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Leadership Practices Supporting Retention in Head Start Nonprofit Organizations

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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2017

Abstract

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by

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MS, Troy University, 2005

BA, Tuskegee University, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Head Start, the largest early childhood organization in the United States, was federally mandated to employ bachelor degreed operational employees, with no additional funds. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore effective strategies that successful leaders of Head Start Nonprofit Organizations use to retain operational employees. The population of this study included 5 Head Start CEOs/Program Directors in 5 Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama who successfully retained operational employees in their organization. Kouzes and Posner's transformational leadership theory provided a conceptual framework for this study. Data were collected via telephone interviews and employee records from the human resources department. Reviewed human resource documents included the highest level of credentials for the leader, the policy for degree requirement for operational employees, and the number of operational employees, and the participants' highest level of education. The data were analyzed using inductive analysis which consisted of a line-by-line approach to review data identifying words, phrases, ideas, and actions consistent among participants and organizations to identify patterns and themes. Results indicated that Head Start leaders used incentives, continuous training, educational support, and job benefits to retain their operational employees. The implications for social change include the potential for young children to receive optimal teaching and caregiving from retained qualified operational employees.

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Dedication

This study is in heartfelt dedication to my father, Izell Brown, who was the epitome of strength and determination. He instilled those characteristics in me through his demonstrative commitment to family, and his persistent battle for fighting cancer. He was a supportive, loving father to me and my brother Rodney and a supportive, loving husband of 50 ½ years to my mother Shirley. I will always love you Daddy, and thank you for being the wind beneath my wings.

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believe you can be, and do anything you set your mind to, and work hard to achieve. I love you all.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Nonprofit organizations must implement better tactics and techniques to ensure organizational effectiveness and to increase staff sustainability (Liket & Maas, 2013). Leaders can create a qualified and reliable workforce (Hess & Bacigalupo, 2013). As the credibility of leadership increases, organizational success and cooperative staff relationships tend to increase (Neumann & Neumann, 2013). For organizations to be successful at optimizing employee commitment to the job, they must implement innovative approaches (Bal, Kooij, & De Jong, 2013). Leaders must provide the right work environment to retain their employees and to improve employee satisfaction. Kouzes and Posner (2012) suggested that a leader's most important task is to model the behavior he or she wishes to develop among the staff. By demonstrating effective behavior, leaders will create an atmosphere that encourages and increases staff productivity.

Nonprofit organizations must work to retain employees using factors other than financial incentives in a job market in which better paying options exist. Quality leadership can create a setting that draws workers to organizations and encourages them to stay (Becchetti, Castriota, & Tortia, 2013). Kouzes and Posner (2012) identified five leadership practices that can be applied in diverse work settings to transform organizations into highly effective teams: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart. These leadership practices lead to employee commitment to the organization by helping employees feel that they are valued and that their work is important (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Background of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to explore the problems that leaders of nonprofit organizations face in retaining operational employees when federal mandates increase position qualifications, but the funds for subsequent pay increases are not commensurate with qualifications. The skills and knowledge acquired by staff tend to filter into the workplace (Smeby & Heggen, 2014). Staff motivation tactics can create win-win situations for both the staff and the organization (Muogbo, 2013). Jyothsna, Jyoshna, and Rajanikanth (2013); Kerslake (2002); and Smeby and Heggen (2014) suggested various methods for providing incentives to increase employee output.

Kerslake (2002) suggested five tactics that could help leaders to create an environment that enhances productivity. The five tactics for the office are (a) use a principal management tool, (b) suit the circumstances of the employees, (c) be flexible about the work to be done, (d) recognize growth, and (e) avoid pursuing false economies in decision making. Jyothsna et al. (2013) explained that before leaders can motivate staff, organizations must create a work environment that encourages motivation, where there is regular recognition of staff, and where goal setting and expectations are clear.

Problem Statement

No federal funds are available to provide Head Start employees with additional pay commensurate with their education (Head Start Information, 2014). Fifty percent of Head Start operational employees were required to hold a bachelor’s degree by 2013, with no additional compensation for their credentials (Head Start Act, 2013). The general business problem is that Head Start leaders need to retain qualified operational employees who have at minimum a bachelor's degree, despite the disparity in pay between Head Start and other early childhood teaching positions (Head Start Act, 2013). The specific business problem is that some leaders of Head Start Nonprofit Organizations in Alabama lack effective strategies to retain operational employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective strategies that successful leaders of Head Start Nonprofit Organizations use to retain operational employees. The target population for data collection included five Alabama Head Start Nonprofit Organization leaders who have demonstrated success in retaining operational employees in their organization. The potential outcomes of the study are threefold: the results may be useful to leaders who endeavor to contribute positive social change in service-oriented organizations, operational employees may remain working in the organization that they prefer and enjoy a better life, and young children may receive optimal teaching and caregiving performance from these operational employees earning better preparation for school.

Nature of the Study

Because of the exploratory nature of the research question, the qualitative method was the best fit for this study. Qualitative researchers investigate emerging areas of concern in which there is insufficient information to design a quantitative study; qualitative scholars also explore existing areas of research in more depth and with more detail (Hunt, 2011). Because the federal mandate related to Head Start operational employee qualifications is new to programs, the focus of this study was on exploring retention strategies for Head Start operational employees. The quantitative method was not suitable for this study because numerical data were not a part of the data collection, nor was there a testing of a theory (Hoare & Hoe, 2013). A mixed-methods approach was not suitable for this study because the collection and analysis of data did not occur by mixing both quantitative and qualitative research (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015).

After reviewing many qualitative designs, I determined them to be inadequate for the purpose of this study. Grounded theory, ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology underwent careful consideration. Grounded theory was not an appropriate qualitative design because I wanted to identify strategies to recruit operational employees rather than creating a theory (Lewis, 2015). Ethnography focuses on people, while the present study was focused on practices (Samnani & Singh, 2013). Similarly, narrative researchers focus on telling the story of an individual; however, this study's focus was on individuals. Phenomenology was a potentially viable option. Phenomenology focuses on human experience and emphasizes understanding the experiences of the people involved (Khan, 2014). Because the experiences of the leaders at the research sites are important in identifying successful practices, phenomenology could have been the qualitative design. For this study, I collected document data in addition to human-source data, so I did not choose phenomenology. A multiple exploratory case study design was the most appropriate design for this study. Researchers use case studies to explore processes and individuals using a variety of data collection approaches (Hays & Wood, 2011; Lokke & Sorensen, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013).

Research Question

The research question for this study was the following:

What effective strategies can Head Start leaders use to retain operational employees in Alabama?

Interview Questions

The following are interview questions (Appendix B) for Head Start leaders to answer.

1. What actions and behaviors do you perform that positively influence retention of operational employees?
2. How do you encourage operational employees not to challenge the process of obtaining higher qualifications with no pay increase?
3. How do you enable operational employees to take action to obtain higher degrees?
4. What strategies do you use to inspire the shared vision of your program to retain operational employees?
5. How do you encourage operational employees to remain employed with your organization?

Conceptual Framework

Kouzes and Posner's (2012) transformational leadership theory provided a conceptual framework for this study. Kouzes and Posner discussed five practices that are transformational in style and key for leaders to be successful. *Model the way* refers to leaders being consistent with what they do in a way that encourages others to mimic their behaviors, while leading in front of people. *Inspire a shared vision* encourages leaders to motivate people by using their creativity and ideas with effective communication. *Challenge the process* gives leaders the opportunity to learn from challenges as they thrive to create innovative ways to overcome adversity. *Enable others to act* is a way leaders can help people feel capable of putting ideas and plans into action. *Encourage the heart* occurs when leaders share passions and stories of their own experiences with people, which inspires others to want to exude their own passion when working on tasks.

Researchers have applied Kouzes and Posner's (2012) theory in other research studies. For instance, Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, and Frey (2013) investigated how work, cultural values, and job satisfaction affect transformational leadership behavior. Carter, Armenakis, Feild, and Mossholder (2013) used survey and observations to explore how the transformational leadership model can serve as an effective classroom model for organization instructors. Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, and Frey (2013) explored how transformational leadership can improve customer perception of services through leaders modeling positive behaviors and views of members of the organization. In this study, the conceptual framework provides various perspectives of how leaders can use the transformational leadership model to enhance any organization. This framework works for this study because it includes five key leadership practices that leaders could implement in their organization to retain qualified operational employees. Organizations that implement Kouzes and Posner's five leadership practices can enhance the leadership skills of their members and depict quality, value, and leadership development (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Operational Definitions

Compensation: Compensation is payment in the form of actual dollars through the involvement of a wage/salary for work performed in the short or long term (Currim, Lim, & Kim, 2012).

Head Start: Head Start is a school readiness nonprofit organization for preschool-aged children (3 to 5 years) and their economically challenged families (Head Start Information, 2014).

Head Start federal mandate: The Head Start federal mandate requires 50% of the program's operational employees nationwide, within each organization, to obtain a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, or a related field, by 2013 (Head Start Act, 2013).

Operational employee: Operational employees at Head Start must hold a bachelor's degree by 2013 (Head Start Act, 2013).

Program director: The program director, also referred to as a chief economic officer (CEO)/leader, is responsible for the overall administrative and programmatic, day-to-day operations of a Head Start Nonprofit Organizations (National Head Start Association, 2015).

Retention: Organizations use retention as a strategy to link employee behaviors and attitudes to institutional goals in order to retain qualified employees and control turnover behavior (Ceylan, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas that scholars and readers acknowledge as true (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). Assumptions affect decision making related to research biases within organization ethics because people define assumptions in various ways (Vohs et al., 2014). I made several assumptions in conducting this research.

I assumed that participants were truthful and honest and that they exercised integrity when responding to interview questions. I gathered documents as data from leaders (program directors), and I assumed that all documents provided are valid, authentic items used in the regular course of the organization. In the informed consent process, I emphasized participants' right to join and leave the study at will, which meant that participants were willingly providing data with no coercing by members of their organization. Finally, I assumed that the practices described by the participants reflected the daily operations of the organization.

Limitations

Strategies for qualitative inquiry require data collection, analysis, and writing; because of this process, limitations in the study will arise (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). Limitations are factors that may cause a threat to the validation of issues when evaluating the relevance and applicability of research (Brutus, Anguinus, & Wassmer, 2013). One limitation of this multiple case study was that only five Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama were in the study; this is a small number compared to thousands of programs in the United States.

While the small number of participating organizations allowed for a deep understanding of each organization, it may not have provided a broad understanding of practices in Head Start nonprofit organizations. Because I limited the study to programs within one state, there is a possibility that the results may be different in other geographical areas. I collected data through e-mail, and I interviewed the participants via a face-to-face meeting. If the participants were not available to meet face-to-face, I conducted the interviews via Facetime, or telephone, whichever was convenient for the participant.

Delimitations

Researchers should identify the scope of the study through delimitations, which determines the boundary or territory of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Olivero, Marquez, & Real, 2013). Several factors may affect the retention of employees with 4-year degrees and no additional compensation. However, the purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore how leaders of Head Start nonprofit organizations can successfully retain operational employees who hold a bachelor's degree as required by a new, unfunded, federal mandate.

Participating programs may have additional documents that could have provided information pertinent to the research questions. Similarly, I considered a larger number of operational employees as participants for this study. I expected the three sources of data collection, as a whole, to produce adequate data and to preclude the need for use of additional human or print sources.

Significance of the Study

Retention issues and concerns may occur in Head Start nonprofit organizations' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) if a leader fails to implement best leadership practices to attract and retain operational employees with college degrees. By implementing business values, leaders can increase social responsibility within the organization while improving the organization's relationship with stakeholders (Mujtaba & Cavico, 2013). Ideally, an organization that must meet mandates and maintain services according to the rules and regulations of federal funding sources will want to maintain qualified staff that operates in compliance with federal guidelines and exceeds the level of competitors' service. Muogobo (2013) suggested that providing regular, positive feedback to staff increases motivation and encourages staff to want to do a good job for the organization.

The leadership and management concepts I discussed in a later section of this study may help supervisors and other leaders to strengthen their team members' approaches to completing day-to-day responsibilities consistently and on a regular basis, thereby increasing productivity and motivation. The study results may establish the competencies, concepts, and leadership practices as they relate to causes and methods for increasing staff productivity and motivation. However, it is possible that some causes of the lack of staff productivity may not be identifiable within the scope of this study and may require additional research.

Contribution to Business Practice

I focused this study on exploring effective strategies that successful leaders of Head Start Nonprofit Organizations use to retain operational employees. Business leaders, in similar settings, may benefit from the findings of this study by implementing similar strategies to retain qualified personnel. Zhang et al. (2015) believed that when organization leaders look at the factors that influence and shape retention, they might develop an employee relations system that will provide a competitive advantage over the competition.

