2017

Voluntary Employee Turnover: Retaining High-Performing Healthcare Employees

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Abstract

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MBA, Jones International University, 2014

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

Voluntary employee turnover in the healthcare industry is one of the most expensive and disruptive business problems that healthcare organizations encounter. Healthcare organizations can expect employee replacement costs to represent up to 150% of a departing employee's annual salary in new employee acquisition and decreased productivity. Guided by the leader-member exchange theory, the purpose of this single case study was to explore the strategies healthcare managers used to retain high-performing healthcare employees. Using semistructured interviews, the targeted population encompassed 6 healthcare managers from a healthcare organization in Central Texas who have demonstrated successful strategies for retaining high-performing healthcare employees by maintaining a 90% retention rate for a 12-month period. Organizational documents were reviewed, including reports of managers' retention rates and number of employees per manager, for a 12-month period. Data were coded, analyzed into themes via Yin's 5-step method, triangulated, and then subjected to member checking to bolster the trustworthiness of interpretations. Two major themes were revealed: employee engagement and leadership style. Participants noted that their employees were their priority and practiced participatory leadership to gain trust, loyalty, and commitment. The findings may promote positive social change by providing healthcare managers with information on successful strategies for retaining high-performing healthcare employees, which could reduce unemployment rates, stabilize families, and improve employees' work-life balance outside their organizations.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my daughters, Jasmine Kiera and Aaliyah Nicole. I know you may not understand now, but this accomplishment is proof that no matter where you are from, you can achieve great things with hard work and dedication. Dreams do not have expiration dates.

To my wife and best friend, Courtney, thank you for having my back when I had to study. I appreciate you asking questions about the doctoral process just so I could talk about it. I missed many weekends and evenings with the family and you never complained. I do not know how I will ever pay you back for your support and dedication, but it will be an honor to try.

I dedicate this accomplishment to my late parents, Sarah J. Williams Boyd and Reverend Jesse "JB" Boyd, Jr. Outside of your love and support, you taught me that zip codes and socioeconomic statuses did not determine future success. You taught me not to accept mediocrity. Although I realize you are not here physically, you will always be with me in spirit. I will save two chairs for you at my graduation ceremony.

I dedicate this to my best friend, Lee Noble. I met you when I was 19 years old and clueless about life. For some reason, you chose me as your mentee and spent your personal time helping me become a better person. I really appreciate your friendship.

Last, I dedicate this to the men and women, past and present, of the United States Air Force. The people I met throughout my 21-year career shaped me into the man I have become. *Aim High … Fly-Flight-Win!*

Acknowledgments

To this day, I do not know why God has chosen to bless my family in this manner, but I am, and will be, eternally grateful. I want to thank my committee members, Dr. Jamiel Vadell and Dr. Ify Diala, who gave me the tools, motivation, and support I needed to be successful in this journey. The numerous phone calls, emails, and text messages helped me settle down and focus. I appreciate the countless hours you spent reading my work and providing feedback, which have made me a better student and independent scholar. I can honestly say I would not be here without you. To my URR, Dr. Scott Burrus, thank you for your support and insight. I would also like to thank my former professors at Walden University, Dr. Denise (Gandy) Hackett, Dr. Robert Miller, Dr. Charles Needham, Dr. Ify Diala, Dr. Judith Blando, Dr. Kathleen Andrews, Dr. Michael Ewald, Dr. Laura Poluka, and Dr. Olivia Herriford. All of you contributed to my success and inspired me to keep going.

I want to thank the men and women of the healthcare organization that allowed me to conduct research for this study. Thank you for trusting me with your most valuable and precious resources – your employees. I wish you continued success.

Last, I want to thank my new DBA friends, *Mary*, *Kimberly*, *Bryan*, *McArthur*, *Sharon*, and *Carl*, who I met at Residency I in Atlanta, Georgia! You have given me the energy I needed to complete this task. Thank you for allowing me to share my ideas, thoughts, and concerns. No matter what I was going through, you always understood. This journey has taught me no person truly walks alone; it takes a village.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employees are vital to the success of any organization (Ganesh, 2016). Organizational leaders should invest in recruitment, development, and rewards to retain valued employees for long-term success (Sutanto & Kurniawan, 2016). High-performing employees may leave an organization when they become dissatisfied, believe their compensation is not commensurate with their skill or education, or become unmotivated (Schlechter, Syce, & Bussin, 2016). Coetzee, Oosthuizen, and Stoltz (2016) claimed that highly skilled employees who realized their assets and scarce talents were the most difficult employees for organizational leaders to retain. Organizational leaders can explore the factors that affect employee turnover rates once they understand why employees resign.

Background of the Problem

Organizational leaders consider their high-performing employees their most valuable assets and precious resources. Such employees' continued support for the organization, which results in competiveness in dynamic and unpredictable business environments, derives from the organization's successful attempts to retain them (Chovwen, Balogun, & Olowokere, 2014). The time-honored process of employees starting their employment and retiring at the same company is no longer common in the business environment. Employees position themselves like independent contractors; they initiate career change while managing their careers (Acikgoz, Sumer, & Sumer, 2016).

Organizational leaders, through planning groups, develop employee retention strategies during their annual conferences (Anvari, JianFu, & Chermahini, 2013).

Organizational leaders use their employee turnover metrics to quantify the rate at which employees resign relative to the number of employees employed with their respective companies (Ozalina-Ozola, 2014). Since the 1970s, researchers have dedicated their efforts to understanding the voluntary employee turnover phenomenon (Wen & Liu, 2015). Researchers' general findings have indicated that employees choose to resign from their positions when they do not feel fulfilled and experience low organizational commitment (Wen & Liu, 2015).

Organizational leaders should explore the organizational factors that lead to voluntary employee turnover. Organizations incur various financial costs when employees leave an organization. The direct costs include selection and replacement of the employee, training, and potential relocation services (Collini, Guidroz, & Perez, 2015). The indirect costs include employee morale and diminished productivity (White, 1995).

Problem Statement

Researchers have identified the loss of high-performing employees as the most expensive business problem that employers encounter and have stated that it shows no sign of abating (Anvari, JianFu, & Chermahini, 2013). Soundarapandiyan and Ganesh (2015) found that 89% of organizations lost high-performing employees because of managers' ineffective leadership and supervisory practices. The general business problem was that employers invested thousands of dollars in efforts to retain high-performing employees yet experienced financial losses when employees resigned. The specific business problem was that some healthcare managers lacked strategies to retain

high-performing healthcare employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that healthcare managers used to retain high-performing healthcare employees. The targeted population encompassed six managers from a healthcare organization in Central Texas who had demonstrated successful strategies for retaining high-performing healthcare employees. The results of the study may contribute to social change by identifying strategies for the retention of high-performing healthcare employees in challenging workplaces. A healthcare organization's patients benefit from interacting with tenured medical professionals who understand patients' needs and provide the continuity of care that patients require, which fosters confidence and long-term relationships.

Nature of the Study

I used the qualitative research method to explore strategies that healthcare managers used to retain their high-performing employees. Solnet, Ford, Robinson, Ritchie, and Olsen (2014) stated that qualitative research involves determining and probing traits and characteristics to glean an understanding of how healthcare employers retain their high-performing employees. In contrast to the qualitative method, researchers use the quantitative research method to examine social phenomena and human problems from a theoretical perspective using statistical analysis (Yilmaz, 2013). The quantitative method requires researchers to formulate and test hypotheses to analyze relationships and differences among variables (Babones, 2015). Since my objective was not to test hypotheses and examine variables' relationships or differences, the quantitative research

method was not appropriate for this study. Mertens (2014) and Sparkes (2014) posited that the mixed-method approach is useful for exploring and examining complex problems because of the need to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches. Since my goal was to identify and explore strategies that healthcare managers used to retain their high-performing employees, I did not need to collect and analyze quantitative data; thus, the mixed method was not appropriate for this study.

I chose a single case study design because it was the most appropriate qualitative design for this study. Researchers use case study designs to conduct exhaustive research on a single unit to understand a larger class of similar units (Baskarada, 2014). Yin (2014) indicated that researchers could use a case design to ask study participants *what, how*, and *why* questions. I considered phenomenological, ethnographic, and narrative research designs prior to selecting case study. I decided against a phenomenological design because phenomenological researchers focus on the meanings of human experiences; phenomenology is the qualitative research design that researchers use to study lived experiences of individuals to explore a phenomenon. The phenomenological researcher gathers data from individuals using interviews, descriptions, and other expressions such as poetry (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). Researchers use the ethnographic design to focus on human societies and groups' cultures. Ethnographic researchers study individuals in the individuals' environments using face-to-face interviews and observations. Choosing the ethnographic research design would have suggested an intention to explore the cultures and social systems of individuals (Grossoehme, 2014). Since I sought to conduct research on an applied business problem,

the ethnography research design was not appropriate. Paschen and Ison (2014) stated that researchers use the narrative research design to collect stories about a phenomenon to describe past experiences. Narrative researchers extract these stories using an interview technique with open-ended questions. The narrative research design is best for social-cultural research and was not suited to addressing the purpose of my study (Paschen & Ison, 2014).

Research Question

What strategies do healthcare managers use to retain high-performing healthcare employees?

Interview Questions

1. What leadership style was most effective to retain high-performing employees?
2. How did your high-performing employee retention strategies differ from your organization's strategies?
3. What employee engagement strategies did you use to retain high-performing healthcare employees?
4. What strategies did you employ when high-performing employees stated that they were considering resigning from the organization?
5. Why did high-performing employees leave your organization?
6. What managerial strategies, in your opinion, did not work to retain high-performing employees?
7. How did job satisfaction affect retention of high-performing employees?

8. What more can you add to benefit this study concerning retention of high-performing employees?

Conceptual Framework

Dansereau, Graen, and Haga (1975) were first to describe and explore leader-member exchange theory (LMX). Leaders who apply LMX theory develop individual relationships with each follower rather than assume one leadership style and apply it to all followers (Hunt, 2014). Northouse (2016) stated that leaders who practiced LMX were successful because leader-follower relationships were responsible for the success of the group. During two-way interactions between the leader and followers, two groups of followers emerge as LMX byproducts: (a) in-groups and (b) out-groups. The *in-group* comprises followers who have the strongest relationships with the leader. Leaders will expand roles within the organization for members of the in-group. Followers enter the *out-group* if the leader does not expand their roles. Followers in the out-group have the weakest leader-member bonds (Northouse, 2016). Leaders review followers' individual personalities and other personal traits when deciding which followers should enter the in-group (Dansereau et al., 1975).

Dansereau et al. (1975) identified the following fundamental attributes underlying LMX theory: (a) mutual trust, (b) respect, and (c) commitment (Northouse, 2016). Leaders who practice LMX experience multiple benefits, including increased follower self-efficacy, heightened follower initiative, more attempts by followers to exercise their leadership skills, and greater efforts by followers to perform well to ensure that their leaders receive promotions and other accolades (Hunt, 2014). In selecting LMX theory

as a framework for this study, I expect that the theory's propositions would enable me to explore strategies, perceptions, and experiences regarding LMX theory characteristics as they pertain to the retention of high-performing healthcare employees.

Operational Definitions

Employee retention: The voluntary process that organizational leaders use to create an environment where employees feel encouraged and motivated to remain with the organization (Pittino, Visintin, Lenger, & Sternad, 2016).

Employee turnover: A lagging metric measuring the rate at which employees leave an organization relative to the total number of employees within a specific reporting period (Anvari, JianFu, & Chermahini, 2014; Ozolina-Ozola, 2014).

Job satisfaction: The employee's attitude toward his or her job, which includes, but not limited to, organizational support, employee involvement, pay, and benefits (Drydakis, 2015; Gozukara & Colakoglu, 2016; Leider, Harper, Shon, Sellers, & Castrucci, 2016).

Organizational commitment: The degree of loyalty and support that an employee extends toward his or her organization (Amdan et al., 2015; Rafiee, Bahrami, Montazer Alalfaraj, & Shajari Pour Mosavi, 2014; Salleh, Amin, Muda, & Abi Sofian Abdul Halim, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Hibbert, Sillince, Diefenbach, and Cunliffe (2014) stated that assumptions are attributes that researchers take for granted while conducting research. I noted five

assumptions in my study. My first assumption was that I had chosen the best healthcare establishment in Central Texas to conduct the study and that the study would yield sufficient results. Researchers consider assumptions are factual but do not verify them. Second, I assumed that the managers I interviewed would be forthcoming and truthful when sharing their experiences and perceptions. Third, I assumed that the participants would offer their best and most relevant strategies to retain high-performing employees. Fourth, I assumed that I would complete each interview within 1 hour from the start time. Fifth, I assumed that I would reach data saturation after the third interview.

Limitations

Limitations are issues that researchers cannot control or mitigate, which may affect the validity of a study (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). I recognized four limitations that could constrain my ability to complete this study. The first limitation was gaining approval from the healthcare organization to conduct the study. The second limitation was a lack of consistent work schedules because some of the participants were on vacation, experienced high work demands, or traveled during the research period on business trips. The third limitation was the need to safeguard patients' personal identification information while conducting interviews. The last limitation was the inability to reach data saturation for the study.

Delimitations

Yin (2014) defined delimitations as the boundaries of research. I noted three delimitations for this study. I delimited the study to participants who had managed successful departments within the healthcare organization and had retained their high-

performing employees for a 1-year period. I delimited participants to the State of Texas, particularly the central region of the state.

Significance of the Study

Value to Business Owners

Business owners and managers could gain value from this study because companies experience financial losses and lack of continuity when they encounter low employee retention rates. The process of retaining high-performing employees starts as early as recruiting and hiring processes. A company incurs at least 150% loss of an employee's annual salary when the employee resigns from his or her position (Collini, Guidroz, & Perez, 2015). Employees who resign levy financial burdens on organizations; departing employees also create intangible burdens such as adverse organizational climates and negative effects on the public's image of the organization (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2016). Although organizational leaders have access to information on retention-rate statistics and the financial burden they present, some healthcare organizational leaders lack strategies to lower their voluntary employee turnover rates, which affect their organizations' efficiency and effectiveness.

Contribution to Effective Practice of Business

Anvari, JianFu, and Chermahini (2013) indicated that the loss of high-performing employees is the most expensive business problem that organizational leaders confront. The findings from this study could inspire healthcare business leaders by identifying effective strategies to increase the retention of high-performing healthcare employees. The results could prompt organizational leaders to revise their recruitment and hiring

procedures to reduce the likelihood of high-performing employees resigning from their positions. Organizations experience lost productivity and morale when high-performing employees leave because of increased workload (Strom, Sears, & Kelly, 2014). The discoveries of this study could provide a template that healthcare organizational leaders could employ to create employee-friendly environments, which could enhance employees' job satisfaction and cause them to remain with the organization.

Contribution to Positive Social Change

This study's implications for positive social change include the potential for organizational leaders to create an organizational culture to foster teamwork, organizational commitment, increased productivity, and improved community relationships. Organizational leaders cannot define values for their employees. Inabinett and Ballaro (2014) stated that employees define what is important to them through their individual values. Employees seek employment in organizations where they can relate to an organizational culture that reflects their own values (Ladelsky, 2014). This study may contribute to social change by identifying strategies for the retention of high-performing healthcare employees in challenging workplaces. Healthcare employees benefit from working in workplaces free from the disruptions that low employee retention creates, such as low productivity, higher workloads, and incompatible attitudes in new coworkers. Healthcare organizations' patients, meanwhile, benefit from interacting with tenured medical professionals who understand patients' needs and provide the continuity of care that patients require, which fosters confidence and long-term relationships.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

To explore the phenomenon of employee retention, I researched peer-reviewed articles and relevant books to complete the review of the professional and academic literature. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that healthcare managers used to retain high-performing healthcare employees. My professional goal is for the findings of my study to contribute to the success of organizational leaders suffering from low retention of their healthcare employees by helping these leaders to mitigate the chances of employees leaving their organizations. I retrieved articles and journal entries from Science Direct, Emerald Management Journals, Sage, ABI/Inform Complete, Business Source Complete/Premier, PsycINFO, and ProQuest Central. I used the following keywords when conducting searches: (a) *employee retention*, (b) *employee turnover*, (c) *organizational commitment*, (d) *employee engagement*, (e) *employee burnout*, (f) *emotional labor*, (g) *job satisfaction*, (h) *workforce*, (i) *social exchange theory*, (j) *human capital theory*, (k) *leader-member exchange theory*, (l) *costs of employee turnover*, (m) *job demands*, and (n) *job autonomy*. I used Ulrich's Global Series Directory to cross-reference each source to ensure that I chose peer-reviewed material. I used 191 references to write the literature review, of which 185 (92.3%) were peer-reviewed articles and governmental websites. Of the 185 peer-reviewed references in the literature review, 168 had been published within the last 5 years, and 28 had not, meaning that 90.8% of the sources had been published within the last 5 years, which was above the minimum of 85%. I included six books in the literature review (Table 1). My focus for the literature review was determining reasons why

employers did not retain high-performing employees and how those reasons supported my problem statement, using LMX theory as the conceptual framework.

