entails the essential procedures to analyze the data collected from the interviews and transcription. A vital tool a researcher utilizes is coding and identifying key themes from qualitative data. These themes comprise the study's findings and are used to synthesize the results. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the setting, data collection, data analysis, themes, results, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. Two research questions guided this study:

- RQ1: What are the managers' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?
- RQ2: What are the training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?

The process and questions were designed to explore the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. Participants were asked six interview questions guided by the two main research questions. Each participant discussed their perceptions based on questions relevant to the two guiding research questions. This chapter reviews the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results by research questions, and data summary.

Setting

A number of group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States were used for this study. These homes provide services to people with IDD. Managers who supervise the day-to-day activities of these group homes and training specialists who prepare DSPs to care for and support people with IDD were the sources of the data.

Purposive sampling was used in this study to find participants knowledgeable about the study's goals. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) provides a publicly accessible list on its website of group home contractors who provide residential homes for persons with IDD, and training specialists who provide training for DSPs. Those with at least 1 year of experience supervising and training DSPs who offer residential services to individuals with IDDs were purposefully selected. The participants' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings were explored through one-on-one semistructured interviews. The participants included five managers and five training specialists from group home settings. Participants indicated their consent by affirming their agreement to the informed consent form. The semistructured interview appointments were scheduled at mutually convenient times and dates using a video conferencing platform. Each semistructured interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and enabled me to record the sessions and obtain transcripts.

Demographics

Each participant's background information is provided in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1*Manager, Participant Experience, and Responsibilities*

Participant	Years of experience	Key responsibilities
Participant 1	10	Manage DSPs, create budgets, maintain secure residential care, organize emergency preparedness, healthcare services, and customized care plans.
Participant 2	2.5	Manages the daily operations of the group home, manages DSPs, ensures safety, and follows care plans.
Participant 3	3	Oversee daily operations, supervising and training DSPs, and providing a safe environment for consumers and staff.
Participant 4	5	Manages schedules, supervises DSPs, provides mini training modules, and ensures consumers receive the required care.
Participant 5	3	Supervises and trains DSPs, supporting consumers' well-being through emergency preparedness, healthcare services, and customized care plans.

Table 2*Training Specialists, Participant Experience, and Responsibilities*

Participant	Years of experience	Key responsibilities
Participant 1	10+	Develop customized training programs, conduct workshops, evaluate DSP competency, and offer continuing education in person-centered care, crisis response, and behavioral support.
Participant 2	2	Coordinates with group home managers to provide customized training programs, evaluate DSP competency, and offer continuing education in person-centered care and de-escalation techniques.
Participant 3	6	Engage with DSPs, offer training programs as an independent contractor, assess DSP competency, and provide continuing education in person-centered care and behavioral support.
Participant 4	10+	Develops customized training programs, conducts seminars, evaluates DSP competency, and offers continuing education in person-centered care, crisis response, and behavioral support.
Participant 5	1	Liaise with group home managers, offer training programs, evaluate DSP competency, and offer continuing education.

Data Collection

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. Before collecting the data, approval was received from Walden University's IRB (IRB Approval No. 01-22-25-0476766). Participants all had at least 1 year of experience working and training DSPs in the group home setting. The data were analyzed using thematic purposive analysis. A purposive sampling approach was used to identify participants from this population with the requisite knowledge about the research objectives (Campbell et al., 2020).

For each interview, a videoconferencing program was employed to record audio. The interview protocol, developed by me and detailed in the Appendix, guided each session lasting up to 60 minutes. Participants were provided with verbatim transcripts to review following the interviews. Engaging in participant validation is a critical step in strengthening the integrity of the study. This process is known as member checking. In addition to the verbatim transcripts and audio recordings, a reflective journal was maintained to ensure awareness of potential biases. This intentional strategy aimed to mitigate bias and minimize its impact on the research. Printed copies of the transcripts will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet, while all recordings and transcripts will be preserved on a password-protected cloud file for a minimum duration of five years. The data collection procedures outlined in Chapter 3 were meticulously followed, with no deviations or unusual circumstances arising during the data collection process.

Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews, guided by an established interview protocol and informed by existing literature and Herzberg's two-factor theory, were employed to gather data for this qualitative study. The interview questions were designed to explore both hygiene factors (such as salary and work conditions) and motivating factors (such as achievement and opportunities for advancement), ensuring alignment with the conceptual framework of this study. These interviews yielded valuable insights into participants' perceptions of the challenges and successes associated with retaining DSPs for individuals with IDD in group home settings. Following the initial two interviews conducted with both managers and training specialists, the transcripts were submitted to the committee for review and feedback.

Understanding that data analysis is an iterative process (Ravitch & Carl, 2021), each interview recording was carefully listened to, and the transcripts were reviewed several times, with notes taken on initial impressions to enhance familiarity with the data. Braun and Clarke (2021) employed a thematic analysis approach consisting of five key stages: (a) familiarization with the data, (b) application of initial coding to assess the material, (c) identification of themes and patterns within the data, (d) review of the themes, and (e) final identification and labeling of these themes. This methodology was used to explore three overarching themes: (a) the impact of organizational and structural challenges, (b) the influence of a supportive culture that fosters recognition and professional growth, and (c) the effectiveness of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness. Although the original plan involved using qualitative

analysis software, as mentioned in Chapter 3, an Excel spreadsheet was ultimately utilized for the analysis.

The following procedures were integral to the thematic analysis approach employed to effectively examine the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews: (a) familiarization with the data, (b) application of initial codes to assess the material, (c) identification of themes and patterns within the data, (d) review of the themes, and (e) labeling and defining the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2021), was utilized to examine the qualitative information obtained from semi-structured interviews with managers and training specialists in group home settings. In qualitative data, this analytical methodology provides a methodical yet adaptable way to find, examine, and analyze meaning patterns. Herzberg's two-factor theory, the conceptual framework for the study, which divides factors affecting workforce retention into motivational and hygienic components, served as a guide for the procedure. The study adhered to the six stages proposed by Braun and Clarke: they are as follows.