Implications for Social Change

In this study, I explored the practices used by Head Start leaders to support the retention of preschool operational employees who hold bachelor's degrees, which may lead to positive social change among Head Start nonprofit organizations. Leadership practices impact the quality of services rendered and may increase economic productivity (Yammarino, 2013). If Head Start leaders have a clearer idea of what practices support the retention of operational employees with bachelor's degrees despite opportunities these educators may have to work in better paying positions, they may be able to employ more highly qualified operational employees. In turn, the programs they supervise may provide better quality instruction for the children they serve.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The Head Start federal mandate requires 50% of the program's operational employees nationwide, within each organization, to obtain a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, or a related field (Head Start Act, 2013). In this study, I explored how Head Start leaders retain operational employees with bachelor's degrees when similar positions with other organizations may offer better pay, public schools may offer additional benefits and job stability, and there is no pay differential to set operational employees with bachelor's degrees apart from their non-degreed peers. The literature review includes background information on the mission of Head Start nonprofit organizations, the effects of operational employee's preparation on student achievement, the effects of operational employee's self-efficacy on student learning, leadership theory as it relates to staff creating a positive work environment, personnel recruitment and retention, motivation and job satisfaction, and employee compensation. In the literature review, I discussed Kouzes and Posner's (2012) leadership traits, as well as leadership theory, to understand the need for well-trained operational employees in Head Start nonprofit organizations and the issues related to recruiting and retaining staff members with college degrees who are not receiving compensation at a rate higher than their non-degreed counterparts.

The literature review includes a combination of research materials from Walden University's online library. I used the following search engines in Walden University's Library site to obtain sources for the literature review: Business Source Complete, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, ABI/INFORM Global, and EBSCOHost. References include peer-reviewed articles and scholarly books related to this study. Search terms used included *compensation, compensating qualified employees, early childhood education, Head Start, leadership, job satisfaction, leadership theory, motivating employees, motivational strategies, personnel retention, school readiness, staff* *productivity, operational employee education,* and *operational employee self-efficacy*. References also include various resource books and references in the literature review. This study includes 203 references with 197 peer-reviewed references (97% of total references). In addition, 176 references (86% of total references) have publication dates that are 5-years-old or less (2013-2017).

Historical Overview

The ACF (2013) is responsible for programs that promote the well-being of socially and economically challenged children, families, and communities. Head Start is one of the programs under the ACF, and like all organizations under the ACF, Head Start depends on federal funding to deliver programs and services. The ACF falls under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Head Start began in 1965 with a mission to prepare children from low-income families to enter school. Head Start has grown to be a multibillion-dollar, nonprofit organization that serves nearly 900,000 children and their families across the nation (Head Start Information, 2014). Head Start serves preschool-aged children and their families using a holistic approach to child growth and development by providing comprehensive services (Head Start Information, 2014).

Head Start and Early Education

Head Start prepares low-income 4-year-olds for school, but state-funded pre-K programs affect the role of the organization. Lee, Zhai, Brooks-Gunn, Han, and Waldfogel (2014) examined Head Start nonprofit organizations and found that pre-K is effective in improving early literacy outcomes, whereas Head Start is effective in improving health outcomes. Head Start and pre-K programs are comparable as they relate to early math learning (Fuhs & McNeil, 2013). According to Fuhs and McNeil (2013), Head Start is associated with short-term gains in cognitive functioning. Head Start nonprofit organizations make a significant difference in the lives of low-income children by providing services that support multiple aspects of children's lives (Bitler, Hoynes, & Domina, 2014). In a Head Start Impact Study, Bitler et al. (2014) showed that children in Head Start acquire many cognitive measures, access to medical care, and a decrease in behavior problems.

Researchers of early childhood and elementary school programs have indicated that intervening early in the lives of disadvantaged children may lead to higher educational attainment and greater long-term success in the job market, thereby helping impoverished children to avoid poverty as adults (Campbell et al., 2014). Kindergarten, in many cases, is the first time that children experience a classroom setting with an instructional focus (Bassok, 2013). Nonetheless, the beginning of a child's educational journey is so important to future educational outcomes that it makes it essential that children have quality leadership oversight, and operational employees who can positively affect their development and growth during early years (Buysse, Peisner-Feinberg, Páez, Hammer, & Knowles, 2014).

The federal government increased operational employee quality to enhance children's academic success (Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Scholars have linked operational employee quality to student achievement (Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Operational employees can affect the production of gains in the areas of literacy and math achievement early in a child's formal education (Fuhs & McNeil, 2013), thus helping children to be ready for success in K-12 education.

Head Start outlines 22 early literacy objectives for Head Start preschool participants to achieve by entering school (Head Start Information, 2014). For example, children must recognize a word as a unit of print, and they must understand that words are separate with spaces (Head Start Information, 2014). This rise in preschool standards coincides with an emphasis on preschool operational employees' use of scientifically validated techniques when delivering early literacy instruction in their classrooms (Booren, Downer, & Vitello, 2012).

As with other professionals who serve children within U.S. schools, administrators have mandated that preschool operational employees use methods that work (Booren et al., 2012). In Head Start nonprofit organizations, Congress has attempted to meet this mandate by requiring operational employees meet job preparation requirements and qualifications for their jobs (Bassok, 2013). However, no additional funding has been allocated to support the mandate (Bassok, 2013), which leaves program leaders to create incentives other than financial ones to assist operational employees in meeting the increased standards.

School Readiness

School readiness concerns more than academics. It also includes children's physical, social, and emotional progress (Landry et al., 2014). During early childhood, the most important priority in working with children is for adults to meet children's basic needs and to provide opportunities for children to engage actively with the world around them (Landry et al., 2014). This emphasis on basic needs compliments rather than supersedes the role of instruction. The revised National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC, 2013) position statement regarding developmentally appropriate practice emphasized that intentional and purposeful teaching can reduce the achievement gap.

Morris, Millenky, Raver, and Jones (2013) explored how implementation of the behavioral aspects of school readiness is in relation to the direct assessment of children's cognitive readiness for entering kindergarten. In a profile analysis of 4-year-old children attending Head Start, Morris et al. indicated that the promotion of competencies associable with classroom participation and prosocial behavior are critical to school readiness. At least two different kinds of cognitive readiness may be important: skills that provide a foundation for reasoning and problem solving (Morris et al., 2013).

The academic knowledge associated with the foundation for reasoning and problem solving represents a proximal antecedent of early achievements in the domains of emergent literacy and emergent numeracy (Morris et al., 2013). Morris et al. stated that these two types of cognitive skills may show different associations with behavioral indices of school readiness, and academic knowledge may reflect the quality of instructional content to which the child has exposure. Having operational employees who hold bachelor's degrees and are trainable in early childhood education may support and enhance the instructional component of early childhood education.

Operational Employee Education

In an effort to provide high-quality preschool education, policymakers are requiring public preschool operational employees to have at least a bachelor's degree, preferably in early childhood education (Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013). State and federal program's intention for 4-year-olds are to provide a knowledgeable experience at a level of quality high enough to change children's developmental trajectory meaningfully (Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013). According to Cascio and Schanzenbach, higher levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities of operational employees provide linkage to higher global quality care in organizations.

There is an implicit understanding that operational employees who have high qualifications and educational backgrounds will be high-quality operational employees who produce student achievement gains and promote student learning (Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013). High qualifications are signals to administrators that operational employees have invested time in training (Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013). Consequently, they possess the necessary skills to be effective in the classroom (Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013).

Although the research on leaders' educational background characteristics and their effects on student achievement vary (Phillippo & Stone, 2013), a central element in the improvement of early education is operational employee quality (Heckman, Pinto, & Savelyev, 2013). Zan and Donegan-Ritter (2014) believed that there is a significant difference between prebachelor's operational employees and operational employees with bachelor's degrees. Operational employee qualifications affect the quality of teaching, education, and beliefs provided to young children and can have positive lasting effects on students (Zan & Donegan-Ritter, 2014).

Based on a content analysis of education policy, Ji, Huang, Liu, Zhu, and Cai (2012) claimed that training requirements are relevant and focus on skills that help employees to work cognitively with children and individualize the education. Cascio and Schanzenbach (2013) noted that increasing operational employees' education will not be enough to improve classroom quality and maximize a child's academics. Instead, Cascio and Schanzenbach (2013) stated that an increase in education will require professional development activities and support toward an employee's interaction with children.

Razak and Connolly (2013) showed that operational employees who attain education influence the development of number concepts in children, while operational employees with experience were a weaker influence on children's development. Operational employee education and experience equally affect a child's learning of number concepts (Razak & Connolly, 2013). Although operational employees' education level may have a greater effect in some areas of student achievement than others, there is a connection between student success, and administrators, thereby using this evidence to push for early childhood educators holding a bachelor's degree.

Operational Employee Commitment and Self-Efficacy

Beyond providing educators with instructional skills and content knowledge, expanding the academic and professional learning preparation of early childhood operational employees may support student achievement in other ways as well. In addition to having operational employees who hold bachelor's degrees, it is important for educational administrators to create staff development programs that help educators adjust their ideology and practices to implement a learning culture that is knowledge-based (Rienties, Brouwer, & Lygo-Baker, 2013). Employees who express a willingness to take the time and expense to earn degrees and to attend staff development focused on teaching and learning are showing commitment on the part of operational employees. Thomason and La Paro (2013) showed that operational employee commitment renders positive results related to job satisfaction. Operational employees who report higher commitment also report greater engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors. Thomason and La Paro also showed a positive relationship between operational employees' commitment and reading achievement among students.

Holding a bachelor's degree or higher degree may lead operational employees to feel more competent to do their job. Competency, in turn, could affect student achievement (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011). Klassen et al. (2011) believed that operational employees with high efficacy beliefs generate stronger student achievement than operational employees with low efficacy beliefs. Operational employee efficacy influences behavior through four processes that focus on cognition, motivation for successes and failures, effectiveness of positive and negative emotions, and selection (Klassen et al., 2011). Operational employees who set high goals for themselves tend to be successful. In addition, students taught by successful operational employees accomplish high goals and overcome challenges more than those students who do not believe in themselves and who are not encouraged by operational employees who believe in them (Klassen et al., 2011).

When operational employees see failure as eminent, they may try to preserve their self-esteem by conserving effort because failing, after exerting great effort, is demoralizing. Self-efficacy depends on how operational employees perceive their success with activities or experiences in the past (Klassen et al., 2011). Self-efficacy may improve through outside influences, and thus obtaining a bachelor's degree, which exposes operational employees to new information and possibilities for role modeling, may aid them in feeling and being more efficacious (Klassen et al., 2011). Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, and Koch (2013) suggested that a combination of employee stress, job dissatisfaction, and an intention to quit is common. Student stressors mediate the relationship between employee efficacies relating to student engagement and job dissatisfaction (Bono et al., 2013). Eckert (2012) revealed that novice operational employees in urban schools have less preparation for teaching, based on their qualifications, which predicts employee efficacy.

Operational employees must establish and provide positive and supportive inclusive learning environments to promote positive interactions between operational employees and children, as well as allow operational employees to implement strategies to teach children (Hamre et al., 2013). Thomason and La Paro (2013) documented a shift toward a preventive orientation that emphasizes early literacy objectives. Operational employees must be prepared to support the attainment of these objectives and feel committed and competent regarding their role in student achievement to achieve success.

Leadership Theory

With the lack of funding to support hiring operational employees with bachelor's degrees, and the established importance of supporting the academic component of Head Start nonprofit organizations, Head Start leaders may find that adjusting their practice is crucial to retaining operational employees with bachelor's degrees. This may lead to improvement in their organizations' effectiveness in preparing constituents for public school. Adjusting their practice may lead them to consider sustainable leadership practices, which rely on various practices that interconnect (Dimmock & Yong Tan, 2013).

Dimmock and Yong Tan (2013) claimed that trust is an element of leadership practices that should be influential within an organization because it will improve the decision-making process and provide long-term retention of staff. Moreover, leaders need training to implement successful leadership practices (Keating, Rosch, & Burgoon, 2014). Their leadership skills develop over time when continuums of practices are in place (Keating et al., 2014).

Kouzes and Posner (2012) introduced a leadership model that includes five practices that a transformational leader can implement to develop desirable outcomes within their organization. The five practices are model the way, challenge the process, enable others to act, inspire a shared vision, and encourage the heart. The focus of this model is on the individual development of a leader's skills and leadership practices. Kouzes and Posner (2012) suggested behaviors to help leaders to practice exemplary leadership.

