

12-4-2025

Strategies Leaders Use to Reduce Voluntary Attrition Among Employees With Access to Wellness Programs

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College of Management and Human
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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Cara Michelle Murray

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Strategies Leaders Use to Reduce Voluntary Attrition Among Employees With Access to

Wellness Programs

by

Cara Michelle Murray

MS, Florida State University, 2021

BS, Florida State University, 2019

Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2025

Abstract

Voluntary employee attrition presents ongoing challenges for organizational leaders, particularly among employees whose workplace needs and preferences are unmet. The problem is that many leaders lack effective strategies to mitigate voluntary attrition, which negatively impacts productivity, morale, and overall organizational performance. Grounded in the job demands–resources model and wellness climate theory, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project was to explore strategies leaders used to reduce voluntary employee attrition among employees who have access to workplace wellness programs. The participants were six organizational leaders from mid-sized and public-sector organizations who successfully mitigated voluntary attrition. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and a review of publicly available documents. Using Braun and Clarke’s six-stage thematic analysis model, five themes emerged: leadership support, engagement and utilization, mental and holistic wellness, incentives and recognition, and barriers and challenges. A key recommendation is for leaders to adopt adaptive and wellness-centered leadership practices that integrate holistic well-being into the organizational culture, thereby strengthening employee commitment and reducing attrition. The implications for positive social change include the potential for organizational leaders to foster healthier workplaces, enhancing employee well-being, thereby creating more sustainable organizational environments that support both personal and professional growth.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral project to my amazing friends, coworkers, and classmates, whose unending support, encouragement, and willingness to listen to my daily rants, solicited or not, kept me sane and smiling throughout this journey. To my siblings, nieces, and nephews, may this achievement inspire you to dream boldly and work hard for what you want in life. You are capable of anything you set your hearts on. To my mom, my greatest source of strength, my constant cheerleader, and the truest example of resilience. As a strong and independent single mother, you showed me that women can overcome anything and achieve everything. I am forever grateful for the foundation you built and the belief you instilled in me.

Acknowledgments

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Hall, whose guidance, encouragement, and thoughtful feedback significantly shaped this doctoral project from its inception to its completion. Your expertise and patience strengthened both my confidence and my scholarship. To my second committee member, Dr. Dewees, thank you for your time, perspective, and valuable insight that refined my work and expanded my thinking. I am also deeply grateful to the participants who shared their experiences so openly. Your honesty brought this project to life.

Most of all, I want to thank Dr. Gely, who saw potential in me long before I saw it in myself. You planted this seed years ago, when I thought you were crazy for suggesting I pursue a doctorate, yet you never stopped believing in me. Your mentorship, encouragement, and constant guidance, every review, every conversation, every moment of support—made this possible. I can say with complete sincerity that this would not have happened without you. Your faith in me changed the trajectory of both my career and my life, and I will be forever grateful for it.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Background of the Problem

Voluntary attrition remains a significant organizational challenge impacting industry stability and performance. Voluntary attrition, defined as employees choosing to leave their jobs, disrupts operations and erodes institutional knowledge (de la Torre-Ruiz et al., 2019; Herr et al., 2022). Researchers have identified high voluntary turnover as a global issue with consequences for profitability and team cohesion (Allen & Vardaman, 2021). Researchers also emphasized the need to identify causes of voluntary attrition and explore organizational responses, such as wellness programs.

Organizations have implemented workplace wellness programs to improve employee satisfaction and reduce voluntary attrition. Despite these efforts, many still experience high attrition rates (Balkin & Werner, 2023; Ranta & Ylinen, 2024). Researchers have called for further research to identify factors contributing to attrition when wellness programs are already in place.

Scholars have linked employee well-being to workforce stability, but gaps remain. Most studies have focused on large private-sector organizations with extensive benefits (Allen & Vardaman, 2021; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Mia et al., 2022), while few have explored wellness programs in mid-sized or public-sector organizations or considered employee perceptions of these initiatives (Ahamad et al., 2023; Herr et al., 2022). This research project addresses the issue of persistent voluntary attrition despite the implementation of wellness programs, which negatively impacts organizational performance and continuity.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

I conducted this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project to address a specific business problem: Business leaders in public and mid-sized organizations may lack effective strategies to understand why employees voluntarily leave despite the availability of workplace wellness programs. Voluntary turnover remains high in many industries despite growing investment in wellness initiatives aimed at enhancing employee satisfaction, work-life balance, and engagement (de la Torre-Ruiz et al., 2019). The problem underscored the need to explore how organizational leaders design, implement, and evaluate wellness initiatives to reduce voluntary attrition (see Al-Suraihi et al., 2021). I selected a qualitative methodology with a pragmatic inquiry design to collect real-world insights from organizational leaders, such as department heads, human resources (HR) managers, and wellness program administrators, who have direct experience overseeing or evaluating wellness initiatives and addressing employee attrition. This project was an exploration of business leaders' effective strategies to understand why employees voluntarily leave despite access to workplace wellness programs.

The targeted population consisted of business professionals who had either (a) observed or (b) managed employee attrition in organizations that offered workplace wellness programs. I used the purposive sampling method to recruit six participants to achieve data saturation. Participants included working-age adults (ages 35–65) with direct knowledge of how wellness program experiences influenced employee decisions to stay or voluntarily leave the organization. I recruited participants through professional networks, including LinkedIn groups, such as Linked: HR (#1 Human Resources Group),

Human Resources Professionals Worldwide, and the Lean In Community (including Lean In Circles). I requested access from each respective group administrator before recruitment outreach.

Data sources for this research project include: (a) semistructured interviews with business leaders and (b) publicly available documents, such as HR policy manuals, wellness program summaries, and annual workforce reports related to wellness initiatives and employee engagement. Following Yin's (2018) principle of methodological triangulation, I used the public documents to corroborate and enrich the findings derived from interview data, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research project.

Next, I reviewed publicly available documents from select public-sector organizations that explicitly permit the academic or research use of their published materials. These documents were selected based on their relevance to the research project's focus on voluntary employee attrition and workplace wellness programs. I evaluated the material to determine its alignment with and support for specific interview questions.

The research project's conceptual framework was the job demands–resources (JD-R) model, developed by Demerouti et al. (2001). Demerouti et al. (2001) identified specific risk factors associated with job stress in every occupation and categorized them into two broad dimensions: job demands and resources.

Research Question

What strategies do business leaders use to reduce employee voluntary attrition by leveraging wellness programs?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are foundational beliefs that qualitative researchers accept as accurate without direct evidence, yet these beliefs shape the overall research project design and interpretation (Yin, 2018). Assumptions help guide the development of the research question, selection of participants, and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2024). For this research project, I made several assumptions that were necessary to support the credibility and direction of the research.

Three key assumptions underpinned this research project. I assumed that participants would respond to interview questions honestly and openly, drawing from their lived experiences implementing workplace wellness programs. Another assumption was that public-sector leaders remain actively committed to improving employee well-being and addressing the causes of voluntary attrition through deliberate planning and engagement. Lastly, I assumed that participants possessed sufficient knowledge, familiarity, and direct experience with workplace wellness initiatives to provide meaningful insight into how such programs influence employees' decisions to remain or voluntarily leave an organization. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that qualitative research relies on participant perspectives, context, and the researcher's role in interpreting meaning. In this research project, I collected and analyzed data through an

interpretive lens, guided by the insights of participants and the context of their experiences.

Limitations

Limitations in qualitative research are potential weaknesses that may influence the interpretation or transferability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Acknowledging limitations enhances transparency, allowing readers to evaluate the trustworthiness of the research project (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These limitations may include researcher bias, participant availability, and constraints related to access or time.

In this research project, one limitation was the reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to recall bias or social desirability. Additionally, some participants may have been hesitant to fully disclose organizational challenges or strategies due to professional sensitivity or perceived risk of disclosure. Triangulation and member checking are widely recommended in qualitative research to strengthen trustworthiness by cross-validating findings and allowing participants to confirm the accuracy of interpreted data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used triangulation and member checking to enhance the credibility and dependability of the research project.

Transition

In this qualitative research project, I explored practical strategies that public-sector leaders use to implement workplace wellness initiatives to reduce voluntary employee attrition. In Section 1, I introduced the background of the problem, the specific business problem, the research purpose, question, conceptual framework, and the JDR model (see Demerouti et al., 2001). Section 2 will contain a critical review of the

academic and professional literature on voluntary employee attrition, wellness programs, and the motivational theories that inform employee engagement and well-being. Section 3 will include descriptions of the research design, ethical considerations, participant selection, and data analysis methods used in this qualitative research project. In Section 4, I will present the findings and discuss their implications for public-sector leadership, organizational practice, and future research.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Literature Review Opening Narrative

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry research project was to explore effective strategies that some public- and private-sector leaders use to reduce voluntary employee attrition through workplace wellness programs. Public organizations face challenges sustaining a healthy and engaged workforce, mainly because voluntary attrition drives costs and disrupts service delivery (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Leaders must recognize the role of wellness strategies in supporting employee well-being and consider how to align these programs with their organization's values and the needs of their employees. The conceptual framework guiding this research project comprised the wellness climate theory (WCT) and the JD-R model.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

Voluntary employee attrition continues to pose significant operational and financial challenges for organizations across industries. In December 2023 alone, approximately 3.4 million employees voluntarily left their positions (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). High turnover disrupts continuity, increases recruitment and training costs, and diminishes organizational performance. These challenges are especially pronounced in public-sector and mid-sized organizations where institutional knowledge and workforce stability are critical.

The specific business problem was that some business leaders in public and mid-sized organizations lack effective strategies to implement workplace wellness

programs that reduce voluntary employee attrition. Although many organizations invest in wellness and benefits programs, researchers have suggested that misalignment between employee expectations and organizational support structures often limits their effectiveness (Li et al., 2021). When wellness initiatives fail to address evolving employee needs, organizations risk ongoing departures despite the availability of these programs.

This problem underscores the need to explore how business leaders design, implement, and evaluate wellness initiatives to reduce voluntary attrition. Addressing this issue is crucial for minimizing costs, enhancing organizational efficiency, and improving employee satisfaction and engagement. This project's implications for positive social change include promoting employee stability; fostering a stronger workplace culture; and supporting healthier, more resilient communities.

Literature Review Organization and Strategy

To construct this literature review, I used Google Scholar and databases accessible through the Walden University Library to identify relevant peer-reviewed articles, government publications, and theoretical sources related to voluntary employee attrition, workplace wellness programs, and leadership strategies within the public sector and mid-sized organizations. Databases included Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM, EBSCOHost, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, and Emerald Insight. Search terms used in various combinations included *voluntary attrition*, *employee turnover*, *workplace wellness programs*, *public-sector leadership*, *organizational*

commitment, employee engagement, retention strategies, benefits satisfaction, wellness climate, and the JD-R model.