Phase 1: Familiarization with the Data

Familiarization represented the initial stage of analysis, involving a thorough review of each transcript alongside the corresponding audio recordings to gain a comprehensive understanding of participant perspectives. Transcripts were cross-verified with the audio to address any discrepancies arising from sound quality issues, ensuring the accuracy of the participants' responses. Following this, participants were provided with verbatim copies of their transcripts for review—this process is known as member

checking. This validation strategy enhanced the credibility and dependability of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

After familiarization with the data, manual open coding was conducted. Each printed transcript was examined line by line, with relevant excerpts annotated to highlight key phrases, patterns, and ideas that were closely aligned with the study's research questions. The resulting codes were systematically organized in an Excel spreadsheet. Although a trial version of MAXQDA software was briefly explored, the decision was made to proceed with manual coding to ensure deeper engagement with the data. As highlighted by Ravitch and Carl (2021), the coding process aids in identifying significant data points and extracting meaningful insights by organizing complex qualitative information into manageable and interpretable categories. This phase resulted in nine codes about the first research question aimed at managers, and seven codes addressing the second research question concerning training specialists.

Phase 3: Probing for Themes

The third phase focused on organizing the initial codes into broader categories and identifying patterns that could evolve into potential themes. This step involved clustering similar code concepts conceptually and assessing their relevance to the research questions and the study's conceptual framework. Emphasis was placed on uncovering patterns that transcended individual responses, reflecting shared experiences and concerns regarding DSP retention in group home settings.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

The initial themes were carefully reviewed to ensure coherence and clear distinctions between them. This phase involved cross-referencing the themes with the coded data extracts as well as the entire dataset to verify their validity and representativeness. Themes that did not have adequate evidentiary support were either revised or removed. The aim was to create a thematic structure that was logically sound, analytically robust, and accurately reflected the experiences articulated by participants.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

After identifying a consistent group of topics, each was meticulously defined and allocated a concise label that encapsulated its fundamental essence. Furthermore, the identification of subthemes served to emphasize more specific elements within the overarching themes. This phase proved to be essential for enhancing both the clarity and interpretive depth of the thematic analysis.

Three overarching themes ultimately emerged for both participant groups:

1. The Impact of Organizational and Structural Challenges
2. The Influence of Supportive Culture through Recognition and Professional Growth
3. The Power of Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Responsiveness

While these themes were consistently acknowledged by both managers and training specialists, notable differences in emphasis were evident. Managers typically prioritized issues such as compensation, opportunities for career advancement, and support from leadership. In contrast, training specialists highlighted concerns related to

staff burnout, dissatisfaction, and inadequate preparation. Furthermore, although both groups recognized the significance of professional growth and recognition, managers placed greater emphasis on motivational strategies and compensation, while training specialists focused on feedback mechanisms, mentorship, and the overall work environment.

Phase 6: Producing the Report

The final phase involved synthesizing the findings into a coherent narrative that highlights the connections between codes, categories, and themes. To substantiate these themes and enhance the interpretation with contextual detail, participant quotations were incorporated. At this stage, axial coding was employed to explore the relationships among categories and to facilitate the abstraction of data into higher-order themes. Color-coded highlighting in Excel spreadsheets supported a focused coding process in the second cycle, further refining thematic precision. This iterative process culminated in the identification of three key categories for each research question and the emergence of three overarching themes, each supported by subthemes (see Tables 3, 4, and 5). The resulting thematic framework offers a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing the retention of DSPs in group home settings.

Table 3*Themes and Subthemes Identified from Participants' Semistructured Interviews*

Codes	Categories	Themes
RQ1: What are managers' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining direct support professionals in group home settings?		
Compensation issues, career advancement, certifications and further education. recognition and support, rewards and incentives, managerial support	Motivational strategies, professional advancement	The impact of organizational and structural challenges
Emotional stress, overwork, high turnover rates, work environmental issues	Psychosocial Stressors, staffing levels, empowerment, supportive leadership	The influence of supportive culture through recognition and professional growth
Lack of training, capacity building, orientation challenges, human resource issues, company policies, scheduling conflicts	Skill development, workplace issues, organizational structure	The power of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness
RQ2: What are the training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining direct support professionals in group home settings?		
Compensation and value perception, training deficiencies, workforce and scheduling challenges. shift burdens, working conditions, excessive overtime, staff shortages	Employee dissatisfaction, inadequate preparation. emotional exhaustion, decreased productivity	The impact of organizational and structural challenges
Professional growth, feedback and mentorship, incentives, recognition, work environment	Motivation, morale, and professional advancement	The influence of supportive culture through recognition and professional growth
Leader-trainer collaboration, responsive communication, shared decision-making	Supportive management, engagement	The power of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness

Table 4*Managers- Codes, Categories, Themes, and Subthemes*

Codes	Categories	Subthemes	Themes
Compensation issues, career advancement, certifications and further education. Recognition and support, rewards and incentives, managerial support	Motivational strategies, professional advancement	Inadequate compensation Poor pay and job dissatisfaction Lower productivity Skill development gaps	The impact of organizational and structural challenges
Emotional stress, overwork, high turnover rates, work environmental issues	Psychosocial Stressors, staffing levels, empowerment, supportive leadership	Professional development Supportive work environment Lack of career growth Resistance to change	The influence of supportive culture through recognition and professional growth
Lack of training, capacity building, orientation challenges, human resource issues, company policies, and scheduling conflicts	Skill development, workplace issues, and organizational structure	Shared decision-making Adaptability to the work environment Employee empowerment	The power of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness

The Power of Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Responsiveness

appeared in both groups as well, though managers linked it with staffing and construction of the organization, whereas training specialists referred to leader-trainer collaboration and responsive communication. Such divergence in views allowed taking a closer look at the way these general themes were captured and reflected through the prism of the roles of the participants. With no contradictions in the data, there is more evidence that the analysis was robust since the same themes kept coming up in both groups, which

indicates saturation. I concluded that saturation had occurred, and no instances of conflict were found in the data, based on the recurring phrases that appeared in the interviews.