Table 1

Literature Review Reference Content

Reference type	Total	< 5 years	>5 years	% < 5 years
Peer-reviewed journals	182	165	22	92.3%
Books	6	0	6	0.00%
Government websites	3	3	0	100%
Non-peer-reviewed journals	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	191	168	28	88.0%

I have organized the literature review into three fundamental categories: (a) conceptual framework, (b) introduction to employee retention, and (c) workplace dynamics. I use critical analysis and research to describe the conceptual framework for this study, extending the Conceptual Framework section presented previously in Section 1. I compare and contrast two leadership theories to the conceptual framework. In the introduction to employee retention, I discuss pertinent terms, outline theories of employee retention, and analyze and cross-reference the various costs of employee turnover. Last, I describe several workplace dynamics that lead to low employee retention.

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

LMX theory was the conceptual framework for this study. LMX is a two-way, relationship-based leadership theory that leaders develop with their followers (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015; Hall, Baker, Andrews, Hunt, & Rapp, 2016). Unlike leadership theories that focus on leadership outcomes from either the leader's or followers' viewpoint, LMX focuses on interaction between leaders and followers for goal accomplishment (Chow, Lai, & Loi, 2015; Northouse, 2016). Before LMX theory became popular, researchers believed that leaders directed their will upon followers in a downward or one-directional process. Leaders who did not practice LMX leadership treated all followers in the same manner by using a leadership style that would affect most followers in a comparable manner (Northouse, 2016). LMX leaders challenged these leadership assumptions and gave researchers a different view on leader-follower relationships.

Dansereau et al. (1975) were first to describe leader-member exchange theory in 1975 (Northouse, 2016). Dansereau et al. introduced LMX as the vertical dyad linkage model (VDL), which distinguishes the different relationships between leaders and their followers (Hwang, al-Arabiat, Rouibah, & Chung, 2016). The theoretical theme of LMX theory is the notion that the leader and follower build a dyadic (two-way) relationship over time through their positive exchanges and interactions (Dansereau et al., 1975). LMX leaders have individual relationships with all followers, and both leader and followers are responsible for the success of the group. Trust, liking, and mutual respect are indicative of quality exchanges between leader and followers and correlate to the effectiveness and efficiency of followers (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015).

During two-way interactions between leaders and followers, two groups of followers emerge as byproducts of LMX: (a) in-groups and (b) out-groups. Followers enter the in-group because of their expanded roles with respect to the leader (Whittington & Bell, 2015). The out-group contains followers who do not have strong bonds with the leader or do not have their respective roles increased (Northouse, 2016). Expanded roles are not the only reasons for followers to enter and become members of the in-group. Individual personalities and other personal traits create avenues for followers to enter the in-group (Dansereau et al., 1975).

In the first phase of the LMX process, the leader and members introduce their individual characteristics, such as attitudes and role expectations, to each other (Hwang et al., 2016). The leader and members cross-reference each other to decide whether they can develop a relationship. In the second phase, the leader assigns tasks to the members and waits for the members to complete them. The tasks are tests; the followers' chances to enter the in-group are dependent on the successful completion of these tasks (Peng, Chen, Xia, & Ran, 2016). During the third phase, the leader monitors the followers' responses to the assigned tasks. The leader analyzes the followers' primary responses upon task assignment, which represent the followers' initial contributions to the LMX relationship (Hwang et al., 2016). The last phase in the LMX process involves the leader interpreting all aspects of the social exchanges between members and leader. Hwang et al. (2016) stated that the leader's interpretation is subject to bias and distortion.

While attempting to understand the likelihood of workers resigning in service organizations, Hopkins (2002) found that leaders who practiced LMX contributed to

increased retention rates. Workers need balance from the organization. Workers and leaders create well-balanced relationships, which yield higher employee performance and increased productivity when employees believe that their leaders will safeguard their jobs (Kim & Barak, 2015). Those relationships are social exchanges. Respect, trust, and commitment are the three dimensions of the LMX construct, and the quality of social exchanges is critical to task completion (Graen & Ulh-Bien, 1995).

Transactional Leadership Theory

Transactional leadership theory was the opposing theory for this study. Bernard Bass (1985) was first to describe transactional leadership in 1947 (Nikezic, Puric, & Puric, 2012). Transactional leaders, or bureaucratic leaders, earn their leadership roles through discipline and control. They establish agreements with their followers and create rules for behavior. Bass (1985) identified the following fundamental attributes underlying the theory: (a) contingent reward, (b) constructive transactions, and (c) corrective actions (Northouse, 2016). Transactional leaders set their followers' wages in a hierarchical fashion. Followers know what to expect if they deviate from the leaders' rules because leaders define their rules at the beginning of the relationship. As followers follow the rules and provide their labor, transactional leaders give them what they owe and begin to set new goals for the next transaction (Nikezic et al., 2012).

Transactional leadership is different from LMX because transactional leaders do not focus on their followers' individual needs or personal development (Northouse, 2016). Breevaart et al. (2014); Chiaburu, Smith, Wang, and Zimmerman (2014); and Jackson, Meyer, and Wang (2013) related transactional leadership to employees'

behavior and organizational commitment. Organizational leaders who practice transactional leadership require employees to perform at a higher level than their peers to foster competition (Breevaart et al., 2014).

The LMX leader's goal is to build a personal relationship with each follower; transactional leaders are not interested in building personal or long-term relationships (Hwang et al., 2016 2016). Transactional leaders emphasize relationship exchanges with their followers. Transactional leaders inform their followers of how they deviate from the leader's standards (Bass, 1985). An example of transactional leadership is the teacher/student relationship in schools. The teacher informs the student of the criteria to earn an A, and the student works to achieve this goal using the teacher's instructions as a guide. At the end of the class or term, the teacher awards the student what the student has earned, and the process starts over for the next academic term.

In transactional leadership, the leader informs followers in the beginning of what they will receive for their compliance and performance (Hamstra, Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014). Followers of transactional leaders concentrate on organizational rewards, which lead to individual praise that does not foster teamwork (Lord, Brown, & Frieberg, 1999). Individuals do whatever the transactional leader wants because they want the individual rewards. Conversely, LMX leaders want to foster team building and facilitate learning from different perspectives (Hamstra et al., 2014). Transactional leaders do not promote professional growth, raise the level of motivation in followers, or attend to followers' needs; thus, transactional leadership theory would have been unsuitable as a conceptual framework for my study (Northouse, 2016).

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory was the supporting theory for this study. In 1973, James Downton was first to use the term *transformational leadership* (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership gained popularity after James MacGregor Burns (1978), a political sociologist, wrote the book *Leadership* in 1978. Clarke (2013) established leadership as the fundamental contributor to followers' performance and behaviors in the organization.

Burns (1978) compared leadership roles to the needs of followers (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leaders promote personal growth, individual coaching, support, and intellectual stimulation (Hentrich et al., 2017). Bass (1985) noted that transformational leadership had inspired leadership literature since 1985. The fundamental concept of transformational leadership is leaders' inspiration and stimulation of their followers to work toward team-oriented (intrinsic) goals rather than short-term (extrinsic) goals (Bormann & Rowold, 2016; Hentrich et al., 2017). Wegge, Shemla, and Haslam (2014) noted that transformational leaders inspired their followers to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness while also aiming to enhance followers' health and satisfaction levels. Certain leadership styles, such as transactional leadership, could foster stressful work environments for followers **(**Wegge, Shemla, & Haslam, 2014). Researchers have studied transformational leadership from corporate and business perspectives. Bormann and Rowold (2016) argued that transformational leaders can be effective in careers such as sports coaching (football, basketball, track, etc.), although researchers have offered little research in this area.

Hentrich et al. (2017) identified the following fundamental attributes underlying transformational leadership theory: (a) influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individual consideration. Followers note transformational leaders' influence and inspirational skills and perceive them as charismatic (Hentrich et al., 2017). Transformational leaders can influence their followers toward their visions through intellectual stimulation. Followers follow the transformational leader's vision because the leader allows the followers to challenge and question his or her vision. Such a leader builds support through transparency by articulating the mission and vision (Hentrich et al., 2017).

Another concern for most followers is safety. Transformational leaders express concern for follower safety on a regular basis, which increases followers' safety behaviors (Mullen, Kelloway, & Teed, 2017). Transformational leaders consider the needs of each follower and meet them, exhibiting individualized consideration (Hentrich et al., 2017).

Since the 1980s, researchers have dedicated much attention and resources to exploring employee turnover and the factors that influence it (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013). Park and Shaw (2013) argued that depressing financial performance, low employee engagement, and diminished employee productivity increase voluntary employee turnover. Park and Shaw (2013) and Hancock et al. (2013) posited that transformational leaders could affect employee turnover.

Transformational and LMX leaders use social exchanges to entice employees to remain with the organization and to inspire them to perform at peak levels (Tse, Huang,

& Lam, 2013). Some social exchanges result in higher levels of trust, respect, emotional support, formal and informal rewards, and access to information (Tse et al., 2013). Employees show their appreciation of social exchanges by exhibiting loyalty to their leaders, exerting more effort in their work, and displaying less turnover behaviors (Ballinger, Lehman, & Schoorman, 2010).

Introduction to Employee Retention

Researchers have studied voluntary employee retention and turnover since 1958 (Arekar, Jain, Deshpande, & Sherin, 2016; Holmes, Chapman, & Baghurst, 2013). March and Simon (1958) contended that the most accurate predictor of job turnover is the state of the economy. Bhattacharya (2015) stated that an employee would remain with an organization if the employer influenced the employee with enticement. Thus, employees will develop activities and processes to enhance their job satisfaction rather than remain dissatisfied. Organizations should not rely on employees to improve their job satisfaction. Demerouti, Bakker, Arnold, and Leiter (2014) examined employees' turnover intentions and found that work characteristics, job demands, and job resources were essential predictors. Employers should identify employees who are most likely to resign their positions and take an active role in mitigating the employees' concerns (Grzenda & Buczynski, 2015).

Employees are vital to the success of any organization (Ganesh, 2016). Organizations should invest in recruitment, development, and rewards to retain valued employees for long-term success (Sutanto & Kurniawan, 2016). High-performing employees leave organizations when they become dissatisfied, believe their

compensation is not acceptable or commensurate with their skill or experience, or become unmotivated (Schlechter, Syce, & Bussin, 2016). Coetzee, Oosthuizen, and Stoltz (2016) claimed that skilled employees who realized their assets and scarce talents were the most difficult employees for organizations to retain. Organizational leaders can examine the factors that affect employee retention and turnover rates when they understand the reasons why employees resign.

Researchers have defined *employee retention* in varied ways in the literature. Pittino, Visintin, Lenger, and Sternad (2016) defined employee retention as the voluntary process organizational leaders use to create an environment where employees feel encouraged and motivated to remain with the organization. Harmon, Kim, and Mayer (2015) defined employee retention as organizations' initiatives to maintain their employees by offering performance rewards to employees, fostering open and harmonious working relations between employees and employers, and creating a safe and healthy work environment. Haider et al. (2015) described employee retention as procedures employers use to urge employees to become part of the organization until the employees retire or complete a project. Although researchers have used different words and phrases to refer to the employee retention construct, their intent has been synonymous.

Of the published employee retention studies, past researchers authored only 7.3% using the qualitative research method (Al-Emadi, Schwabenland, & Qi, 2015). This low statistic of qualitative research in the field of employee retention prompted me to conduct this study because some healthcare managers lacked strategies to retain high-performing

employees. Organizations face employee retention challenges because of the increased competition in the market (Haider et al., 2015). Rasli, Norhalim, Kowang, and Qureshi (2014) believed HR managers must understand how to attract and retain high-performing employees because losing the employees can damage the organization's standing within the community and around the world. Organizational leaders should not rely on a single strategy to retain employees. Employees consider multiple factors when deciding to remain or leave the organization. Some of these factors are the employee's age, their family affairs, whether they have a mentor, career and learning opportunities, company benefits, networking, and their job title (Yusoff, Khan, Mubeen, & Azam, 2013). David and Holladay (2013) found organizational leaders invest large sums of money and resources in candidate selection practices, which are crucial to avoid turnover costs. Organizational leaders experience the lowest levels of employee retention in salesforces although salespeople receive substantial financial investments for effective training (Katsikea, Theodosiou, & Morgan, 2014).

Employee Retention Theories

Human capital theory (HCT). Becker (1962) was first to introduce the subject of human capital. Bae and Patterson (2014) defined the human capital theory as the economic analysis of an employee's education and training in comparison with their income. The employees benefit their employers by providing increased knowledge, performance, and productivity. Barney (1991) specified organizational leaders could sustain their competitive advantages by obtaining resources that were valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Although organizations retain their competitive

advantages, they do not own their human resources. Employees are not under their leaders' complete control because leaders do not own their employees (Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, & Ketchen, 2011). The employee can resign at any time. Conversely, if the employee believes their employers has not compensated them for their human capital, the employees are more likely to leave the organization (Al-Emadi, Schwabenland, & Qi, 2015).

Social exchange theory (SET). Peter Blau was first to designate the social exchange theory as a field of study in 1964 (Jia, Shaw, Tsui, & Park, 2014). The premise of the social exchange theory is people engage in exchange behaviors because they believe they will benefit from the exchanges and transactions (Huang et al., 2016). People enter social exchange relationships when they believe they would benefit from others; everyone must be fair and balanced in their exchanges (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015). Not all people present material goods in their exchanges with others. People exchange services and intellect during their exchanges, which the receiving person views as valuable resources (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015). If individuals find their benefits plentiful, they have an obligation to return the benefits to others (Chang et al., 2015). Allen and Shanock (2013) explained employers and employees appreciate the wide usage of the social exchange theory in organizations because both parties profit from the exchanges.

Cost of Voluntary Employee Turnover

Employers bear the responsibility of recruiting and hiring qualified employees although retaining such employees can be as difficult as recruiting them (Patimah, 2015; Rafii & Andri, 2015; Sutanto & Kurniawan, 2016). Employers of service organizations,

such as medical centers and hotels, experience distinctive and different industry characteristics than employers of organizations that offer physical products. Employees of service organizations must consider their interpersonal interactions while they deliver services to their customers (Kessler, 2014). Employers invest in employees' service skills because customers form their attitudes, behaviors, and opinions from their interactions with the employees (Shah, Irani, & Sharif, 2016). Customers make decisions to conduct future business with service organizations by assessing the quality of the service they receive from the employees. Bandura and Lyons (2014) reported the average turnover rate for all industries is 13%. In 2013, the national average for employee turnover was 18.8% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). In the call center industry, employers expect a 20% - 30% employee turnover rate (Li & Zhou, 2013). Haider et al. (2015) estimated organizations could spend 250% of the former employee's salary in replacement onboarding costs. While the hiring managers identifies a new employee, managers pay to advertise the open position, screen employees while in the applicant stage of employment, verify credentials, interview, and train them (Bryant, 2013). In certain instances, hiring managers reimburse the new employee's expenses, such as relocation costs (Haider et al., 2015). In healthcare organizations, leaders can experience up to $800,000 loss when a trained and tenured physician resigns considering losses in gross billings, potential inpatient revenue, and the lost skills and organizational knowledge (Fibuch & Ahmed, 2015). Some employers neglect chronically ill employees, who represent a growing group of employees (Kanengoni & Murugan, 2013). Kirk-Brown and van Dijk (2016) explained some chronically ill employees resign because of

other employees' perceptions of vulnerability and insecurity. For these reasons, chronically ill employees are more likely to resign and contribute to the high turnover rates (Kirk-Brown, van Dijk, Simmons, Bourne, & Cooper, 2014). Employers must pay accrued vacation time to the departing employee (Harrison & Gordon, 2014; Maina, 2014). Hanzlik (2014) estimated organizational leaders with 3,000 employees and an average employee salary of $45,000 can save $1.3 million each year if leaders reduce their turnover rate by 1%.

Although organizational leaders lose substantial amounts of money and resources when they do not retain their high-performing employees, leaders encounter intangible losses as well (Wang, Wang, Xu, & Ji, 2014). Organizational leaders lose the former employees' knowledge and job skills when high-performing employees leave their organizations (Janjua & Gulzar, 2014). Leaders are not the only affected members of the organization; employees experience increased workloads and higher job demands, which foster decreased productivity and low employee morale (Kumar & Yakhlef, 2016). In addition to increased workloads and higher job demands, employers find decreased levels of organizational knowledge among the staff, which increase the probability of producing mediocre quality products and services (Dusek, Ruppel, Yurova, & Clarke, 2014). Beynon, Jones, Pickernell, and Packham (2015) specified organizational leaders are at war with their competitors; losing employees to the competition do not only decrease the human capital of the former organization, but the new employer benefit from the new employee's expertise and experience within the industry.

Managers can affect their employee retention rates but most have misconceptions about the reasons employees resign. Harrison and Gordon (2014) stated the most common misconceptions about employee turnover are (a) employees choose to leave organizations over their pay and benefits, (b) employees resign because of dissatisfaction, (c) managers can not affect employee turnover, and (d) managers shall develop and implement one-size-fits-all retention strategies. If employers concentrate on the failed beliefs, they will continue to experience low employee retention rates.