In the literature review, I prioritized recent, peer-reviewed research published within the last 5 years to meet doctoral-level standards and ensure scholarly relevance. I made exceptions for foundational theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the JD-R model. Each literature review section was organized thematically and guided by conceptual frameworks that align with the research project's qualitative, pragmatic inquiry design. These themes include the evolution of wellness programs, the causes and effects of voluntary attrition, the role of leadership in promoting wellness, the alignment of benefits with employee needs, and specific challenges in implementing wellness programs in the public sector. As noted by Hammerback et al. (2021), aligning methodological strategies with real-world organizational problems enhances the practical value and applicability of qualitative business research. The review culminates in a discussion of current research gaps, which supported the rationale for this research project.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this qualitative, pragmatic inquiry research project was the JD-R model. In the JD-R model, Demerouti et al. (2001) posited that when job demands, such as workload, stress, or a lack of organizational support, outweigh available resources, including wellness programs, leadership support, and flexibility, employees are more likely to experience burnout and voluntary attrition. Conversely, when resources meet or exceed job demands, employees are more likely to

remain engaged, satisfied, and committed to their organization. By applying this model, I explored how leaders can leverage workplace wellness programs as organizational resources to reduce voluntary attrition. The JD-R framework provided a structure for analyzing the balance between employee demands and available resources, connecting wellness initiatives directly to attrition outcomes.

In this study, I also drew on WCT as a supporting perspective. Reynolds and Bennett (2023) defined wellness climate as employees' shared perceptions of how much their organization values and supports their well-being. Their research indicated that a positive wellness climate can reduce stress, enhance morale, and decrease turnover intentions. Incorporating this perspective provided context for how organizational culture may strengthen or weaken the influence of workplace wellness programs as job resources.

The JD-R model served as the primary framework for explaining the structural relationship between job demands, resources, and attrition in the project. At the same time, I used WCT to enrich the analysis by highlighting the role of organizational culture and employee perceptions in shaping the effectiveness of wellness programs.

Wellness Programs: Definitions and Evolution

Workplace wellness programs refer to organized, employer-sponsored initiatives to support employees' physical, emotional, and mental well-being. These programs may include fitness memberships, biometric screenings, mental health counseling, stress management initiatives, smoking cessation resources, and support for work-life balance (American Psychological Association, 2023; Society for Human Resource Management,

2024). The primary objectives of modern wellness programs are to enhance employee health, reduce healthcare costs, increase workplace engagement, and cultivate a positive and resilient organizational culture (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Cohen et al., 2023). By promoting holistic well-being, these programs serve as strategic tools for organizations aiming to improve individual employee outcomes and overall organizational performance.

The evolution of workplace wellness programs reflects broader changes in public health and organizational management philosophies. In the 1970s and 1980s, early wellness efforts primarily focused on occupational safety and health promotion, often limiting activities to reducing injuries and encouraging basic physical fitness (Mattke et al., 2013). However, as the understanding of employee well-being expanded to include mental health, emotional resilience, and stress management, wellness programs became more holistic and preventive. Scholars have emphasized the importance of psychological safety and emotional wellness in modern wellness strategies (Herr et al., 2022). These shifts align with contemporary models, such as the JD-R model, which underscores the role of organizational support in mitigating burnout and promoting engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This progression reflects a broader organizational recognition that investing in employee wellness is integral to long-term sustainability and workforce stability.

Leaders in the 2000s increasingly adopted integrated wellness strategies directly tied to business objectives, such as improving engagement and reducing attrition (Parks & Steelman, 2022). Employers began recognizing the strategic value of these programs in

influencing organizational outcomes. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend, increasing demand for mental health services, remote wellness tools, and flexible scheduling as part of employee well-being strategies (Moon et al., 2023). Organizations that invest in employee well-being experience stronger performance outcomes and higher workforce resilience because wellness resources enhance engagement, motivation, and organizational commitment (Arevin et al., 2024; Gelencsér et al., 2023). Business leaders are now integrating wellness efforts into their strategic planning to strengthen organizational culture and reduce voluntary attrition.

Modern wellness programs are increasingly data-driven, leveraging surveys, wearable technologies, and HR analytics to measure effectiveness and target interventions (Barbosa & de Oliveira, 2025). Organizations are also adopting more inclusive approaches that address diverse employee needs and remove barriers to participation (Sears et al., 2022). Barbosa and de Oliveira (2025) found that visible leadership support, active employee engagement, and strong alignment with organizational values significantly influence program participation and effectiveness, often determining whether wellness initiatives succeed. When leaders embed wellness into the organizational culture, they can potentially create conditions that promote long-term participation and meaningful impact.

Despite widespread adoption, there is significant variation in the structure, scope, and outcomes of wellness programs across organizational types. While large private-sector firms often have the financial and administrative capacity to implement comprehensive, data-driven wellness initiatives, public-sector organizations frequently

face budgetary constraints, limited staffing, and slower decision-making processes (Mattke et al., 2013). These disparities have led to inconsistent program effectiveness, particularly in smaller government agencies and educational institutions. Recent comparative research has highlighted these challenges, emphasizing that public organizations often lack the necessary infrastructure to sustain high-impact wellness programs despite precise employee needs and interest (Mattke et al., 2013).

Understanding these structural and resource-based disparities is crucial for developing realistic and scalable wellness strategies that effectively meet the needs of public-sector employees. Leaders often implement wellness programs to support staff well-being in public-sector organizations where budgets are tight and innovation is slower. However, despite these efforts, employees may still choose to leave voluntarily. Understanding the structure and perceived effectiveness of such programs helps identify why wellness initiatives may not always be effective in reducing attrition in mission-driven, resource-constrained settings.

Voluntary Employee Attrition: Causes and Organizational Impact

Voluntary employee attrition refers to employees choosing to leave their jobs. While some degree of this is expected in any organization, ongoing or unplanned departures can create significant strain. Although turnover may occasionally support renewal, persistent voluntary attrition disrupts workflow, increases operational costs, and diminishes employee morale (Moon et al., 2023). Despite the presence of wellness initiatives in many organizations, employees often resign because these programs focus on symptom relief rather than addressing the root causes of stress, such as workload

pressures and cultural expectations (Cohen et al., 2023). This pattern raises questions about whether current wellness efforts effectively address the deeper issues that drive employees to leave. To reduce attrition sustainably, organizations must pair wellness benefits with broader cultural and structural changes that confront these underlying challenges.

Some organizations strive to enhance their work environments, yet many employees still opt to leave. Voluntary separations have remained a consistent trend across various sectors. In December 2023 alone, approximately 3.4 million employees in the United States voluntarily quit their jobs, with a national quits rate of 2.2% for total nonfarm employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). Scholars have emphasized that misalignment between employee needs and the design or implementation of wellness initiatives can reduce program effectiveness and contribute to continued attrition (Herr et al., 2022). To reverse this trend, organizations must offer wellness programs that align with employee expectations and meaningfully integrate them into daily work life.

While organizations often use wellness programs to promote engagement and reduce stress, they may not fully address the root causes of employee dissatisfaction. Gelencsér et al. (2023) emphasized the consequences of frequent attrition, which include rising recruitment and training costs, weakened team cohesion, and a loss of institutional knowledge that can ultimately reduce overall performance. Artelt and Gregoriades (2023) highlighted the importance of investigating those root causes to understand what drives people to leave, an insight critical for developing targeted solutions beyond surface-level wellness offerings.

The factors contributing to attrition are multifaceted and vary by industry, job role, and organizational culture. Common causes include poor leadership, lack of career advancement opportunities, work-related stress, inadequate compensation, and a perceived lack of recognition or appreciation (Deery & Jago, 2015). Compensation structures that acknowledge employee contributions help reduce turnover (Abugu & Othman, 2025). Since approximately 2020, employee expectations have shifted toward seeking meaning, flexibility, and well-being in their roles, leading to increased turnover in organizations that fail to meet these expectations (Reynolds & Bennett, 2023).

Voluntary attrition rates are particularly concerning in mission-driven sectors, such as education, healthcare, and public service, where elevated stress levels and underdeveloped wellness programs contribute to employee burnout and turnover. In a cross-sectional research project involving public-sector employees, AlMarzooqi et al. (2025) found that compensation, workload, and access to supportive benefits had a significant influence on job satisfaction. Similarly, Frediani et al. (2025) examined the long-term care sector and found that higher organizational commitment, supported by robust internal policies and wellness structures, was significantly associated with lower turnover intentions. These findings underscore the importance of investing in comprehensive benefits and wellness strategies to enhance retention in sectors where employee engagement is crucial to achieving organizational objectives.

Additionally, organizational environments that ignore employee wellness or mental health concerns often experience higher levels of burnout and disengagement, which are strong predictors of voluntary attrition. Bakker and Demerouti (2017) reported

that when job demands outweigh the emotional, psychological, or organizational resources available to employees, it often leads to burnout, disengagement, and, ultimately, higher turnover intentions. In the public sector, constraints, such as limited budgets, rigid structures, and slower innovation cycles, can make it more challenging to address employee well-being proactively (Selden & Sowa, 2015).

One key contributor to voluntary employee attrition is an organization's lack of meaningful career progression. When employees perceive a lack of advancement opportunities, their sense of fulfillment and organizational loyalty tend to decline (Al-Omari et al., 2020; Parmenas, 2022). Even generous compensation cannot offset the disengagement that comes with feeling professionally stagnant (Gelencsér et al., 2023). While competitive pay is essential, keeping employees engaged over the long term is often insufficient. Research grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation suggested that opportunities for personal and professional growth are key to genuine job satisfaction (Al-Omari et al., 2020).

Furthermore, feeling stuck or professionally stagnant may negatively affect employees' mental and emotional well-being, which are critical components of overall workplace wellness (Parmenas, 2022). Organizations aiming to improve retention and support employee wellness should focus on financial incentives and building structured development pathways. Investing in compensation and career growth can help foster a more resilient, motivated, and wellness-oriented workforce.

Organizations that do not offer structured opportunities for career growth often face difficulty retaining high-performing employees, particularly in sectors with high

turnover pressure. Recent research has suggested that a lack of defined advancement options contributes to employee disengagement and increased voluntary attrition (Bonneton et al., 2022). When employees, especially those excelling in their roles, feel that their development has stalled, they are more likely to seek employment elsewhere, even if other aspects of the job are satisfactory (Susanto et al., 2023). Sectors, such as retail, hospitality, and frontline service positions, are particularly vulnerable because limited internal mobility can lead to persistent staffing instability (Ghani et al., 2022). Investing in transparent career pathways and professional growth strategies may be crucial for organizations seeking to retain talent and mitigate the negative impacts on employee wellness associated with chronic turnover. Promoting internal mobility enhances morale and fosters long-term engagement, while supporting broader wellness by addressing career-related stress and promoting career growth and advancement.

Employee expectations around advancement and development often vary by generation, which has implications for voluntary turnover. Research has shown that younger employees, particularly millennials and members of Gen Z, are more likely to leave an organization if they perceive limited opportunities for professional growth (Prasetio & Hasanah, 2022). While traditional incentives, such as pay and benefits, still matter, they may not be sufficient to retain younger workers who value advancement and skill development as core aspects of job satisfaction. Rank and Contreras (2021) emphasized that organizations that are slow to adapt to these generational priorities may experience higher turnover among their emerging workforce. These findings suggest that career progression should be a key component of modern retention strategies for

employers seeking to reduce attrition and promote overall employee well-being. Offering development opportunities tailored to generational expectations may be just as crucial as providing competitive compensation.