Table 5

Training Specialists- Codes, Categories, Themes, and Subthemes

Codes	Categories	Subthemes	Themes
Compensation and value perception, training deficiencies, workforce and scheduling challenges, shift burdens, working conditions, excessive overtime, staff shortages	Employee dissatisfaction, inadequate preparation, emotional exhaustion, decreased productivity	Bridging skill gaps Stability of the DSP workforce Organizational objectives Sustainable achievement	The impact of organizational and structural challenges
Professional growth, feedback and mentorship, incentives, recognition, work environment	Motivation, morale, and professional advancement	Support and professional development Appreciation and professional growth Structured learning programs Growth-driven environment	The influence of supportive culture through recognition and professional growth
Leader-trainer collaboration, responsive communication, shared decision-making	Supportive management, engagement	Workplace support and growth Collaborative leadership techniques Responsiveness to change Team empowerment	The power of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness

Results

An analysis of the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings forms the basis of this section. Research findings structured overarching themes that match different categories

and include unique coding systems. The feedback from both managers and training specialists revealed essential elements that explain what affects DSP retention in group home settings.

Research Question 1

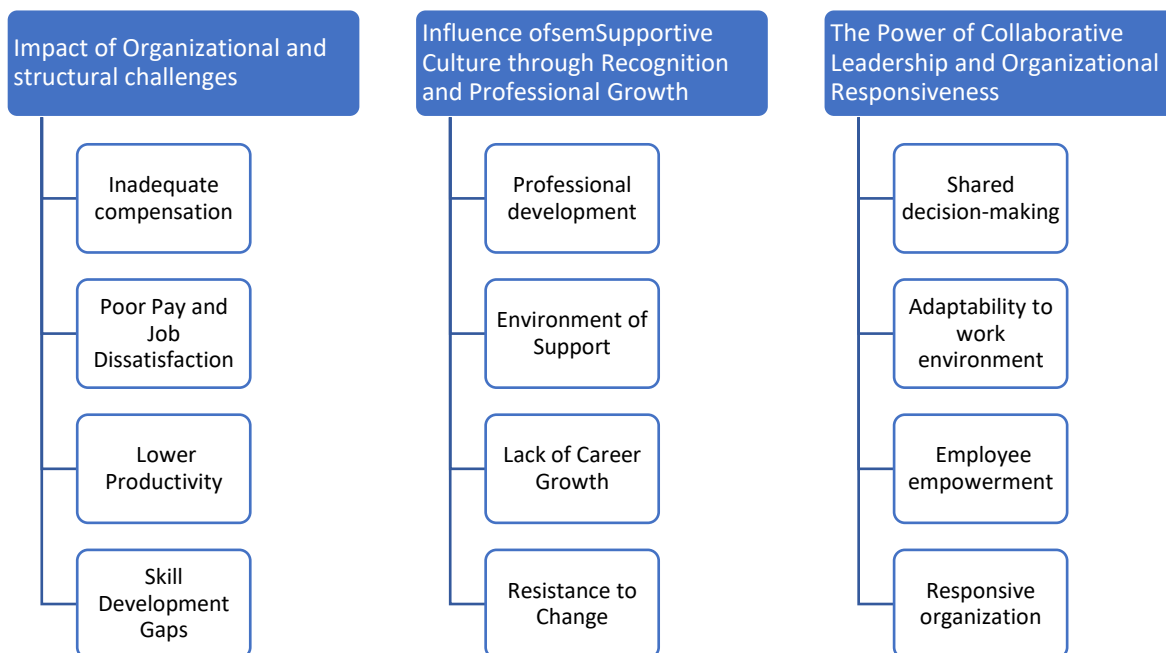
What are managers' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?

The themes that correspond with RQ1 are:

- Theme 1: Impact of Organizational and Structural Challenges
- Theme 2: Influence of Supportive Culture through Recognition and Professional Growth
- Theme 3: The Power of Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Responsiveness.

Figure 3

Themes Yielding Subthemes for Research Question 1



Theme 1: Impact of Organizational and Structural Challenges

Managers often stated that the current organizational structure makes it challenging to retain DSPs. These challenges center around four recurring subthemes: inadequate compensation, poor pay and job dissatisfaction, lower productivity, and skill development gaps. Most managers pointed out that pay does not match the hard work and expectations involved in DSP roles. According to participant feedback, DSPs frequently feel undervalued, resulting in being unmotivated and leaving the organization more frequently.

Participant 2 noted, “Many direct support professionals (DSPs) leave their positions due to the challenges of the job and a lack of fair compensation.” This

observation aligns with the findings of Pettingell et al. (2022b), who identified inadequate pay as a primary factor that impedes caregivers from remaining in their roles.

Furthermore, those who are not well-compensated often have limited opportunities for career advancement. Many managers have recognized that, in the absence of clear career paths, DSPs may feel stagnant in their roles, which diminishes their motivation and commitment to continue working.

There was also a problem with low productivity because DSPs lacked practical training and development. Several managers pointed out that DSPs received little preparation for their jobs, which decreased the quality of care and exposed DSPs to a greater risk of burnout. Participant 5 also highlighted the issue of training, saying, “A lack of support from supervisors often leads DSPs to either resign or get burned out quickly.” Pettingell et al. (2022), wrote that if there are few skill-building programs, workers are likely to quit their caregiving jobs sooner. Because of organizational and structural issues, group homes’ high turnover rate among direct support workers (DSPs) leads to continuous staffing stability issues. These retention concerns have the potential to impair continuity of care and affect overall productivity, underscoring the necessity for organizations to create strategic frameworks that consider both typical and unique reasons why DSPs leave. Determining effective retention techniques will require an understanding of the perspectives of managers and training specialists.