Differences in Workforce

DeVaney (2015) believed employees identify their generation by their ages, periods, and friends. For instance, people born in the 1960 identify with the Vietnam War, Neil Armstrong's moon landing, John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King's assassinations, and Woodstock. Sages (employees born between 1925 and 1945) and the Baby Boomers (employees born between 1946 and 1964) are out of the workforce. In 2016, the Generation X employees (employees born between 1965 and 1980) and Generation Y employees (employees born between 1980 and 2000) comprise the workforce (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015). With such diversity in the workforce, employers should understand what each group of employees have in common and where they differ (Iorgulescu, 2015). In 2013, Millennials accounted for 32% of the workforce (Gallup, 2013). As Millennials mature and age, they will become the largest component of the overall workforce (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015).

Generation X. Generation X children, also called Latchkey Kids, are more self-efficient than Generation Y children. Children from the Generation X era had to police

and protect themselves while their parents worked outside the home. In some cases, Generation X children lived in single-parent homes after a divorce or death of a parent (Johnson, 2015). Generation X children had to mature faster than any recent generation because of their independence (Johnson, 2015). Generation X employees had to wait their turn at senior-level jobs when they entered the workforce because the Baby Boomers held those positions for extended periods. Johnson (2015) noted Generation X workers changed the workplace environment. Generation X employers changed the workplace culture from suits and dress shirts to casual clothing and introduced paternity leave to the workforce (Guysoy, Chi, & Karadag, 2013).

Generation X employees desire teamwork, autonomy, independence, flexibility, and work-life balance to remain with their organizations (Vinit & Patel, 2013). Latchkey Kids do not accept the status quo in the workplace; they will challenge experts and senior leaders on work processes and expect well-reasoned and factual answers (Johnson, 2015). These employees can learn and utilize innovative technology more rapidly and yearn to embrace diversity. Generation Y employees are more culturally aware than Generation X employees are and believe they can obtain success with education. Employees from the Generation X era are skeptical of hierarchical relationships, do not enjoy using professional titles at work, and do not have organizational loyalty (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015). Organizational leaders offer flexibility to Generation X employees because their children, older parents, and higher education goals are important to them (Johnson, 2015). Generation X's needs are not extraordinary; simply rescheduling work

hours or providing a day off to attend a child's school function will make members of Generation X content.

Generation X employees tend to be reasonable, independent, cynical, flexible, tech shrewd, and innovative (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015; Johnson, 2015). Ruble (2013) explained Generation X employees pursue difficult challenges; Millennials aspire to make difference in their own lives, the lives of others, and for their organizations. Although the two sets of employees have differences, they do not trust politics, organizational hierarchies, society, government, or the world, in general (Lu & Gursoy, 2013).

Generation Y. Generation Y employees, or Millennials, are the latest generation of workers to enter the workforce and consist of more than 80 million people (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015). Generation Y members constitute the first generation of workers who do not remember a world before computers, WI-FI, and internet access (McAlpine, 2013). While Generation X employees value independence and work-life balances, Generation Y value honesty and respect in their organizations (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015). Generation Y employees believe they build loyalty by being sincere, not on their workload or length of work (Kerslake, 2005). Millennials, as with Generation X employees, enjoy time off for vacation but they expect rewards, frequent promotions, and pay raises (Rentz, 2015).

Brown et al. (2015) and Hillman (2015) described members of Generation Y as confident, well-educated, self-reliant, open-minded, team builders, and socially and politically conscious. Employers should know both Generations X and Y employees

share some of the same views, especially in the workplace. As with Generation X employees, Millennials value their personal lives, flexibility, and challenging opportunities at work (Brown, Arendt, & Bosselman, 2014). Non-work time is important to Millennials as they consider their pay and benefits as sources to fund their lifestyles and non-work time (Kerslake, 2005). Although Generation Y employees enjoy challenges in their daily work, they lose the value of the job easily (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015). To combat Generation Y members' needs to find and sustain value in their jobs, employers should engage Millennials with work that is fulfilling, significant, and challenging (Gursoy, Chi, & Karadag, 2013). Millennials do not appreciate offsetting their work-life balance for work (Huffman, Casper, & Payne, 2014). Generation Y employees leave their organizations if they believe they have a negative work-life balance (Zhao & Mattila, 2013).

Rentz (2015) conducted research on Millennials at an information technology (IT) workplace in the southwest United States. Rentz (2015) supported Brown et al. (2015) research on Millennials in the workplace and further explored their work ethics. Millennials are assertive in their views and presume their managers will value their views (Johnson, 2015). Generation Y employees need and expect extensive and continuous praise and recognition from their employers but are sensitive to criticism. Brown et al. (2015) did not explore how Millennials interpreted their work. Rentz (2015) stated Millennials do not focus on the larger picture, or vision, of the organization. Millennials concern themselves with current tasks and projects. With the emergence of video games, social media, and the internet, Millennials are the most tech savvy generation in history

(Rentz, 2015). Kadakia (2014) stated organizations must understand how Generation Y employees affect the organization. Millennials believe their insight and knowledge supersede their age and longevity; if employers do not appear to welcome Millennials' opinions, Millennials believe their employers are discriminating against them because of their ages (Kadakia, 2014). Employers of Generation Y employees need to entice them to commit to their organizations, which increase employee retention rates.

Job Satisfaction

Organizational leaders of all types realize their employees are their most important and precious resources (Alegre, Mas-Machuca, & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2016; Arekar, Jain, Desphande, & Sherin, 2016). To ensure employees remain productive and committed to the company, employers gauge the employees' job satisfaction (de Mesquita & Carvalho, 2015; Hanaysha & Tahir, 2015). Employers know job satisfaction is fundamental to favorable work attitudes; employees with high job satisfaction experience increased creativity, flexibility, and organizational loyalty (Mohammed & Eleswed, 2013; Susilo, Yovel, Barton, & Duchaine, 2013). Employees who contemplate leaving the organization use their job satisfaction as the main determinant (Tarvid, 2015). Dusek, Ruppel, Yurova, and Clarke (2014) researched and found employees' job satisfaction and their individual well-being affect organizational performance. Employers consider developing and instituting programs that would influence higher employee job satisfaction (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2015).

Job satisfaction is the sum of the employee's emotional and mental outlook of the job, their work environment and conditions, and the employee's workload (Pomirleanu &

Mariadoss, 2015; Saif & Saleh, 2013; Tepret & Tuna, 2015). Only the employee can gauge their job satisfaction (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2015). Rayton and Yalabik (2014) argued employees use their respective work positions to garner job satisfaction; employees consider the physical environment, social environment, and their relationships with their managers. Although employees consider the previous factors to gauge job satisfaction, they weigh each factor differently (Dubey, Gunasekaran, Altay, Childe, & Papadopoulos, 2016). Job satisfaction is different from work satisfaction. Members of society place high regard on professions, such as doctors, lawyers, and police officers. The employee receives positive work satisfaction because of the respect society gives to them. Police officers and military personnel can experience high work satisfaction because of society's respect for their profession but can experience low job satisfaction because they must work nights, weekends, holidays, or other unfavorable work schedules (Dubey, Gunasekaran, Altay, Childe, & Papadopoulos, 2016).

Employees use tangible aspects of the job to ascertain their overall job satisfaction rate. Some of the job satisfaction factors are (a) employment benefits, (b) salary, (c) nature of the job, (d) stress levels, (e) fellow team members, (f) working environment, (g) managers, and (h) workload (Bakotic & Babic, 2013). Rae (2013) noted organizational leaders expect their employees' job satisfaction to affect their organizational outcomes. Employees must believe their job satisfaction is appropriate to remain with the organization.

To create harmony between employees and their jobs, employers ensure the employees' individual abilities and personality correspond to their positions (Yildirim,

Gulmez, & Yildirim, 2015). One of the fundamental reasons employers hire job seekers less suitable for employment is because employers do not consider the job seekers' personalities for the job or organization. Organizational leaders invest large sums of money in personality tests to gauge applicants' abilities and knowledge. Using personality tests results, employers can ascertain whether the applicant is a good fit within the organization (Yildirim, Gulmez, & Yildirim, 2015).

Personality

Yildirim, Gulmez, and Yildirim (2015) defined personality, which comes from the Latin word *persona*, as the interpersonal, motivational, experimental, and emotional forms people draw upon in different circumstances. Personalities are also hereditary. In the 1980s, personality scientists agreed on five factors to assess a person's personality traits, which they called the Five-factor model (Yildirim, Gulmez, & Yildirim, 2015). The five factors are (a) extraversion, (b) agreeableness, (c) conscientiousness, (d) neuroticism, and (e) openness to experience (Kozako, Safin, & Rahim, 2013). Since the 1980s, scientists referred to the five-factor model as the Big Five. Avery, Smillie, and Fife-Schaw (2014) noted extraversion and neuroticism are the Big Two. The other personality traits are predictors of how well employees will work but extraversion and neuroticism are predictors of how employees feel while at work (Kozako, Safin, & Rahim, 2013).

Employee Engagement

Employers must empower their employees (Lee, Kim, & Perdue, 2016). Wu and Chen (2015) and Namasivayam, Guchait, and Lei (2014) defined employee engagement

as the employees' ability to communicate information and thoughts to their leadership while increasing their intellectual capabilities to gain job autonomy and decision-making skills. Khan, Tariq, Hamayoun, and Bhutta (2014) added employers should share some organizational power with their employees to increase employee empowerment. Employees accept tasks and duties because they recognize they have the responsibility to complete the tasks as they deem necessary (Kang & Kim, 2014; Saifullah, Alam, Zafar, & Humanyon, 2015). In addition, employees view their organizational leaders as trustworthy when employers engage their employees (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015). Chen, Leung, and Evans (2015) and Karatepe (2013) argued employers should consider employee empowerment as the nucleus of high performance work practices.

Job Demands

Jong (2016) contended role ambiguity and work overload as essential factors when discussing employees' high job demands. For example, law enforcement officers and healthcare professionals that experience high job demand situations report higher levels of dissatisfaction (Lee & Lee, 2014). Employees can experience work exhaustion, or *burnout*, when employers subject them to high job demands for extended periods. Anitha and James (2016) stated employees should understand their individual emotions prior to engaging in efforts to balance them because not doing so will change to stress and alter their emotional behavior.

Job Autonomy

Organizational leaders interpret job autonomy as the degree of freedom and independence employees need to perform their routine work at the employee's discretion

(Sripirabaa & Maheswari, 2015). Although employees can exercise their creative minds when working in such environments, employees also use job autonomy as a buffer between themselves and abusive supervision (Velez & Neves, 2016). Zahra, Irum, Mir, and Chishti (2013) claimed employees would balance the abusive supervision and job demand with increased job resources. Employees are likely to remain with the company when their employers afford them the autonomy to perform their jobs (Zahra, Irum, Mir, & Chishti, 2013). Healthcare employees are critical to the success of healthcare organizations. Without this research effort, a gap exists in the literature exists, which prompts the need for this study.

Mentorship

In 850 B.C., Homer wrote *Homer, The Odyssey.* Since the initial publishing date, four authors have translated *Homer, The Odyssey,* into several languages. In the book, Homer sent his son to live with Mentor, Homer's trusted friend, in hopes Mentor would educate Homer's son (Chen, 2013). Chen (2013) believed Homer's friend, Mentor, is the first recorded story of mentorship. *Bai-shi-xui-yi,* which is a Chinese proverb, means *bow to the master for apprenticeship* (Chen, 2013). Abbas, Raja, Darr, and Bouckenooghe (2014) defined mentorship as a relationship where the senior employee (mentor) advise the younger or less experienced junior employee (protégé) by offering support, feedback, and direction concerning personal and professional development. Both the mentor and protégé benefit from effective mentorship. Junior members who receive mentorship enjoy increased job satisfaction, increased pay, higher promotion opportunities, and increased self-confidence (Abbas et al., 2014; Holt, Markova,

Dhaenens, Marler, & Heilmann, 2016). By participating in mentorship, mentors appreciate the positive feelings of assisting mentees through challenging times and prepare them for future success (Holt et al., 2016). The mentor and mentee are not the only employees who benefit from the relations. Organizational leaders benefit from the mentorship relationship because the mentor increase the speed and intensity of which the mentee learns, which decreases the probability the mentee will leave the organization because of the lack of effective training (Hartmann, Rutherford, Feinberg, & Anderson, 2014).

Organizational leaders around the world realize the positive benefits of effective mentorship as 71% of Fortune 500 companies participate in mentorship programs (Holt et al., 2016). Although organizations tend to assign mentors to mentees within the same workplace, some mentees search for mentors outside of their workplace or organizations. Holt et al. (2016) referred to these mentors as informal mentors. Mentees view informal mentors positively because mentees select their mentors without any managerial or employers' oversight, which make the relationship more enjoyable and sustainable (Holt et al., 2016).

Mentors must focus the mentee's expectations. If the mentor does not meet or exceed their mentee's needs or expectations, the mentor and mentee enter a negative mentoring relationship whereby the mentee's job satisfaction and organizational commitment decline (Haggard, 2012). One aspect mentees analyze potential mentors on is their physical features. Mentees use first impressions to decide whether the mentor is appropriate for their needs. Mentees have their own vision of how a mentor should look;

mentees believe their mentors should be older than mentees (Bailey, Voyles, Finkelstein, & Matarazzo, 2016). If mentors exhibit features that mentees find youthful, mentees dismiss the mentor as inexperienced and not capable of serving as their mentor (Finkelstein, Ryan, & King, 2013).

Mentees need career development and psychosocial support from their mentors. Mentors introduce mentees to new job and professional possibilities, challenge mentees with goals and tasks, and coach them through the endeavors. Mentees want their mentors to provide psychosocial support; mentors deliver psychosocial support when mentees accept them as their counselor, friend, and positive role model (Bailey et al., 2016). James, Rayner, and Bruno (2015) expanded on Bailey et al. (2016) argument by stating 69% of mentees looked for interpersonal qualities in their mentors, such as approachability, humor, and friendliness.

Although organizational leaders understand the benefits of mentorship programs, less than 20% of organizational leaders rate their company's mentorship programs as good or excellent (Institute for Corporate Productivity, 2007). Mentees must allow mentors to mentor them and potential mentors must want to mentor (Hartmann, Rutherford, Feinberg, & Anderson, 2014). The pivotal moment for the effective mentorship relationship occurs when the mentor identifies with the mentee as a younger and inexperienced version of himself or herself (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). Employers realize the difference between supervisor-supervisee relationships and mentor-mentee relationships. While the mentee benefits from each

relationship, employees do not accept supervision alone as an effective mentorship relationship (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).

Kram (1983) outlined essential phases mentees experience in mentoring relationships: (a) imitation, (b) cultivation, (c) separations, and (d) definition. During the initiation phase, which ranges from the first six months to one year, mentors and mentees spend time interacting with each other to develop a relationship (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). After the mentor and mentee establishes a relationship, they transition to the cultivation phase, which can span two to 5 years. During the cultivation phase, the mentor and mentee test and accomplish goals they establish during the initiation phase (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). During the separation phase, the mentor or mentee begin to transition from the mentorship relationship. The separation phase ranges from six months to 2 years. Both individuals enter the redefinition phase where the mentor and mentee assume a professional, peer relationship, which lasts indefinitely (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). Mentors and mentees realize their relationship changes from a hierarchical to peer-based (Kram, 1983).

Workplace Bullying

Most people attribute bullying to deviant behaviors school-aged children encounter on any school playground. After a review of the academic and professional literature on workplace bullying, no single agreed-upon workplace bullying definition exists (Sheard, Kakabadse, & Kakabadse, 2013). Randall (1997) defined workplace bullies as co-workers and employers who display hostile behaviors to inflict psychological anguish or physical harm in the workplace. Olive and Cangemi (2015)

extended upon Randall's (1997) definition of workplace bullying by adding it is the persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating, threatening, humiliating, malicious, or insulting behavior workplace bullies use to levy abuse of power and unfair penal sanctions to upset the person they target. Although some employees believe bullying in the workplace is an epidemic, many high-level employers and organizational leaders contribute to bullying by creating work conditions that foster bullying. Treadway, Shaughnessy, Breland, Yang, and Reeves (2013) suggested 84% of employees in the United States experience bullying by coworkers. Of the employees who reported workplace bulling, 72% of workplace bullies outrank the coworkers they target by at least one level of supervision (Parker, 2014). In contrast to England, Sweden, Australia, and Canada, the United States do not have anti-bullying workplace legislation although Americans are four times likely to experience mistreatment from bullies (McLaughlin, 2014).

Heinz (1990) was first to study workplace bullying in Sweden's steel mills where Heinz coined the term *mobbing* to label hostile and unethical treatment of an individual by one or more coworkers or managers. Organizational leaders expect workplace bullies to damage organizations, difficulties implementing organizational change, reduced organizational commitment, decreased productivity, and diminished organizational performance (Top, Akdere, & Tarcan, 2015). Namie and Namie (2011) found in most workplace bullying cases, employees range from the bullied individuals to the silent witnesses, which incorrectly infer workplace bulling is an organizational problem rather than related to the bad employers' pathology. Contrary to Randall's (1997) definition of

workplace bullying, employees do not view organizational leaders as workplace bullies if the leaders were consistent in their dealings with all employees (Namie & Namie, 2011). While some employees confuse tough leaders with bullies, workplace bullies identify and select certain employees causing them misery (Parker, 2014).