A lack of variety in day-to-day responsibilities can lead to boredom, disengagement, and eventually higher turnover rates, especially in roles where tasks are repetitive or routine (Tumi et al., 2022). When leaders fail to design jobs with sufficient scope and challenge, employees often struggle to stay motivated. Research has indicated that job enlargement, which involves expanding the range of tasks, can help sustain interest by introducing variety to work responsibilities (Tumi et al., 2022). Additionally, integrating practices, like mindfulness, has shown promise in reducing the mental fatigue associated with repetitive roles (Wihler et al., 2022). Clear communication of goals and responsibilities can also give employees a greater sense of purpose in otherwise monotonous environments (Martin et al., 2023). Nur et al. (2021) further emphasized that a lack of mental stimulation can hinder personal growth and contribute to feelings of stagnation. As part of a broader employee wellness strategy, organizations can supplement redesigned roles with morale-building activities, such as team challenges, on-site fitness options, or access to wellness spaces, that promote engagement and reduce the psychological strain of repetitive tasks. When employees feel mentally stimulated and supported, their satisfaction increases, reducing the desire to seek new opportunities elsewhere.

Monotonous job structures can negatively impact engagement and contribute to emotional exhaustion and burnout, particularly among younger generations who value

dynamic work environments. Nur et al. (2021) identified a strong link between repetitive tasks and job dissatisfaction, while Kaya (2021) demonstrated that unchanging schedules can lead to a decline in performance over time. Zeschke and Zacher (2023) found that boredom significantly reduces job satisfaction and can prompt employees to leave their jobs voluntarily. Rubiano-Moreno et al. (2023) noted that millennials and Gen Z are more sensitive to this issue, valuing variety and stimulation as central to their workplace satisfaction. These findings indicate that how engaging and meaningful employees perceive their work to be closely influences their well-being. To mitigate voluntary attrition risks, particularly among younger staff members, organizations should implement thoughtful job design strategies that introduce task variety and foster creativity. Additionally, incorporating wellness initiatives, such as flexible break areas, access to gym memberships or mindfulness programs, and regular morale-boosting events, can support emotional resilience and make routine work more sustainable. These measures enhance job satisfaction and demonstrate a company's commitment to employee well-being, thereby helping to retain talent in an increasingly competitive labor market.

Unstable and inflexible work schedules continue to be a primary driver of voluntary attrition, particularly among hourly and service-based employees (Bolino et al., 2021). While many organizations claim to promote work-life balance through wellness initiatives, these efforts often fall flat when employees have little control over their time. Basha et al. (2023) argued that organizations must embed work-life balance into operational systems, not just offer it as a surface-level incentive. In the retail sector,

Bergman et al. (2023) found that unpredictable scheduling directly contributed to employees' decisions to quit, particularly when schedules conflicted with personal obligations or changed without notice. Bolino et al. (2021) further noted that rigid scheduling practices spill over into employees' family lives, increasing frustration and emotional fatigue. These patterns suggest that employees may leave not because wellness programs are absent, but because the core drivers of stress, like schedule instability, remain unaddressed.

Chronic scheduling volatility can negate the impact of wellness resources even when organizations offer them. Choper et al. (2022) developed a model of cumulative disadvantage using data from over 1,800 hourly workers, revealing that erratic schedules often lead to job instability, earnings insecurity, and, ultimately, voluntary exit. Employees who experience frequent last-minute changes, extended shifts, or inconsistent hours may view wellness perks as irrelevant when their foundational needs, such as predictable income and rest, remain unmet. These findings indicate that organizational misalignment between wellness messaging and job design may contribute to attrition. For many workers, on-site yoga or wellness training may not be enough to compensate for burnout caused by fragmented and disempowering work schedules.

Employees are also more likely to leave when they perceive a disconnect between wellness programs and the day-to-day realities of their jobs. Blom et al. (2025) emphasized that organizational support must be perceived and experienced in a meaningful way. When wellness efforts, such as morale events, mindfulness resources, or fitness programs, are offered in environments where job stressors remain unaddressed,

employees may view them as performative rather than impactful. Wan and Duffy (2022) found that the effectiveness of wellness initiatives depends on employees' sense of control and support within the workplace. Suppose foundational stressors, such as poor communication, unpredictable schedules, or a lack of autonomy, persist. In such cases, employees may perceive wellness programs as irrelevant or dismissive of their actual needs, ultimately leading them to leave the organization voluntarily.

The consequences of voluntary attrition extend beyond the immediate costs of recruitment and training. These "exit ripple effects" often leave remaining employees overburdened and less engaged, leading to a decline in overall productivity (Gamba et al., 2024). Financially, replacing an employee may cost up to twice the employee's annual salary, factoring in lost productivity, recruitment expenses, and onboarding (Work Institute, 2023). High turnover disrupts team cohesion, weakens communication networks, and reduces institutional knowledge, negatively impacting performance and service quality in public institutions.

Voluntary attrition imposes significant operational and financial burdens on organizations, even those that invest in employee wellness and benefits programs. Lee (2025) found that organizations often use flexibility- and stability-enhancing benefits to improve retention; however, their organizational impact is limited when such programs are not strategically aligned with employee needs or expectations. Ineffective benefits structures can lead to wasted resources and missed opportunities to reduce attrition. Latorre et al. (2024) further emphasized that organizations face steep costs when benefit offerings fail to deter turnover, especially in sectors where employee training and

development are resource intensive. Their prescriptive analytics model demonstrated how poorly designed benefit programs could contribute to organizational inefficiencies, workforce instability, and increased rehiring expenses. These findings suggest that to mitigate the organizational strain of voluntary attrition, leaders must adopt a targeted and data-driven approach to designing wellness and benefits programs that have a meaningful impact on employee decisions to stay.

Voluntary attrition imposes a significant financial burden on organizations due to the recurring costs of recruiting, onboarding, and training new employees. Igbinoba et al. (2022) emphasized that frequent employee departures require significant organizational resources, especially in roles that necessitate specialized training. Abbasi et al. (2022) noted that the cost of integrating new hires extends beyond basic orientation, encompassing not only productivity loss but also team disruption. Furthermore, Rawashdeh et al. (2022) found that voluntary turnover undermines overall profitability, suggesting that even organizations offering wellness programs may experience losses when leaders do not proactively address the underlying causes of attrition. These compounding expenses can divert resources from wellness initiatives or other employee support programs.

The departure of colleagues can create a demoralizing atmosphere for those who stay, reducing engagement and potentially prompting additional resignations. Ahmad (2022) found that frequent attrition leads to feelings of instability and increased workloads, which may erode trust in leadership. Soetjipto et al. (2021) reinforced the connection between organizational climate and morale, emphasizing that satisfaction

declines when turnover becomes frequent. Hayes et al. (2022) revealed that engaged employees are less likely to leave; however, high attrition often disrupts the cohesion that supports engagement. Even with wellness programs in place, the risk of further voluntary exits persists if morale continues to decline.

When experienced employees leave voluntarily, they often take with them invaluable organizational knowledge and relationships. Adil et al. (2023) stressed that this knowledge loss can destabilize teams and delay project timelines. Farooq (2023) explained that operational flow and customer continuity can suffer even when organizations quickly backfill positions. Phaladi and Ngulube (2022) recommended proactive strategies, such as knowledge management systems and mentorship programs, to mitigate this loss; however, leadership must consistently support these systems to make them effective. Even organizations with wellness programs may find those benefits insufficient if they do not concurrently manage knowledge retention.

Voluntary attrition can have immediate operational consequences. Charles-Leijja et al. (2023) demonstrated that job enjoyment and recognition reduce turnover intention, but when departures occur, they disrupt team efficiency and service delivery. Kanchana and Jayathilaka (2023) found that human capital is central to business transformation, and turnover-related gaps reduce adaptability. Le et al. (2023) found a connection between frequent staff changes and poor customer service outcomes. This consequence is especially damaging in sectors where public trust or client satisfaction is crucial. While wellness programs aim to reduce stress and burnout, these disruptions suggest that such

programs alone may not be sufficient to prevent attrition if role expectations and recognition are lacking.

High levels of voluntary turnover pose a significant challenge to an organization's ability to maintain operational continuity. Kaltiainen et al. (2022) found that turnover correlates with uncertainty in financial performance forecasts. Sivakami and Roy (2022) observed that internal workflows suffer each time a departure occurs, particularly in tightly resourced departments. Mia et al. (2022) emphasized that even small organizations, such as microfinance institutions, face notable financial strain from repeated turnover events. As Samašonok (2024) noted, the solution lies in offering benefits and understanding what motivates departures despite those offerings. Organizations must go beyond surface-level wellness and address deeper causes of dissatisfaction to maintain stability.

Wellness Programs in the Public Sector

Public-sector organizations often face constrained budgets, complex hierarchies, and rigid administrative processes that can hinder the effective implementation and sustainability of workplace wellness programs. These structural limitations often lead to underdeveloped or inconsistently implemented wellness initiatives, which restrict employees' access to preventive care, mental health services, and other essential well-being resources (Campmans et al., 2023). Juba (2024) found that strong leadership support and active employee participation are crucial for wellness programs to succeed and have a positive impact on workplace engagement and productivity. In addition, Hammerback et al. (2021) observed that bureaucratic delays and limited managerial

engagement can reduce participation and stall program expansion. Interviews with employees across sectors indicated that unsupportive organizational cultures, where leaders undervalue wellness, and a lack of tailored programming create significant barriers to access, especially for lower paid workers (Smit et al., 2023).

Effective implementation of workplace wellness programs depends on more than financial investment, it requires strategic communication and leadership engagement to overcome employee skepticism. Many public institutions face low participation rates in wellness initiatives due to limited awareness and the perception that such programs lack personal relevance or organizational authenticity (Campmans et al., 2023). These challenges underscore that effective implementation requires more than financial investment. Janiukštis et al. (2024) emphasized that transparent communication, trust building, and visible leadership engagement are critical factors in securing employee buy-in. Rather than surface-level perks, programs framed as strategic priorities are more likely to generate meaningful engagement across organizational levels. Employees are more likely to view wellness initiatives as meaningful and engage actively when rooted in shared organizational values and visibly connected to the institution's mission (Kang et al., 2023). Such strategies foster a culture where wellness is considered a core component of the organizational fabric.

Organizational Climate and Contextual Influences

Stress management, mental health support, and work-life balance interventions are particularly valuable in emotionally demanding environments. Despite financial and structural constraints, public-sector organizations can implement wellness programs

tailored to the specific needs of their workforce (Campmans et al., 2023). Peer-led programs such as Whole Health Action Management have effectively improved well-being and employee engagement (Cook et al., 2020; McCart, 2024). Smit et al. (2023) and Juba (2024) further highlighted that contextual factors, such as leadership involvement, psychological safety, and employee voice, significantly impact program success. Tailored and inclusive wellness strategies that align with organizational culture are more likely to yield lasting improvements in individual health and institutional performance.

Leadership plays a decisive role in the successful implementation of wellness initiatives. McCart (2024) asserted that while resources and organizational structure are necessary, leadership support often determines whether wellness programs are integrated into the workplace culture or dismissed as superficial. Leaders influence employee perceptions by modeling healthy behaviors, encouraging engagement, and normalizing wellness practices (Skakon et al., 2010). In public-sector contexts, where resources are often limited, even modest leadership actions, such as supporting mental health days or encouraging flexible work arrangements, can significantly improve morale and increase participation (Gelencsér et al., 2023). These efforts help embed wellness into the organizational identity and reinforce its legitimacy among staff.