Model the way. Leaders who are consistent in their actions and communications build their credibility with their staff (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Kouzes and Posner explained that to effectively model the way, leaders should establish how people should receive treatment, how they should work to enhance organization uniqueness, and how standards can be measurable. When leaders use these strategies, they are showing that they lead by example and advocate for their staff.

Employees tend to watch leaders and managers they trust for direction and guidance (Yaghoubi & Hojatizade, 2015). Leaders should lead by example and illustrate the way for organizational change to occur (Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013); yet, some employees have difficulty embracing change within their organizations. For employees to embrace change, change must be evident in other areas prior to implementation (Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013). For instance, the organization, the leader, the way of thinking, and the approach should change for the implementation of any method or technique to be successful in an organization (Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013).

Because of the significance of the work involved in nonprofit organizations, leaders and managers should implement strategic management functions. This is important because performance and evaluation determine the successes and failures of organizations. Nonprofit organizations should mirror for-profit organizations in their increased reliance on sustainability (Erakovich & Anderson, 2013).

Karp (2013) explained that bad leadership develops because of a lack of self-management and poor relationship management competencies. Good leadership, by contrast, tends to derive from self-management and relationship management competencies. Karp further suggested that leaders should focus on their followers to develop their leadership style and own management competencies through face-to-face communications.

Organizations should pay attention to social responsibility and the impact that leaders and managers have on the business (Duckworth, 2015). A lack of systematic thinking can negatively affect customer service. Organizations should implement initiatives that support sustainability, such as monitoring customer service for improvements and listening to how customers feel about the services (Duckworth, 2015).

Proenca (2014) argued that power and empowerment matters and discussed how individuals might get it and use it to advance the organizations' goals while furthering their careers. Jervis (2013) explained that there are several things powerful people (or leaders) do to prevail. They mete out resources, deploy rewards and punishments to shape others' behavior, advance on multiple fronts, make the first move, co-opt antagonists, remove rivals, avoid drawing unnecessary fire, use a personal touch, persist, attend to important relationships, and make their vision compelling (Jervis, 2013).

Inspire a shared vision. Kouzes and Posner (2012) noted that transformational leaders have a passion for envisioning the outlook of an organization. A leader's passion generates enthusiasm for the sharing of the vision with others through personal energy and positive language (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Sharing a vision is crucial for creating togetherness and commitment within an organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Leaders must share their vision to accomplish their goals of providing inspiration and focus on the works of their organization (Berson, Da'as, & Waldman, 2015). Berson et al. (2015) explained that leaders could share the organization's vision by communicating and engaging operation employees in an innovative way that would assist them with understanding, remembering, and sharing the vision. When evidence of self-leadership and sharing leadership is prevalent in organizations, and a focus on processes of trust and commitment is clear, it may lead to the creation of innovative ideas and knowledge (Lucke, & Furtner, 2015). Leaders must help their followers believe that they make a difference by inspiring them to give of themselves as they realize their potential (Meister, Jehn, & Thatcher, 2014).

Although leaders should be directive in some cases, they should be open to changing the vision of their organization (Tillott, Walsh, & Moxham, 2013). Tillott et al. (2013) noted that successful leaders develop skills as they relate to change management, which allows them to engage members in sharing the change strategy. Shared vision can occur in an organization, but it requires commitment, collective discipline, and action to achieve the purposes or the organization (Hoch, 2013). The facilitation of a shared vision requires that everyone have knowledge of the organization and knowledge of people's capacity (Hoch, 2013).

Leaders who help to create a shared vision of what needs to take place in an organization, develops management and communication skills in their organization (Hoch, 2013). Developing a shared vision of the future takes a joint effort between the leader and its members to define a strategy that adapts best to the organization (Mader, Mader, Zimmermann, Gorsdorf-Lechevin, & Diethart, 2013). Leaders should also monitor the objective and performance within the organization, along with a select management model to play a role in strategic management (Mader et al., 2013).

Challenge the process. Transformational leaders take risks with implementing new approaches, embrace opportunities that are challenging, and test their skills and abilities (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). A leader's willingness to challenge the process leads to ideas transforming into new actions (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). This transformational process eventually becomes a natural habit or a way of life for leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). How leaders or managers implement change in their organizations may potentially hinder an organization's progress with customer service. Creating a learning environment that assists employees with change could be helpful (Smith, Barnes, & Harris, 2014). A learning environment that promotes change could place the organization in a competitive position (Smith et al., 2014).

Ashar, Ghafoor, Munir, and Hafeez (2013) suggested that suitable training for staff could enhance the productivity in organizations. Human resource management can give appropriate motivation to staff, through training, for the organization to achieve their desired results (Achakul & Yolles, 2013). The amount of time and money spent on employee training does matter, except in nonmanufacturing jobs (Achakul & Yolles, 2013).

Enable others to act. Transformational leaders strive to create a workplace that encompasses trust and dignity to encourage empowerment and capability among staff (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). When leaders enable action from others, they take the needs and interests of others into consideration, while encouraging them to feel a sense of responsibility and ownership (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Leaders who enable others to act allow them to realize their full potential (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

In a work environment, changes to organizational structure, increasing competition, and a rise in innovative technology are all reasons why leaders should take a strategic approach to complete a job analysis (Biggio & Cortese, 2013). Leaders often work in highly stressful environments; however, employees who focus on managing stress and alleviating stress through physical exercise may increase job control in the long term (Vishnupriya & Sakthipriya, 2013). Organizations that decide to add gym facilities with equipment, or provide discounts to gym memberships, may better retain employees (Payne, Jones, & Harris, 2013).

As nonprofit organizations face the challenge of maximizing resources, creativity in the workplace becomes especially important. Transformation efforts can change an organization's culture, leadership attitudes, and behaviors, and organizational relationships can bring about increased productivity (Shadraconis, 2013). An increase in productivity within the organization will produce a higher quality of service in organizational operations (Shadraconis, 2013).

Bagga (2013) and Jia, Shaw, Tsui, and Park (2014) found that the value of social networking in the workplace is undervalued. Undercommunicating the vision to employees can also create failure in organizations (Bagga, 2013). Necessary transformations are impossible unless everyone involved is willing to help and implement the changes in the organization (Tse, Huang, & Lam, 2013). Employees will not make sacrifices unless they believe that the change is possible and that it will benefit them personally (Tse et al., 2013).

Entrepreneurs' attitudes toward social responsibility can bring about social change within an organization (Servaes & Tamayo, 2013). For instance, more attention is on social responsibility and the environment. It can help the organization if companies choose to invest in their employees, not materials, equipment, or other items, in order to have a successful corporate social responsibility (Homburg, Stierl, & Bornemann, 2013). Leaders can identify staff that should be in a network to provide support for projects or information about the organization, resources, or corporate culture to assist organizations with their social environment. Leaders should introduce themselves to others in the organization, and to new hires, and remember to reciprocate by sharing relevant information with others in a network, which may increase staff productivity and motivation (Gilliard, Edwards, Gibson, Owen, & Wright, 2013).

Encourage the heart. Kouzes and Posner (2014) discussed seven identifiable elements that leaders should implement for encouraging the heart. Kouzes and Posner encouraged leaders to set clear standards, expect the best, pay attention, personalize recognition, tell the story, celebrate together, and set the example. Smitha (2013) believed that when staff members receive encouragement in the workplace, they tend to perform at a higher level, which causes staff to feel satisfaction from positive feedback. Thus, recognizing achievement may be a way to increase staff motivation in organizations (Muogbo, 2013).

Leaders who regularly communicate to their employees how valuable their work is to the organization can employee boost motivation when funds are too low to offer financial incentives (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). The objective is to help employees believe that what they are doing for the organization is important (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). Implementing techniques and providing suggestions to employees about how to make a greater impact in the organization is another way to boost motivation (Hills, 2014). Jyothsna et al. (2013) suggested communicating with staff about the expectations of the organization as a way to increase motivation. Organizations should have effective techniques for motivating staff to incorporate high levels of productivity and flexibility in times of recession (Jyothsna et al., 2013).

Rauch (2013) explained that teams should be forming and engaging when implementing staff motivation techniques. Rauch stated that some organizations have trouble getting the message of needed awareness of sustainability and good management across to all team members. Leaders in organizations facing this difficulty use various communication methods (e.g., electronic media) as a technique to share motivational tips with all team members on how to preserve sustainability in the workplace.

Human Resources Issues

In addition to transformational leadership practices, human resource issues may be significant in supporting Head Start leaders in retaining a highly qualified workforce (Achakul & Yolles, 2013). Organizations that understand research related to retention, motivation and job satisfaction, compensation, and leadership practices can have effective program leaders who maintain competent and qualified personnel.

Personnel retention. Leaders in organizations face challenges when developing strategies to retain qualified employees. Organizations have high demands for qualified personnel and an effective delivery of services, which leads to leaders to developing retention plans (Mgohamwende & Josephat, 2013). Idris (2014) suggested that increasing an employee's financial benefits is not a sustainable strategy in the long run. Leaders should implement working five flexible practices such as flextime, job sharing, flex leave, flex career, and flex place. However, Deo (2014) believed that fair compensation, in addition to empowering employees and providing thorough training with effective supervision, will reduce retention challenges. In addition, with increasing pressure for creativity and performance in the workplace, organizations will retain more employees if the leaders implement retention strategies, such as employee inclusion in decision-making and treating employees with respect (Ghosh, Satyawadi, Prasad Joshi, & Shadman, 2013). To implement such changes, Redick, Reyna, Schaffer, and Toomey (2014) suggested that organization leaders develop the model organization of choice in order to attract and retain their target market. According to Manpower Incorporated's survey on talent shortage, 30% of organizations have challenges finding and retaining qualified individuals to fill positions (Redick et al., 2014).

Ceylan (2013) insisted that an organization's image and the potential candidate's initial impressions of the organization affect the organization's ability to retain qualified staff. Once the ideal candidate is hired, leaders must keep him or her motivated and satisfied enough to stay. It is worthwhile for organizations to operate and promote an efficient and effective organization that encourages retention (Ceylan, 2013).

Employees are more likely to remain committed to their organization when they are involved in identifying factors for retention. Employees and leaders should focus on compensation, work environment, career advancement, effective relationships, and regular support (Arokiasamy, 2013). Once leaders of an organization identify reasons for turnover and the rate at which turnover occurs, then they will know how to meet current trends and demands to retain employees (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015).

Shore (2012) emphasized that retention yields an improved workplace culture and reduces stressors placed on employees. Sources that create stress in the workplace are insufficient pay, not being treated equally, an excessive amount of work, staff deficiency, absence of acknowledgment and advancement, a lack of employer stability, and supervisory support; all of these factors affect the mental health and behavior of employees (Cooper & Baglioni, 2013). Managers who take the time to understand the needs of their employees may be able to offer advice to reduce stressors and provide training for promotion and increase (Deery & Jago, 2015).

The culture of an organization directly relates to its performance. Individual standards of employees will determine productivity and retention rates (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). In order to have a lower retention rate, Vispute (2013) believed that leaders should have effective recruitment strategies to retain qualified employees. Successful staff retention will positively affect an organization. Although challenging, a detailed recruitment process will minimize training funds and time and reduce retention rates (Luscombe, Lewis, & Biggs, 2013).

Employee retention is imperative for guaranteed access to quality customer services. Leaders should play a part in retaining employees with an objective of guaranteeing superb and safe customer service (Rogoff, 2014). Some organizations use the concept of interior promoting, which means placing the employees first. Advertising internally is critical in the administration division where the best way to advance organization is through staff promotion (Bak, Vogt, George, & Greentree, 2013). Bak et al. (2013) believed that internal correspondence, being prepared, and being inspired leads to beneficial outcomes in employee retention.

Organizations should embrace practical retention patterns (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). For example, organizational building plans may include employees participating in the decisions of the organization, starting customized compensation, introducing components for career advancement, preparing and training for growth, and building adaptable work programs, particularly for employees in critical thinking positions (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). In addition, keeping an organization's best employees is one of the purposes of human resource departments within organizations (Brock & Buckley, 2013). Through the work, leaders and managers are the individuals who bring the greatest quality to the organization. As such, they guarantee the accomplishments of the organization by setting a competitive advantage (Brock & Buckley, 2013).

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is an administrative method in which a leader with a vision encourages others to act to share the vision (Garcia-Morales, Jimenez-Barrionuevo, & Gutierrez-Gutierrez, 2012). Organizations can face problems when high employee turnover occurs (Green, Miller, & Aarons, 2013).

Negative workplace relationships with employees and the employee's perception of negative treatment in the workplace can cause further organizational problems (Green et al., 2013).