Contrary to past characterizations of bullies as socially awkward and inept misfits, Treadway et al. (2013) claimed most bullies are not misfits and use bullying tactics strategically to accomplish individual objectives. Ferris, Zinko, Bouer, Buckley, and Harvey (2007), who researchers consider leading scholars on workplace bullying, offer circumstantial evidence (Treadway et al., 2013). Ferris et al. (2007) believed coworkers could not detect bullies because bullies understand the work environment and employ strategies to choose potential targets. Ferris et al. (2007) referred to the bullying acts as political skill when bullies select targets. Ferris et al. (2007) defined political skill as the talent to understand the work environment, employees, and to use skill to influence others to act or react to meet one's personal or profession intentions. Treadway et al. (2013) noted politically skilled employees are influential, socially shrewd, and maintain social networks. They master the rules, regulations, social norms, and professional environments where they operate and know what behaviors are acceptable without alerting senior leaders to their ideas. Politically skilled employees present themselves as genuine and team players while working to realize their personal ambitions (Treadway et al., 2013).

Organizational leaders should address the bullies' specific behaviors. Refraining from addressing the harmful behaviors damage the organization's climate. Olmstead

(2013) offered two steps to stop workplace bullying. Olmstead stated the first step is to set expectations. Organizational leaders and supervisors outline and deliver their behavior expectations for their employees (Olmstead, 2013). A fundamental approach to informing employees of behavior expectations is to state the unacceptable behaviors.

Olmstead (2013) recognized two types of unacceptable behaviors: (a) verbal and (b) nonverbal behaviors. Employers confirm the following verbal behaviors are unacceptable to employees: (a) persistent complaining, (b) ugly speech, (c) arguing, (d) personal abuse, (e) non-personified abuse, and (f) negative sarcasm (Olmstead, 2013). Nonverbal behaviors unacceptable in the workplace are behaviors that cause supervisors to correct employees repeatedly, employees who do not participate in jobs that require teamwork and collaboration, and employees who force coworkers to work in tense workplaces (Olmstead, 2013). Employers move to Olmstead's next step once they instruct employees of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.

The second step is to enforce expectations. Olmstead (2013) believed the second step is more important than the first step in eliminating workplace bullying. Employers institute a corrective action plan when employees notify them of workplace bullying (Olmstead, 2013). During the meeting with the bully, Olmstead explained employers do not use words like *bully* or *bullying* when discussing the issues with the bully as the words have negative connotations. Individual mishaps do not create a bully. Employers view an unacceptable violation as a bad day, two violations as a very bad day, and three violations as a pattern (Olmstead, 2013). Organizational leaders use Olmstead's outline

for confronting workplace bullies. Employers create a positive and professional workplace when they rid the workplace of bullies and negative behaviors.

Abusive Supervision

Some employees resign their positions because of abusive supervision. Tepper (2000) defined abusive supervision as a manager's display of hostile verbal and nonverbal communication and behaviors toward their employees. Most organizational leaders know employees do not leave their jobs; they leave their bosses (Matthieu & Babiak, 2016). Although managers do not physical abuse employees, managers continue their abusive behavior until the manager terminates the employee's employment or the employee changes their behavior (Gabler & Hill, 2015; Tepper, 2000). Mathieu and Babiak (2015) referred to abusive supervisors as dark leaders; dark leaders have negative effects on employees' productivity, which affect organizational performance. Employees experience lower job and life satisfaction, lower creativity, lower commitment to the organization, and increased organizational deviance when they suffer from abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000).

United States-based organizational leaders lose $23.8 billion each year because of abusive supervision practices, which yield productivity losses, absenteeism, and increased healthcare costs (Tepper, 2000). Employees who report abusive supervision believe organizational leaders are responsible for the abusive supervisor's actions (Shoss, Eisenberger, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013). Although employers with abusive supervision practices increase the likelihood of resignations, researchers know little about the underlying causes of abusive supervision (Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey,

2013). Kernan, Racicot, and Fisher (2016) argued employees are more likely to tolerate abusive supervisors if employees believe organizational leaders do not support such behavior.

Garcia, Restubog, Kiewitz, Scott, and Tang (2014) argued researchers do not study the broader workplace environment, or climate, as a fundamental factor, which fosters abusive supervision. The policies, procedures, and practices that organizational leaders reward, support, and expect constitute the organizational climate. Organizational leaders realize the difference between the organizational climate and psychological climate. As stated earlier, organizational leaders create the organizational culture. An employee creates a psychological culture on an individual basis; the employee bases their perception on individual and personal observations (Garcia et al., 2014).

More than 20 million Americans suffer abusive working conditions and climates daily (Stephens, Hill, & Gentry, 2005). The employee that suffer from abusive leadership are not the only ones to suffer. Farh and Chen (2014) revealed abusive supervisors affect the entire team of employees. Abusive supervisors often experience situations or events that create irrational or tempting impulses to engage in abusive behavior (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave, & Christian, 2015). Barnes et al (2015) agreed with Tepper (2000) and stated some supervisors publicly shame their employees for making mistakes. Brees, Martinko, and Harvey (2016) countered Barnes et al. (2015) and Tepper's (2000) argument that abusive supervisors were the exclusive sources of abuse. Employees may view supervisors as abusive when supervisors are not. Employers may initiate the employee's personality-driven perceptions, which employees distort because

of their own personality factors (Brees, Martinko, & Harvey, 2016). Harvey, Harris, Gillis, and Martinko (2014) added some employees experience psychological entitlements, which means the employer offers the employees what the employees want, or they consider the employer as abusive. Whether real or perceived, bullied employees rely on their perceptions to decide whether to remain with the company (Bano & Malik, 2013).

Burnout

Lu and Gursoy (2013) and Tews, Michel, and Stafford (2013) suggested a positive relationship between employee burnout and employees' turnover intentions. In service-oriented organizations, employers overemphasize the notion that customers are always right to their employees although employees serve customers who are not always rational (Su, Bonn, & Cho, 2016). Employees suffer stress in such environments because they must put aside their feelings for the benefit of the customer and organization. Working in high-stress workplaces increase employees' burnout rate because employees experience distress, psychological and job-specific strain, and emotional exhaustion (Adams & Webster, 2013; Suner-Soler et al., 2014; Wilson & Holmvall, 2013). Employers expect as high as 62.6% turnover rate in service organizations because of rapid employee burnout (Su, Bonn, & Cho, 2016).

Burnout is not one-dimensional. Employees deplete three dimensions of their well-being when they experience burnout: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced personal achievement (Yanchus, Beckstrand, & Osatuke, 2015). Employers believe the employees are emotionally exhausted when they

realize their employees experience elevated levels of stress. That is not the case. Employees need to depersonalize, or distance themselves, from the workplace because remaining lead to negative feelings toward the employer and coworkers (Yanchus, Beckstrand, & Osatuke, 2015). Without the feeling of personal accomplishment, employees lose their organizational loyalty and job satisfaction, which lead to reduced employee retention rates (Elegido, 2013; Masakure, 2015). Employers should know an employee's burnout state is multifaceted; the employee's psychological well-being, job attitude, and productivity levels create their individual burnout states (Innanen, Tolvanen, & Salmela-Aro, 2014; Leon, Halbesleben, & Paustian-Underdahl, 2015). To counteract burnout, some employers allow employees to work from home when available because employees continue their work at home after work hours, which lessens the amount of time available for home life (Presbitero, Roxas, & Chadee, 2016).

Researchers explored the relationship between difficult customers and service employees (Su, Bonn, & Cho, 2016). Employees who work in the service, education, engineering, healthcare, retail, banking, and insurance fields are most likely to experience burnout (Adams & Webster, 2013; Hur, Moon, & Han, 2015; Walker, van Jaarsveld, & Skarlicki, 2014; Wilson & Holmvall, 2013). To protect themselves from uncivil customer behaviors, employees defend themselves against the abusive customers, which leaves the employees emotionally exhausted (Su, Bonn, & Cho, 2016). Hobfoll (1989) referred to employees' defense mechanisms as the conservations of resource (COR) theory, which Hobfall described the employees' feelings after numerous interactions with unruly customers. Su, Bonn, and Cho (2016) believed employees experience burnout

when their physical, emotional, and psychological resources deplete and employers do not offer support to replenish their resources.

Employees who encounter uncivil customers believe stress is part of the job demands (Bunk & Magley, 2013). Kottke and Sharafinski (1988) conducted a study on job stress and found employees can manage stress if they receive emotional support from family and friends, organizational leaders, and favorable job conditions. Demerouti, Bakker, Arnold, and Leiter (2014) extended the job stress research and argued employees reduce their stress levels if coworkers and organizational leaders provide the employees with support. Employees strengthen their emotional bonds, which increases their dedication and commitment to their organizations once they receive their leaders' support (Tian, Zhang, & Zou, 2014). Walker et al (2014) noted employees under stress misbehave toward their coworkers, which make them workplace bullies. Su, Bonn, and Cho (2016) suggested employees discussed negative customer behaviors with their employees to create training scenarios and learning opportunities for other employees. Employees learned and mastered techniques to assist them with unruly customers.

Employee Voice

Hirschmanin (1970) was first to coin the term *employee voice*. Hirschmanin believed people had only two options when they respond to dissatisfaction: (a) leave the organization or (b) voice their dissatisfaction. Borcaa and Baesu (2014) and Hume and Leonard (2013) expanded upon Hirschmanin's *voice* definition by adding employee voice characterizes the intentional expression of work-related ideas, information, and opinions. Employees are more willing to remain and commit to their respective organizations when

they believe organizational leaders value their voices and opinions (Cheng, Lu, Chang, & Johnstone, 2013; Rees, Alfes, & Gatenby, 2013). Gounaris and Tzempelikos (2013) and Kaufman (2014) defined employee voice as the process where employers provide information to employees and involve employees as part of the joint decision-making team within the company. Organizational leaders use two types of employee voice in their organizations: (a) indirect and (b) direct voice practices. Employees employ indirect voice practices when they join or take part in their collective bargaining or work unions. Employees consider indirect voice practices as passive mechanisms because they depend on the union representatives to speak for the employees (Kwon, Farndale, & Park, 2016). In contrast to indirect voice, employees use direct voice when they do not want formal groups to represent them.

Employers who allow employees to use their direct voices at the individual levels create opportunities for employees to make work-related work decisions (Kwon, Farndale, & Park, 2016). Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, and Kalleberg (2000) developed the AMO Model, which stands for ability, motivation, and opportunity. Employees have the ability and opportunity to participate in direct voice because employers motivate them to do so (Appelbaum et al., 2000). If employers suppress either component of the AMO Model, employees lack motivation, resign, and leave the company to work for employers of competing organizations (Constantin & Baias, 2015).

Organizational leaders allocate valuable resources to produce well-defined vision and mission statements, organizational rules, and strategic plans but their work is meaningless if the employees do not know or understand the vision (Constantin & Baias,

2015). Employers view their internal communication constructs as building blocks of their organizational cultures. Employers ensure all employees understand the goals and purpose so employees can assist others to work toward the common objective (Constantin & Baias, 2015).

Organizational leaders who do not offer internal communication or allow employee voice should consider implementing the constructs because employees have other options to state their views. Consider the following example. In July 2013, a chef who worked for Golden Coral recorded and posted a video to YouTube showing raw hamburger meat next to the trash dumpster in the back of the restaurant (Wilkle, 2013). The chef tried to file a complaint with the county health department prior to posting the video on YouTube to advise them of the Golden Coral's practices and no one from the health department contacted the chef. The chef decided to post the video to inform people what employees at Golden Coral did to their food. Golden Coral organizational leaders disputed the video but to no avail. Golden Coral experienced substantial damage to their brand, public image, and profitability (Bennett, 2013).

With social media technology, employees have unprecedented power in the marketplace (Miles & Mangold, 2014). One employee's video affected an entire organization's public image and profitability. If employers at Golden Coral instituted internal communication mediums, the chef may not have recorded or posted the video to YouTube. An employee's voice can damage an organization in more discrete technological venues. For instance, an employee can file a complaint on the U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commissions' website by selecting the link from any cell

phone or internet platform (Miles & Mangold, 2014). In 2012, the U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission received 99,412 complaints, which was 31% higher than 2006 complaint rates (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2013). The Federal Stored Communications Act (SCA) provides employees the opportunity to voice their opinions; the National Labor Relations Act states employers cannot fire employees who post negative information about their employers or organizations (National Labor Relations Board, 2013). Organizational leaders inherit the risk of the employee's voice causing external damage to the organization when leaders do not create and manage internal communication modes within the organization (Miles & Mangold, 2014).

Emotional Labor

Researchers have studied emotions in the workplace since the late 1800s (Ozturk, Bahcecik, Ozcelik, & Kemer, 2015). Cossette and Hess (2015) referred to emotional labor as *surface acting*. Industries where employees use their emotional labor are in hospitality, healthcare, service, and education. Employees deliver courteous service to sometimes demanding, difficult, and oppositional customers (Cossette & Hess, 2015; Kaya & Tekin, 2013). Hochschild (1983) defined emotional labor as an employee's ability to manage their feelings and emotions to produce a physically observable facial and bodily visage for their customers. Ozkan (2013) expanded upon Hochschild's definition of emotional labor by adding emotional labor is a second duty in addition to the job's basic tasks. Since employees employ their emotional labor, employers purchase employees' emotional labor, which means it has monetary value (Ozkan, 2013).

Organizational leaders develop emotional display rules to ensure employees suppress any negative emotions while at work because employees must deliver service with a smile and enthusiasm (Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005). Depending on the occupation, Karatepe and Choubtarash (2014); Berry and Cassidy (2013); Picardo, Lopez-Fernandez, and Hervas (2013); and Lee and Ok (2015) argued emotional labor have positive and negative consequences. Some of those negative consequences are feelings of robotics, role overload, lack of empathy, absenteeism, and low morale (Berry & Cassidy, 2013). Tunc, Gitmez, and Boothby (2014) added employees would also experience emotional exploitation, depression, alienation, loss of identity, and emotional labor depletion.

Modekurti-Mahato, Kumar, and Raju (2014) suggested emotions are the intra-psychic states employees assume when they face factors such as job stress, professional relationships with organizational leaders, job environment, and compensation. The fundamental component of emotional labor is that employers dictated, whether in writing or verbally, how their employees respond to certain stimuli while in the workplace. Since employees must display emotions displaying emotions in the workplace, employees compare and evaluate themselves to the organization's institutionalized emotional labor rules and procedures (Modekurti-Mahato et al., 2014). Whenever employers notify employees that they are not adhering to the organization's emotional labor policies, the employees adopt surface acting, which is the false facade employees use while at work. Medical technicians, nurses, and doctors are renowned for their emotional labor benefits. Funeral directors exhibit emotional labor to ensure their customers receive the support and level of service they require at times of need (Modekurti-Mahato et al., 2014).

Employees experiencing emotional labor depletion are more likely to resign their positions with the organization.

Transition

In Section 1, I provided (a) the background of the problem, (b) the problem statement, (c) the purpose statement, (d) nature of the study, (e) research question, (f) conceptual framework, (g) operational definitions, (h) assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, (i) significance of the study, and (j) a review of the processional and academic literature. In Section 2, I discussed the (a) role of the researcher, (b) qualitative research design, (c) case study method, (d) population and sampling I conducted in the study, (e) ethical research, (f) validity and reliability, (g) data collection, (h) analysis, and (i) organization. In Section 3, I (a) presented my findings, (b) discussed my findings' application to professional practice, (c) listed implications for social change, (d) offered recommendations for action, (e) proposed recommendations for further research, (f) provided my reflections, and (g) closed with a conclusion. I anticipate my findings addressed a deficit in business practice and offered best practices to organizational leaders to retain their high-performing healthcare employees.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I describe my role as the researcher, the qualitative research method, and the single case study design. Furthermore, I offer a thorough justification for my plan to select participants. I complete Section 2 with a discussion of the protection of participants' confidentiality, ethical research, validity and reliability, collection of data, data analysis, and data organization.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies healthcare managers used to retain high-performing healthcare employees. The targeted population encompassed six managers from a healthcare organization in Central Texas who had demonstrated successful strategies to retain high-performing healthcare employees. The results of the study may contribute to social change by identifying strategies to retain high-performing healthcare employees in challenging workplaces. The healthcare organization's patients benefit from interacting with tenured medical professionals who understand the patients' needs and provide the continuity of care patients require, which fosters confidence and long-term relationships.

Role of the Researcher

I served as the main data collection instrument and conducted my research in the Central Texas region, particularly near the greater Austin area. My role in this study was to facilitate semistructured interviews, conduct data analysis and member checking, and synthesize the data to answer my research question. My duties in the research included formulating my research question, remaining mindful of any cultural phenomena

perceptions, welcoming and embracing change, and ensuring that my personal values and ideals did not create bias in my study (Koch, Niesz, & McCarthy, 2013). In addition, my role was to base my analysis on one or more cases to uncover comprehensive explanations of the phenomena (Abma & Stake, 2014). I used the guidance of Koch et al. (2013) and Abma and Stake (2014) in the processes of study participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and findings evaluation.