Modeling, Communication, and Employee Involvement

Leaders who visibly engage with wellness programs by participating in initiatives, endorsing mental health awareness, or prioritizing work-life balance signal the value of well-being to their teams. This “wellness leadership” form can build organizational trust,

increase participation, and strengthen program sustainability (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). McCart (2024) showed that transformational leadership increases employee engagement in wellness efforts by emphasizing individualized support and a shared vision of well-being. Conversely, wellness programs launched without leadership modeling or endorsement often suffer low engagement because employees may view them as disconnected from daily organizational priorities (Janiukštis et al., 2024).

Effective wellness leadership also includes strategic communication and employee involvement. Leaders who create open channels for feedback and clearly communicate the rationale, benefits, and expectations of wellness initiatives help cultivate a sense of ownership among staff (Kim & Park, 2022). Transparent communication fosters perceived organizational support, which is linked to higher satisfaction with wellness offerings and increased participation in these initiatives. Participatory approaches promote psychological safety and enhance the likelihood of long-term behavioral change (Li et al., 2021; Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). Including employees in the planning and implementation phases, through wellness committees or staff-driven focus groups, enhance program relevance and sustainability.

Comparison of Scholarly Points of View

Lowering voluntary employee attrition presents ongoing challenges for business leaders, especially in labor-intensive sectors. Al-Suraihi et al. (2021) asserted that high attrition leads to increased hiring and training costs, disrupts operational continuity, reduces institutional knowledge, and weakens team morale. Multiple scholarly viewpoints have emerged regarding strategies that may effectively reduce attrition.

Yadewani and Wijaya (2021) emphasized that competitive compensation and a robust benefits package, including health coverage, paid time off, and retirement contributions, are critical for workforce stability. Al-Harthy and Yusof (2022) extended this position, demonstrating that a positive organizational culture, work-life balance policies, and supportive management can significantly improve employee retention. These authors highlighted how compensation is necessary but insufficient, emphasizing the broader organizational context as a contributing factor in attrition.

Leadership, therefore, plays a direct and strategic role in addressing voluntary attrition. Kuhn and Yu (2021) contended that leadership behaviors are pivotal in influencing employees' decisions to stay or leave. Their research indicated that when leaders communicate transparently, manage conflict fairly, and treat employees respectfully, they create a climate of trust that supports long-term commitment. Bakker and Demerouti (2017), through the lens of the JD-R model, endorsed this view by suggesting that strong leadership acts as a resource that can reduce job strain and increase engagement. These findings demonstrate that leadership quality affects immediate job satisfaction and serves as a structural factor that buffers against burnout and turnover intentions.

Technological solutions can lower cognitive overload and increase role clarity by streamlining communication and automating repetitive tasks, thereby improving retention. Thaichon et al. (2024) proposed that technology integration can influence employee experience and indirectly reduce attrition. Their research project on omnichannel retail systems found that integrating digital tools enhanced customer

satisfaction and employee workflow, reducing redundancies and clarifying expectations. Tummers and Bakker (2021) argued that work-related stressors, such as unclear roles and inefficient systems, contribute to burnout, a leading cause of voluntary turnover. These insights suggest that technology should serve the customer, empowering and supporting employees in their work.

The convergence of fair compensation, engaged leadership, and employee-centered technological solutions creates a stronger foundation for organizational stability and resilience. Taken together, the perspectives of Al-Suraihi et al. (2021), Yadewani and Wijaya (2021), Al-Harthy and Yusof (2022), Kuhn and Yu (2021), and Thaichon et al. (2024) point toward a multidimensional understanding of voluntary attrition. Leaders operating within a pragmatic framework can use these evidence-based strategies to address attrition by aligning organizational objectives with employee well-being and satisfaction.

Transition

In Section 2, I presented a critical synthesis of recent scholarly literature related to voluntary employee attrition and workplace wellness initiatives. I analyzed the applied business problem and examined relevant concepts, including the JD-R model. Emerging themes from existing research were also explored, such as compensation, leadership, organizational culture, and employee well-being, and diverse scholarly perspectives on effective strategies to reduce voluntary attrition were compared.

In Section 3, I will describe my role as the researcher as well as the procedures for data collection and ethical engagement with participants. Section 3 will also include a

discussion of the qualitative research design, the justification for participant selection, and ethical safeguards. I will detail the recruitment process, my interactions with participants, the steps taken to ensure confidentiality and secure data storage, and the criteria for determining the research project's sample size and target population. I will also explain the rationale for using purposeful sampling and the alignment of semistructured interview questions with the central research question. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research project, I will describe the strategies for establishing credibility, dependability, and confirmability as well as the data analysis approach of thematic coding and the steps taken to reach data saturation.

In Section 4, I will present the findings of the research project. The findings will be connected to the conceptual framework, and I will compare participants' insights with the current body of knowledge regarding business practices aimed at reducing voluntary attrition. Section 4 will also include my practical recommendations for business leaders and a discussion of the findings through a positive social change lens. Lastly, I will identify the areas for future research based on the gap identified in the research project.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Project Ethics

Ethical integrity was foundational to the conduct of this research project. Before any data collection or participant interaction, I obtained approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that all research activities complied with established ethical standards for human subject research. As Taherdoost (2021) explained, ethical data collection is central to empirical research and requires a commitment to transparency, accuracy, and respect for participants. In accordance with the IRB protocol, I adhered to approved procedures for obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, ensuring voluntary participation, and protecting data. These measures helped ensure the safety of participants' rights and the overall credibility of the research project.

As the researcher, I serve as a contract specialist for a federal agency and did not have supervisory authority over any potential participants. I did not work in the same field as the research topic and did not interview any individuals from my current workplace. None of the participants were former colleagues, and I had no prior working relationships with any of them. In previous roles, I served on wellness and morale committees, which fostered a professional interest in workplace wellness and voluntary attrition; however, I had no involvement in designing or delivering wellness programs in the organizations targeted for this research project. This separation maintained objectivity and minimized the potential for bias or undue influence during the research process.

I conducted the research project in accordance with the principles outlined in *the Belmont Report*, which establishes the ethical requirements of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Resnik, 2018). Respect for persons involves recognizing participants' autonomy and securing voluntary, informed consent (Resnik, 2018). Beneficence entails maximizing potential benefits while minimizing risks, and justice requires equitable selection and treatment of research participants (Emanuel et al., 2000). *The Belmont Report* faces limitations in addressing evolving global research contexts, highlighting the need to adapt its principles to diverse and digitally mediated settings to preserve ethical rigor (Herington et al., 2023). These foundational principles guided the ethical design and implementation of this research project, ensuring the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process.

Before enrollment, I clearly explained the purpose, expectations, and withdrawal rights of the research project to each participant. Kapiszewski and Wood (2022) noted that transparency fosters trust and strengthens ethical engagement in qualitative research. I informed them that they may withdraw from the research project at any time, without penalty, by contacting me directly or by contacting the IRB by phone or email. To minimize bias, I used bracketing techniques, such as reflective journaling and consultation with my chair, as recommended by Ortlipp (2008). I did not offer any financial or material incentives for participation.

I strictly maintained participant privacy and confidentiality throughout the research project. In line with Pascale et al. (2022), I assigned pseudonyms (e.g., P1, P2, P3) to all participants and removed personally identifiable details from transcripts and

reports. All digital data were stored on a password-protected external drive, kept in a locked location accessible only to me. Following data collection, I will retain the research project materials for 5 years and then permanently delete or destroy all data in accordance with Walden University's data retention policy (Walden University IRB Approval No. 09-26-25-1210588).

Nature of the Project

The qualitative methodology was suitable for this research project because it enabled me to explore the lived experiences of business leaders with workplace wellness programs and voluntary employee attrition. Qualitative research allows flexible inquiry into complex social phenomena that cannot be quantified, thereby supporting the development of rich, context-specific insights (Levitt et al., 2017). A qualitative, pragmatic inquiry design was well-suited to addressing the central research question, which was aimed to aid in understanding the strategies of business leaders rather than statistically measuring outcomes. A pragmatic inquiry design further supports the qualitative approach by focusing on real-world problems and practical solutions within their operational context (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Pragmatist researchers emphasize the usefulness of findings over adherence to any single epistemological tradition, allowing the researcher to adapt data collection and analysis to what works best for understanding the problem (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). By selecting a qualitative methodology and pragmatic design, I investigated how leaders interpret and implement wellness strategies to address voluntary attrition, generating insights that are both academically rigorous and actionable in practice.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

The target population for this research project consisted of business leaders from public-sector or midsized organizations who have implemented workplace wellness programs to support employee well-being and reduce voluntary attrition. To be eligible for participation, individuals must have had at least 5 years of leadership experience and direct involvement in designing, implementing, or overseeing workplace wellness initiatives to influence employee retention outcomes.

I used purposive sampling to select participants most likely to provide rich, detailed information relevant to the research question. Purposive sampling is commonly employed in qualitative research to identify individuals with specific knowledge or experience related to the research project topic (Staller, 2021). Purposive sampling enables the deliberate selection of information-rich cases (Patton, 2015), facilitating the development of in-depth insights into the lived experiences of business leaders. I identified prospective participants through professional networks; wellness-related organizational contacts; and social platforms, like LinkedIn. Each prospective participant received a formal invitation via email, outlining the purpose of the research project, the inclusion criteria, and assurances of confidentiality.

The proposed sample size was a minimum of six participants, which aligned with guidance from qualitative research literature. This sample size also supports the use of small, purposeful samples for in-depth interview-based studies (Palinkas et al., 2015). I continued recruiting participants until I reached data saturation. According to Islam and Aldaihani (2022), data saturation occurs when no new interview themes or insights

emerge. Saturation was evident after six interviews when a recurring pattern indicated that I had collected sufficient data to answer the research question.

I engaged with participants transparently and respectfully to establish trust and rapport throughout the recruitment and data collection process. Lavee and Itzchakov (2023) emphasized the importance of active listening and relational competence in qualitative interviews. I followed their recommendations by using open-ended communication, expressing genuine interest in participants' experiences, and clearly outlining expectations. By applying these relationship-building strategies, I created a respectful and collaborative environment that supported the collection of authentic and meaningful data while upholding ethical research standards.

Data Collection Activities

For content guidance, I served as the primary data collection instrument in this qualitative research project, gathering data through semistructured interviews with selected participants. Semistructured interviews are appropriate for exploring participant experiences while allowing flexibility to probe deeper into emerging themes (Toyon, 2023). I developed and used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to guide each session and ensure consistency in data collection across participants. The protocol included open-ended questions aligned with the central research question and conceptual framework.