Transformational leaders who think critically and take part in basic speculation are equipped for helping staff to adjust to hierarchical objectives (Adelman-Mullally et al., 2013). Management styles that are task-oriented and value-based leave little space for employee self-choice on noteworthy issues (Brown, Fraser, Wong, Muise, & Cummings, 2013). This style has the unintended results of lessening employee confidence and increasing turnover (Brown et al., 2013).

Brown et al. (2013) noted that improvements in leadership information have led leaders to use a transformational style. Using a transformational style, the leader creates a vision for the employees to model so that the employees can feel enabled to engage in important issues in the organization. Phillips (2013) believed that clarifying goals and establishing an organizational culture in an encouraging manner would lead to positive employee performance. Organizational cultures with strong leadership promote employee performance, motivation, adaptability, and retention (Carter & Greer, 2013).

While researchers have examined transformational leadership, it is not widely used. Some leaders are acquainted with the term, and a small number of organizations are creating transformational leaders; however, not many leaders know how to be a transformational leader (Neumann & Neumann, 2013). One of the difficulties with transformational leadership is that while researchers have identified the qualities expected to be a transformational leader, they have not clarified the abilities needed to change and transform organizations (Neumann & Neumann, 2013).

Ling (2013) suggested that human resource managers ought to train management personnel in creating transformational leadership performance. Because this type of performance adds to human capital creation and organizational leaders who use this style have a stronger advantage over competitors, training would be beneficial to the employee and the organization (Ling, 2013). Organizations that invest more in training and development to increase productivity will increase employee efficiency (Ling, 2013).

Motivation and job satisfaction. Graham and Weiner (2012) defined motivation as a desire or drive someone has inside him or her to achieve a goal, and the desire comes from an individual's choice, needs, perceptions, and values. Operational employees have needs that are both intrinsic and extrinsic (Din et al., 2011). Intrinsically motivated operational employees may undertake a task for its own sake and for the satisfaction it provides or the feeling of accomplishment. Operational employees who have extrinsic motivation may complete a task or duty to gain some type of reward, such as compensation (Din et al., 2011).

The highly competitive environment of nonprofit organizations has forced nonprofit organizations to change the ways in which they manage and operate. Nonprofit organizations are encouraged to operate as a private for-profit organization in terms of accountability and financial viability and effectiveness while pursuing their social goals (Wolf, 2012). Garbers and Konradt (2014) showed that most operational employees feel that their salaries do not reflect what they are worth. Some employees have a desire to upgrade their economic state but cannot, and they believe operational employees should receive incentives based on good results (Garbers & Konradt, 2014). Because the quality and worth of operational employees are determining factors in the quality of education, it is clear that teaching facilitates learning (Tran, 2013). Consequently, operational employees are central to the educational process (Tran, 2013).

Job crafting one-way practice may support operational employees' motivation and job satisfaction. According to Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2013), job crafting is an active role that individuals play in changing the boundaries of their jobs and shaping actual work practice. It is an employee-initiated, proactive behavior, rather than a management-initiated practice. This practice reflects employees' efforts to make their jobs a better fit to their preferences. Use of job crafting among childcare operational employees in center-based programs may directly affect classroom quality and organizational performance (Tims et al., 2013).

The outcomes of job crafting can benefit an organization by increasing efficiency and productivity because employees craft their jobs with the primary intention of reducing their workload or own efforts (Tims et al., 2013). The use of job crafting may be detrimental to organizations in some circumstances. For instance, if employees craft their job to meet their own needs, they may impair their workplace learning and workload coordination, thereby affecting the organization's performance and goals (Tims et al., 2013).

Serving children in educational settings is a stressful profession, and it is associable with significant levels of burnout that leads to turnover (Elder, Nidich, Moriarty, & Nidich, 2014). Bagga (2013) noted that educational settings consist of stressors such as work overload, role ambiguity, role pressures, inadequate resources, poor working conditions, a lack of professional support, a lack of effective communication, and challenging child behavior. These stressors lead to lower job satisfaction.

Measures of employee burnout are in relation to operational employees' motivation and job satisfaction, as well as subjective and objective health (Elder et al., 2014). Employee burnout is moderately relatable to operational employee self-efficacy, which allows influence over what they do, giving conception to self-organization, self-regulation, and self-reflection (Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012). Efficacy beliefs affect choice of activities, how much effort a person gives to activities, and how long an individual will persevere when facing obstacles (Pas et al., 2012).

Operational employees' attitude toward their work is measurable through their job performance, achievements, motivation, and job satisfaction (Allen & Shanock, 2013). To increase the performance of operational employees, enhance achievement and motivation, and to increase job satisfaction, some organizations increase their employee salaries each year, which ultimately improves job performance (Allen & Shanock, 2013). Motivating employees with performance-based bonuses and reward programs could increase the retention rate in organizations (Garbers & Konradt, 2014).

Compensation

School systems set employee salaries based on experience, education, and tenure in the position with continual evaluation and salary increases, regardless of quality and capability (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). Gupta and Shaw (2014) suggested that, to retain and motivate the highest quality of employees and have a compensation structure, leaders must implement effective employee compensation. In early childhood education, school administrators who raise employee qualifications without substantially increasing compensation means those operational employees will continue to work without adequate payment (French, 2010).

Becchetti, Castriota, and Tortia (2013) believed that nonprofit workers would earn significantly less than for-profit organizations because they tend to gain motivation and attraction toward the job they do, which transcends compensation. Operational employees in nonprofit organizations mandated to obtain bachelor's degrees without an increase in salary may do so if they receive job satisfaction through employee-employer relationships that remit total rewards that satisfy the employees (Terera & Ngirande, 2014). Some total rewards may include the provision of employer-provided benefits, achievement of selfless goals, and a flexible work schedule (Khan, Shahid, Nawab, & Wali, 2013). The implementation of total rewards could enable employees to act while leaders encourage the employee's hearts as Kouzes and Posner (2012) suggested leaders should do to be more effective.

Madera (2013) argued that effective management of diversity within organizations could create a competitive and strategic advantage. Leaders who manage organizations effectively will positively affect the bottom line of an organization (Madera, 2013). Ineffective workplace planning can create problems for recruiting and retaining new members (Lyon-Maris, Edwards, Scallan, & Locke, 2015). Restructuring positions within the organization to better reflect skills that members have and enhance flexibility and movement across service areas may encourage employees to remain with the organization (Lyon-Maris et al., 2015).

Formal planning where employees participate in setting organizational goals with characterized objectives affects strategies for rewards of job performance (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2014). The characterized objectives are reflective in merits and bonuses dependent upon individual or organization levels of success. Leaders' and managers' evaluations for reward strategies provide positive influences (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2014).

Leadership Practices

Assessing the daily practices of leadership has changed from the perception of leaders to followers viewing actual everyday tasks of leaders. The daily practices of leaders affect how leaders achieve positive outcomes (Endrissat, 2013). Carter, Armenakis, Feild, and Mossholder (2013) believed that a combination of employee practice and transformational leadership behaviors fosters employee knowledge. In addition, Carter et al. argued that leadership styles and success influences leaders based upon how followers are impacted.

Organizations that enable the professional development of their employees can determine their competitiveness by consumer awareness (Smith, Stokes, & Wilson, 2014). Employees must operate above means to reach organizational goals (Amin, Khairuzzaman, Zaleha, & Daverson, 2014). Amin et al. (2014) claimed that the approach to training and enhancing the competencies of employees should be constructive and deliberate. To encourage employees to work innovatively, leaders may need to adjust their manner in which they train or manage operations (Hoch & Dulebohn, 2013).

Leaders who offer training and development for technology for job enhancement so that employees can increase their knowledge skills and abilities can increase the bottom line and make employees happier (Hoch & Dulebohn, 2013). The employee's perception of how he or she receives treatment within their organization determines the impact of the organization services (Mohamed, 2013). For instance, employees who have the option of working in flexible cultures moving from one area to another, or taking a break within a time span, yield more job satisfaction and a better working relationship with leaders (Azanza, Moriano, & Molero, 2013).

Anitha (2014) suggested that employees who are more engaged in their job duties are more team-oriented. Strong employee-supervisor relationships affect the employee's performance as well as their performance appraisal (Cheng, Lu, Chang, & Johnstone, 2013). Bellamy (2013) found that employees who receive encouragement and motivation from their leaders had a significant increase in job performance as well as financial performance. Leaders who use psychological methods such as being optimistic and giving hope to their employees reverse low levels of performance and the quality of services to high levels (Bellamy, 2013).

Transition

In Section 1, I presented an introduction to the proposed qualitative study, including the background of the problem, a problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions guiding the study. The section featured the conceptual framework and definitions for key terms pertaining to the study. I reviewed strategies and techniques that organizations can use to increase staff productivity and motivation, and the need for the study and its significance for discussion on positive social change. The literature review section included motivational techniques, the physical and social environment of organizations, leadership and management competencies, leadership practices, and an historical overview and current findings. In Section 2, I will describe the research project, including my role as researcher, population, sampling, data collection with a survey instrument and personal interviews, data analysis, reliability and validity of the findings, and measures taken for the ethical protection of participants and cooperating Head Start Nonprofit Organizations. Section 3 will end with a summary and conclusion of the study.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore how leaders of Head Start nonprofit organizations retain operational employees who have bachelor's degrees. The target population for data collection included Alabama Head Start nonprofit organization leaders who have demonstrated success in retaining operational employees in their organization. The potential outcomes of the results from this study are three-fold: the results may be useful to leaders who endeavor to contribute positive social change in other service-oriented organizations, operational employees may remain working in the organization they prefer and enjoy a better life, and young children may receive optimal teaching and care-giving performance from these operational employees and be better prepared for school.

Role of the Researcher

Research requires a systematic approach that is instrumental to data collection and interpretation, which reduces bias and improves efficiency (Palinkas et al., 2013). Terwel, Daamen, and ter Mors (2013) noted that bias may occur due to the presence of "not-in-my-backyard" sentiments of the target population when using a within-subjects approach as compared to a between-subjects approach. I am aware of the topic of this study because I am a CEO/leader of a Head Start nonprofit organization with experience in the retention of operational employees. Inclusion of participants from the Head Start nonprofit organization with which I am affiliated may have created bias. This study took place in Alabama, the state in which I live, and did not occur at the Head Start nonprofit organization where I work.

Researchers who involve human subjects have to adhere to all ethical standards in accordance with the Belmont Report (Rabionet, 2011). Researchers who respect the recommendations included in the Belmont Report ensure the implementation of ethical principles, such as treating human subjects fairly and with respect, guaranteeing risks of harm are at a minimum, and ensuring that possible benefits are at a maximum (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pannuci & Wilkins, 2011; Rabionet, 2011). I adhered to the recommendations included in the Belmont Report to treat human subjects fairly and with respect, reduce risks of harm to a minimum, and increase the possible benefits to a maximum.

To mitigate bias and view data from a personal lens, a researcher must review information and avoid biased treatments, which are potentially harmful (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pannuci & Wilkins, 2011; Smith & Noble, 2014). Researchers must understand bias and its effects on the evidence of a study (Pannuci & Wilkins, 2011). Once a researcher understands bias and its effects, he or she needs to identify it to reduce it (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pannuci & Wilkins, 2011; Rabionet, 2011). Bias must be mitigated by a researcher by using a systematic approach (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rabionet, 2011; Terwel et al., 2013). To reduce response bias, I conducted research for this study in the state of Alabama where I live, and did not conduct research at the Head Start organization where I am employed. The wording of interview questions (Appendix B) are in such a way that did not influence the respondents' answers (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Pezalla et al., 2012; Rabionet, 2011). In addition, I used an interview protocol (Appendix C) to document information for each participant, and to guide the interview process to obtain details regarding the participants' practices as suggested by Jacob and Furgerson (2012), Pezalla et al. (2012), and Rabionet (2011).

In this study, I was the data collection instrument (Pezalla et al., 2012). An interview protocol (Appendix C) is a strategic way to obtain valuable data regarding a particular subject (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Pezalla et al., 2012; Rabionet, 2011). I showed respect for persons and acknowledge autonomy and protect those with diminished autonomy as suggested by Jacob and Furgerson (2012), Pezalla et al. (2012), and Rabionet (2011). I protected persons from harm and made efforts to secure their well-being. Further, justice guaranteed that persons received fair treatment, with all operational employees having had an equal opportunity to participate in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rabionet, 2011; O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014).