I considered the topic of healthcare employee retention when I spoke to a longtime friend who stated that she was considering resigning as a registered nurse after 5 months of employment. After some preliminary research in Walden University's Library, I realized that employee retention was a major concern for the healthcare industry, and I decided to explore it for this study. I did not have previous experiences with healthcare administration or any relationships with the study participants.

The authors of the Belmont Report noted three basic principles that apply to interviewing and interacting with humans: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Fiske & Hauer, 2014). I exhibited respect for persons because I treated everyone as an autonomous agent; if individuals had diminished autonomy, I protected them from potential harm (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). In exercising beneficence, I treated every individual in an ethical manner by respecting his or her decisions and ensuring his or her wellbeing through protection from harm (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). In keeping with the principle of justice, I acted fairly and equally when interacting with individuals (U.S. Department of Health

& Human Services, 2016). Adams and Miles (2013) argued that all study participants should have similar benefits, inconveniences, and access to the research.

Sinatra, Kienhues, and Hofer (2014) argued that researchers' ability to comprehend and accept their personal biases and viewpoints aids them in understanding other people's views. To ensure trustworthiness in my data collection techniques, I implemented lessons I learned from the Human Research Protections course that the National Institute of Health (NIH) offers online, which allowed me to minimize bias through bracketing (Appendix A). Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) defined *bracketing* as a researcher's ability not to employ previous knowledge, experience, or bias when conducting research. Bracketing consists of two practices: (a) setting aside assumptions and (b) understanding one's new level of comprehension of the subject matter as the study evolves (Overgaard, 2015). To aid my attempts to minimize bias, I used methodological triangulation, which involved the collection of data from various sources. Methodological triangulation improved the credibility and trustworthiness of my study (Yin, 2014). To improve the accuracy of my study, I used member checking, which was the process of interpreting transcriptions and capturing precise meanings (Andraski, Chandler, Powell, Humes, & Wakefield, 2014). All study participants had the opportunity to review my interpretations, and I made all necessary changes.

I limited bias by being open-minded and becoming an investigator (Bernard & Bernard, 2013). To ensure that I remained open-minded, I used an interview protocol as a guide to data collection while realizing that I should use the same interview process for all study participants (Bond et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Marshall and Rossman (2016)

indicated that I could use an interview protocol to educate study participants on what to expect during the interview process.

Participants

Following Yin's (2014) guidelines on qualitative research, I conducted a multiple-participant study using one unit in an exact setting to yield accurate results. The participants in this study worked in a healthcare organization in Central Texas that was part of a large healthcare company ranked as a Fortune 500 organization. The company's size (3,000 employees) was the reason that I chose to sample its managers for the study. Researchers should base participant selection on their study criteria (Torrance, 2013; Wahyuni, 2012; Yin, 2014). The eligibility criteria for study participants were the following: (a) must have been a manager in the healthcare industry for 1 year or longer, (b) must have experienced less than 10% voluntary employee turnover during the last 12 months, and (c) must have been a full-time employee with the healthcare organization. I identified six potential participants from the managerial population for ideal and purposeful sampling (Robinson, 2014; Suri, 2011, Yin, 2014).

To ensure that the participants were adequate for the study, I visited the company's human resource department and inquired about managers' retention rates since 2014. I contacted one of the senior leaders of the healthcare organization to request permission to study its managers. This leader stated that the organization would participate in the study and signed the letter of cooperation. I received IRB approval; the approval number is 03-31-17-0638277, which expires on March 30, 2018. Upon IRB approval, I contacted the human resource department and requested a list of potential

participants that met the study criteria. When I received the list from the human resource department, I emailed 104 eligible participants and invited them to participate in my study. I allowed eligible participants 3 days to decide whether to participate or not. After the 3-day period, I selected six participants from the interested group of potential participants using my participant selection process. I emailed an informed consent form to each participant to indicate his or her agreement to participate in the study prior to scheduling interviews. Study participants replied to my informed consent email with *I consent,* which indicated their consent. Siu, Hung, Lam, and Cheng (2013) noted that a researcher must maintain a professional relationship throughout the research process.

I started the initial participant recruitment process upon approval of this proposal and IRB approval (IRB approval 03-31-17-0638277) to ensure that I had enough time to vet potential participants and build professional relationships prior to their respective interviews (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013; Namageyo-Funa et al., 2014). Before I conducted data collection, I discussed employee retention with participants to ensure that they had knowledge of the topic prior to the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I spoke with each participant and checked his or her knowledge of the topic to confirm that this knowledge aligned with my overarching research question. All participants understood the concepts of employee retention. Confidentiality and trust were fundamental to building new business relationships **(**Birchall, 2014; Nudzor, 2013). I assured the participants that I would secure their electronic and written interview data in my personal combination safe in my residence for 5years, after which I would destroy the data.

Research Method and Design

To study phenomena, researchers may use three research methods: (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed methods. Qualitative researchers may consider grounded theory, narrative, case study, phenomenology, or ethnography as design choices (Earley, 2014). I could have chosen any of the research methods and garnered satisfactory results. I chose the qualitative research method and case study research design because I intended to explore strategies to retain high-performing healthcare employees.

Research Method

Researchers use the qualitative research method to understand people from economic, cultural, and social perspectives. The qualitative research method has a distinct advantage over the quantitative method and mixed methods because researchers can investigate people's feelings and attitudes with this approach (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). For this study, I chose the qualitative research method because I planned to identify successful healthcare managers and inquire about their employee retention strategies using an interview tool. Qualitative research allows researchers to ask *how* and *why* questions to gain deeper understanding (Yin, 2014). Since 1996, researchers who used the qualitative research method in many areas garnered success beyond reasonable doubt (Bailey, 2014).

Solnet, Ford, Robinson, Ritchie, and Olsen (2014) stated that qualitative research involves determining and probing traits and characteristics; this process offered me an understanding of why some healthcare managers did not retain their high-performing employees. In contrast, researchers use the quantitative research method to examine

social phenomena and human problems from a theoretical perspective using statistical analysis (Yilmaz, 2013). I chose to use the qualitative research method to explore strategies that healthcare managers used to retain their high-performing employees. Qualitative research allows researchers to ask *how* and *why* questions to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon.

Choosing the quantitative research method requires researchers to formulate and test hypotheses to analyze dependent variables (Babones, 2015). Because my objective was not to test hypotheses and evaluate variables, the quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study. Mertens (2014) and Sparkes (2014) argued that the mixed-methods approach yields complex problems for researchers because of the combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. Researchers use mixed methods to gather data through quantitative and qualitative designs concurrently. The outcomes of the mixed method approach are subjective qualitative data and numerical quantitative data (McKim, 2015). My goal was to explore strategies that healthcare managers used to retain their high-performing employees, not to collect and analyze quantitative data. The mixed method was therefore not appropriate for this study.

Research Design

I chose the single case study design for this qualitative research study. After reviewing the professional and academic literature on employee retention, I realized that I could choose case study, grounded theory, narrative, ethnography, or phenomenological designs to explore this phenomenon. Hussein, Hirst, Salyers, and Osuji (2014) suggested that new qualitative researchers struggle with grounded theory design because they tend

to influence results by selecting samples instead of conducting random sampling. Researchers must remain mindful of validity in grounded theory research because the design allows researchers to place data into preconceived categories, which can introduce bias (Engward, 2013; Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014). The narrative design does not provide enough raw data to conduct research (Baskarada, 2014). Yin (2014) argued that researchers use the narrative design to learn about structural methods of analysis and social phenomena. The ethnographic and phenomenological designs require extensive data collection from individuals or groups over an extended period by exploring personal views and experiences (Bonnett, 2013; Yin, 2014). I did not choose the ethnographic or the phenomenological design for this study because of time constraints. Researchers use ethnographic design to observe participants' perspectives, cultures, and practices to assess and understand their shared experiences (Kaplan et al., 2014). Before starting an ethnographic ethnological research study, Siwale (2015) recommended that researchers understand that using the design is expensive because of the time researchers must spend with the participants and related expenses that researchers accrue with visits.

Data saturation is the point at which researchers have gained an adequate level of depth and breadth of information (O'Reilly & Parker, 2015; Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) argued that the typical number of interviews in qualitative studies is 11 to 16. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) noted that qualitative researchers could reach data saturation with six participants. I sampled six participants for this study to reach data saturation, which aligned with Yin's (2014) argument that researchers must determine the appropriate

sample size for data saturation. Data saturation occurred once the study participants did not offer new patterns or themes (Ragab & Arisha, 2014). I knew that I had reached data saturation when I did not discover new evidence or information that related to my research question (Suri, 2013). I achieved data saturation by asking eight healthcare managers specific, open-ended interview questions and comparing their responses until the managers presented no new information or themes.

Population and Sampling

Researchers must select study participants from the target population when conducting qualitative research (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). I interviewed six managers in a healthcare organization in Central Texas to conduct this study. Guest et al. (2006) argued that I could reach data saturation with fewer than six participants. To gather data, I used the single case study design to discover and understand how managers retained their high-performing employees within the managers' natural environment.

Population

Population is a statistical term that denotes the entire data set (Gravetter & Walnau, 2016). The population for this study consisted of 398 managers that worked in a healthcare organization in Central Texas on a full-time and permanent basis. For the purposes of this study, *managers* were supervisors, team leaders, directors, or managers; they held a leadership role and managed people. I narrowed my population to 104, which was 26% of the total managerial population. My sample size represented the population sufficiently (Englander, 2016). From my sample size of 104, I selected six participants. Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey (2016) and Harf et al. (2015) posited that the

probability of reaching data saturation improved with a sample size of six rather than using smaller sample sizes. The healthcare organization had more than 3,000 employees, which made it a suitable candidate for my research. Although the healthcare organization was in Texas, some of its managers worked remotely in other states, so my interviews occurred in person and telephonically. The population included private sector managers, not public or military participants.

Sampling Method

Researchers using the qualitative research method must guard against compromising the credibility of their study by providing justification for their sampling decisions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers have many types of sampling methods to consider for their studies when conducting qualitative research. Some of the most used sampling methods are convenience sampling, snowball sampling, random sampling, criterion sampling, and stratified sampling (Suri, 2011). Researchers should allow the research question to guide them to the most appropriate sampling method (Palinkas et al., 2013).

The process of selecting participants suitable for this study was purposeful sampling (Hoeven, Janssen, Roes, & Koffijberg, 2015). Boardman and Ponomariov (2014) and Suri (2011) stated purposeful sampling allowed researchers to select and vet participants for their study by choosing participants who met specific requirements of the study. Palinkas et al. (2013) indicated purposeful sampling was a popular choice for qualitative researchers because of the importance on data collection. Although a popular choice, purposeful sampling had a weakness. Researchers could reach data saturation

without reaching practical generalizability (Palinkas et al., 2013). Healthcare managers explained their strategies to retain their high-performing employees; readers should not assume other employee retentions strategies were nonexistent because the additional strategies were not a part of this study's findings.

Qualitative researchers realized sampling was important to the success of their research (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Yirdaw, 2016). To select significant organizational representatives for a study was an example of purposeful sampling and was appropriate for my case study design (Kaczynski, Salmona, & Smith, 2014; Poulis, Poulis, & Plakoyiannaki, 2013; Yin, 2014). Fusch and Ness (2015) indicated the importance of sample size to ascertain the data saturation level in research. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) argued the typical interview size for qualitative studies is 11 to 16. I sampled six participants for this study and reached data saturation, which aligned with Yin's (2014) argument that researchers must determine the appropriate sample size for data saturation.

Cleary, Horsfall, and Hayter (2014) and Lee (2014) stated researchers must consider the adequacy of the sample size and determine the quality of the participants' data when conducting qualitative studies. My sample population was managers who manage people. Harf et al. (2015) suggested I improved the likelihood of reaching data saturations with a sample size of six. Not all managers had the official title of *manager*. I realized the quality of the participants' data was imperative to reach data saturation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). I chose six participants for this study to reach data saturation.

In preparation for the interviews, I chose a conference or interview room not in the same proximity of the participants' offices because I wanted to limit the probability of disruption (Radcliffe, 2013). I silenced any telephones in the interview rooms and powered down computers. I placed a sign outside the interview door indicating the room was in use and only disturb for emergencies. For participant confidentiality, I did not include the participant's names on the signs or dry erase board.

To qualify for this study, participants must have had a proven history of implementing retention strategies for their high-performing employees. Participants met the additional criteria below to participate: (a) must have been a manager in the healthcare industry for one year or longer, (b) must have experienced no more than 10% voluntary employee turnover during the last 12 months, and (c) must have been a fulltime employee with the healthcare organization.

Ethical Research

To ensure I conducted ethical research, I did not begin the study until Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my proposal. I understood I could not visit the study organization and interview its employees without receiving permission from an organization official. Before I conducted interviews, I sent the potential participants who met the criteria of the study an informed consent form and noted they could withdraw from the study at any time without ramifications at any point in the study (Edlund, Hartnett, Heider, Perez, & Lusk, 2014; Hardicre, 2014). Participants could withdraw from the study verbally or in writing, whichever they chose. To thank the participants for their time and information, I offered each participant a $25 Visa gift card, which was

enough to buy lunch or dinner but not enough to create coercion. Singer and Ye (2013) believed researchers who offered small monetary gifts could persuade employees to participate in the study and increased their feedback. After the interviews and member checking, I delivered the gift cards to local employees and mailed gift cards to remote employees.

To ease participants' anxiety of confidentiality was the basis of ethical protection of participants (Fisher, 2015). I did not use the participant's personal identifying information for any reason throughout the study. I did not mention the actual name of the study organization in any form or faction. I referred to the study organization as *Acme Healthcare*. I assigned a pseudo name to each participant, ranging from M1, M2, M3, etc. As I stated earlier, I secured and stored all study documents in my personal combination safe in my residence. I am the only person with the combination. After the mandatory 5-year timeframe, I will destroy all electronic and handwritten notes to protect the right of all participants. The IRB approval number for this study was 03-31-17-0638277 and expires on March 30, 2018.

Data Collection Instruments

Elo et al. (2014), and Ozer and Douglas (2015) stated I could use semistructured interviews, member checking, focus groups, achieved data, observations, or a combination of these approaches to conduct qualitative studies. I served as the primary data collection instrument and used the semistructured interview technique as the second instrument to conduct interviews. I supported my research topic with applicable interview questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Davis (2013) specified I could use the

interview design to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the study participants' thoughts and perspectives. To guide the structure of the interviews, I used the interview protocol, which I placed in this study as an appendix attachment (Appendix B). Although I used the interview guide as a template to conduct interviews, I remained mindful that data collection procedures should not be routine; researchers with experience in interviewing often took advantage of unanticipated opportunities during their interactions (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Taking advantage of interview opportunities did not mean I influenced the interviewee's discussion toward a biased position. Researchers used the semistructured interview to receive positive, negative, and mixed responses from participants (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012).

I used member checking as the third data collection instrument. To control the quality of my interpretations, Andraski et al. (2014) suggested using member checking to ensure study participants reviewed the data to check for completeness of thoughts, correct term usage, and accurate interpretations. Researchers who used member checking heightened the trustworthiness and academic rigor of their studies (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). To conduct member checking, I analyzed the data, wrote a 2-page summary for each interview session, and gave it to the study participants for their review (Allen, 2015; Moreland & Apker, 2015). That served as their opportunity to offer comments or clarification on my interpretations. I corrected all interpretations errors and conducted member checking, again, with the respective participants.

Data Collection Technique

I used the semistructured interview technique to conduct my face-to-face and telephonic interviews. I used one of the company's interview rooms for the interviews so the participants would not become distracted with telephone calls, cellular phone notifications, or fellow employees with inquires. I interviewed each participant individually and digitally recorded the interviews with an electronic audio recording device. I ensured all participants consented to audio recording before I scheduled their interview sessions.

The advantage of using the interview tool was researchers obtained insight and content that was accurate for their study (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The fundamental reason researchers conducted qualitative research was to explore phenomenon and interviews served as the principle instrument (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). Radcliffe (2013) indicated the interview instrument allowed researchers to ask questions to clarify participants' responses. The ability to ask follow-up questions ensured quality data. Another advantage of the semistructured interview was I had increased the probability that the study participants would be honest and transparent when speaking about their experiences.

Semistructured interviews have some disadvantages. One limitation of the semistructured interview is participants may not be comfortable in a different setting. Conducting interviews outside of the participants' work area can cause them to become uncomfortable, which can restrict their willingness to participate (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Radcliffe, 2013; Yin, 2014). The different setting was not my only concern; I

checked the interview room for acoustics and sound quality because I did not want others to disrupt our interviews or to hear the interview through the walls (Beach et al., 2013). To ensure professionalism, I prepared my recording equipment prior to the interviews and tested them for technical problems. Before I met with the participants, I asked their permission to record our conversations. Another disadvantage of the interview collection technique is the time researchers schedule to conduct interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I scheduled an hour for each interview and increased the interview time to 90 minutes if the participant exceeded the hour-mark. Using semistructured interview questions focused my interview and limited bias, which was another disadvantage. Bevan (2014) noted semistructured interviews were essential in controlling and avoiding bias in qualitative research.