Theme 2: Influence of Supportive Culture through Recognition and Professional Growth

This theme, identified from the data, was the influence of a supportive culture through recognition and professional growth. These influences are centered around four recurring subthemes: professional development, supportive work environment, lack of career growth, and resistance to change. The managers mentioned that creating a positive environment, including providing encouragement, recognition, and support, is an important tool for DSP retention. The managers emphasized appreciation and recognition, which were also considered adequate. For Participant 3, it was clear that recognizing DSPs and validating their efforts made a noticeable difference in their willingness to continue working. “Recognizing DSPs and validating their efforts made a noticeable difference in their willingness to continue working,” Participant 3 said. According to Geetha and Muthukumaravel (2022b), when recognition systems appreciate staff achievements, job satisfaction, and workers’ intention to remain on the job increases. Organizational inflexibility and a reluctance to adopt new practices can hinder improvements in the work environment, negatively impacting DSP engagement and retention. It was perceived that when employees are motivated, they will seek growth opportunities. However, organizational leaders must emphasize providing training and promoting it internally. Participant 4 shared, “We developed a peer mentorship program to help newly hired DSPs feel supportive and confident,”. Lindstrom et al. (2014) found that efforts to train support staff are closely connected with fewer burnout cases and increased commitment to the organization among support staff.

Managers have noted persistent obstacles to fully supporting the work environment. For example, they believe that the absence of new opportunities and a reluctance to embrace change hinders workplace improvements. Participant 1 remarked, “Some DSPs are eager to advance in their careers, but the process is often inflexible.” These findings are consistent with Friedman’s (2018) research, which indicated that stagnation in organizational structures and slow changes diminish motivation among those who work directly with patients.

Theme 3: The Power of Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Responsiveness

This theme emphasizes the power of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness in practices that support DSP retention. These influences are centered around four recurring subthemes: shared decision-making, adaptability to work environment, responsive organization, and employee empowerment. Managers stressed that strong decision-making, the ability to adapt, and frequent contact between management and frontline staff can help the organization perform well. The participants explained that making DSPs part of the decision-making process in the company has helped them feel more included and appreciated. Participant 5 shared, “Empowering direct support staff helps them stay more motivated.” This sentiment aligns with Nassani et al. (2024), who found that shared decision-making improves employees’ morale and commitment.

The managers mentioned that being able to adjust schedules, add DSPS to shifts, or update training would be valuable for employee morale. Participant 2 noted, “Flexible scheduling addressed employee shortages, leading to fewer missed days and higher job

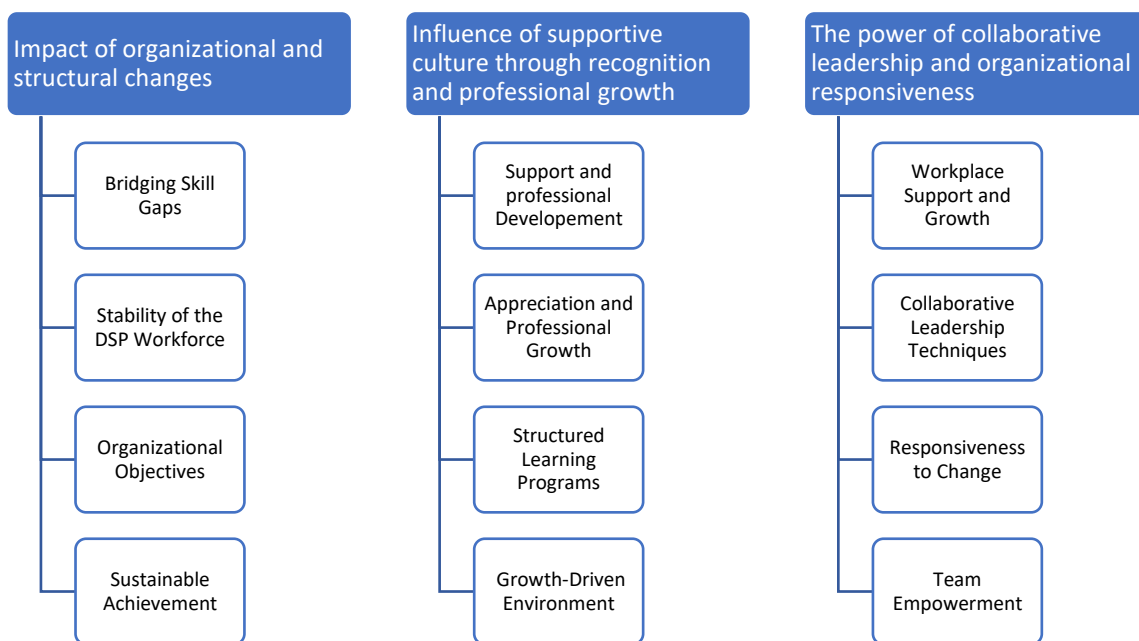
satisfaction.” This finding was consistent with what Bourgeault et al. (2021) described, where organizational agility increases the workforce’s ability and willingness to persist and stay on the job. Employee empowerment was an important aspect of DSP retention. DSPs were found to do better and stay longer when managers gave them partial or complete autonomy to manage and choose their actions. Some ways to empower staff were offering them a choice in their shift, including them in care meetings, and giving them paths to career advancement. According to He, Y. (2023), when employees have more autonomy, and their managers lead by including them, there is less turnover in tough caregiving positions.

Research Question 2

What are the training specialists’ perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?