Participants

Participants may be from several organizations in a qualitative study (Erickson, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; Yin, 2013). I selected five participating Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama that met the federal mandate requiring 50% of the program's operational employees nationwide, within each organization, to obtain a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field by 2013 (Head Start Act, 2013; Head Start–Alabama Department of Children Affairs, 2013; Head Start Information, 2014). I needed to obtain permission to collect data from the chief executive at each site

(Erickson, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; Morgan, Ataie, Carder, & Hoffman, 2013). Once receipt of permission occurs, the leader of the organization received an invitation to participate in the study (Erickson, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; Morgan, Ataie, Carder, & Hoffman, 2013). I invited this individual via e-mail and followed up by sending the informed consent agreement by e-mail.

Small samples in a qualitative study will increase the credibility of results when seeking to obtain thematic and lived experiences (Palinkas et al., 2013; Rabionet, 2011; O'Brien et al., 2014). The population for this study included leaders from Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama (Head Start Act, 2013; Head Start–Alabama Department of Children Affairs, 2013; Head Start Information, 2014). To accomplish the mission of this study, the Head Start state lead representative in Alabama identified five Head Start nonprofit organizations who work to exceed the educational requirements for operational employees, as well as Head Start nonprofit organizations that are committed to meeting the requirements. I identified the chief executive (leader) from the five Head Start nonprofit organizations as the potential participant.

It is important to recruit an adequate sample size of one leader from each organization to participate (Dworkin, 2012; O'Brien et al., 2014; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). I provided information about the study to the leader at each participating Head Start nonprofit organization. I chose the leaders who returned completed consent documents by mail or e-mail as participants.

Participants responded via mail or e-mail of their intent to participate in this study (Bella, 2014; O'Brien et al., 2014; Yin, 2013). Interviews occurred at their Head Start nonprofit organization or an off-site location where the leader felt comfortable talking candidly. If face-to-face interviews were not possible, I conducted interviews through Facetime, or telephone. Verbal consent of each participant underwent proper receipt and recording. To guarantee confidentiality, personal information that identifies the participants will remain private. Ethical clearance required approval from Walden University. Content analysis in research can be employable to analyze data collection (Bella, 2014; O'Brien et al., 2014; Yin, 2013).

I conducted interviews via Facetime, or telephone if I was not able to travel to Head Start nonprofit organizations throughout the state of Alabama. I recorded the interview to document the discussion with each participant (Al-Yateem, 2012; Bella, 2014; Yin, 2013). As recommended, I transcribed these recordings verbatim (Al-Yateem, 2012; Bella, 2014; Yin, 2013).

Erickson (2012); Hays and Wood (2011); and Morgan, Ataie, Carder, and Hoffman (2013) suggested establishing a working relationship with the participants. Erickson; Hays and Wood; and Morgan et al. claimed that a working relationship with participants will lead to the development of trust for fluid interaction and ethical measures. In a study, ethical measures must ensure respect and integrity with regard to the participants (Thiel et al., 2012). Participants received written assurance that their responses throughout the study are confidential (Dworkin, 2012; Thiel et al., 2012; O'Brien et al., 2014). Participating Head Start nonprofit organizations had a number for reference; I referred to Head Start nonprofit organizations as P1 for the first program, P2 for the second program, P3 for the third program, P4 for the fourth program, and P5 for the fifth program. Participants had descriptive terms by position aligned with the overarching research question, and a number reference that coincided with the program. For example, CEOs/Program Directors are termed *leader*.

The implementation of a data retention plan will guarantee that information such as recordings of interviews and notes are private (Al-Yateem, 2012; Bella, 2014; Yin, 2013). I audio recorded the interviews and saved them to a recorder tape in a locked cabinet at my home. A storage container that locks can house any paper documentation/recordings in my home (Al-Yateem, 2012; Bella, 2014; Yin, 2013). The Walden University IRB process provided assurance of meeting ethical standards prior to conducting research. No collection of data took place until the university IRB issued the approval number.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The research method for this study was qualitative. Qualitative studies include text and verbal data such as open-ended questions via interviews and documents, and they include a philosophical approach to inquiry (Hays & Wood, 2011; O'Brien et al., 2014; Yin, 2013). In contrast, quantitative scholars explore the relationship between variables and use surveys and experiments to interpret data from a numerical approach (Erickson, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; Hoare & Hoe, 2013), which was not the intent of this study. Other methods underwent review and consideration. Both quantitative and mixed methods involve numerical data, which does not serve the intent of this study, as I described a situation (Frambach, van der Vleuten, & Durning 2013; Hoare & Hoe, 2013; Mertens, 2014).

Research Design

Researchers use case studies to explore processes or individuals and collect detailed information using a variety of data collection approaches (Hays & Wood, 2011; Lokke & Sorensen, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013). For this research, the purpose of the study included the recruitment and retention of Head Start operational employees who hold bachelor's degrees. Each participating organization included in a study shall be under examination as an individual case. I compared the cases to identify consistencies and inconsistencies in approach as suggested by Mohamed (2013), Ritchie et al. (2013), and Yin (2013). Mohamed and Yin stated that a multiple case study provides answers to how and why questions, and Ritchie et al. claimed that case studies in social science research includes psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education. Yin further explained that a multiple case study accommodates situations that researchers face when there is minimal control over the event, and the study requires a focus on phenomena that occurs in a real-life context.

A narrative study was not appropriate because the focus was not on individual experiences (Adelman-Mullally et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller, & Wilderom, 2013). Phenomenological research involves the lived experiences of elements and themes (Khan, 2014; Wolfswinkel et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016); therefore, it was not suitable for this study because I focused on a problem within a system, namely Head Start. Grounded theorists generally identify the underlying theory of practices (Adelman-Mullally et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Wolfswinkel et al., 2013), which did not align with this study as I identified best practices for recruiting and retaining operational employees. Ethnography was not a selected design for this study because it allows researchers to immerse themselves in a culture to gain an understanding of human interactions (Jenkins, 2011; Lewis, 2015; Suwankhong & Liamputtong, 2013).

A multiple case study provides a method for studying a system and testing a theory (Lokke & Sorensen, 2014; Mohamed, 2013; Ritchie et al., 2013). Samnani and Singh (2013), Lokke and Sorensen (2014), and Yin (2013) noted that researchers who use a case study must use caution and not accept explanations that may normalize something that initially happens unexpectedly. A case study does not involve observations; instead, researchers should adopt the approach of a historian and be able to convert descriptive explanations of specific results to analytical explanations (Mertens, 2014; Samnani & Singh, 2013; Yin, 2013). Yin suggested that a case study design is appropriate when the research will focus on *how* and *why* questions and when there is no need to control behavioral events.

Most qualitative sample sizes receive determination by saturation, including factors regarding the pace to achieve in a qualitative study (Dworkin, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; O'Brien et al., 2014). In qualitative studies, a small sample size of five participants may represent a research population to ensure data saturation, and limit repetitive data (Dworkin, 2012; Hunt, 2011; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). I used a sample size of five participants from five Head Start organizations in Alabama, which was adequate to achieve data saturation for this study.

Population and Sampling

I used purposive sampling by reaching potential participants with relevant experience (Erickson, 2012). Scholars who use purposive sampling will reach relevant participants (Dworkin, 2012; Erickson, 2012; O'Brien et al., 2014). The selection included leaders from Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama, particularly one leader from each of five Head Start nonprofit organizations. I used interview questions to obtain the valuable research information from participants as suggested by Jacob and Furgerson (2012); Pezalla et al. (2012); and Rabionet (2011).

Regardless of the size of the organization and the number of leaders, for this study, only one person in a leadership role from each program participated. Once organization leaders agreed to involve their programs, I asked that person to either participate or identify another leader to participate. Leaders who identify another leader within their organization were using the snowballing technique (Biggio & Cortese, 2013; Mertens, 2014; Shekhar Singh, 2014).

The population for this study included Head Start nonprofit organizations in the United States (Administration for Children and Families, 2013; Head Start Information, 2014; Head Start Act, 2013). In Alabama where this study took place, the Office of Head Start Corporation, also called the ACF (2013), oversees Head Start and other federally funded programs for families and communities that focus on providing economic and social welfare support. The Office of Head Start Corporation is an entity that offers federal grant opportunities to local public and private nonprofit and for-profit agencies that provide comprehensive services to low-income, preschool-aged children and their families, with a focus on school readiness knowledge and skills (Head Start Information, 2014). Head Start has a federal to local program structure (ACF, 2013; Head Start Act, 2013; Head Start Information, 2014).

The structure of each local Head Start nonprofit organizations varies, but has similarities related to this study (ACF, 2013; Head Start Act, 2013; Head Start Information, 2014). Each organization has a leader (CEO/Program Director) who oversees all components/services areas and the day-to-day operations of the entire program. Some Community Action Agency Head Start grant holders may have CEOs as leaders. Leaders of local Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama are identifiable as CEOs, and/or Program Directors (Head Start Act, 2013; Head Start-Alabama Department of Children Affairs, 2013; Head Start Information, 2014).

A multiple case study includes a sample from a chosen organization (Lokke & Sorensen, 2014; Mohamed, 2013; Yin, 2013). Five programs chosen from the 29 Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama were in this study. To receive an invitation to participate, the Head Start nonprofit organization had to be in compliance with the federal mandate requiring at least half of the operational employees to have a bachelor's degree. I identified potential programs through the statewide Head Start organization (Head Start Act, 2013; Head Start-Alabama Department of Children Affairs, 2013; Head Start Information, 2014). Participants consisted of leadership personnel, as well as operational employees, from the selected Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama.

The number of leaders in each organization may vary based on the size of the organization (Dworkin, 2012; Gillard, Edwards, Gibson, Owen, & Wright, 2013; Samnani & Singh, 2013). Large organizations (with 100 or more employees) may have a CEO/Program Director (leader) with one additional leader. Small organizations (70 or fewer employees) may have one CEO/Program Director.

Scholars use data saturation to set criterion to prove the quality of qualitative research. Researchers should justify data saturation to ensure the transparency and credibility of the qualitative research (Frambach et al., 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; O'Brien et al., 2014). Researchers achieve data saturation when no emergence of new data occurs and there is ample information for a replicable study (Dworkin, 2012; O'Brien et al., 2014). In a qualitative study, a sample size that includes a minimum of five participants will help achieve saturation (Dworkin, 2012; Hunt, 2011; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). I interviewed five participants to ensure that enough data were available to analyze for saturation.

To ensure data saturation, Biggio and Cortese (2013), Mertens (2014), and Shekhar Singh (2014) suggested that alternate participants should be identifiable if original participants decide to withdraw from the study. I selected the first respondents to be in the study and I told the other respondents that their names were on a list of alternate participants in the event that the original participant withdraws from the study. I asked the organization's leader to provide information about the study to all other leaders in the organization. Any other leader interested in participating were to contact me directly via e-mail or telephone. I wrote a number on each response as it came to me, providing a record of the chronological order in which responses arrived. If an alternate participant is needed, researchers should contact the third person who responded, and if necessary, the fourth person, and so on (Mertens, 2014; Samnani & Singh, 2013; Yin, 2013).

Ethical Research

Adhering to ethical practices and acquiring consent from each participant prior to participation in the study is important, and it requires researchers to engage with the participants in a responsible manner (Morgan, Ataie, Carder, & Hoffman, 2013). I used the results of this qualitative study to explore how leaders of Head Start nonprofit organizations retain operational employees with bachelor's degrees, even when those operational employees could work elsewhere for greater pay. After initially agreeing to participate (verbally or via e-mail), each participant received the consent form (Appendix A) via e-mail to review prior to consenting to participate. Participants with questions or requesting clarification regarding the consent form or the interview received a response from me within 24 hours. Participants signed the consent form either physically or electronically and return it to me by mail or e-mail.

Participants had to be willing to participate; all participants had rights in the research process (Mohamed, 2013; Thiel et al., 2012). I informed participants how to obtain any additional information and to report any unforeseen circumstances that may occur that require them to withdraw from the study. Participants were aware of their right to withdraw from this study during the interview and that there were no consequences for withdrawal. Participants received no material or monetary incentives for participation in the study. Participants received a thank you e-mail in appreciation of their willingness to participate in this study.

Upon receipt of the signed consent forms from participants, I saved all forms in an electronic mail folder with the title Research Consent Forms. I used security measures to protect the rights and confidentiality of individuals who participated in this study. All research consent forms will remain in a secure, password-protected electronic mail box and on a secured digital source such as a CD, flash drive, or hard drive in a clear storage lock box in my home for at least 5 years. After the 5-year period ends, I will delete the study files from all flash or hard drives, and I will destroy any CDs.