I offered each participant an hour timeframe during the workweek they deemed acceptable, as I did not want to force them to interview at times that were not suitable for their schedules. I asked each participant eight questions (Appendix C). Although I planned to extend the interview sessions by 30 minutes if interviews exceeded the 60-minite timeframe, I did not have to. We conducted all interviews within an hour.

My second data collection technique was triangulation. In qualitative research, researchers used triangulation to develop an inclusive understanding of a phenomenon by gathering data sources with multiple methods (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). The four types of triangulation were (a) method triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) data source triangulation. Casey and Murphy (2013) indicted researchers could use method triangulation to conduct

two or more data collection methods for the same research study. I chose and used method triangulation. Method triangulation could be sequential or used simultaneously. If I used one data collection method prior to the second data collection method, I would have conducted sequential triangulation. If I used both data collection methods at the same time, I would have conducted simultaneous triangulation (Casey & Murphy, 2013). Triangulation was a precursor for confirmation. Researchers obtained research confirmation when they collected data from numerous sources to explore phenomena (Casey & Murphy, 2013).

Researchers had mixed views on the use of triangulation in social research studies. Hussein (2015) argued an advantage of using triangulation was it increased researchers' understanding of the research phenomenon. Yin (2014) believed another advantage of using triangulation was it served as a validity measure to increase the accuracy of the research. These advantages allowed me to delve deeper in the subject matter and confirm similarities between different data sources (Houghton et al., 2013).

Triangulation had several disadvantages as well. Some researchers did not conduct the triangulation process in a uniformed manner, which led to fluctuating methods and difficulty explaining their techniques (Murdock, 2017). Murdock (2017) noted another disadvantage to triangulation was most researchers received training in quantitative or qualitative research. The researchers may not have the appropriate training with other research methods to implement triangulation, which could result in decreased validity in the study (Murdock, 2017).

I used member checking to increase the accuracy of my transcription interpretation (Andraski, Chandler, Powell, Humes, & Wakefield, 2014). Using member checking also ensured I used the correct verbiage and word meaning prior to completion of the study (Archbold, Dahle, & Jordan, 2014; Forber-Pratt, 2015; Fusch & Fusch, 2015; Houghton et al., 2013). After I conducted the interviews, I transcribed each encounter and offered a summary of each interview to the respective participant to review for accuracy. That process allowed each participant to evaluate my interpretations and make any corrections before I started the coding process. If the participant stated my interpretation were inaccurate, I gave the participant the opportunity to correct or expound on any points to ensure I had an accurate account of our interview.

Data Organization Technique

Josselson (2014) argued the analysis of data, data collection procedures, and critical reflection techniques were superior to others. To ensure the data I collected from qualitative research retained its value and rigor, I used appropriate data organization techniques to guarantee worth (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). Qualitative analysis software offered enhanced trustworthiness through its data organization processes, which assisted me in documenting the processes (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012).

Sarma, Islam, and Gazi (2013), Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2014), and Bor (2013) posited the importance of using a naming convention in qualitative research and the usefulness of digital files. To track the data, I used a naming convention for study participants and data tracking. I referred to participants as M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, and M6, which protected their confidentiality and ensured privacy. None of the

participants knew their study identifier. After I gathered data, I stored it a word processing software and used the participants naming convention to label and sort the data. This action ensured confidential digital file storage.

I selected NVivo Pro 11 as my qualitative analysis software tool, which I used to code my raw data into themes and focused my analysis (Hermanowicz, 2013; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013; Koekemoer, 2014). Kaefer, Roper, and Sinha (2015) argued that MaxQDA, NVivo, and ATLAS.ti were good choices to conduct qualitative analysis. Before the interviews, I create an electronic folder for each participant; each folder contained the interview notes and other raw information I collected before, during, and after the interview sessions for each participant. Pocock (2015), Young & MacPhail (2015), and Cowan (2014) stated researchers could alleviate bias by using a reflective journal. Yin (2014) noted I should use a reflective journal to record observations and notes while conducting interviews. I transcribed the handwritten reflective journal notes and stored them in the respective participant's electronic folder on my personal computer. My personal computer was password-protected and I was the only person with access to it. I stored all data in my locked briefcase as I traveled to study participants and back to my home. After I transcribed the reflective journal notes into digital files, I transferred all electronic data and files to a password-protected external thumb drive and put it in my safe for 5 years. After the mandatory 5-year timeframe, I will delete all electronic data files and destroy handwritten notes to ensure I complied with Walden University's data storage policy.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, researchers used triangulation to develop an inclusive understanding of a phenomenon by gathering data sources with multiple methods (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). The four types of triangulation were (a) method triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) data source triangulation. Casey and Murphy (2013) indicted researchers could use method triangulation to conduct two or more data collection methods for the same research study.

Methodological Triangulation

I used method triangulation in my study. Koch et al. (2013), Overgaard (2015), and Yin (2015) noted researchers used methodical triangulation to limit bias by collecting data from multiple data sources. Method triangulation could be sequential or used simultaneously. If I used one data collection method prior to the second data collection method, I would be conducting sequential triangulation. Conversely, using both data collection methods at the same time constituted simultaneous triangulation (Casey & Murphy, 2013). Triangulation was a precursor for confirmation. Researchers obtained research confirmation when they collected data from numerous sources to explore phenomena (Casey & Murphy, 2013).

Recursive Five-Phase Cycle

Yin (2014) addressed a recursive five-phase cycle to analyze qualitative data. The steps were: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c), reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. I used these five steps to analyze the categories I received from my

coding process, which were where I discovered information to answer my research question (Hyett & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Yazan, 2015).

Compiling. Compiling data was the first step in data analysis (Essary, 2014). In qualitative research, *compiling* was the process of organizing raw data for analysis (Haines, Summers, Turnbull, Turnbull, & Palmer, 2015). During the compiling phase, I created electronic databases for all interview notes, transcription, and reflective journal entries (Cox & McLeod, 2014; Yin, 2014). I entered all notes from each interview on the same date as the interview to ensure I did not lose any information or transcribe notes for the wrong interview session. This process assisted me with protecting the integrity of my data analysis and participants' confidentiality.

Disassembling. Disassembling was the second phase of data analysis (Essary, 2014). I used disassembling as a conventional process of open coding data (Castleberry, 2014). To conduct coding, I used NVivo software and received emerging themes from the coding program (Cox & McLeod, 2014; Yin, 2014). Siegle, Rubenstein, and Mitchell (2014) argued researchers disassembled the data into individual groups so they could focus on a group of data at a time. I assigned each individual group a category name, which allowed me to identify themes and patterns.

Reassembling. The next step in the data analysis process was reassembling (Essary, 2014). Cox and McLeod (2014) referred to reassembling as the procedure to either recombine or rearrange the data. I rearranged my data by ensuring I arranged all data with similar coding categories together (Haines et al., 2015). During this step, I had the option to arrange the data graphically or in tabular form (Haines et al., 2015). After I

reassembled the data by categories, I prioritized each category in order of significance. I knew the significance of each category by reviewing the data accumulation process within the qualitative software. As I reassembled the data, I observed connections to answer my research question (Yin, 2014).

Interpreting. The fourth step in the data analysis process was interpretation (Yin, 2014). During this phase, my goal was to interpret the meaning of the data by making sense of it (Essary, 2014; Castleberry, 2014, Ivankova, 2014; Samonis et al., 2014). Interpretation did not mean to describe; researchers must interpret the data to extract the meaning from it (Haines et al., 2015). Yin (2014) argued the researchers' ability to extract meaning from the data was a segment of case study research. In this step, I interpreted the data by reflecting on the interviews and analyzed the themes I received from my qualitative software program. After I completed my interpretation, I conducted member checking to ensure my interpretation were accurate. I summarized each interpretation and offered each participant the opportunity to check if for accuracy. I noted all irregularities with member checking and edited my interpretations to match.

Concluding. The fifth and last step in the data analysis process was concluding, which was where I discussed my findings (Haines et al., 2015). Cox and McLeod (2014) stated the concluding step presented researchers with the opportunity to explain their findings and conclusions they drew from their study. An important aspect of concluding was that the conclusion I drew indicated I followed the recursive 5-phase cycle (Yin, 2014). To draw conclusions, I ensured I comprehended the data by providing text and

tables from my interpretations so readers would understand how and why I arrived at my conclusions. I provided supportive examples from the data to strengthen my arguments.

Qualitative Software Use

Marshall and Rossman (2016) defined coding as the process of identifying core concepts, themes, or patterns across all interviews. Qualitative researchers had the option to code their transcribed interview data to deduce meaning (Dincer & Dincer, 2013; Forber-Pratt, Aragon, & Espelage, 2013; Taskila et al., 2014). Researchers must synthesize their data and findings because synthesis adds credibility to the study (Patton, 2015). I labeled each code and used the theme of the code as a naming convention.

Nassaji (2015) defined data analysis as the investigation of patterns, concepts, and recurring themes to provide vibrant and succinct interpretation. To find patterns and recurring themes, researchers used open-ended questions when they collected data (Rizo et al., 2015; Wilson, 2014). My primary analytic method was to identify patterns and themes with inductive analysis using a qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) (Paulus, Woods, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015). Patton (2015) stated researchers used inductive analysis to uncover themes and created codes to use throughout the analysis. I searched for strings of text related to my codes and aligned the strings of text in similar thematic groupings using NVivo 11 Pro (Yin, 2014). NVivo was a software program researchers used to analyze complex, text-based data that were unstructured. Before I made the decision to use NVivo, I compared NVivo to ATLAS.ti. Beside the differences in interfaces and available features of the programs, my gain from the program depended on my knowledge of coding because ATLAS.ti and NVivo did not serve as substitutes for

me in the coding process (Oliveira, Bitencourt, Zanardo dos Santos, & Teixeira, 2016). I stored all data in one project file in NVivo. ATLAS.ti's project file only stores project information along with other details (Major, 2016). MaxQDA could not code handwritten notes. MaxQDA could code qualitative data but I would have had to use another coding software to look for remaining codes because MaxQDA had an exclusion tool (Major, 2016). I chose NVivo as my primary qualitative analytical tool because it allowed me to classify, sort, and arrange my information and explore the complex relationships between them. One of the best features of NVivo was its capability to analyze material from audio files, which limited the probability of human error in transcription (Oliveira et al., 2016). Last, I compared the prices for the three qualitative coding programs and students could purchase a 12-month NVivo license for $75 (QSR International, 2017).

My conceptual plan to use NVivo consisted of seven steps: (a) sources, (b) nodes, (c) classifications, (d) clusters, (e) consultations, (f) reports, and (g) models (Oliveira, Bitencourt, Zanardo dos Santos, & Teixeira, 2016). During the sources step, I uploaded my raw data into NVivo. In the nodes step, I created categories that corresponded with my research question. As I stated earlier, NVivo was capable of transcribing audio data, which saved countless hours and money if I would have solicited the services of a professional transcription company. The program did not remove the codified parts from the data as it coded. This ability allowed me to receive a richer analysis by showing how many times the code appeared throughout the raw data (Oliveira et al., 2016). During the classification phase, the program structured the sources and categories by providing an

overview of each item. The program used the criteria I defined in my data collection to build the structures for classification (Oliveira et al., 2016). After classification, the program compared coding to facilitate the emergence of new insights during the cluster phase. In consultations, I created charts and graphs to display the research data. While creating my charts and graphs, I created models, which displayed the connections between my raw data to the research data (Oliveira et al., 2016). At the end of my qualitative analysis, I found frequent themes and insights and exported the findings to Microsoft Word or Microsoft Excel for further analysis.

Correlation of Key Themes

I compared key themes with the academic and professional literature, which included recently published studies. My goal was to compare the key themes to the literature and explain how the themes supported, refuted, or clarified peer-reviewed literature (Pryce**,** 2016). If a key theme related or varied from the literature or the Conceptual Framework, I reported it in the *Relationship to Existing Literature and Conceptual Framework* section for inclusion in the doctoral study.

Reliability and Validity

Elo et al. (2014) indicated four criteria to assess reliability, validity, soundness, and trustworthiness in qualitative research: (a) dependability, (b) credibility, (c) reliability, and (d) confirmation.

Reliability

Grossoehme (2014) referred to reliability as the ability to use the same methods and procedures as the original researcher to obtain comparable outcomes. Reliability was

imperative in qualitative research; researchers seek reliability to ensure their data were accurate (Sayed & Nelson, 2015). Dependability occurred when the findings of research were replicable (Matamonasa-Bennett, 2015). To confirm dependability, I used member checking after I transcribed the participants' data to ensure accuracy. I gave the participants the transcripts from their respective interviews; I instructed them to review my interpretation of the interviews and to notify me of any corrections. The process of allowing participants to review interview transcripts and notes was member checking. Through member checking, participants could correct, confirm, and clarify their comments before I proceeded with my research, which increased the credibility of the interaction and ensured my research process was efficient and effective (Caretta, 2015; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). I annotated all changes in a change log and stored it as a table in the original interview documents. If I discovered information that the participants did not offer in the interviews, I wrote the information in my reflective journal for future consideration (Grossoehme, 2014).

Validity

To guard against potential threats to the study's findings, researchers must ensure their research contained validity (Humphry & Heldsinger, 2014). Roulston (2014) argued researchers sought validity in their research to address associations between the study results and study methods. Qualitative researchers used validity protocols to promote accuracy in their research, which researchers used to explain the phenomenon (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2012). I used triangulation to obtain data from multiple sources (Hoque, Covaleski, & Gooneratne, 2013). Foster, Hays, and Alter (2013)

identified methodological as an acceptable form of triangulation, which was capable of processing data from more than one data collection method. Creditability referred to the degree researchers and scholars valued and believed the study's findings (Houghton et al., 2013). My goal was that readers would find my work simple to understand, yet pure and free from objections. Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) stated researchers could strengthen the trustworthiness of their studies by combining appropriate methods and instruments that applied to qualitative case studies. Conformability was the degree of neutrality in the study and independence of me (Kapoulas & Mitic, 2012). To seek conformity, I used the interview protocol in the same manner for all study participants. Using the interview protocol ensured I did not allow my biases to affect my study. Researchers used semistructured interview questions to avoid biases, which would result in increased research conformability (Kaczynski, Salmona, & Smith, 2014). Transferability meant the study findings could transfer to other qualitative research (Yilmaz, 2013). Although researchers should ensure transferability, only the study's readers could ascertain the study's transferability (Yilmaz, 2013). For my part in transferability, I followed the research process as close as possible by documenting and adhering to the research process. I did not depend on the participants for data. Turner, Cardinal and Burton (2015) relayed researchers could solicit and collect data from archival resources to conduct the methodological triangulation process. To ensure validity, I used methodological triangulation for the interview process, observations, and when performing the company's archival information review. Data saturation occurred once the study participants did not offer new patterns or themes (Ragab & Arisha, 2014).

I knew I had reached data saturation when I did discover new evidence or information that related to my research question (Suri, 2013). I achieved data saturation by asking six healthcare managers eight specific, open-ended interview questions and comparing their responses until the managers presented no additional information or themes.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I reviewed the role of the researcher, study participants, research method and design, population and sampling method, the need for ethical research, data collection, data analysis, data organization techniques, reliability, and validity. In Section 3, I (a) presented my findings, (b) discussed my findings' application to professional practice, (c) listed implications for social change, (d) offered recommendations for action, (e) proposed recommendations for further research, (f) provided my reflections, and (g) closed with a conclusion. I anticipate my findings addressed a deficit in business practice and offered best practices to organizational leaders to retain their high-performing healthcare employees. This concludes my research proposal.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that healthcare managers used to retain high-performing healthcare employees. I used the interview guide to conduct semistructured interviews with six healthcare managers in Central Texas who had been managers of people for at least 12 months, were full-time employees, and had experienced less than 10% voluntary employee turnover during the last 12 months. Drew (2014) indicated that researchers should consider management interviews because they provide insight into how managers have influenced their organizations through their individual perspectives and practices. The healthcare managers that agreed to participate in this study offered their best practices and insight concerning strategies that healthcare managers could use to retain their high-performing healthcare employees. My findings consisted of four themes that healthcare managers used to reduce voluntary employee turnover: (a) employee engagement, (b) leadership style, (c) job satisfaction, and (d) effective communication. In Section 3, I include the presentation of my findings, applications to professional practice, recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, and implications for social change. I end Section 3 by revealing my personal reflections and using my research to draw conclusions.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this single case qualitative study was the following: What strategies do healthcare managers use to retain high-performing

healthcare employees? I chose six study participants from a healthcare organization in Central Texas because it contained managers who had used strategies to retain their high-performing employees. I have included Acme Healthcare's managerial summary in the table below.