The themes corresponding with RQ2 are:

- Theme 1: Impact of Organizational and Structural Challenges
- Theme 2: Influence of Supportive Culture through Recognition and Professional Growth
- Theme 3: The Power of Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Responsiveness.

Figure 4*Themes Yielding Subthemes for Research Question 2****Theme 1: Impact of Organizational and Structural Challenges***

A common finding from interviewing training specialists was that group homes face significant structural issues, particularly when there is frequent turnover and a lack of focus on long-term success plans. These challenges are centered around four recurring subthemes: bridging skill gaps, stability of the DSP workforce, organizational objectives, and sustainable achievement. Participant 1 emphasized that compensation, workforce perception, and training gaps leading to high turnover. “Compensation issues, role perceptions, and insufficient training are key factors contributing to the high turnover rate,” Participant 1 noted. This reveals that the absence of strategic workforce planning,

and sufficient training prevents organizational stability, prompting many DSPs to leave prematurely.

Participant 2 further echoed the sentiment that low pay contributes to high turnover, stating, “High staff turnover happens because many DSPs feel they are not paid enough for the tough and demanding nature of the job.” This is reflected by Participant 4, who emphasized that low compensation encourages DSPs to seek employment elsewhere, which exacerbates turnover. “When DSPs are not compensated adequately, it often leads them to explore other job opportunities,” stated Participant 4.

While managers pointed out similar issues, training specialists placed greater emphasis on the lack of proper training and workforce perception as critical factors affecting DSP retention. These challenges align with existing literature, such as Jadon & Upadhyay (2018), which highlights that low pay and harsh work environments significantly contribute to staff departures. Both training specialists and managers agree that not addressing training deficits, maintaining a stable work environment, and aligning organizational goals with adequate resources for employees can hinder productivity and employee satisfaction.

Theme 2: Influence of Supportive Culture through Recognition and Professional Growth

A second theme emerged, emphasizing the importance of fostering a culture of recognition and professional growth. These influences are centered around four recurring subthemes: support and professional development, appreciation and professional growth, structured learning programs, and a growth-driven environment. Training specialists

shared that recognition, learning opportunities, and career advancement directly affect DSPs' job satisfaction and commitment. Participant 4 pointed out that acknowledging DSPs' efforts helps them feel valued, which positively impacts retention:

“Acknowledging DSPs for their hard work makes them feel valued, which helps reduce turnover and encourages them to stay longer.” Similarly, participant 5 highlighted how structured learning encourages DSPs to become more involved: “On-the-job training for DSPs helps them become more dedicated and active within the organization.” De Vries et al.'s (2023) view is that employee development focused on career progression helps increase job satisfaction and commitment. Participant 2 agreed, stating that teamwork creates a sense of unity among DSPs.

Training specialists also pointed out that teamwork plays a key role in fostering unity and commitment among DSPs. Participant 2 mentioned, “Teamwork creates a sense of unity among DSPs, which motivates them to stay engaged and perform better in their roles.” This demonstrates how the integration of professional growth opportunities and team cohesion can reduce burnout and improve retention, with training specialists focusing on structured learning and mentorship as tools for fostering engagement.

Theme 3: Power of Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Responsiveness

The final theme highlights the importance of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness in the retention of DSPs. These influences are centered around four recurring subthemes: workplace support and growth, collaborative leadership techniques, responsiveness to change, and team empowerment through leadership.

Training specialists underscored that strong leadership is essential for motivating DSPs

and ensuring their continued commitment. Participant 3 remarked, “Having robust support from their managers makes DSPs feel more valued and reduces the likelihood of their departure from the center.” This observation reinforces the notion that effective managerial support is crucial for job satisfaction and loyalty.

Moreover, training specialists emphasized that team-based decision-making and the autonomy of DSPs are key factors in enhancing morale and retention. “DSPs are more likely to remain loyal to their team when they feel a sense of affiliation,” stated Participant 5. This point emphasizes the importance of inclusive leadership styles that promote empowerment and shared responsibility. According to Jones & Williams (2019), inclusive leadership encompasses shared decision-making, team-building, and proactive communication, all of which contribute to increased staff satisfaction and commitment. While managers concentrate on practical aspects such as flexible scheduling and managerial support, training specialists view leadership in a broader context that involves fostering a culture of empowerment through collaborative approaches. They advocate for involving DSPs in decision-making and granting them greater control over their work as strategies to enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility pertains to the researcher’s ability to establish the validity of the study’s findings, ensuring that the independent opinions of participants are accurately represented and interpreted (Slettebø, 2021). To enhance the credibility of this study, managers and training specialists with a robust background in managing DSPs were

selected, each bringing an average of five years of experience in the field. These participants were chosen specifically for their expertise and their capacity to provide reliable insights regarding the challenges of DSP retention within the group home environment. To further bolster the credibility of the data, member checking was employed, conducted immediately following each interview. Participants were given a verbatim transcript of their interviews to review. Any feedback or corrections they provided were thoughtfully considered and incorporated into the findings, though the original responses were not altered. This process confirmed that the data accurately reflected the participants' views and upheld the reliability of the findings (Rubin & Rubin, 2021). Member checking serves as a vital validation tool, ensuring that the data conveys a genuine and unbiased interpretation of participants' perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In addition to member checking, prolonged engagement with participants was conducted, dedicating ample time during interviews to foster trust, minimize biases, and collect rich and meaningful data. This extended engagement facilitated the clarification and verification of any misinformation and allowed for a deeper understanding of the participants' responses.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to other settings or populations (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To enhance the transferability of this research, detailed descriptions of the participants were provided, including their professional backgrounds and the environments in which they work. A thorough portrayal

of their years of experience, roles, and demographics helps readers assess how the findings might be relevant to similar contexts.