Based on participant preference and availability, I conducted interviews via Microsoft Teams. With the participant's consent, I audio recorded each interview to ensure an accurate, word-for-word record of the participants' responses. I used these

records to prepare interview summaries that preserved participants' original language and meaning, allowing participants to review and verify the accuracy of the documented content. Murphy et al. (2021) emphasized that precise and thorough documentation enhances the trustworthiness of qualitative findings. In addition to the review process, I engaged in member checking by paraphrasing participants' responses to each question in my own words and asking them to confirm whether my interpretations accurately convey their intended meaning. Rowlands (2021) described member checking as a critical strategy for enhancing reliability and credibility by allowing participants to confirm or clarify the researcher's understanding. Participants had 10 days to review their interview summaries and provide feedback. I took brief notes during interviews to document contextual details and capture nonverbal cues, when applicable.

As part of my methodological approach, I incorporated document review to supplement interview data. This process involved examining publicly available documents related to workplace wellness programs, such as policy documents; organizational wellness reports; and materials found on company websites, LinkedIn, and Glassdoor. I used document review to support triangulation, which enhanced credibility by comparing multiple sources of evidence (see Arias Valencia, 2022). Accessing publicly available data helped ensure transparency, verify findings, and strengthen the trustworthiness of the research. I securely stored all data in encrypted digital formats on a password-protected external drive. Only I have access to this data. In accordance with Walden University's data retention policy, I will store the information for 5 years and then permanently delete or destroy it.

Interview Questions

1. What wellness program strategies did you implement, and how do you believe these strategies have influenced employees' decisions to stay or leave?
2. Which aspects of these strategies do you believe impact employees' decisions to remain with the organization?
3. What challenges have you faced in developing or implementing these strategies?
4. How do employees typically respond to the wellness-related strategies you have implemented?
5. What changes have you observed in employee well-being since implementing these strategies?
6. What changes, if any, have you observed in voluntary attrition rates since implementing these strategies?
7. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your strategies in reducing voluntary attrition?
8. In your opinion, why do some employees choose to leave despite having access to wellness programs and related strategies?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience using wellness program strategies to address voluntary attrition?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

I organized all interview summaries, participant notes, and reflective journal entries in an encrypted electronic folder system to maintain a structured and secure

approach to managing qualitative data. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and exclude all identifying information from the final transcripts and documentation. I kept a detailed research log to record interview dates, procedural notes, coding decisions, and analytical memos. Ortlipp (2008) emphasized the importance of reflective journaling in qualitative research as a tool for identifying and mitigating researcher bias. I also maintained an audit trail documenting data collection and analysis decisions throughout the research project.

I employed Braun and Clarke's (2024) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis approach for data analysis. The iterative six-phase reflexive process involves becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining them, defining and naming them, and producing the final analysis. The thematic analysis approach is well-suited for qualitative pragmatic researchers because it allows for flexibility in identifying patterns that emerge directly from participant narratives (Naeem et al., 2023). I read all summarized transcripts multiple times to immerse myself in the data and gain a broad understanding. All publicly available documents collected during the data gathering process, including policy documents, organizational wellness reports, and materials from company websites and professional networking platforms, were also reviewed. Next, I applied initial codes to interview segments and document data related to the research question, using manual coding and memoing in a Microsoft Word and Excel matrix. I clustered related codes into themes that reflect shared ideas and experiences related to workplace wellness programs and voluntary attrition.

As part of the reflexive process, I continuously revisited and revised the themes to ensure they accurately represent the data. This recursive approach aligns with Braun and Clarke's (2024) emphasis on researcher engagement and subjectivity in qualitative analysis. By employing a thorough, transparent, and flexible data organization and analysis process, I ensured that the findings of this research project are credible, traceable, and aligned with the research project's qualitative goals.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

To ensure the reliability and dependability of this qualitative research project, I implemented strategies that promote consistency, accuracy, and transparency throughout the data collection and analysis process. Maintaining rigor in qualitative research requires documenting procedures that ensure transparency and confirmability (Hays & McKibben, 2021). Reliability in qualitative research is established through techniques that ensure researchers handle data systematically and document procedures (Mellinger & Hanson, 2020). I used a consistent, semistructured interview protocol for all participants, as recommended by Jiménez and Orozco (2021), to provide structure while allowing for follow-up questions that explored participant-specific experiences. This consistency helped establish a dependable process across all interviews.

I also employed member checking as a central strategy to support reliability. After transcribing each interview, I prepared a summary of key themes and interpretations, which I shared with the respective participant for review and feedback. Participants were given 10 days to verify the accuracy of the interpretation or offer clarifications. Rowlands

(2021) emphasized that member checking allows participants to confirm that researchers have accurately represented their perspectives, thereby supporting the credibility and dependability of the research.

In addition to participant validation, I maintained a detailed research journal and audit trail. I used the journal to record interview details, methodological decisions, analytic memos, and reflections on the research process. Megheirkouni and Moir (2023) explained that audit trails help future researchers trace how they reached conclusions and enhance the transparency of qualitative research.

To ensure dependability, I reviewed and recoded summarized interview transcripts as needed and applied analytic procedures uniformly across all interviews. These efforts promoted a consistent and repeatable research process, contributing to the overall reliability of the research project (see Janis, 2022).

Validity

To enhance validity in this qualitative research project, I applied multiple techniques to establish credibility, confirmability, and transferability. Validity in qualitative research refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of the interpretations drawn from participant data (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). One key method I used is member checking, where I invited participants to review my interpretations of their responses and provide feedback to correct any misrepresentations (see Motulsky, 2021). The member checking process was employed to help ensure that my findings authentically reflect participants' experiences with wellness programs and voluntary attrition.

I also engaged in reflexivity throughout the research by maintaining a reflective journal. Researchers and scholars use journaling to monitor and critically examine their assumptions, biases, and decision-making processes during data collection and analysis (Preiksaitis, 2023). To ensure confirmability, I documented all coding decisions, theme development steps, and methodological adjustments in an audit trail, as Kearney et al. (2023) recommended. The audit trail and detailed documentation allow others to assess how interpretations were derived and verify that the findings were grounded in participant data rather than researcher bias.

I addressed transferability by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the research project context, participant demographics, and organizational settings. Haq et al. (2023) noted that transferability enables other researchers or practitioners to determine whether the findings are applicable in similar contexts. I described what participants said and the circumstances under which they experienced or implemented wellness programs, providing depth to the thematic findings.

Finally, I collected data until I reached data saturation. Islam and Aldaihani (2022) described data saturation as the point at which no new information or themes emerge from the data. No new patterns appeared after the initial six interviews. Mwita (2022) emphasized that data saturation enhances the comprehensiveness and validity of qualitative findings. These combined data saturation strategies reinforced the rigor and trustworthiness of the research project's results.

Transition and Summary

Section 3 contained an explanation of the methodological framework guiding this qualitative, pragmatic inquiry project on workplace wellness programs and voluntary employee attrition. I described ethical considerations, sampling strategies, data collection procedures, and thematic analysis techniques. I also discussed the approach used to enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings. In Section 4, I will present the research project's findings, analyze the results in relation to the conceptual framework, and offer practical recommendations for business leaders. The section will also include a discussion of how the findings contribute to social change and suggestions regarding areas for future research.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative, pragmatic inquiry project was to identify and explore the strategies that business leaders use to reduce voluntary employee attrition among employees who have access to workplace wellness programs. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed five major themes: (a) leadership support, (b) engagement and utilization, (c) mental and holistic wellness, (d) incentives and retention, and (e) barriers and challenges. These themes collectively illustrated how organizational leaders foster wellness initiatives that promote employee well-being and reduce voluntary attrition. The JD-R model provided the conceptual framework for interpreting the findings, helping to explain how supportive leadership and access to wellness resources mitigate stressors and strengthen employees' intention to remain within the organization. WCT further informed my interpretation of results by emphasizing the importance of shared employee perceptions of organizational support for well-being. I used WCT to explain how leaders' actions and communication cultivate a favorable wellness climate, reinforcing the impact of wellness initiatives on engagement and retention.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question guiding this project was: What strategies do business leaders use to reduce employee voluntary attrition by leveraging wellness programs? The data sources consisted of semistructured interviews with six participants who have worked in mid-sized public- and private-sector organizations and implemented wellness initiatives. Each participant received a distinct pseudonym to ensure confidentiality, and all interviews were transcribed verbatim in Microsoft Word and organized in Excel for

coding and thematic analysis. I manually coded the data to identify recurring patterns and shared meanings across participant responses.

Analysis of the data indicated convergent perspectives among participants regarding the influence of compensation, leadership support, organizational culture, and accessibility of wellness benefits on employees' decisions to stay or leave. Consistent with the JD–R framework, participants explained that supervisor buy-in, mental health support, and flexible leave policies contributed to retention. In contrast, limited communication and high dependent coverage costs increased turnover.

The collective findings of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project reflect the interdependent relationship between wellness-centered leadership, employee engagement, and organizational commitment as described by the JD–R model and WCT. Each of the five emergent themes—leadership support, engagement and utilization, mental and holistic wellness, incentives and retention, and barriers and challenges—illustrates how organizational resources can strengthen employee well-being and reduce voluntary attrition. Consistent with the JD–R framework, participants identified leadership advocacy, flexibility, and access to wellness resources as critical job resources that mitigate sustained engagement (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). When employees recognize consistent organizational investment in their well-being, a shared sense of trust and belonging develops, reinforcing well-being and strengthening positive behavioral and cultural norms, which aligns with recent research on wellness climate (see Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). Together, these theories help explain how leaders who actively communicate, fund, and model wellness practices foster a supportive environment where

employees feel valued and empowered. This integrated system of wellness-driven leadership, participation, holistic care, and recognition creates a favorable wellness climate that enhances engagement, satisfaction, and retention, which ultimately contribute to organizational stability and long-term effectiveness.

Each participant received a unique pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. All interviews were audio recorded, and interview summaries were input into Microsoft Word. I then organized the summaries in Microsoft Excel for coding and thematic analysis. Table 1 is an overview of participant demographics, including gender, years in position, and role within their organization.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Years in position
P1	Male	20
P2	Female	10+
P3	Female	5+
P4	Female	7+
P5	Female	5+
P6	Female	9+

The member checking process involved sending each participant a copy of their interview summaries, along with my preliminary analysis, for review and confirmation of accuracy. Five participants responded to verify the accuracy of their interview summaries and interpretations, and one did not respond. After reviewing the interview summaries and confirming their alignment with the research question, I determined that the data had reached a preliminary level of saturation. I then manually analyzed the interview summaries. Data were collected using Microsoft Excel, and a codebook was developed to

categorize the identified codes. Through reflexive thematic analysis, I constructed themes that represented shared meanings across participants' experiences. These themes were supported by the interview summary data and validated through iterative review and comparison (see Table 2).