Information that identifies programs or participants should not appear in a study (Lokke & Sorensen, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013; Thiel et al., 2012). Instead, programs and participants will be identifiable by an alphanumeric designation, such as P1 for first program, P2 for the second program, and so on. Participants will also be identifiable by codes. For example, leader participants' identification will be L1 for the leader in the first program, L2 for the leader in Program 2, and so on. The Walden IRB approval number is 08-11-16-0187840.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary data collection method for this proposed research included semistructured interviews, as suggested by Brinkmann (2013), Thiel et al. (2012), and Deery and Jago (2015). Transformational leadership theory was the foundation for the development of the research protocol. This interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions. Use of open-ended questions provided consistent data, as suggested by

Fielding, Fielding, and Hughes (2013), Pagaporn, Bret, Tanasukarn, and Vatanasomboon (2012), and Deery and Jago. I used semistructured interview techniques to create an overall picture of how leaders in Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama practice the retention of operational employees. The participants included leaders of Head Start nonprofit organizations.

I contacted each participant by phone or e-mail to set up a date and time for interview administration. I preferred to administer the semistructured interview techniques in-person; however, participants who were unable to meet in person had the opportunity to participate in the interview process face-to-face using Skype, FaceTime, or telephone. I recorded all interviews using voice recording. Participants gave me permission to record interviews via voice recording prior to the start of each interview. The recording of interviews is critical to qualitative research because researchers can then transcribe and review the interview data after the collection of data (Dworkin, 2012; Rabionet; 2011; Thiel et al., 2012).

Data collection took place using an interview protocol. I used an interview protocol to guide the data collection process in order to obtain details regarding the participants' practices (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Pezalla et al., 2012; Rabionet, 2011). The interview protocol is in Appendix C. At the time of interview, I followed the interview protocol to allow the participant the opportunity to answer clearly. If it was necessary to clarify participant responses, I asked follow-up questions. The research protocol changed as pertinent questions and information becomes available during interviews.

I used member checking and triangulation to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument and interview process. Scholars use member checking to increase the validity and transferability of the research techniques. Member checking may include verification of participants in order to achieve internal and external validity (Koelsch, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). During the enrollment process, participants reported the highest level of education received. I used documents from the human resources department to verify this information. During the interview process, I took notes of the gist of the answers given. At the conclusion of each question, I asked the participant if each answer accurately reflected what the participant meant. In order to increase the credibility and reliability of the research, I used techniques and data collection instruments and methodological triangulation of data sources (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Gorissen, van Bruggen, & Jochems, 2013; Heale & Forbes 2013). Triangulation included the use of findings from the review of documents obtained from the human resources department and findings from the interviews. Triangulation also included comparison of findings from each organization.

Data Collection Technique

A semistructured interview technique was the primary data collection method. I preferred to perform the interviews in person. However, if in-person interviews were not possible, I conducted interviews face-to-face using Skype, Facetime, or telephone (Dworkin, 2012; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Rabionet, 2011). The process included in semistructured interviewing consists of an opening, interview questions, and closing. I began the interview with an opening to explain the purpose of the research project and to build rapport. Receipt of permission from participants to record interviews occurred prior to interviews (Dworkin, 2012; Rabionet; 2011; Thiel et al., 2012). I interviewed five participants.

During the opening, I established introductory rapport with each participant to promote his or her encouragement and willingness to participate in the study. After establishing rapport, the interview began with open-ended questions (Biggio & Cortese, 2013; Hays & Wood, 2011; Mertens, 2014). The interview protocol included five questions to for leader participants to answer. These interviews were private. The interview ended with a closing to thank each participant, and at that time, I gave my contact information for any future questions or concerns. I collected data over a specific time frame of 3 weeks. I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed the interviews.

There are several advantages and disadvantages associated with the qualitative methods of data collection and analysis in this research project. Collecting qualitative interview data allows for depth of information and allows participants to offer information relevant to the researcher's topic (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Dworkin, 2012; Mertens, 2014). Scholars use interviews to gather data from the participants' perspective and to unveil new data (Biggio & Cortese, 2013; Hays & Wood, 2011; Mertens, 2014). Information regarding leadership techniques as they relate to the recent changes in Head Start requirements are absent from current research. I collected in-depth information via semistructured interview techniques. Other advantages included the use of member checking and methodological triangulation. During the interview process, interviewers check participant responses to ensure accuracy. I used documents provided by the human resources department to validate the findings of the interview.

Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012), Koelsch (2013), and Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated that the process of collecting qualitative data via interviews has two disadvantages: the requirement of intricate detailing and the actual interviews may be time consuming. Because interviews are time consuming, the human resources department was responsible for providing accurate and complete documents. I planned the format of interviews to alleviate errors that may occur with the collection of data (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Dworkin, 2012; Mertens, 2014). Prior to each interview, I ensured that the voice recorder was functioning properly.

Walden University IRB granted me permission to perform this research project prior to conducting data collection (O'Brien et al., 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2013). Upon approval from Walden University, I used purposive sampling and selection criteria in order to reach data saturation, as suggested by Suen, Huang, and Lee (2014). Interviews included open-ended questions (Appendix B) for participants to answer.

I used member checking to ensure that accurate information is collected. I conducted member checking by asking participants to verify the documentation of the answers to each question for accuracy (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Koelsch, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I conducted methodological triangulation by comparing documents from the human resources department with findings from the interview (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Heale & Forbes 2013; Gorissen, van Bruggen, & Jochems, 2013).

Data Organization Technique

The interview questions served as the basis for the interviews (Dworkin, 2012; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Rabionet, 2011). Researchers should reinforce the confidentiality expectations during the introductory rapport process and assure the participants the protection of their confidentiality (Hays & Wood, 2011; Thiel et al., 2012; Yin, 2013). As interviews were completed, I verified and sorted the interview responses into categories of leader and program (O'Reilly & Parlor, 2012; Pezalla et al., 2012; Rabionet, 2011).

Each of the five Head Start nonprofit organizations received the code P meaning program. I provided each leader with the code L meaning leader. Transcriptions of participant data were verbatim with the exception of any data that breaches confidentiality. I removed any conversation that is not relevant to the study (Dworkin, 2012; Pezalla et al., 2012; Rabionet, 2011). All research data will remain in a secure clear storage lock box in my home for at least 5 years (Lokke & Sorensen, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013; Thiel et al., 2012).

Data Analysis

The goal of data analysis is to identify and compare the various deployments and implementation of retention strategies and the actions taken by leaders to support these strategies (Bella, 2014; Hunt, 2011; Deery and Jago 2015). At the conclusion of interviews, after transcribing the interview and subsequent notes, I began the analysis process. As suggested by authors, I consolidated interview data into MS Word tables, which provided the foundation for the analysis (O'Brien et al., 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2013).

This research project included the use of inductive analysis to analyze data (Bella, 2014; Lokke & Sorensen, 2014; Smith, 2011). The use of inductive analysis consists of identifying words, phrases, ideas, and actions consistent among participants and organizations in order to identify patterns and themes (O'Brien et al., 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2013). In using inductive analysis, I used a line-by-line approach to review data and identify domains within them relating to semantic relationships (O'Brien et al., 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2013). I used a set of words, phrases, and/or ideas to establish categories. I defined each category and data in transcriptions, and the notes were categorized (O'Brien et al., 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2013).

Bella (2014) stated that the inductive method for interpretive data analysis is instrumental to all protocol. Each case underwent analysis and synthesis separately as if it were a single case. The data from individual cases underwent aggregation and had consideration as a whole to determine how the categories serve to answer the research questions (Mohamed, 2013; Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2013). Each organization underwent analysis and synthesis as a group. Finally, I used a philosophical approach to review data from interviews and documents pertinent to the research questions to ensure methodological triangulation (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Heale & Forbes 2013; Wilson, 2014).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability in qualitative research is the consistency in which researchers handle research data with the surety of replicating a prior study and yielding similar results (Yin, 2013). Validity depends upon a researcher's experience and trustworthiness (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The following trustworthiness factors within reliability and validity need consideration in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Li, Lee, Chen, Jeng, & Chen, Y-C, 2014).

Dependability

In order for the results to be valid in qualitative research, the assessment and measurement used in the data collection must be consistent and dependable (Anney, 2014). To ensure the dependability and replicability of the findings, researchers can document details of research procedures in a sequential manner (Byrman & Bell, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2014). The procedures for selection and participation in this study are identifiable through sequential documentation to ensure dependability (Byrman & Bell, 2015; Frambach et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2014).

Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012); Koelsch (2013); and Marshall and Rossman (2011) noted that member checking allows participants to review a summary of their interview report. Participants review the summary of their interview report to confirm the accuracy of data interpretation (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Koelsch, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To improve dependability, peers or advisors should review the interview to ensure that the data interpretation and the analysis of the method is honest (Byrman & Bell, 2015; Frambach et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2014).

Credibility

Usage of sequential data ensured the trustworthiness of the research and reflects credibility; implementing reliability ensured consistency in measuring the results (Hunt, 2011; Pagaporn et al., 2012; Ritchie et al., 2013). When researchers provide a detailed description of their experiences, a researcher achieves credibility (O'Brien et al., 2014). A suitable rigor in research leads to reliability and credibility in the study (Hunt, 2011; Ritchie et al., 2013).

A strategy to improve the credibility of qualitative data includes member checking, which was a part of this research, to allow participants to clarify data during the interviews (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2013). Some strategies included enhancing credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative data and outcomes through the triangulation of data sources (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2013). Strategies for member checking included verifying responses with participants. Strategies for triangulation include a researcher's transcripts and review of organization documents of the documents (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2013).

Transferability

Bryman and Bell (2015), Erickson (2012), and Hays and Wood (2011) suggested that internal validity occurs when researchers determine if data are transferable and comparable among participants with documentation verifying results for accuracy. Sampling sufficiency should provide the maximum prospect for the transferability of the findings (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012) and data saturation. Li et al. (2014) suggested that transferability is obtainable through the selection of participants by using inclusion and exclusion measures. The use of purposive sampling and verification of the inclusion criteria of level of education will ensure that participants are similar and share similar experiences. Comparing the results of this qualitative study to the findings of those in similar cases may lend transferability to how leaders approach the retention of operational employees with bachelor's degrees (Lokke & Sorensen, 2014; O'Brien et al., 2014; Yin, 2013). Data analysis for this research included comparing findings across organizations.

Confirmability

Researchers use confirmability to determine that data are confirmable by someone other than the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Validity, a decisive factor in research, is in relation to the truthfulness and confirmability of the results (Bryman & Bell, 2015). I conducted a detailed examination of the data to ensure confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Erickson, 2012; Frambach et al., 2013). I used member checking to verify the accuracy of findings and inductive analysis to identify themes among individual participants, organizations, and all participants to ensure confirmability (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2013).

Data Saturation

Data saturation is a vital aspect of the quality of qualitative research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Dworkin (2012), O'Reilly and Parker (2012), and O'Brien et al. (2014) suggested that researchers achieve data saturation when no emergence of new data occurs and there is ample information for a replicable study. In this study, I used purposive sampling, inclusion criteria, and exclusion criteria to ensure an ample selection of similar participants and data saturation occurs. Scholars use purposive sampling techniques to ensure transparency, credibility, reliability, and validity of qualitative research (Frambach et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2014; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012).

Transition and Summary

This qualitative multiple case study included an analysis of leadership practices that support the recruitment and retention of staff at nonprofit Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how leaders of Head Start nonprofit organizations retain operational employees who have bachelor's degrees. Section 2 was an outline of the methodology, design, and analysis that I used for this study. I discussed the case study methodology in terms of the research questions, and I justified the approach for studying the bounded system of Head Start nonprofit organizations. I will present the results in Section 3, and I will offer recommendations for action and further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective strategies that successful leaders of Head Start Nonprofit Organizations use to retain operational employees. Very few scholars have conducted thorough research on retaining operational employees in Head Start nonprofit organizations. This study was focused on CEOs/Directors that provide Head Start services in the state of Alabama. I collected data using telephone interviews with five leaders from various Head Start organizations in Alabama. As a secondary data source, I reviewed HR documents correlated with data obtained from the interviews, such as the highest level of credentials for the leader, policy for degree requirement for operational employees, and number of operational employees and their highest level of education. I analyzed all the data and identified five themes. The main themes were (a) incentives, (b) continuous training, (c) educational support, (d) job benefits, and (e) retention.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study is the following:

What effective strategies can Head Start leaders use to retain operational employees in Alabama?

Findings were inclusive of the following five retention themes: (a) incentives, (b) continuous training, (c) educational support, (d) job benefits, and (e) retention. I used a number reference for each of the participating Head Start nonprofit organizations; I referred to Head Start nonprofit organizations as P1 for the first program, P2 for the second program, P3 for the third program, P4 for the fourth program, and P5 for the fifth program. Participants had a descriptive term by position, and a number reference that coincided with the program. For example, CEOs/Program Directors are termed *leader*, and the CEO/Program Director for P1 is referenced L1.