In addition to outlining the professional backgrounds, an in-depth examination of the group home setting was offered, including staffing ratios and the specific challenges related to DSP retention. This contextualization fosters a clearer understanding of the study's environment, enabling others in comparable situations to evaluate the relevance and applicability of the findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Such a comprehensive description aids practitioners and researchers in analogous environments in determining how closely their conditions align with those in this study, thereby increasing the transferability of the findings to other contexts.

Dependability

Dependability is essential for ensuring the reliability and reproducibility of research findings. As noted by Méndez-Sánchez et al. (2022), a study achieves dependability when its methodology is thoroughly documented, allowing for replication. To ensure this, a semi-structured interview protocol was implemented that remained consistent across all participants. The interview questions were identical for each participant, which helped maintain uniformity in the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

A consistent method for data collection was employed by recording all interviews and transcribing them verbatim. These audio recordings and transcriptions provided reliable and consistent records, ensuring that the data collection process was transparent and repeatable (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By adhering to a structured approach and

following established research protocols, the study's findings were made dependable and could be replicated by other researchers.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which research outcomes accurately represent the data provided by participants, rather than being influenced by the researcher's biases or interpretations (Amankwaa, 2016). To enhance confirmability, a reflective diary was maintained throughout the research process. This journal facilitated monitoring and contemplation of thoughts, biases, and preconceptions during data collection and analysis. By consistently documenting reflections, it was ensured that interpretations remained rooted in the participants' responses, rather than being shaped by personal subjectivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Furthermore, a peer review process was engaged in by sharing data collection and analysis with a colleague for feedback. This external review provided an objective perspective, which helped ensure that interpretations were free from individual bias. The peer review process contributed to validating the findings, thereby enhancing the confirmability of the study's results (Rubin & Rubin, 2021).

Reflexivity

Reflexive practices were engaged throughout the study, particularly through the maintenance of a reflective journal. This approach facilitated an understanding of how conceptual frameworks and preconceptions influenced various phases of the research, including data collection, coding, and analysis. By critically examining biases and

assumptions, informed decisions were made, minimizing their potential impact on the study's outcomes.

Summary

In Chapter 4, the purpose of the study was reviewed, accompanied by an examination of the research questions. A detailed description of the study was provided, which included an analysis of the results derived from interviews conducted with managers and training specialists regarding the retention of DSPs in group homes. The chapter aimed to investigate the perspectives of managers and training specialists on DSP retention, framed by two primary research questions.

Employing Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis, which emphasized the researcher's active role in identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning within data, three key themes emerged from both participant groups: (a) the impact of organizational and structural challenges, (b) the influence of a supportive culture through recognition and professional growth, and (c) the power of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness. These themes were based on recurring experiences and observations shared by the participants. In response to Research Question 1, managers highlighted significant factors contributing to turnover, including inadequate compensation, limited opportunities for career advancement, and a lack of sufficient training. They stressed that a positive work environment—marked by recognition, mentorship opportunities, and pathways for professional development—greatly enhances employee motivation (Geetha & Muthukumaravel, 2022, p. 34). Additionally, elements such as shared responsibilities,

flexible scheduling, and strong leadership support were identified as crucial for improving job satisfaction and reducing staff turnover.

Training specialists expressed similar concerns while addressing Research Question 2. They identified several factors contributing to employee attrition, including insufficient salaries, challenging job demands, and limited opportunities for skill development. Nonetheless, they emphasized that well-structured training programs, recognition of employee contributions, and strong leadership are essential for enhancing morale and fostering commitment among staff. Meeting staff needs and nurturing a team-oriented environment were highlighted as key strategies for improving the retention of DSPs.

Numerous factors discussed in Chapter 4 clarify how DSP retention influences the performance and well-being of DSPs in group homes. Aspects such as compensation, robust support systems, effective leadership, and relevant professional development were found to be crucial. These findings will be further examined with the conceptual framework and existing literature in Chapter 5, along with the anticipated implications for practice, policy development, and future research initiatives.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. This study was grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory, which classifies factors influencing job satisfaction into hygiene factors (extrinsic conditions) and motivators (intrinsic rewards). The research aimed to understand, describe, and analyze the experiences and perceptions of individuals in supervisory and training roles who significantly impact DSP workforce dynamics.

Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with five managers and five training specialists, each with at least one year of experience overseeing or training DSPs in residential facilities that serve individuals with IDD. Through thematic analysis, guided by the framework established by Braun and Clarke (2021), three key themes emerged: (a) the impact of organizational and structural challenges, (b) the influence of a supportive culture through recognition and professional growth, and (c) the power of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness. These themes revealed both common and differing perceptions between managers and training specialists, highlighting the complex nature of DSP retention.

Interpretation of the Findings

This study addressed the following research questions:

- **RQ1.** What are managers' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?

- **RQ2.** What are training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining DSPs in group home settings?

The findings of this qualitative study provide meaningful insights into how managers and training specialists understand the factors that impact the retention of DSPs in group home environments. Using Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis approach, three major themes emerged: (a) the impact of organizational and structural challenges, (b) the influence of supportive culture through recognition and professional growth, and (c) the power of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness. These findings were interpreted through the lens of Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959), which categorizes workplace influences into hygiene factors (i.e., those that prevent dissatisfaction) and motivators (i.e., those that actively promote satisfaction and engagement).

Theme 1: The Impact of Organizational and Structural Challenges

Recent research underscores that the turnover of DSPs is closely linked to the characteristics of the employment organization. Managers have long associated turnover with factors such as low wages, limited career advancement opportunities, and insufficient training, which have emerged as significant barriers to employee retention. These findings align with earlier studies demonstrating that low pay, excessive workloads, and the absence of robust support systems are primary contributors to employee dissatisfaction (Bogenschutz et al., 2014; Hewitt & Larson, 2007). The shortcomings within organizations can be related to the hygiene factors identified by Herzberg, which, when neglected, can lead to dissatisfaction rather than foster

motivation. Moreover, training specialists have expressed concerns regarding employee burn-out and inadequate preparation, highlighting the critical importance of stable support systems. Collectively, these insights affirm that failure to consistently address fundamental job requirements ultimately results in unfavorable turnover outcomes.