Table 2*Theme Table With Supporting Categories and Codes*

Theme	Category	Codes
Theme 1: Leadership support	Leadership support	Management buy-in; modeling healthy behaviors; accountability from top-down leadership; emotional intelligence and empathy; transparent decision-making; recognition of employee well-being as a performance driver; consistent communication from leadership about wellness priorities.
	Leadership development and organizational culture	Coaching and mentoring on employee wellness, encouraging self-care and balance, empowering midlevel leaders to reinforce wellness values, building trust through inclusive dialogue, establishing a safe environment for feedback, and leading by example.
Theme 2: Engagement and utilization	Communication practices	Two-way feedback channels, regular check-ins, clear and transparent communication from supervisors, supervisor accessibility, listening to employee concerns, and employee voice in policy changes.
	Flexibility practices	Remote and hybrid scheduling; flexible work hours; autonomy in managing workload; support for family/work integration; reduced stigma around flexible arrangements; supervisor support for work-life balance.
Theme 3: Mental and holistic wellness	Wellness resources	Employee Assistance Program (EAP) access; on-site wellness coach; licensed clinical support; mental-health training for staff and supervisors; and preventive care opportunities (annual screenings, flu shots).
	Wellness culture and environment	Reducing stigma around mental health; encouraging work-life balance; confidential wellness spaces; sustained leadership investment in mental well-being initiatives.
Theme 4: Incentives and retention	Compensation and recognition	Paid time off (PTO) and leave benefits; gift cards and wellness incentives; recognition for participation; wellness competitions and awards; family-inclusive benefits.
	Retention strategies	Connection between wellness and lower turnover; exit interviews informing program improvements; retention through a positive work environment; employee loyalty linked to leadership trust.
Theme 5: Barriers and challenges	Participation barriers	Limited staff availability for wellness events, low engagement among shift workers, geographic and scheduling constraints, budget limitations for expanded programs, and communication gaps across departments.
	Organizational constraints	Competing workload priorities; resistance from supervisors not fully invested in wellness; policy inconsistencies between departments; limited measurement tools for program impact.

Theme 1: Leadership Support

Leadership commitment emerged as the dominant influence on employees' decisions to remain within their organizations. Across participants, leaders who demonstrated authentic concern for employee well-being—through transparent communication, accountability, and sustained investment in wellness—cultivated higher trust, engagement, and organizational loyalty. Consistent with the JD–R framework, leadership functioned as a job resource that buffered against stressors, enhanced motivation, and promoted well-being (see Tummers & Bakker, 2021). From the WCT perspective, visible support from leaders also signals that employee well-being is valued, strengthening shared perceptions of a favorable wellness climate (see Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). Together, these frameworks help explain how leader engagement directly and symbolically reinforces participation in wellness and organizational commitment. Publicly available documents emphasized the supervisor's responsibility for promoting employee well-being and ensuring equitable access to leave and wellness services, reflecting participants' descriptions of leadership accountability in shaping workplace culture (see Bay County Board of County Commissioners, 2024a). Gelencsér et al. (2023) reinforced this connection, emphasizing that organizations increasingly view employee well-being as a driver of long-term competitiveness. When employees feel supported and valued, they demonstrate higher commitment, productivity, and openness to collaboration. Conversely, neglecting their well-being contributes to disengagement and voluntary attrition.

Leadership involvement in wellness efforts influenced how employees perceived the organization's commitment to their well-being. Participants described how leaders modeled healthy behaviors, championed mental health support, and embedded wellness expectations into daily practices. P1 emphasized that "supervisor buy-in is the single most important barrier and facilitator," while P2 and P3 noted that managers who demonstrate empathy and transparency strengthen employees' intention to remain. Participants also highlighted concrete actions. For example, P5 explained that leadership's willingness to fund additional Employee Assistance Program counseling beyond policy limits demonstrated respect for employee needs, and P6 shared that executives maintained investment in wellness coaches, health fairs, and flu-shot programs despite budget reductions. Recent studies have supported these findings by showing that leadership advocacy for wellness reduces stressors and enhances organizational attachment (Peña et al., 2024). These practices align with the JD-R model, in which leaders function as a critical job resource by increasing access to support that buffers workplace demands and reinforces employees' motivation to remain in their roles (Peña et al., 2024; Tummers & Bakker, 2021). Strong leadership commitment, therefore, plays a crucial role in sustaining wellness engagement and enhancing workforce stability.

Leadership accountability plays a crucial role in enhancing employee commitment and reducing voluntary turnover. Research has demonstrated that when supportive leadership, transparency, and recognition function as job resources, employees experience lower emotional exhaustion and stronger intentions to remain with their organization (Demerouti et al., 2001). Leadership behaviors that foster well-being also

enhance organizational competitiveness by cultivating employee satisfaction and loyalty (Gelencsér et al., 2023). Additionally, wellness initiatives grounded in leadership support reduce turnover and absenteeism while improving engagement and productivity (Santoso, 2024). Leadership-driven wellness practices further enhance motivation and resilience by demonstrating organizational care and support (Arevin et al., 2024). These findings demonstrate that when leaders champion wellness efforts, employees are more likely to stay, reinforcing the theme that leadership support directly influences voluntary attrition outcomes in this study.

Multiple data sources strengthened credibility and allowed for triangulation across interviews and organizational documents. Publicly available HR policy manuals and annual workforce reports provided evidence of leadership support for employee well-being, flexible leave opportunities, and mental health services, which aligned with the strategies participants described as being implemented (Bay County Board of County Commissioners, 2024a, 2024b). These documents also highlighted incentive-based wellness initiatives, such as participation rewards and family-inclusive benefits, corroborating interview insights about the role of recognition and belonging in employees' decisions to remain (Bay County Health Department, 2023). Reviewing these organizational materials supported Yin's (2018) principle of using multiple data sources to confirm emerging patterns, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of the findings and ensuring that each theme reflected both leaders' perspectives and documented wellness practices. Collectively, the interview and document findings demonstrated

consistent alignment across data sources, reinforcing the credibility of the thematic results in this study.

Theme 2: Engagement and Utilization

Open communication and workplace flexibility play a crucial role in enhancing employee engagement and reducing voluntary turnover. Annual reporting highlighted strategic communication of wellness offerings and participation opportunities, which aligned with interview findings that effective information sharing influences employee engagement with wellness initiatives (Bay County Board of County Commissioners, 2024b). Within the JD–R model, communication and autonomy function as job resources that enhance motivation, reduce burnout, and strengthen employees’ sense of control and belonging (Demerouti et al., 2001). When employees feel respected, heard, and supported through flexible scheduling and consistent communication, they are more likely to remain committed to the organization and maintain job satisfaction. These findings suggest that engagement strategies based on flexibility and open communication support employees’ well-being and contribute to lower voluntary attrition in this study.

Wellness initiatives that promote the adoption of healthy behaviors can play a critical role in enhancing employee engagement and organizational commitment. These initiatives often include health education, fitness and nutrition activities, smoking cessation support, and incentive programs designed to increase participation (Yu et al., 2024). When organizations integrate wellness programs into their culture, employees report feeling more valued and supported in maintaining well-being, which is associated with higher engagement and stronger organizational attachment (Yu et al., 2024).

Participants in the current study explained that consistent encouragement to utilize wellness offerings contributed to loyalty and satisfaction in their roles. In this project, leaders' integration of wellness into daily practice was aligned with reduced voluntary attrition because it supported employees' well-being and sense of belonging. Interpreted through the JD-R model, these initiatives functioned as organizational resources that replenished energy, fostered engagement, and buffered the effects of workplace stressors (see Tummers & Bakker, 2021). From the WCT perspective, employees' perceptions that wellness participation was valued and encouraged cultivated a favorable wellness climate, reinforcing commitment and shared trust within the organization (see Reynolds & Bennett, 2023).

Direct communication and flexibility significantly influenced how employees perceived organizational support and shaped their decisions to remain with the organization. P1 described maintaining open dialogue between supervisors and staff as foundational, explaining that transparent communication builds trust and reduces misunderstandings that may lead to frustration. P2 shared that regular check-ins addressing both personal and professional concerns help employees feel supported and included in decision-making. P3 and P4 emphasized that flexibility in scheduling and remote work options helped employees achieve a better balance and reduce feelings of overwhelm. P4 added that an open-door approach contributed to retention, stating that many employees choose to stay "even when they could make more elsewhere." These perspectives demonstrate that when employees experience autonomy and accessible

communication, they perceive greater organizational care, which, in turn, increases engagement and reduces voluntary attrition.

Respect for personal boundaries and confidentiality further contributed to employees' willingness to remain with their organization. P5 explained that leaders encouraged employees to disconnect from work after hours and use paid time off without pressure to remain available, which helped establish a sense of psychological safety and trust. She also described consistent and compassionate messaging about the importance of mental health, noting that employees felt empowered to take time for themselves without fear of judgment. These experiences suggest that when organizations prioritize boundary-setting and mental health support, employees feel protected and valued, which in turn reduces voluntary attrition.

Inclusive communication efforts ensured that employees across all roles and work schedules could access wellness resources. P6 explained that her HR team uses newsletters, flyers, and direct outreach to administrative assistants to ensure employees working irregular shifts receive health and wellness information. She further emphasized that flexible scheduling for participation in wellness activities allowed first responders and shift workers to feel respected and included, rather than excluded from opportunities concentrated during standard hours. These experiences suggest that equitable communication and access to wellness opportunities foster stronger engagement and organizational connection, which can help reduce voluntary attrition among employees who may otherwise feel marginalized.

Transparent communication and flexibility contribute to stronger employee engagement and commitment. Open communication channels and supportive feedback mechanisms have been linked to improved perceptions of fairness and workplace satisfaction (Kaltainen et al., 2022). Job autonomy and flexibility have also been identified as predictors of employee retention and well-being, particularly when reinforced by empathetic and responsive supervision (Kaltainen et al., 2022). These findings underscore the importance of effective communication and flexibility as organizational practices that enhance employee loyalty.

Participants in the current study emphasized that flexibility and clear communication were key factors in sustaining satisfaction and well-being in their roles. They described feeling respected and valued when leaders encouraged open dialogue and provided autonomy in managing their work responsibilities. Within the JD–R model, these practices function as job resources that enhance motivation, reduce burnout, and foster employees' sense of belonging (see Demerouti et al., 2001). Viewed through WCT, these day-to-day interactions also reinforce employees' shared perception that wellness is embedded in the organization's culture, strengthening the climate of trust and psychological safety that supports engagement and retention (see Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). These experiences indicate that supportive communication and scheduling flexibility contribute to lower voluntary attrition by reinforcing employees' connection to their organization.

Theme 3: Mental and Holistic Wellness

Holistic wellness support plays a vital role in influencing employees' decisions to remain with an organization. Wellness resources that promote psychological safety, work–life balance, and accessible health support contribute to stronger motivation, lower burnout, and greater engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). Participants in the current study explained that leadership's attention to mental, emotional, and physical needs strengthened trust and loyalty, contributing to the organization's ability to retain employees. These insights demonstrate that when leaders prioritize holistic wellness, employees feel valued and are more likely to remain in their employment. Reducing psychosocial stressors through organizational strategies strengthens employee well-being and retention. Unmanaged burnout, chronic stress, and presenteeism can erode engagement and weaken organizational commitment (Cohen et al., 2023). Wellness interventions that incorporate mindfulness, self-care approaches, and direct access to mental health support help buffer job strain and reinforce employees' ability to remain effective in their roles (Cohen et al., 2023). Participants noted that wellness must be embedded in organizational culture—not treated as an individual burden—to support sustained mental health and stability. When organizations remove systemic stressors, employees express greater satisfaction and are more likely to remain with their employer.