The primary data collection method for this proposed research included semistructured interviews. I used an interview protocol (Appendix C) to guide the data collection process to obtain details regarding the participants' practices as suggested by Jacob and Furgerson (2012); Pezalla et al. (2012); and Rabionet (2011). I used member checking and triangulation to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument and interview process.

After I collected the data, I consolidated the interview data into MS Word tables, which provided the foundation for the analysis (Ritchie et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2014; Yin, 2013). I used inductive analysis to analyze data. The use of inductive analysis consists of identifying words, phrases, ideas, and actions consistent among participants and organizations in order to identify patterns and themes (Ritchie et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2014; Yin, 2013). In using inductive analysis, I used a line-by-line approach to review data and identify domains relating to semantic relationships. I used a set of words, phrases, and/or ideas to establish categories. I defined each category and data in transcriptions, and the notes were categorized (Ritchie et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2014; Yin, 2013). Thereafter, I reviewed human resource documents that included the highest level of credentials for the leader, the policy for degree requirement for operational employees, and the number of operational employees and their highest level of education (P3, P4).

Kouzes and Posner's (2012) transformational leadership theory provided the conceptual framework for this study. Kouzes and Posner discussed five practices that are transformational in style and key for leaders to be successful. The five practices include (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). I reviewed the findings in comparison with the framework. The participants' responses supported Kouzes and Posner's transformational leadership theories. Table 1 includes the frequency of all five themes, and the percentage rate of occurrence for each theme that aligns with the framework.

Table 1

Frequency of Themes

Themes	*n* (*n*=22)	% of rate of occurrence
Incentives	3	13.6%
Continuous Training	7	31.8%
Educational Support	4	18.1%
Job Benefits	3	13.6%
Retention	5	22.7%

Note: *n*=frequency

Theme 1: Incentives

The common theme was that incentives were important throughout the year. Leaders engaged in certain behaviors and implemented activities to influence retention. CEOs/Program Directors should endeavor to provide incentives to employees who were producing at a high level (Smeby & Heggen, 2014). Offering bonuses to employees are not always affordable to all the organizations. L1 indicated she encouraged employees through incentives by giving tokens of appreciation throughout the year. Another way L2 rewards employees was to make assertive efforts to spend time with employees and to give positive interaction and reinforcement. Leaders who complimented employees on their work empowered employees to do a good job (Castelli, 2016; Ji-Eun, 2012).

L2 rewards employees by making assertive efforts to spend time with employees and to give positive interaction and reinforcement. L4 suggested that spending time with their operational employees begins during the hiring process, and they should be very open with expectations in the hiring process. L4 believes he should help employees understand they have to be flexible and hold themselves to the same standard as other employees. Based on previous research (Khan, Shahid, Nawab, & Wali, 2013), a total reward may include the provision of a flexible work schedule to allow supervisors to spend time with as many employees as possible. Moreover, L1 discussed having an open-door policy for employees to discuss their concerns, with an established chain of command, where employees who have a grievance can pursue relief through follow-up with the CEO and board if necessary. An open-door policy offers transparency in the workplace and minimizes conflict between leaders and employees (Jordaan & De Wulf, 2016; Mountford, 2013).

L2 complimented employees' work to boost morale and efforts of operational employees. This strategy supports Kouzes and Posner's (2012) transformational leadership theory, *encourage the heart*. Encourage the heart occurs when leaders share passions and stories of their own experiences with people, which inspires others to want to exude their own passion when working on tasks.

When weaknesses were found, L2 provided coaching as an incentive to their operational employees. All research participants indicated that they provided continuous training to assist employees to gain confidence and become comfortable in their work environment. L3 claimed he helped employees feel they are a part of a team by exposing them to orientation activities for about 3 weeks at the start of the job. All participants opined that the initiation of a mentorship program would help to establish a strong coordinator-to-employee relationship training. Mentorship programs exposes employees to broader issues and accelerates their growth (Bergelson, 2014; Chang, & Busser, 2017). All employees received similar training and a co-teacher was available to assist.

Theme 2: Encouragement of Continuous Training

Leaders provided their strategies for encouraging their teachers to pursue additional training without the prospect of increases in salary for having acquired additional qualification. L1, L3, and L5 openly discussed with employees their concerns of wanting to move up or forward in the agency. L1, L3, and L5 encouraged a healthy exchange of ideas as they explored avenues for professional development and growth. L2 strived to create a training environment for their employees that was conducive to expressing thoughts, thereby enhancing creative thinking skills. Leadership processes that include promoting employee creativity produces positive outcomes (Mittal & Dhar, 2016; Rego, Sousa, Marques, & e Cunha, 2014).

Organization documents (P3, P4) included requirements for degrees as well as training. Employee were required to attend pre-service and in-service training to gain additional knowledge, as well as programmatic updates and expectations. According to previous research, high qualifications are signals to administrators that operational employees have invested time in training (Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013).

L5 believed Head Start leaders should hire only teachers with a child development degree, and not necessarily those who have a teacher certification because the program tends to lose those with teacher certification because salaries and benefits of the public schools make it difficult to retain teachers and L5 would have difficulty competing. L1 and L5 have been fortunate because there are two colleges in the area that train graduates with child development degrees. Training provided by the two colleges has helped L1 and L5 in their ability to recruit.

According to L3, his organization continues to strive and grow because the employees appreciate the opportunity to have input with the organization's overall strategic plan. Additional ideas provided by employees could make the system better and the employees would more likely be supportive if they feel that they have contributed something to the program (Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013). L5's operational employees have opportunity to raise questions at regular staff meetings and offer suggestions to address prevailing issues. L5 mentioned supervisors listen to the operational employees and incorporate their ideas in the decision-making process. The results of continuous training and receiving employee input inspires employees to share the organizations vision for effective implementation of services (Menguc et al., 2013; Negri et al., 2016; Rego et al., 2014).

Documents from P3 and P4 indicated that L3 and L4 held bachelor's degrees, and as leaders, were required to attend pre-service and in-service training for enhanced professional development. This strategy supports the framework for Kouzes and Posner's (2012) transformational leadership theory *model the way*. Model the way refers to leaders being consistent with what they do in a way that encourages others to mimic their behaviors, while leading in front of people.

Theme 3: Educational Support

I asked leaders to report on how they provided support to operational employees to pursue higher degrees. L1 and L5 indicated that they partnered with universities and colleges in their surrounding area to enable employees to attend classes. According to this arrangement, the organization would pay for tuition, so that employees would not be stressed about how they will pay for schooling. Cascio and Schanzenbach (2013), and Laverty (2016) believed that an increase in educational training will require support for employees. With this type of arrangement, L2 encourages employees to seek additional degrees in education to improve themselves and the quality of services provided by the organization, with L2's motto in mind, "moving from good to great". This is particularly meaningful because in order to go to the next level of academic achievement, new knowledge and new credentials would be essential (Harris, Ingle, & Rutledge, 2014). With this incentive for academic development, most teachers are now enrolling in programs leading towards the master's degree level.

A review of HR documents indicated 100% of operational employees at P3 and P4 obtained a minimum of a bachelor's degree in their field of work. Some operational employees at P3 and P4 obtained a Master's degree. L1, L2, and L5 mentioned that all of their operational employees had obtained a minimum of a bachelor's degree, even though there is a high turnover. To have operational employees who are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree to be employed, Kouzes and Posner's transformational leadership theory suggests that employers should *enable others to* act. Enabling others to act is a way leaders can help people feel capable of putting ideas and plans into action. Moreover, P3 employees are exposed to professional development from institutions of higher education (IHEs) in the surrounding area related to their degree. There are some employees at P4 who do not take advantage of the opportunity because they qualify for Pell grants, and employees who receive financial assistance from P5 must sign a contract that they must work a minimum of 3 years after obtaining their degree.

To facilitate employee education participation, the Head Start leaders are making concessions. Operational employees who are working on their degree are allowed to attend classes using paid administrative leave, as long as classes are not more than 3 or 4 days in a semester (P5). L5 allows some employees to leave early during their planning time at the end of the day if they have to take an early evening class. Offering flexible work practices for enhanced professional development can significantly improve employee's organizational commitment (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013; Koivisto & Rice, 2016). Employees at P5 are also encouraged through a one-step raise for higher education. The raise amounts to 5% of their current salary. The educational support findings affirm research that assisting operational employees with educational fees and providing a small raise when complete helps programs to that the lead in modeling the way for employees to remain committed while helping the organization to be successful (Harris, Ingle, & Rutledge, 2014; Saifulina, Carballo, & Penela, 2016).

Theme 4: Job Benefit

Leaders provided the strategies they use to inspire the shared vision of the program to retain operational employees. Proactive strategies used by leaders in the workplace can provide inspiration and knowledge to employees for increased outcomes (Aarons, Ehrhart, & Farahnak, 2014). Kouzes and Posner's (2012) transformational leadership theory *inspire a shared* vision, encourages leaders to motivate people by using their creativity and ideas with effective communication.

Offering bonuses to employees are not always affordable to all the organizations. L4 offered pensions and low copays, summers off, flexibility, no weekends/nights, and two employees in the classroom as job benefits. L5 informs the employees that the program does not have the best benefits plan, but does have health insurance, which P5 pays 60%, and a 401K that P5 matches as part of the salary. However, L1 encourages employees to participate in community service activities, helping to uplift the community, particularly for the benefit of helping to make a difference in the lives of children and families.

Employees must all be aware of the mission and vision in order to assist the organization with accomplishing its goals. L2 requested that employees start all meetings with a recitation of the mission. The leaders also initiate contests that focus on activities related to the vision. L5 acknowledged that operational employees hired with degrees in child development realize that although most Head Start organizations do not pay salaries higher than public schools; Head Start organizations do pay more than childcare programs in the area. Although leaders desire to give bonuses as incentives, funds are not always available. Idris (2014), and Desai (2016) suggested that increasing an employee's financial benefits is not a sustainable strategy in the long run. Leaders should implement working five flexible benefit practices such as flextime, job sharing, flex leave, flex career, and flex place.

Inspiration for operational employees is provided on three levels (P3): First, the executive director has a plan to inspire employees to go beyond works done the prior year. With this plan, the previous year's objectives for achievements, scores, and database information are placed on a screen for employees to view, and they are encouraged to go higher. Second, the program director looks at the specific goals (three times per year) to examine the program operations such as academics, engagements, and health. Third, the center manager motivates, inspires, and coordinates with operational employees on their progress in acquiring their credentials. Center managers are evaluated based upon whether they have reached the goals during the evaluation period. This 3-level program is designed to provide inspiration to operation employees working in the program. Employees were also instructed about cost of living adjustments (COLA) when received from the federal government (P3). L3 has developed a compensation equity spectrum in which all employees are classified on levels based on degrees because the program does not offer merit increases.

Head Start leaders want to change the culture of the program to be more positive. An important activity is the plan to keep employees by implementing leadership practices to support retention (Aarons et al., 2014; Desai, 2016). Information is shared during preservice and in-service training by all leaders, and leaders are working on developing more formal avenues for sharing information. P4 site supervisors meet monthly with the program director (L4) to ensure they understand the vision and take information back to operational employees.

P1 employees understand that the main focus is to help children and the families for the school readiness goals of the program. L2, L4, and L5 stated that preservice training allows leaders to inform employees about the shared vision, goals and vision for the year, and to make sure operational employees understand the meaning of Head Start. New employees are informed about policies and procedures through orientation. Center supervisors have weekly staff meetings with operational employees to share updates. The findings supported the belief of Aarons et al. (2014), and Mehdinezhad and Sardarzahi, (2016) that on the job training and employee benefits encourage the heart of employees giving them the desire to remain employed with the organization.

Theme 5: Retention

All five of the leaders provided details about how they encourage operational employees to remain employed with their organizations. It is not uncommon for employees to challenge the process. Kouzes and Posner's (2012) transformational leadership theory, c*hallenge the process,* gives leaders the opportunity to learn from challenges as they thrive to create innovative ways to overcome adversity. Creating a learning environment that assists employees with change could be helpful to organizations (Smith, Barnes, & Harris, 2014).