Theme 2: The Influence of Supportive Culture through Recognition and Professional Growth

Both managers and training specialists place considerable emphasis on fostering a supportive organizational culture defined by recognition, feedback, mentorship, and opportunities for professional growth. These elements align with the motivators identified by Herzberg, demonstrating their potential to enhance employee satisfaction and motivation. Managers particularly highlighted the importance of performance rewards, appreciation, and specific motivational strategies, while training specialists concentrated on cultivating a positive working environment, opportunities for mentorship, and providing constructive feedback. These findings align with previous research indicating that intrinsic rewards—such as professional development and recognition—are critical for retaining human service workers (Scales et al., 2017). Additionally, participants observed that organizations that cultivate respectful and growth-oriented environments are more likely to succeed in retaining dedicated and motivated DSPs.

Theme 3: The Power of Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Responsiveness

The third theme emphasized the vital role of leadership in fostering employee commitment. Respondents noted that the distribution of collective responsibilities,

coupled with open communication, flexible work arrangements, and proactive managers addressing challenges, contributed significantly to the creation of a positive organizational climate. These observations align with a growing body of research that recognizes leadership support as an effective retention strategy (e.g., Test et al., 2003). Furthermore, Herzberg's (1968) framework clarifies this distinction: while policies such as flexible scheduling and open communication are considered hygiene factors, effective leadership that encourages collaboration and engagement serves as a motivator. Similarly, both groups affirmed that leaders' attentiveness to employees' needs positively influenced job satisfaction and reduced turnover rates.

This study explored the dynamics of staff support structure development in group homes, focusing on retaining direct-support professionals (DSPs). Addressing the first research question on "what are managers' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining direct support professionals in group home settings," it was found that they mainly emphasize better pay, the creation of formal career development paths, and fostering a positive, motivating environment. In response to the second research question regarding "what are training specialist perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining direct support professionals in group home settings," there were additional information was provided that underscores the significance of onboarding quality, the preparedness of DSPs, and the effectiveness of mentoring procedures. Both groups recognized organizational culture and leadership support as fundamental elements; however, the priority assigned to these aspects varied according to their distinct roles and their proximity to the direct supervision or training of DSPs.

Overall, these findings align with the two-factor model proposed by Herzberg, suggesting that a combination of hygiene and motivational factors is essential to maintain employee satisfaction and enhance DSP retention within human-services organizations. Furthermore, this study introduces a fresh perspective by examining the issue through two lenses—managers and trainers—thereby broadening the scope of previous research that focused on distress within group homes.

Limitations of the Study

This study provided valuable insights into the perceptions of managers and training specialists on the factors impacting DSP retention. However, limitations like sample size, geographic scope, and absence of DSP input can limit how widely the results can be applied. Results should be interpreted or applied to different service settings with these limitations in mind. These limitations may impact on the generalizability and transferability of the findings.

First, the sample size was restricted to 10 participants—five managers and five training specialists—from group home settings in the southeastern region of the United States. Although the purposive sampling strategy effectively included individuals with relevant experience and knowledge, the small and geographically constrained sample may not accurately reflect the diversity of experiences and organizational contexts found in other regions of the country. Consequently, caution is warranted when attempting to generalize these findings to larger populations.

Secondly, all interviews were conducted virtually through a video conferencing platform. Although this method offered flexibility in scheduling and allowed for

geographic inclusivity, it may have constrained the richness of nonverbal communication and the rapport-building typically attainable face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, potential technical difficulties or participants' comfort levels with virtual platforms could have impacted on the quality of their responses.

Thirdly, although measures were implemented to ensure credibility—such as employing Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase approach to thematic analysis, conducting member checking, and maintaining a reflexive journal—subjectivity remains an intrinsic aspect of qualitative research. The researcher's interpretive lens, shaped by prior knowledge and professional background, may have influenced the coding of data and the construction of themes. While reflexivity was actively practiced, minimizing bias, achieving complete neutrality in qualitative inquiry is ultimately unattainable.

Fourth, the study predominantly concentrated on managers and training specialists, thereby excluding the direct perceptions of DSPs themselves. While insights from managers and training specialists are essential for comprehending organizational practices and staff development strategies, the absence of DSP narratives restricts a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of the workforce in question.

Lastly, the data were manually hand-coded by me using Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase approach to thematic analysis. This method was chosen because it allowed for in-depth familiarity with the data and flexibility in identifying nuanced themes. However, while manual coding is appropriate for small sample sizes and offers qualitative rigor, it may lack the systematic precision that qualitative data analysis software can provide. Despite careful efforts to ensure accuracy, manual coding can be

more susceptible to human error or oversight. Acknowledging this limitation provides important context for interpreting the findings and highlights the need for future studies to consider integrating qualitative analysis software for enhanced reliability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations are offered for practice, policy, and future research to address the ongoing challenge of retaining DSPs in group home settings.

Recommendations for Practice

Organizations should prioritize strategies that effectively address both hygiene and motivational factors influencing DSP retention. Firstly, enhancing compensation and benefits packages—a commonly cited structural challenge—must be recognized as a foundational necessity. Offering competitive wages, health benefits, and performance- or tenure-related bonuses can significantly contribute to reducing turnover.

Secondly, it is crucial to cultivate a supportive work environment through mentorship, regular recognition, and access to professional development opportunities. Managers and training specialists have consistently highlighted the significance of feedback, mentoring, and clearly defined career pathways. Organizations should implement structured onboarding programs, continuous skills training, and leadership development initiatives for DSPs.

Lastly, fostering a culture of collaboration and responsive leadership can greatly strengthen employee engagement. Formalizing practices such as flexible scheduling,

shared decision-making, and open communication channels between frontline staff and leadership can create a profound sense of belonging and purpose among employees.