Practices that support mental and emotional balance contribute to a stronger sense of belonging and workplace stability. Participant 2 shared that expanded use of Employee Assistance Programs reduced stigma and increased access to support. Participant 3

described mental health days and flexible scheduling as tools that helped employees maintain their energy and focus. Participant 6 explained that a whole-person approach, which includes physical activity, mindfulness, and stress management education, made employees feel cared for in both their personal and professional lives. Publicly available documentation showed similar commitments, including family-inclusive wellness benefits designed to strengthen connectedness (Bay County Health Department, 2023). When employees feel understood and equipped to manage their well-being effectively, they are more likely to remain engaged and experience lower rates of voluntary attrition.

Strategic investments in holistic wellness can strengthen workforce stability and performance. Proactive wellness policies, grounded in prevention, education, and cultural transformation, benefit both employees and organizations by supporting the mental, emotional, and social well-being of individuals (Al Bizri et al., 2024). Tailoring resources to meet the specific needs of employees—such as working parents or shift workers—promotes equitable access to support services and fosters greater engagement (Al Bizri et al., 2024). These approaches align with the JD–R model and WCT, which suggest that job resources, such as psychological safety, belonging, and purpose, reduce job strain and enhance motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In this study, participants linked these same cultural wellness strategies to increased organizational loyalty, indicating that holistic support contributes to lower voluntary attrition.

Holistic wellness support fosters a workplace culture that enables employees to thrive both personally and professionally. Participants reported that organizational resources helped alleviate emotional strain and fostered mutual trust between leaders and

staff, leading to increased motivation and engagement. Consistent with WCT, employees identified wellness efforts as a sign of organizational care and alignment with shared values. A robust wellness climate contributes to lower voluntary attrition by fostering a sense of belonging, purpose, and sustained connection to the organization.

Theme 4: Incentives and Retention

Incentives and recognition played a meaningful role in encouraging wellness participation and reducing voluntary attrition. Participants reported that when employees felt supported and rewarded for engaging in wellness activities, they demonstrated stronger motivation and organizational loyalty. Public policy information confirmed the availability of supports for emotional and physical well-being, including mental health services and flexible leave options (Bay County Board of County Commissioners, 2024a). Within the JD–R model, organizational rewards and recognition function as job resources that enhance employee motivation and buffer against stress-related exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). From the WCT perspective, these incentives also communicate that employee well-being is genuinely valued by leadership, shaping collective perceptions of a supportive wellness climate that strengthens engagement and belonging (Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). These combined strategies helped employees feel valued, increasing engagement and influencing their decisions to stay.

Wellness-related incentives helped reinforce a positive and supportive organizational environment. P1 explained that recognizing employees for prioritizing their well-being encouraged consistent participation in wellness activities. P2 shared that rewards such as wellness points, gift cards, and paid leave made employees feel visible

and appreciated by leadership. P3 emphasized the connection between incentives and organizational goals, noting that competitive activities and bonuses strengthened morale and team cohesion. These examples demonstrate how recognition and rewards enhance participation and foster employees' desire to remain with their organizations.

Appreciation from leadership emerged as a significant driver of employees' decisions to stay. P4 observed that many employees remained with the organization because of favorable treatment and emotional support, even when higher pay was available elsewhere. P5 described how nonmonetary incentives, including flexible scheduling and stress-relief events, reinforced feelings of being cared for at work. Participants connected these experiences to lower turnover, emphasizing the importance of feeling recognized for contributing to wellness initiatives. When employees believe their well-being is valued, they develop stronger loyalty and are less likely to leave the organization.

Comprehensive benefits helped retain employees even when financial incentives were limited. P6 explained that, although large bonuses were not feasible in her public-sector organization, the agency covered 90% of insurance premiums and continued to fund on-site wellness programs. These efforts signaled a long-term commitment to employee well-being and were associated with lower turnover rates. Employees expressed that these stable benefits created trust and security in their employment relationships. Sustained investment in employee well-being contributed to strong organizational commitment and reduced voluntary attrition.

Recognition and benefits play a crucial role in fostering workforce stability and sustained employee engagement. Nonfinancial rewards, such as appreciation and flexibility, have been shown to maintain motivation over more extended periods than financial incentives alone (Kim & Park, 2022). Reward systems embedded in an organization's culture promote loyalty and reduce attrition by reinforcing employees' sense of value (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Participants in this study expressed similar experiences, linking incentive structures with improved morale and reduced burnout. These findings suggest that both relational and tangible incentives promote employee retention within organizations.

Incentives and recognition strengthened employees' emotional connection to their organizations. Participants agreed that both tangible rewards and relational appreciation signaled a culture of care and support. Employees who received acknowledgment for their wellness efforts reported more substantial alignment with the organization's mission and greater job satisfaction. By embedding wellness incentives and comprehensive benefits into organizational culture, leaders foster higher engagement and reduce voluntary attrition.

Theme 5: Barriers and Challenges

Organizational constraints limited the effectiveness of wellness programs and engagement in this study. Participants noted challenges, including workload pressures, staffing shortages, scheduling conflicts, and communication gaps between leadership and staff. These conditions often made it difficult for employees to participate in wellness offerings even when they valued them. According to the JD-R framework, such

workplace demands weaken the positive effects of job resources by increasing stress and hindering engagement (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). From the WCT perspective, these same barriers also erode employees' shared perception that leadership values their well-being, thereby weakening the overall wellness climate and diminishing trust and participation (see Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). In this study, the presence of organizational barriers reduced employees' opportunities to benefit from wellness initiatives and influenced their decisions to stay or leave the organization.

Limited time and coverage prevented many employees from engaging in wellness activities. P1 described workload and staffing challenges as the "biggest barrier to participation," noting that employees often lacked the time to step away from their responsibilities. P2 explained that employees wanted to participate in wellness offerings but were unable to do so due to insufficient coverage in small departments.

Participants also stated that without active reinforcement from supervisors, wellness became viewed as optional rather than integral to workplace culture. These experiences demonstrate that logistical barriers can hinder participation and negatively impact employees' perceptions of organizational support, ultimately affecting their willingness to remain with the organization.

Inconsistent supervisor engagement led to variations in how employees experienced wellness resources. P3 noted that some departments strongly promoted wellness activities, while others rarely acknowledged them, resulting in variable engagement across worksites. P4 noted that the absence of data tracking tools made it challenging to measure success and determine which initiatives were most beneficial.

These challenges limited leaders' ability to reinforce wellness practices and effectively evaluate outcomes. Where leadership support was inconsistent, employees felt less encouraged to participate, which reduced the program's retention benefits.

Organizations with diverse work schedules struggled to ensure inclusive access to wellness programs. P5 explained that hybrid and remote employees sometimes missed awareness updates when communication occurred primarily in person. P6 described the difficulty of scheduling wellness activities for shift workers and first responders, noting that traditional event times limited their participation. Her HR team responded by distributing wellness materials through departmental liaisons and offering health fairs across multiple shifts, which required additional resources and planning. These findings suggest that accessibility barriers can reduce engagement and limit the effectiveness of wellness programs in influencing voluntary attrition.

Multiple studies support the need for clear communication and leadership reinforcement in wellness engagement. Research has indicated that inconsistent messaging and limited supervisor involvement significantly reduce participation in organizational wellness programs (Kaltainen et al., 2022). Excessive workload demands and rigid schedules also discourage involvement, particularly in public-sector environments where staffing shortages are common (Kaltainen et al., 2022). Participants in the current study described similar experiences, linking these constraints to lower utilization of wellness offerings and diminished retention benefits. Structural barriers weaken the positive impact of wellness initiatives on retention.

Removing structural and cultural barriers is essential for wellness programs to achieve meaningful retention outcomes. Participants acknowledged the value of wellness efforts but emphasized that their utility depends on an organization's ability to support consistent participation. Addressing communication gaps, scheduling limitations, and supervisory inconsistencies can help ensure that wellness programs reach all employees. Within the JD-R framework, these constraints reflect elevated job demands that deplete energy and reduce the capacity to benefit from available resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). From the WCT perspective, persistent barriers can signal to employees that wellness is not truly prioritized, undermining shared perceptions of organizational care and weakening the overall wellness climate (Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). By reducing these barriers, organizations can strengthen employees' sense of support and well-being, which in turn helps lower voluntary attrition.

Business contributions and recommendations for professional practice served as the foundation for effective wellness implementation in this study. Participants described how leaders who modeled wellness, provided supportive resources, and communicated transparently created trust and organizational commitment. Supervisory accountability and empathy shaped loyalty, as P1 and P3 explained, and P6 highlighted that leadership's sustained investment in employee well-being helped retain employees, even without offering the highest pay. These perspectives align with findings that supportive leadership enhances autonomy, psychological safety, and a sense of belonging (see Tummers & Bakker, 2021), and with the JD-R framework, which identifies leadership behaviors as job resources that buffer stress and sustain engagement (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

When leaders demonstrate visible accountability for wellness, employees feel valued and are more likely to remain with the organization.

Leadership commitment has a significant influence on the development and maturation of wellness initiatives within organizations. Peña et al. (2024) identified three levels of wellness implementation—awareness, behavioral change, and supportive environments—and leaders in the current study described moving through similar stages. Participants shared that initial communication strategies evolved into expanded programs and culture-level support for well-being. These findings demonstrate that program effectiveness grows when leaders embed wellness into operational practices and physical environments. As wellness strategies become more integrated and supportive, employees perceive stronger organizational care and are more likely to stay.

Transparent communication and flexible scheduling emerged as essential mechanisms supporting employee well-being and retention. Participants reported that regular check-ins, open-door policies, and clear updates helped reduce miscommunication and improve trust. Flexibility in where and when work occurred promoted balance and decreased burnout, with P2 and P5 noting these practices helped employees feel “respected as people, not just workers.” These findings align with research demonstrating that open communication strengthens trust and autonomy and reduces strain while enhancing engagement (see Kaltiainen et al., 2022). When employees experience clear communication and flexibility, they feel more supported and become increasingly committed to the organization.

Recognition and incentives further reinforced employee engagement and organizational loyalty. Participants reported that wellness rewards, family-inclusive benefits, and acknowledgment for participation contributed to a sense of belonging. P4 observed that employees “stay because of how they are treated, not just how they are paid,” while P5 emphasized that recognition prevented feelings of invisibility. These insights align with findings that nonfinancial rewards can have a more substantial long-term motivational influence than financial incentives (see Kim & Park, 2022). Meaningful appreciation for employees’ well-being strengthens loyalty and helps reduce voluntary attrition.

Holistic wellness strategies promoted emotional connection and organizational pride. Participants described how mental health initiatives, monthly wellness events, and access to Employee Assistance Program resources supported balance and community belonging. Prior research has consistently shown that wellness programs enhance employee satisfaction and reduce turnover by increasing perceived organizational support (Parks & Steelman, 2022; Peña et al., 2024). Employees who feel supported in their whole-person well-being are more likely to remain committed to the organization.

Structural and logistical barriers limited consistent wellness engagement across organizations. Participants reported that heavy workloads, inconsistent supervisor support, scheduling constraints, and limited communication with remote or shift workers all contributed to reduced participation. P2 and P6 explained that operational priorities often prevented employees from engaging with wellness resources. These challenges align with research findings that unclear communication and inflexible scheduling

significantly reduce engagement (see Kaltiainen et al., 2022). Removing barriers to participation is crucial for wellness programs to influence voluntary attrition effectively.