Table 2

Acme Healthcare Managerial Summary

No. of mgrs	Mgr for 12 mos	Mgrs with > 10% turnover	Mgrs contacted	Mgrs responded	Response rate
433	304	257	99	29	29.3%

I emailed 104 of Acme Healthcare's managers who met the study's participation criteria using Microsoft Outlook, and I received five notifications stating that the emails were undeliverable. Before I sent the email, I formatted a voting button option to allow the managers to respond with either *Yes* or *No* to indicate whether they would like to participate. Within two business days, I received 28 *Yes* responses from managers and one *No* response, which represented a response rate of 29.3% (Table 2).

I conducted all semistructured interview sessions in the healthcare organization's interview room. I reviewed organizational documents, which included reports of active managers, their retention rates, number of employees per manager, and retention rates per 12-month period. The analysis of organizational documents and interviews with multiple participants constituted methodical triangulation (Gibson, 2017). Foster, Hays, and Alter

(2013) identified methodical triangulation as an acceptable form of triangulation, which is the capacity to collect and process data using more than one data collection method.

Before each interview session, I ensured that the participant and I enjoyed a room that was free of distractions, provided privacy from other employees, and provided a comfortable setting to ask and respond to open-ended questions (Tran et al., 2017). After I secured each participant's consent, I used a digital audio recording device to record the interview session. After the interview sessions, I transcribed the audio recordings and uploaded them into NVivo 11 for Windows to identify themes and codes (Tran et al., 2017). I created electronic folders for each participant and used M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, and M6 as a naming convention, which, as Sarma, Islam, and Gazi (2013); Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2014); and Bor (2013) noted, protects the identity of study participants. As an added security measure, I did not conduct the interviews in numeric or sequential order.

After I coded the data from the interview sessions, I realized that I had discovered no new themes after the second interview, which was the point at which I reached data saturation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2015; Roy et al., 2015; Tran et al., 2017). To conduct member checking, I prepared summary documents containing my interpretations from each interview and submitted them to the respective participant for accuracy and truthfulness (Andraski, Chandler, Powell, Humes, & Wakefield, 2014). After sufficient time to review my summaries and subsequent corrections, all participants relayed my interpretations were true and accurate. I identified four major themes, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Emerging Themes and Frequencies

Emerging theme	Frequency	Percentage of total
Employee engagement	83	35.47%
Leadership style	72	30.76%
Job satisfaction	40	17.09%
Effective communication	39	16.66%
Total	233	100%

Theme 1: Employee Engagement

Campbell, Im, and Jisu (2014) asserted that employees resign from their positions when their skills and knowledge are not commensurate with the job requirements. Some organizations do not consider employee wellness and engagement a priority even though poor employee wellness and engagement lead to absenteeism and low morale (Rubel & Kee, 2013). Ghadi, Fernando, and Caputi (2013) conducted research on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement and found a strong correlation between the two variables. Conversely, Mozammel and Haan (2016) conducted research on the transformational leadership and employee engagement relationship and found no significant relationship between the variables. Mozammel and Haan (2016) concluded that their findings indicated that other variables might have fostered employee engagement. I would recommend that future researchers explore this dispute to add to the professional literature.

Employee engagement is the emotional commitment that employees have toward their organizations and goals, which results in the voluntary use of discretionary effort (Mackay, Allen, & Landis, 2017). Engaged employees experience pride and loyalty toward their organizations, are more productive, and perform above standards (Pandita & Ritesh, 2017). M5 revealed that high-performing employees motivated themselves to perform at elevated levels but leaders had to engage even the high-performing employees. M3 believed that mangers should reward employees and stated, "If one employee works harder and produces better results, they should be rewarded and recognized in kind. The 'participation trophy' approach breeds complacency and results in a minimum level of performance." M3's comments coincided with Ghost, Rai, Chauhan, Baranwal, and Srivastave's (2017) comments on rewarding employees. Ghost et al. (2017) argued that rewards cause employees to achieve increased performance. M4 stated that managers should encourage their employees to think about where they would like to be in 5 years and assist them in meeting their goals. M1 believed that managers were integral to employee engagement and team cohesiveness and argued for the importance of office events that are not business related to build comradery. To foster teamwork and a positive work environment, M1 offered company-paid lunches and scheduled volunteer opportunities at charity events so that employees could work together and promote social change in the community.

Employees as the priority. The most valuable and crucial resource that organizations have is their employees. Employees manage the effectiveness of the organization and serve as true testaments of the organization's culture and environment

(Jha & Jumar, 2016). Organizations foster employee engagement by encouraging employees to provide feedback and voice concerns about business operations (Harshitha, 2015). Riggs and Porter (2017) argued that employers and employees progress from economic exchanges to social exchanges, which is an underlying component of LMX theory that leads to mutual trust. Managers must ensure that employees do not become bored. To mitigate the likelihood of employees becoming bored, M6 stated, "I give high-performing employees additional tasks and usually that motivates them to continue to do their job and do it well. I give them additional tasks and put them in maybe like a team lead type of position."

A fundamental component of employee engagement is ensuring that employees are the priority within the organization. Employees who do not believe that they are the organization's priority perform as their managers direct but do so without any energy or passion (Mackay, Allen, & Landis, 2017). Nearly 50% of employees within an organization lack energy and passion (Harshitha, 2015). M2 acknowledged that employees were the priority in the organization and indicated that they could discuss their issues with M2 at any time. M2 declared,

> If there is an issue that needs to be addressed or if there is something they need to talk to me about, as long as I am not on a conference call or a leadership meeting, I will drop what I'm doing and we will go into a room and we'll talk.

Goal setting. Facilitating goal-setting practices for employees helps employees to reach their potential (Ford, 2017; Xie, Zhou, Huang, & Xia, 2017). Most managers had access to their organization's human resource employee engagement software and

programs but did not use the functionality of the various programs to their full potential. Some organizations used the employee engagement programs as a *check-the-box* task, which has caused some managers to overlook critical tasks, such as goal setting, for an entire year. M3 was the only manager who referenced the use of the organization's employee management to engage employees. Along with formal and informal coaching and challenging employees with increased responsibility, M3 used the built-in performance management functionality of the organization's employee management system to ensure that employees established and tracked goals, maintained an individual development plan, and received regular performance feedback. To ensure open communication, M3 supplemented those tools with structured, frequent one-on-one encounters, team meetings, and informal discussion to identify and address issues as early as possible. M3 believed that the consistency of this approach helped to drive predictability for employees, which improved morale and retention.

M3's comments complement the commitment component of LMX theory (Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017; Dansereau et al., 1975). Committed employees contribute innovative ideas and spread positivity in an organization (Harshitha, 2015). Hanaysha (2016) argued that organizational commitment produces loyal and engaged employees. Engaged employees benefit organizations as well as their organizations' customers and stakeholders, enabling organizations to meet their goals and objectives (Harshitha, 2015). Table 4 displays the frequency analysis of employee engagement.

Table 4

Employee Engagement Analysis

Participant	Interview Questions	Total count of references
M1	2,3,4,7,8	18
M2	1,2,3,4,7,8	21
M3	1,2,3,4,6,7,8	14
M4	1,3,4,5,7,8	7
M5	2,3,4,7,8	13
M6	2,4,6,7,8	10
Total		83

Theme 2: Leadership Style

All leaders are managers, but not all managers are leaders. Leaders extend their scope of influence past the duties of managers through their visions, charisma, creativity, and transformational abilities (Ruben & Gigloitti, 2017). Leaders exhibit ethical behaviors, which result in their followers' ethical behaviors (Mo & Shi, 2017). The leader's ability to lead and inspire teams to work efficiently and effectively results in the success of the organization (Zubanov, Katic, Grubic-Nesic, & Berber, 2017). Shimizu (2017) reported that only 37% of employees stated that they understood their organizations' values, goals, and objectives. Leaders must ensure that their followers understand *why* they are there and *what* constitutes goal accomplishment. One aspect of leadership is certain: Without followers, there are no leaders (Ruben & Gigloitti, 2016).

Okan and Akyuz (2015) stated that most employees who resign their positions do so because of the way their managers treat them, not because of the job requirements. M1 noted that people are human beings, not robots or machines. Managers should not attempt to manipulate people like spreadsheets. Managers should employ leadership styles that are subjective and objective when leading people.

Employees may pretend to embrace their leaders' values when they do not believe their values match (Hewlin, Dumas, & Burnett, 2017). Organizational leaders cannot understand the complexity of work processes without considering the employer-employee climate in which these processes occur (Trefalt, 2013). This notion aligns with LMX theory, in that leaders appreciate not only the work the employee performs, but also the employee as a person and a valuable member of the team. Steele and Plenty (2015) argued that an employee's satisfaction and the leader's influence on it yields the employee's overall job satisfaction level.

Leadership involvement. All participants stated that leadership involvement was of paramount importance in retaining high-performing employees (Hussain, Akram, Haider, Hussain, & Ali, 2016). Of the six study participants I interviewed, two referred to a specific leadership style. Although four participants did not name or identify a specific theory or style, all participants mentioned that effective leaders should be (a) transparent, (b) honest and forthcoming with information, (c) available, and (d) respectful. In LMX theory, Dansereau et al. (1975) identified mutual respect, mutual trust, and commitment as fundamental attributes underlying the theory, which align with the participants' leadership approaches. M6 explained, "Managers should be attentive to

their employees' needs, absolutely, and make sure that they have all the tools that they need to be successful in their role."

Participative leadership. Study participants mentioned empowerment and participatory leadership as components of their leadership styles; these are prevalent concepts among researchers, practitioners, and scholars (Hassan, Wright, & Park, 2016). Loew and Wentworth (2013) found that 75% of employees from different industries believed that their leadership development programs were ineffective. Although these programs may have been ineffective, organizations spent $15 billion on leadership programs in 2013 (O'Leonard & Krider, 2014). Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2015) argued that participatory management practices decrease the likelihood of employee burnout and improve job satisfaction levels. Other benefits of participatory management are stronger organizational commitment, higher production, and increased creativity and innovation (Hassan, 2015; Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2013). M4 relayed,

> I give them enough room so that they can think and give me their decisions and thoughts because I do not want them do just do what I tell them to do. I want them to think and do a better job.

Researchers have examined and explored the benefits and consequences of participatory leadership techniques, but few have offered empirical research on the conditions in which managers would use participatory leadership (Burbaugh, Seibel, & Archibald, 2017; Hassan, 2015). Consultation, which is a form of empowerment, occurs when employees influence decision-making. Consultation provides employees with a voice in processes or workplaces, thereby fostering teamwork, commitment, and a sense

of priority (Jones, Kalmi, Kato, & Makinen, 2017; Yukl, 2013). M2 noted, "When I talk about previous leadership, that's what we felt like … like we were just a number. You are here to do your job and, to me, that was not great leadership strategy." M3's comments supported Yukl's (2013) argument concerning consolidation and empowerment: "Collaborative and highly communicative styles are the most effective. By collaborating with employees on decision-making and taking time to explain business rationale behind decisions, employees feel empowered and more connected to the business."

Although some managers allowed employees to contribute to decision-making, managers retained the ultimate decision-making task and weighed employees' comments differently in each situation (Hassan, Wright, & Park, 2016). M1 believed leaders could use a combination of leadership styles depending on the situation (Bouckenooghe, Asma, & Usman, 2015). M1 stated, "I use a combination of the laissez-faire approach but also I use the participative approach and the transactional leadership approach." As I noted earlier, some managers did not subscribe to particular leadership styles or theories. M5 gave employees the direction they needed to accomplish their goals but did not relay *how* to accomplish goals. "I do not want to stifle or choke out their creativity. I do not want to choke out their ability to improvise when needed."

I added Table 5 to display the frequency analysis for leadership style.

Table 5

Leadership Style Analysis

Participant	Interview Questions	Total count of references
M1	1,2,4,8	16
M2	1,2,3,4,6,7,8	13
M3	1,2,3	7
M4	1,2,3,4,5,7	10
M5	1,2,3,4,5,6,8	19
M6	1,2,3	7
Total		72

Theme 3: Effective Communication

The participants stated effective communication was essential for employee retention strategies. Employees viewed effective and honest communication as a mechanism to trust their employers, no matter if the news was good or bad. Just as employees expected honest communication from their managers, they expected to communicate up the managerial chain and desired their managers to practice open-door policies, which Raina and Britt-Roebuck (2016) argued was critical to organizational success. The participants posited timely and effective communication instituted transparency within their organization, which also fostered trust and loyalty (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Ruben and Stewart (2016) and Turaga (2016) suggested

without loyalty and trust, the messages leaders sent would not be the messages followers received.

Transparency. The participants also discussed the importance of being transparent with their employees, which built mutual trust, a core component of the leader-member exchange theory (Dansereau et al., 1975). Albu and Flyverbom (2016) defined transparency as the dissemination of information throughout the organization. The participants agreed employees appreciated transparency, even if the news was not favorable. M6 stated the worst thing managers could do was sugarcoat information to make it more appealing when it was not. To the contrary, M4 asserted managers should keep some information from their employees so they would have peace of mind, which protected them from uncertainty. Managers should attend to their employees during uncertain times to guide them through stressful and anxious situations. M5 argued transparency with information fostered successful teams, departments, and organizations. M5 stated, "I believe when you are working with folks who are ultimately making the organization successful, unless it is a significant business decision that has a level of confidentially around it, I do not see any point in withholding information just to withhold information."

Gatling, Shum, Book, and Bai (2017) and Vogelgesang and Avolio (2013) agued leaders increased their leader-follower relationships because followers viewed the leader as credible and engaging when practicing transparency. In the healthcare industry, leader transparency is important because leaders could affect their followers' ethical behaviors, which could reduce the propensity of waste, abuse, theft, forgery, and fraud

(Vogelgesang & Avolio, 2013). The lack of transparency could foster distrust in employees, which could result in the concealment of mistakes and other negative behaviors that could be difficult to detect (Kim & Brymer, 2011).

Frequent communication. Frequent communication between leaders and followers yielded increased employee commitment to the organization, which strengthened organizational performance (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Sharbrough, 2015). The participants agreed communication should be frequent and timely. M3's comments aligned with Gatling et al. (2017) and Vogelgesang et al. (2013) arguments concerning frequent communication and information sharing. M3 posited, "I communicate frequently and tend to err on the side of over-communicating rather than under-communicating. My philosophy about communication is to share as much as I can and trust my employees to handle the information in a professional way."

M2 stated communicating with employees daily built strong relationships, which increased morale and mutual respect. These relationships provided managers the opportunities to detect satisfaction and dissatisfaction among their employees. M1 argued effective communication was important when managers managed remote employees. Some managers led employees in different cities, states, and time zones. In most cases, telephonic and electronic communication mediums were the only avenues to communicate with direct employees. In 2009, Schadler, Brown, and Burnes (2009) predicted 43% of U.S employees would work remotely by 2016. Although information technology (IT) has evolved to support remote employees and managers, managers should not rely on electronic mediums as the fundamental platform to communicate with

their remote employees (Johnston, Wech, & Jack, 2013). I added Table 6 to display the effective communication frequency analysis:

Table 6

Effective Communication Analysis

Participant	Interview Questions	Total count of references
M1	1	1
M2	1,2,3,5,8	11
M3	2,3,4	5
M4	4,5,6,8	5
M5	1,2,3,4	11
M6	4,6,7,8	7
Total		39

Theme 4: Job satisfaction

Before job seekers applied for new jobs, they considered several attributes prior to submitting their applications (Robertson & Kee, 2017). Job seekers assessed their skills and aptitude to the job requirements along with the compensation, which included benefits packages, vacation time, and retirement options (Ong & Theseira, 2016). These attributes created interest in the new position, which led to employment. Job satisfaction is the employee's attitude toward his or her job, which includes, but not limited to, organizational support, employee involvement, pay, and benefits (Drydakis, 2015; Gozukara & Colakoglu, 2016; Leider, Harper, Shon, Sellers, & Castrucci, 2016). An

employee's attitude toward his or her job could be positive or negative, or satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Employees with a high level of job satisfaction performed well and contributed to the success of the organization (Bayarcelik & Findakli, 2016). Employers should focus on improving job satisfaction, which could benefit the organization with increased productivity, lower turnover rates, and fewer attempts of criminal or unethical behavior, such as embezzlement (Ravid, Malul, & Zultan, 2017).

Bayarcelik and Findakli (2016) commented on the relationship between job satisfaction and an employee's intention to resign and found a negative relationship. To restate, employees with high job satisfaction levels remained with their organizations, which lowered the organization's turnover rates. If an employee's job satisfaction was high, they did not intent to resign. Unler et al. (2015) added employees with high job satisfaction did not only remain their organizations but continued to report to work on time. Unler et al. (2015) comments aligned with the leader-member exchange theory's component concerning commitment. Employees with high job satisfaction were less likely to search for new jobs and rejected offers from corporate recruiters. M1 found employees resigned because they sought employment opportunities that had preferred work schedules, weekends off, more pay, or was a better fit for the employee's professional and personal growth.

M1's comments supported Ong and Theseira's (2016) argument that employees continued to assess their skills and aptitude to the job requirements after employment. Some of the reasons that contributed to job dissatisfaction were outside of the manager's scope of influence. If employees stated they were unhappy with their jobs, managers

could still support them through the transition. M5 relayed, "If I cannot provide them what they need for their personal and professional growth, I am not going to try to keep them for my own selfish reasons just because they are a high performer. They need to be able to learn and grow and leave the nest. I am not going to stop them from that."