Recommendations for Policy

At the policy level, both state and federal agencies should explore funding mechanisms and incentives designed to promote wage increases for DSPs, alleviate caseloads, and invest in workforce development initiatives. Moreover, policymakers have an essential role in establishing standardized training frameworks and certification pathways that elevate the professional standing and recognition of DSP roles.

Additionally, fostering partnerships among service providers, advocacy organizations, and educational institutions could be beneficial in developing sustainable pipelines for the recruitment, training, and retention of DSPs, particularly in underserved regions.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the limitations of this study, future research should expand to encompass a larger and more diverse sample across various regions of the United States. Comparative studies investigating the factors affecting DSP retention in both rural and urban group home settings could provide valuable insights into how geographic considerations impact workforce stability.

Additionally, it is essential to explore the perception of DSPs directly. Their insights are vital for understanding intrinsic motivations, everyday challenges, and the support mechanisms perceived from their viewpoint. Employing mixed-methods studies

that combine qualitative interviews with quantitative survey data could yield a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing DSP retention.

Lastly, longitudinal studies that track retention outcomes over time in organizations implementing targeted interventions—such as leadership training, recognition programs, or compensation adjustments—would help assess the effectiveness of these strategies and inform evidence-based practices.

Implications

The findings of this study yield several significant implications for organizational leadership, workforce development, and the broader field of services for individuals with IDD. The study reinforces the notion that addressing the retention of DSPs requires a multifaceted approach, combining structural enhancements with motivational strategies, in line with Herzberg’s two-factor theory.

Implications for Leadership and Organizational Culture

Leaders in group home environments must acknowledge their vital role in shaping workplace culture. The identified themes—especially those concerning recognition, mentorship, and collaborative leadership—highlight the importance of a human-centered approach to management. When DSPs feel that their contributions are valued and that leadership is attuned to their needs, they are more likely to remain engaged and committed. This necessitates a deliberate investment in leadership training that emphasizes emotional intelligence, effective communication, and inclusive practices.

Implications for Staff Retention Strategy

The study emphasizes the importance of integrating retention strategies into the core of the organization, rather than treating turnover as a separate concern. Establishing clear career pathways, offering continuous training, and fostering open feedback channels should become integral to daily operations. Additionally, cultivating a supportive culture through regular recognition, coaching, and flexible scheduling can act as cost-effective yet powerful mechanisms for improving employee retention.

Implications for the IDD Service Field

At a broader level, this study adds to the increasing body of literature that highlights the systemic challenges encountered by DSPs. It reinforces the appeals made by advocacy organizations for enhanced professionalization of the DSP role and for targeted reforms in workforce support. The persistent theme of burnout, intensified by low wages and high demands, indicates that enhancing DSP retention is not solely about operational efficiency; it is also a critical consideration for ensuring ethical care and quality service for individuals with IDD.

Implications for Conceptual Framework Application

Herzberg's two-factor theory has proven valuable in organizing and interpreting participants' insights, highlighting the interplay between hygiene factors (such as compensation and workload) and motivational factors (including recognition and growth opportunities) in influencing employee retention. Interestingly, the findings extend Herzberg's theory by introducing emotional well-being and exposure to trauma as modern elements influencing retention. This nuance shows how Herzberg's principles

remain relevant but may need adaptation for emotionally demanding professions like DSPs. Overall, the framework effectively explained the retention challenges, confirming that sustainable improvement requires addressing both intrinsic motivators and extrinsic hygiene factors. This study highlights the importance of applying motivational theories in qualitative research within the human services sector, offering a framework that informs both academic inquiry and practical decision-making.

Conclusion

This study examined the managers' and training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retraining DSPs in the group home settings. Grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory and analyzed through Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach, the research identified three primary themes. These included the impact of organizational and structural challenges, the significance of a supportive culture facilitated by recognition and professional growth, and the effectiveness of collaborative leadership and organizational responsiveness.

The findings indicate that while both hygiene and motivational factors play crucial roles in DSP retention, the perception of managers and training specialists differs in emphasis. Managers primarily focused on structural issues such as compensation and workload, whereas training specialists underscored the importance of mentorship, feedback, and preparedness. Nevertheless, both groups recognized the importance of recognition, leadership support, and professional development in mitigating turnover.

This study offers valuable insights into the challenges faced by the DSP workforce and provides practical recommendations for enhancing retention. By

addressing both systemic and interpersonal factors, organizations can cultivate environments that promote stability, engagement, and quality care for individuals with IDD. These findings not only align with Herzberg's conceptual framework but also present actionable strategies that can guide leadership practices, policy development, and future research in the field. The increasing DSP retention rates by supporting and providing the resources needed for employees to care for individuals with IDD in group home settings have implications for positive social change when retention strategies are integrated into the core of the organization.

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Appendix Interview Protocol

RQ1: What are managers' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining direct support professionals in group home settings?

1. What are the challenges in retaining direct support professionals in the group home setting?
2. What successful strategies are used, and how are they evaluated, to retain direct support professionals in the group home setting?
3. What factors influence direct support professionals' stress and lack of motivation at work?
4. What contributes to direct support of professionals' work satisfaction?
5. What contributes to direct support professionals' dissatisfaction with their work?
6. What successful work-related event has increased direct support professionals?

RQ2: What are the training specialists' perceptions of the challenges and successes in retaining direct support professionals in group home settings?

1. What are the main challenges in training and retaining direct support professionals?
2. What are the strategies implemented to retain direct support professionals?
3. What factors influence direct support professionals' stress and burnout at work?
4. What factors contribute to job satisfaction among direct support professionals?
5. What are common sources of dissatisfaction among direct support professionals?
6. What successful work-related events have affected direct support of professionals' retention and job satisfaction?