Embedding wellness strategies into organizational practices enhances employee retention and engagement. Participants emphasized that leadership accountability, meaningful recognition, flexible scheduling, and holistic wellness support create environments where employees feel valued and remain committed to their work. These results align with the JD–R model’s premise that accessible job resources help buffer job demands and sustain engagement (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). By integrating wellness into daily culture, organizations can reduce turnover and enhance long-term stability.

Implications for Social Change

Workplace wellness initiatives play a significant role in strengthening the social and economic well-being of communities. Findings from all six participants indicated that wellness-centered leadership, open communication, equitable incentives, and holistic support contribute to improved organizational stability and employee well-being. These conditions extend beyond the workplace by enhancing family stability and local economic resilience. By prioritizing wellness, inclusivity, and psychological safety, organizations can influence community health and contribute to greater social equity. Leadership behaviors that normalize wellness practices contribute to societal acceptance of mental health and work–life balance. P3 and P4 explained that open dialogue around health “changes how people think about wellness at work,” which creates a positive ripple effect outside the workplace. Prior research supports this position, showing that

wellness-focused leadership reduces stigma and fosters psychological safety (Parks & Steelman, 2022) while cultivating compassionate management practices that acknowledge employees as whole individuals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). When leaders openly support wellness, they help promote a culture of empathy and understanding that strengthens social well-being.

Recognition programs and inclusive wellness benefits enhance the quality of life for employees and their families. P5 and P6 reported that family-inclusive benefits, health coverage, and acknowledgment of employee efforts support personal fulfillment and improve well-being at home. Research has similarly shown that wellness initiatives foster social connectedness and resilience (Peña et al., 2024). When employees feel balanced and supported, they are better equipped to make positive contributions to their families and the communities they serve.

Fair and equitable access to wellness opportunities strengthens community trust and inclusion. P2 and P6 identified inequities, including workload, inconsistent supervisor support, and shift-based schedules, as barriers to participation in wellness. When employees perceive strong organizational support for wellness, they are more likely to participate in and actively engage with available programs (Peña et al., 2024). Similarly, Kim and Park (2022) found that perceptions of fairness and inclusion in wellness initiatives increase employee engagement and strengthen organizational trust. Ensuring that both remote and shift-based employees can access wellness offerings demonstrates organizational fairness and reinforces shared responsibility for well-being. When organizations adopt inclusive wellness practices, they promote social justice and

strengthen their role as trusted community institutions. This alignment between participant experiences and prior research highlights that equitable access to wellness benefits not only enhances employee well-being but also fosters organizational legitimacy and cohesion (Kim & Park, 2022; Peña et al., 2024). Public-sector and midsized organizations have a unique opportunity to model community-focused wellness practices. Participants emphasized that when these organizations invest in wellness and retention strategies, they contribute to the creation of stronger regional economies and healthier workforces. As major local employers, they set expectations for responsible employment across sectors and contribute to broader societal stability. Integrating wellness into leadership practices extends an organization's impact on community well-being and long-term economic resilience.

Employee wellness efforts play a crucial role in building a more compassionate and sustainable society. Some participants reported that prioritizing wellness increased their feelings of dignity, belonging, and empowerment. For example, one leader explained that “when we take care of people first, the whole community benefits,” emphasizing the perceived connection between employee well-being and community health. Another participant described wellness initiatives as “a way to give back,” linking workplace care with civic responsibility. These findings align with research suggesting that organizational wellness practices promote social connectedness and collective resilience beyond the workplace (see Kim & Park, 2022; Peña et al., 2024). Viewed through the JD-R model, wellness-centered leadership provides resources that enhance employees’ psychological well-being and sense of purpose. From the WCT perspective,

visible organizational commitment to wellness shapes a shared belief that compassion and equity are core values, extending the benefits of workplace care into the broader community (Reynolds & Bennett, 2023). The results of this study demonstrate that wellness-centered leadership can catalyze positive and enduring social change by fostering stronger families, healthier communities, and more sustainable workplace cultures.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future scholars could strengthen theoretical rigor by incorporating mixed-methods approaches that unite qualitative depth with quantitative measurement. Analytic tools, such as surveys or structural equation modeling, may help evaluate relationships among engagement, burnout, and turnover intentions while validating themes from employee narratives. These strategies enable triangulation, reinforcing both reliability and theoretical grounding. Combining data types would provide leaders with credible evidence to guide decisions about wellness-driven retention strategies.

Further investigation into behavioral and contextual variables could clarify how workplace experiences shape retention decisions. Participants noted that recognition and belonging often outweighed monetary incentives, suggesting that intrinsic motivators play a significant role in influencing employee loyalty. Future researchers could examine leadership style, communication frequency, and technology-based engagement tools to determine how different workforce generations and hybrid roles respond to wellness initiatives. Studying these specific variables would help reveal what conditions most effectively promote workplace stability.

The connection between wellness practices and equity-focused outcomes presents another valuable research direction. Workplace initiatives that emphasize accessibility, inclusion, and cultural competence may reduce disparities in both well-being and career progression. Comparative analyses across sectors could clarify how policy environments and employer structures shape access to wellness supports (Kaltiainen et al., 2022). Exploring these intersections would help organizations implement more inclusive and equitable wellness strategies.

Continued theoretical development is necessary to elucidate the interplay between wellness, leadership, and attrition at multiple levels. Researchers could further develop frameworks, such as the JD-R model, and integrate complementary lenses, including self-determination theory, social exchange theory, and psychological safety theory, to gain a deeper understanding of motivation, well-being, and organizational connection. Interdisciplinary perspectives may reveal more nuanced relationships among job design, wellness culture, and voluntary attrition. Strengthening theoretical foundations would enhance the scholarly understanding of wellness-driven retention practices.

Sustained research efforts can support leaders in implementing innovative approaches that improve well-being and organizational outcomes. Scholars who build upon practical findings from various sectors can help refine and optimize wellness programs that reduce turnover and promote a sense of belonging. By continuing to expand knowledge in this area, future research can advance wellness initiatives that support human-centered, sustainable workplaces, including organizational design, wellness culture, and voluntary attrition.

Conclusion

In this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project, I explored strategies leaders use to reduce voluntary employee attrition through workplace wellness programs. Interviews with six organizational leaders from mid-sized and public-sector organizations revealed that leadership support, effective communication, flexibility, holistic wellness, and meaningful recognition each play a crucial role in strengthening employee engagement and organizational commitment. Some participants emphasized that when wellness is integrated into daily operations and culture rather than being isolated or short-term, employees feel valued, connected, and are more likely to stay. Although participants described persistent challenges, such as workload pressures and unequal access to wellness resources, the findings demonstrated that intentional leadership involvement and equity-focused planning can overcome these barriers. Wellness-centered leadership represents a strategic and sustainable approach to reducing voluntary attrition while supporting healthier employees and stronger communities. This study reinforces that employee wellness is not merely a benefit but a core organizational responsibility that drives stability, resilience, and long-term success.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

As part of the methodological approach, I incorporated a document review to supplement interview data. This process involved examining publicly available materials related to workplace wellness programs, including policy documents, organizational wellness reports, and information posted on company websites, LinkedIn, and Glassdoor. Document review supported data triangulation, which enhanced credibility by comparing multiple sources of evidence (Arias Valencia, 2022). Accessing publicly available data ensured transparency, verified findings, and strengthened the trustworthiness of the research.

All electronic data were securely stored in encrypted digital formats on a password-protected external drive accessible only to me. In accordance with Walden University's data-retention policy, I will maintain all research materials for five years and then permanently delete or destroy them.

Interview Questions

1. What wellness program strategies did you implement, and how do you believe these strategies have influenced employees' decisions to stay or leave?
2. Which aspects of these strategies do you believe impact employees' decisions to remain with the organization?
3. What challenges have you faced in developing or implementing these strategies?
4. How do employees typically respond to the wellness-related strategies you have implemented?

5. What changes have you observed in employee well-being since implementing these strategies?
6. What changes, if any, have you observed in voluntary attrition rates since implementing these strategies?
7. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your strategies in reducing voluntary attrition?
8. In your opinion, why do some employees choose to leave despite having access to wellness programs and related strategies?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience using wellness program strategies to address voluntary attrition?

Appendix B: Categories and Codes From Data Analysis

Theme	Description	Key Insight	Representative Participants	Key Takeaway
Leadership Support	Leadership commitment drives program success.	Supervisors influence employee perception and engagement.	P1, P3, P4, P6	Visible and caring leadership fosters trust and sustained participation.
Engagement & Utilization	Employee awareness and accessibility determine success.	Peer advocacy and education increase engagement.	P2, P3, P5, P6	Communication and accessibility convert availability into actual use.
Mental & Holistic Wellness	Mental health is integral to workplace wellness.	Expanding EAPs reduces stigma and supports retention.	P2, P3, P5, P6	Whole-person wellness creates stronger emotional commitment to the organization.
Incentives & Retention	Recognition and appreciation	Non-monetary rewards	P1, P4, P6	Culture and recognition outweigh

	promote belonging.	sustain long- term loyalty.		monetary incentives in retaining employees.
Barriers & Challenges	Communication and demographic barriers persist.	Awareness gaps and supervisor resistance remain key obstacles.	P1, P3, P5, P6	Cultural, structural, and scheduling barriers limit participation but are addressable through leadership and communication.

Appendix C: Member Checking Email

Hi Participant 1,

Thank you again for speaking with me for my qualitative project on voluntary employee attrition in the context of workplace wellness programs. I'm sharing your transcript for member checking so you can confirm accuracy and add clarifications. I've omitted the personal conversation that occurred after the interview concluded; the transcript reflects only the research portion.

Below is a brief summary of what I understood from our discussion—please confirm, correct, or add nuance:

- Your wellness approach at the local government (“Organization A”) pursued two aims: support employees and reduce costs (workers’ comp and health premiums the organization largely funded).
- A management mindset shift (from “health is your problem” toward proactive support) enabled wellness adoption and made productivity and retention benefits more visible.
- On-the-clock participation mattered: short daily stretching at start of shift, points-based incentives (e.g., wellness videos, intramurals), and targeted programs (smoking cessation, weight loss) boosted engagement—especially when leaders modeled participation.
- Supervisor buy-in was the primary implementation challenge; leadership accountability and clear expectations were needed.
- Partnerships with the health insurer/TPA tied wellness to lower premiums, which you then linked back to department budgets to reinforce support.
- Employees generally responded positively, with signs of greater loyalty; outside expert speakers (plus a provided lunch) improved participation.
- Exit interviews helped evaluate impact; when employees left despite wellness options, the most frequent reason was better pay/benefits elsewhere.

Cultural differences surfaced: white-collar teams tended to value work-life balance and wellness more consistently than blue-collar teams (general trend). What I'm asking you to do :

1. Review the attached transcript for accuracy.
2. Suggest corrections or clarifications (reply inline or use track changes/comments).
3. Note anything you'd like further anonymized or retracted.

If it's easier, I can capture your edits in a 5–10 minute call.

When: If possible, please send any edits by Wednesday, October 15, 2025. If I don't hear back by then, I'll proceed with the current version as accurate.

Thank you again for your time and insights—your feedback ensures I capture your perspective faithfully.

Best regards,
Cara Murray
DBA Candidate, Walden University