Employee reward systems have a great impact on the motivation of employees (Chauhan, Ghosh, Rai, & Shukla, 2016; Holston & Kleiner, 2015). Employees at P1 were offered summer vacation, and the employees at P2 were offered year-round pay during the summer months. L1 offered gifts and awards to encourage employees' commitment to the agency. L3 encouraged operational employees to remain on the job using two strategies; leaders encouraged their employees to work for the sake and benefit of the children, and leaders appealed to employee's desire to work in the profession. Summer vacation, year-round pay, gifts, awards, and encouragement were all retentions strategies that leaders used to encourage employees to remain employed with their organization. Even though there was a high turnover rate at P4, L4 encourages the employees by reminding them about the benefits of the program which are offering pensions and low copays, summers off, flexibility, no weekends/nights, and two employees in the classroom. Smitha (2013) confirmed that when staff members receive encouragement and support in the workplace, they tend to perform at a higher level, which causes staff to feel satisfaction from positive feedback.

The objective of Head Start leaders is to have long-term employees. About half of employees in one program (P5) are former Head Start parents, making some employees long-term. L5 advertises and promotes internally first without compromising credentials. All center supervisors are former operational employees in P5 who were promoted. L5 provides leadership training (supervision, communication, monitoring, coaching) with lead operational employees who L5 sees as having potential for promotion. P5 pays for teachers to attend certification training to give operational employees the extra they may need to become a supervisor. More experienced employees are paired with new employees to serve as mentor in all organizations. The retention method to reward operational employees confirms and extends knowledge of various ways to encourage employees to remain employed and enable them to work towards success (Chauhan et al., 2016; Holston & Kleiner, 2015).

The findings of this research were inclusive of comparisons and associations with the conceptual framework, literature review, and significance within this study. Strategies that leaders could use to retain qualified, degreed employees are listed as themes in Table 1. When organization leaders look at the factors that influence and shape retention, they might develop an employee relations system that will provide a competitive advantage (Blankenship & Slate, 2016; Zhang et al., 2015).

Applications to Professional Practice

Leaders must provide the right work environment in order to retain productive employees and to improve employee satisfaction. In this study, I identified strategies used to cultivate cooperative staff relationships that tend to increase productivity and retention, ensuring that organizations can recruit and retain a qualified and reliable workforce. Providing supportive work environments with high employee morale is important to an organization’s success in achieving its goals (Michel et al., 2013).

This study includes effective strategies that successful leaders of Head Start Nonprofit Organizations use to retain operational employees. Business leaders, in similar settings, may benefit from the findings of this study by implementing similar strategies to retain qualified personnel. Zhang et al. (2015) believed organizational leaders can look at the factors that influence and shape retention as provided by the leaders participating in this study, and they can consider using some of the strategies that have enabled organizations to have a competitive advantage over the competition.

Retaining efficient employees requires addressing factors and providing attractive options in addition to having financial incentives (Smeby & Heggen, 2014). By adopting some of these practices, leaders may ensure organizational effectiveness and increase staff sustainability. Gilliard et al., (2013) concluded when leaders' mode expectations to staff members, they create an atmosphere that encourages and increases staff productivity, leading to organization success.

The retention of operational employees in Head Start nonprofit organizations is critical to the success of the organization. The time, costs, and efforts of training employees, at the beginning of services, and while in the process of providing services, may help employees to stay focused on the vision to promote organizational success (Jennex, 2014). Leaders who employ effective HR managers to recruit, orientate, and secure necessary training for employees may yield a higher retention rate (Zopiatis, Constanti, & Theocharous, 2014).

Based on participant interviews, offering incentives in the form of small tokens of appreciation throughout the year, and employee compliments were among the leaders' significant practices. Although financial incentives for employees are not readily available, other forms of incentives for employees encourages retention and helps employees to feel appreciated for the work they do for the organization (Jyothsna et al., 2013). Incentives are also critical for positive outcomes of an organization.

According to participant feedback, business practices improve by offering job benefits, and educational support for employees. Employees tend to appreciate on the job benefits to support them and their families, which provides a sense of security and encourages them to remain loyal to the organization (Beynon, Jones, Pickernell, & Packham, 2015). Providing educational support for enhanced knowledge and credentials is an added benefit to employees.

Implications for Social Change

Head Start organizations provide a valuable service to communities as they strive to provide a working and learning environment that will help to shape the development of young children and facilitate their academic development (Head Start Act, 2013). I examined the issues and needs of CEOs/Program Directors of Head Start organizations identifying retention practices that would enable the leaders to attain and maintain proficiency of the organization with qualified operational employees. To accomplish these lofty goals, Head Start leaders should retain qualified operational employees who have at minimum a bachelor's degree, while competing with other institutions that can afford to pay higher salaries. If Head Start leaders master the art of recruiting and retaining highly qualified and productive staff, they can ensure a cadre of children who can enter the education system better prepared to advance successfully through the system, despite the disparity in pay between Head Start and other early childhood teaching positions (Head Start Act, 2013).

Head Start leaders, faced with the responsibility of developing strategies that support retention of staff and efficiency of operation, offered strategies that can support positive, expanded, and effective services. They offered suggestions about types of training, professional development, and education of employees that can lead to positive social change for Head Start nonprofit organizations. The information provided by the participants of this study described leadership practices that impact the quality of services rendered and can increase productivity. Head Start leaders provided ideas about practices that can support the retention of operational employees with bachelor's degrees despite opportunities these educators may have to work in better paying positions. This will allow them to employ more highly qualified operational employees. In turn, the programs Head Start leaders supervise may provide better quality instruction for the children they serve.

Recommendations for Action

Leaders should provide regular, positive feedback to staff to increase motivation and to inspire staff to want to do a good job for the organization. Leadership practices that can be applied in diverse work settings to transform organizations into highly effective teams include: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). These leadership practices stimulate employee commitment to the organization.

Leaders help employees feel that they are valued and that their work is important. In order to motivate staff, organizations must create a work environment that encourages motivation, where there is regular recognition of staff, and where goal setting and expectations are clear (Azar & Shafighi, 2013). Ongoing motivation and recognition via incentives generates employees who are satisfied, and will remain with their organization.

I will share the results of this study, with business or organizational leaders seeking strategies of how to retain qualified employees. I will conduct presentations, seminars, and facilitate meetings at Head Start and business leader forums to share the results of this study. The results of this study may enhance the professional development, knowledge, skills, and abilities of leaders. I will share the results with regional and national Head Start administrators for informational purposes and perhaps policy revisions that includes additional funding for degreed employees.

Recommendations for Further Research

Because of the limitation of only including five Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama in this study, I recommend that a future study be developed to include a larger number of organizations across Alabama. This will allow a broader understanding of practices in Head Start nonprofit organizations. I also recommend that future studies be developed to include organizations in other states outside of Alabama. This will allow researchers to determine if these results may be different or similar in other geographical areas. To address the limitations of this study, researchers can conduct additional studies, not covered in this study, to explore leadership practices supporting retention in Head Start nonprofit organizations. The themes identified in this study offered great strategies for retaining employees. However, the themes in this study warrants further research, perhaps feedback from operational employees to determine if they predict Head Start employees' retention.

Reflections

I particularly enjoyed my experience during the data collection process. I have been employed with Head Start for 23 years and the experience to hear from other leaders who shared their organization's strategies for retaining qualified operational employees was enlightening. The federal mandate and challenges for retaining operational employees with a minimum of a bachelor's degree with no additional compensation, prompted me use this to research and identify ways to encourage retention without having additional funds to compensate those employees.

The main strength of this study was the research design and the type of methodology used to collect the data. The choice of a qualitative study with purposeful selection of participants improved the strength of the study. Because of the exploratory nature of the research question, the qualitative method was the best fit for this proposed study. As Hunt (2011) proposed, qualitative researchers investigate emerging areas of concern in which there is insufficient information to design a quantitative study; qualitative scholars also explore existing areas of research in more depth and with more detail. Although I have experience in the Head Start industry, in this research I had no influence over any of the participants, and the multiple forms of data collection allowed me to capture the information from some leaders within Alabama. Utilizing the research techniques in this study allowed the participants and me to communicate via telephone, and I was able to separate my preconceptions and bias of the Head Start industry from the research process.

My experience as a Walden University student in the DBA program has been rewarding. I have overcome numerous challenges and milestones while working on my doctoral study. I am proud of myself and my accomplishments, even through adversity. My knowledge, skills, and abilities have increased, making me a more effective leader in my organization, and for positive social change in my community, state, and regional area. Employee retention in Head Start organizations is a personal interest of mine because I am employed as an Executive Director of a Head Start organization. The findings of this study will help me to promote and implement enhanced retention strategies within my organization, and train other organizations on the retention strategies found. Consequently, the results of this study could be used to enhance any business or organization that desires to implement best retention practices.

Conclusion

This project provided a glimpse of how CEOs/Program Directors of Head Start nonprofit organizations implemented practices to retain their operational employees. I explored a broad range of perceptions of participants' practices and their attempts at attaining and maintaining proficiency as well as recommendations for future leaders to improve the quality of their programs. The focus of this study was on exploring retention strategies for Head Start operational employees. The experiences of the leaders at the research sites are important in identifying successful practices and providing guidance for potential future leaders of similar organizations.

CEOs/Program Directors from five Head Start nonprofit organizations in Alabama were selected for examination in this study. This small number of participating organizations allowed for a deep understanding of their operation and a broad understanding of practices in a Head Start nonprofit organization. Retention strategies in organizations determines the success of the organization. This study provides a foundation for leaders to use to encourage employees to remain employed with their organization. Leaders who continually seek new and innovative retention strategies and techniques to make employees feel appreciated will yield a high retention rate for better business outcomes (Supanti, Butcher, & Fredline, 2015).

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Appendix A: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a study of Nannette Phillip's doctoral study on Leadership Practices Supporting Retention in Head Start Nonprofit Organizations. You were chosen for the study because you are a Leader (CEO/Program Director) in a Head Start Nonprofit Organization in Alabama. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Nannette Phillips, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. In addition, as a CEO/Program Director of an Alabama Head Start program, Nannette Phillips will not be included in this study, keeping it separate from her role as a CEO/Program Director.

Background Information:
The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study will be to explore effective strategies that successful leaders of Head Start Nonprofit Organizations use to retain operational employees. The target population for data collection will include Alabama Head Start Nonprofit Organization leaders (CEO/Program Directors) who have demonstrated success in retaining operational employees in their organization.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview that will be audio recorded (estimated time is approximately 45 minutes)
- Review a summary of your interview report to confirm the accuracy of data interpretation (estimated time is approximately 30 minutes)

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are no foreseeable risks or harms to participants. Benefits may be to the greater community and useful to leaders who desire to contribute positive social change in service-oriented organizations, by motivating operational employees to remain working in their respective organizations. The results of these benefits may help young children to receive optimal teaching and caregiving from high performing operational employees.

Compensation:
There is no compensation for participating in this study. Participants will receive a thank you email after completion of the interview.

Confidentiality:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. Please be advised that as a mandated reporter, I am required to report any criminal activity or child/elder abuse to the proper authorities that might be revealed during the research procedures.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at [redacted]. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 3121210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant	______________________
Date of consent	______________________
Participant's Written Signature	______________________
Researcher's Written Signature	______________________

Appendix B: Interview Questions

The following are interview questions for Head Start leaders to answer.

1. What actions and behaviors do you perform that positively influence retention of operational employees?
2. How do you encourage operational employees not to challenge the process of obtaining higher qualifications with no pay increase?
3. How do you enable operational employees to take action to obtain higher degrees?
4. What strategies do you use to inspire the shared vision of your program to retain operational employees?
5. How do you encourage operational employees to remain employed with your organization?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Topic: Leadership Practices Supporting Retention in Head Start Nonprofit Organizations

Date:

Time:

Location:

Interviewee:

Consent form signed?

Opening Comments to Interviewee

I believe your input will be valuable to this research and in helping leadership practices for supporting retention. Thank you for agreeing to participate.

The approximate length of interview will be 30 minutes, and will include five major questions.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study will be to explore effective strategies that successful leaders of Head Start Nonprofit Organizations use to retain operational employees. The target population for data collection will include Alabama Head Start Nonprofit Organization leaders who have demonstrated success in retaining operational employees in their organization. The potential outcomes of the results of this study are three-fold: it may be useful to leaders who endeavor to contribute positive social change in other service-oriented organizations; operational employees may remain working in the organization they prefer and accordingly enjoy a better life; and young children may receive optimal teaching and caregiving performance from these operational employees and be better prepared for school.

The following are interview questions for leader participants to answer.

1. What actions and behaviors do you perform that positively influence retention of operational employees?
2. How do you encourage operational employees to not challenge the process of obtaining higher qualifications with no pay increase?
3. How do you enable operational employees to take action to obtain higher degrees?
4. What strategies do you use to inspire the shared vision of your program to retain operational employees?
5. How do you encourage operational employees to remain employed with your organization?

Closing

Thank you for participating in this interview. I appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to share your experiences and thoughts. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.