Employers offered higher wages and opportunities in exchange for the employees' assets when employees increased their human capital with time in the industry, education, and skills (Bae & Patterson, 2014; Linz, Good, & Busch, 2013). In some situations, employees used the threat of resignation to receive added benefits from their present employers. One of the reasons why employees resigned was because of more money, which might not have been the root cause of the employee's job dissatisfaction. M3 stated, "Counter offers rarely address the root cause issue behind a decision to leave, unless it was purely financial, and are often a short-term solution to retain an employee until another can be suitably trained.

Managers tried to rectify compensation rates for their high-performing employees but were not successful. M4 stated two employees were going to resign because the organization did not offer pay adjustments, which had not been an option M4 could use for 2 years. M4 believed the best course of action was not to inform the employees of the pay adjustment issue because it would have angered the employees if the organization did not adjust their salaries.

Leadership and organizational changes. Employees were uncomfortable with changes in key leadership positions and organizational structures. Acquisitions of new organizations also added to employees' anxiety. M6 added comments to support my

interpretations. M6 noted, "High-performing employees left for higher pay, usually, and we did have some changes in senior leadership and so wherever there is a change in leadership there are new expectations as well so those are the main reasons."

The study participants agreed that trying to retain dissatisfied employee might cause more problems for managerial staff and for fellow employees. M3 argued satisfied employees were much less likely to actively seek or even be open to a competing job offer. M3 stated, "Satisfied employees also positively affect the job satisfaction of other employees around them whereas dissatisfied employees can spread discontent and resentment to others. This *halo effect* is important to understand because even one dissatisfied employee can create enormous negative repercussions on the team."

Wang, Hom, and Allen (2017) believed that new employees might experience the *hangover effect*, which occurred when employees became familiar with their job responsibilities. The familiarity of performing job caused boredom with some employees, which contributed to job dissatisfaction. M1 supplemented M3's comments and argued managers should support their employees' decisions when they mention they would like to resign. M1 believed attempting to retain the employee could be detrimental to the organization because the employee would become more disengaged, which could affect other employees. M1 added, "Trying to keep employees will, usually, end up turning around and biting me or them in the long-term because they will change their minds. They will just get more and more disengaged and unhappy in their job or position, and then it gets worse."

The study participants employed their emotional intelligence, which was their ability to remain rational in emotional situations (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2016). Emotional intelligence was a predictor of a leader's effectiveness (Siegling, Sfeir, & Smyth, 2014a). Employers must be aware of the signs of negative employee emotions that contributed to job dissatisfaction to ensure the workplace does not experience discontent.

Brunges and Foley-Brinze (2014) argued the workplace culture was the most influential component employees use to gauge employee commitment, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. Employees believed positive work environments meant the organization appreciated what the employee did and valued them as individuals (Sadatsafavi, Walewski, & Shepley, 2015). The participants exclaimed negative work environments are difficult to change but leaders should attempt to change them for the benefit of the employees and the organization's customers. I added Table 7 to display the frequency analysis of job satisfaction.

Table 7

Job Satisfaction Analysis

Participant	Interview Questions	Total count of references
M1	6,7,8	17
M2	7	3
M3	2,3,4,5,6,7,8	9
M4	8	1
M5	1,4,5,7	5
M6	4,5,7	4
Total		39

Applications to Professional Practice

My research findings are applicable to professional business practices in the healthcare industry by offering an understanding of healthcare managers' knowledge, best strategies, and experience as they pertain to the retention of high-performing healthcare employees. Junior and senior healthcare managers representing different departments within the healthcare organization provided their insight on successful retention strategies that contributed to their respective 90%-100% employee retention success rates. My findings will benefit healthcare managers experiencing high employee turnover rates with no signal of declining and healthcare organizations that have suffered from low employee engagement and commitment.

Healthcare employers must understand the correlation between successful employee retention strategies and organizational performance because the relationship is positive (Gajendran, Harrison, & Delaney-Klinger, 2015). Managers tend to use traditional managerial policies when managing employees; younger employees would like more flexibility in their managers' leadership styles (Zhao & Mattila, 2013). Healthcare managers lead a diverse workforce ranging from the Baby Boomer Generation to Generation Y. Inappropriate leadership styles may attract a small portion of the workforce but repel the majority because of the strictness of the managers' policies.

Employee retention is not a single task, checklist, or a procedure; it is a lifestyle (Prince, Hagar, & Chacko, 2017). I found healthcare managers created work environments where they could get to know each employee on a personal basis and understand what the employee wanted to ensure they met their needs. Engelen, Flatten, Thalmann, & Brettel (2014) posited leaders could improve employee involvement and retention by practicing employee-focused leadership. If an employee did not have any professional goals, managers met with the employee to brainstorm and develop goals, both short-term and long-term, with measurable milestones to ascertain progress. I found the prevailing leadership style was supportive and participatory while exhibiting a friendly, caring, and compassionate personality. The leadership characteristics aligned with several leadership theories, such as servant leadership, transformational leadership, and the leader-member exchange (LMX), which is the theory I chose as the conceptual framework for this study.

Employees desired teamwork, effective communication, autonomy, independence, flexibility, and work-life balance to remain with their organizations (Vinit & Patel, 2013). Effective teams have dedicated employees who lead the teams to accomplish tasks and objectives (Ford, Piccolo, & Ford, 2017). Leaders based their selection of team members on the individual employee's ability, potential, experience, and attitude. Employees interpreted job autonomy as the degree of freedom and independence they needed to perform their routine work at their discretion (Sripirabaa & Maheswari, 2015). Job autonomy, or independence, is important to employees because it affords them the opportunity to be creative in the manner they perform their jobs (Zahra, Irum, Mir, & Chishti, 2013). Employees enjoy flexibility when employers allow them to deviate from traditional management styles and norms (Jong, 2016. For instance, if an employee's child had a recital during the workday, flexible managers would consider allowing the employee to attend the recital and make up the lost productivity at another time. Flexibility fosters employee loyalty because it shows the organization values the employee as an individual with other obligations (Johnson, 2015).

Most employees do not appreciate offsetting their work-life balance for more work (Huffman, Casper, & Payne, 2014) and will consider leaving an organization if they believe they are experiencing a negative work-life balance (Zhao & Mattila, 2013). To counteract employees' negative work-life balances, healthcare managers considered allowing employees to work remotely when feasible (Tysiac, 2017). Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, and Andry (2013) asserted employees built managers' trust while working remotely because of the lack of physical supervision. Working remotely provided

employees with the ability to (a) save on fuel, (b) decrease wear on vehicles, (c) save money on new clothing, (d) reduce time in traffic while commuting, and (e) lowered the risk of automobile accidents (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Andry, 2013). An employee that spends one hour traveling each day can repurpose that hour with their family, higher education, or other activities to reduce work-life tension (Cartwright & Warner-Smith, 2003).

Implications for Social Change

The findings from this study proposed implications for positive social change, which would affect healthcare organizations, healthcare employers, healthcare employees, patients, families, and local communities (Whalen, 2014). Patients trust and value their healthcare professionals; the patient-provider relationships began to develop the moment patients visited the healthcare organization. Part of any medical treatment plan is relaxation and peace of mind. Patients must allow the benefits of the medical treatment to take effect. Healthcare employees contribute to the overall well-being of their patients through continuity, which produces assurance (Ghost, Rai, Chauhan, Baranwal, & Srivastave, 2017). Some tangible implications for social change are: (a) sharing information through the organization, (b) leadership communication technique, and (b) employee recognition.

Sharing Information

Participants stated employees wanted to receive organizational communication because employees believed sharing information meant the organization trusted them with its *secrets*, which built a positive organizational culture (Eaton & Kilby, 2015).

Employees appreciated the CEO's live broadcasting to all employees four times a year. The CEO's presentation and address to all employees created a culture where everyone was an equal and privy to the same information, which aligned with Engelen et al. (2014) assertion that employers at all levels within the organization should practice employee-focused leadership. Permitting employees to receive pertinent company information in a timely manner placed the employees at ease and allowed them to become dedicated supporters of the organization in the community (Kang & Sung, 2017).

Between quarterly broadcasting, organizations should send written communication to all employees to share relevant information. The fundamental reason for frequent and formal communication is to limit the effects of the rumor mills. The effects of rumor mills also affect the local communities, which can alarm citizens and cause disruption in their daily lives. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, are the dominant reporting tools within communities, which position citizens and local communities as first responders during organizational and social crises (Oh, Agrawal, & Rao, 2013). Rumor mills caused low productivity, negative organizational cultures, and reduced customer loyalty (Johanson, 2016).

Leadership Communication Technique

Employer communication techniques yielded tangible implications for social change (Luo, Song, Gebert, Zhang, and Feng, 2016). Employers who spoke to employees in a calm and friendly manner tend to lead employees who spoke in a friendly manner to other departments within the organization and to the organization's external customers (Bellou & Gkorezis, 2016). Employers who spoke to employees sarcastically

or in a belittling fashion tend to foster employees who spoke to others using the same tactics. Demeaning employees caused some employees to become depressed while with their families, which affected their work-life balance and their ability to separate work from home life (Lopamudra, 2017). Employees do not interpret effective communication only by spoken words. Nonverbal gestures, attitudes, demeanors, and frequency of communication constituted the employers' communication style (Luo, Song, Gebert, Zhang, and Feng, 2016).

Employee Recognition

Organizations that recognize and reward their high-performing healthcare employees affect their patient populations and their financial standings (Barcalow, 2016). The plan to create employee reward programs should start with the organizations' values, which should be visible in each employee. Employees should know and their organization's values and be able to explain them. Employers influenced their employees with the organization's values, which served as the basis for employee recognition programs. Rewards not only praised employees for living the organization's' values and standards, they also informed other employees of the type of behavior, production, and dedication the organization believed were important enough to warrant a reward (Ghose & Mohanty, 2016). Consiglio, Borgogni, and di Tecco (2015) argued employees who reached self-efficacy not only benefitted the organization, but also benefitted their families and communities with their positivity and mentorship. Organizational leaders should ensure all employees are aware of what the reward recipients accomplished and share either pictures or videos of the recipient accepting the reward. Barcalow (2016)

stated the power of the recipient's accomplishments would be evident through their relationships with their fellow coworkers and the patients they treated.

Recommendations for Action

Healthcare organizations suffering from increased employee turnover have lost high-performing healthcare employees, which have increased organizations' medical risks, costs, and diminished the quality of care patients expected (Heinen et al., 2013). Managers in the healthcare industry can use the strategies in this study to assess their current employee retention strategies to affect low employee retention. Low employee retention rates can damage healthcare organizations because of repetitive hiring and training costs, which yields low morale, reduced productively, and a lack of organizational knowledge across the organization (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013). Study participants exclaimed the fundamental component for higher retention rates was employee engagement. Healthcare managers can reduce voluntary turnover by supporting their employees and assisting them to build commitment to the organization (Akremi, Colaianni, Portoghese, Galletta, & Battistelli, 2014).

Business managers from service industries (food service, transportation, retail, sales, production, customer service, etc.) can also benefit from this study because employee turnover is problematic for all industries. As the study participants noted, high employee turnover correlated to low organizational performance (Eaton & Kilby, 2015). One manager cannot solve an organization's high turnover problem; all healthcare managers must increase their knowledge on effective employee engagement practices to increase employee retention.

Dansereau, Graen, and Haga (1975) identified three attributes for leaders to develop relationships with their employees: (a) mutual trust, (b) respect, and (c) commitment. Leaders who practiced the LMX theory developed individual relationships with each follower rather than assumed one leadership style and applied it to all followers (Hunt, 2014). Employees did not commit to organizations or managers they did not trust or respect (Adiele & Abraham, 2013). Healthcare managers must incorporate Dansereau et al. (1975) attributes in their managerial training objectives and everyday lives to lower employee turnover rates.

I will disseminate the findings through several methods. I will provide my analysis to each participant when I complete the study. Study participants can share their new insight with fellow managers in the healthcare organization, which will spark discussion and social change. I will present the findings to the senior management team of the community partner, which it can use to develop training material for its managers. Current and future researchers will have the opportunity to read the findings in the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database. Last, I will use the findings in my future leadership and team development courses to support the subject matter and will seek opportunities to publish in academic and professional journals.

Recommendations for Further Research

For future research opportunities, I would recommend researchers conduct qualitative studies using focus groups to understand the impact of LMX leaders on their employees. This recommendation would address my second limitation, which was the availability of management participants. Lower-level employees do not travel as

frequently as managers and senior leaders, which may ensure mass participation and attendance when conducting focus group research. Conducting an exploratory qualitative study using focus groups will verify if managers' leadership styles were the reason employee remained with the organization.

Second, I recommend future researchers conduct research on how managers engage with remote employees. During my study, I learned some of the managers are in different states and must find efficient and effective ways to engage their employees. While conducting the research, I would task future researchers to identify more participants than they believed they needed to reach data saturation, which was my fourth limitation. I learned participants had other requirements and obligations, which could have affect my study. If future researchers decide to choose six participants for their study, consider identifying eight because researchers may need the additional data to reach data saturation. Exploring strategies to engage remote employees may yield new insight to employee retention.

Third, I would recommend a quantitative study to determine the relationship between emotional labor and burnout. I learned many healthcare jobs required employees to use their emotional labor when performing their job, which led to burnout at a faster rate. For instance, Intensive Care Unit (ICU) employees may deplete their emotional labor and experience burnout faster than employees who work in the optometry or dental offices. Identifying and analyzing the healthcare careers that yielded the highest employee turnover rates may provide answers healthcare managers could use across all healthcare organizations.

Reflections

Personal Biases

Before I started research on employee retention strategies, I believed healthcare employees were the easiest to retain. Ask any child in elementary school what they aspired to be when they grew up and they would say lawyer, doctor, or nurse. Society considers doctors and nurses some of the most elite professions in the world. Beside the prestige healthcare employees receive from others outside the healthcare industry, healthcare professionals are among the highest paid employees. With notoriety and handsome salaries, I did not believe healthcare organizations would experience voluntary employee turnover at such a high rate. When I started researching employee retention, I believed the most difficult employees to retain were lower-salaried employees, such as fast food preparers, dishwashers, and waiters/waitresses. I learned salaries and public prestige were not the important components of employee retention. Employees in all industries wanted their employers to recognize them as professionals and treat them with respect whether they were performing open-heart surgery or preparing a table for their next dining patrons. Healthcare employees will realize their employers appreciate them when employers give them respect and acknowledge their contributions.

Changes in My Thinking

I entered the doctoral program believing I would have challenges completing it. If the doctoral program were easy, more than 2% of the world's populations would hold doctorate degrees. During my first course, I considered withdrawing from the program and the university. My thoughts about the doctoral program changed when I attended the

first residency in Atlanta, Georgia, in May 2016. I had great conversations with seminar leaders, fellow students, and staff members who provided the information and energy I needed to be successful. Of all the components of the study, I enjoyed the review of the professional and academic literature most. I read and analyzed more than 500 articles concerning business, psychology, and management theories, which have provided me with the knowledge to be successful in business and as a future leader.

I considered withdrawing from the doctoral program during the first course. My 9-year-old daughter, Jasmine, stated she went to school and told her friends that her daddy was going to be a doctor just like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She was so proud of me and there was no way I was going to disappoint her. She asked me every day if I completed my study, which became the spark I needed to complete this program. Under no circumstances was I going to place Jasmine in a position where she would have to explain to her friends and teachers why her dad did not finish the doctoral program. As I typed the last word of the my abstract, I allowed Jasmine and my 15-year old daughter, Aaliyah, to type their names in the *Dedication* section to show them that (a) daddy did what he said he was going to do and (b) they were part of the process and my success. When ProQuest publishes this study and I complete all remaining requirements for the DBA degree, Jasmine can tell her friends that her dad is a doctor – just like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Conclusion

My goal throughout this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies successful managers used to retain their high-performing healthcare employees.

Organizations of all sizes and across all industries struggled to decrease employee turnover because employees were vital to the success of organizations. Employers experienced decreased productivity, lower profits and intangible losses, such as negative climate assessments and diminished job satisfaction. To combat the negative aspects of low employee retention rates, organizations must start their retention strategies during the screening and hiring procedures. In healthcare organizations, such as medical centers and clinics, organizations must develop programs and incentives to retain healthcare employees because healthcare employees realized their talents are scarce, which created a demand for their services. Understating why employees resigned could assist organizations to build employee engagement programs that entice employees to remain with the organization.

Healthcare organizations cannot manage all healthcare employees in the same manner. Employees are from diverse generations, geographic locations, professional backgrounds, and ethnicities and perceive fair treatment differently. Before the 1990s, employees would remain with organizations for 20 to 30 years because they wanted to retire and collect the pension. Typically, the organizations were the major employers in the city. In 2017, organizations operate in several states, countries, and continents concurrently so healthcare employees have more options for employment. If incentives and management styles are more appealing at another company, the employee may consider joining the new organization. Organizations must compensate their employees fairly, ensure they work in safe and productive environments, and acknowledge them for the jobs they perform.

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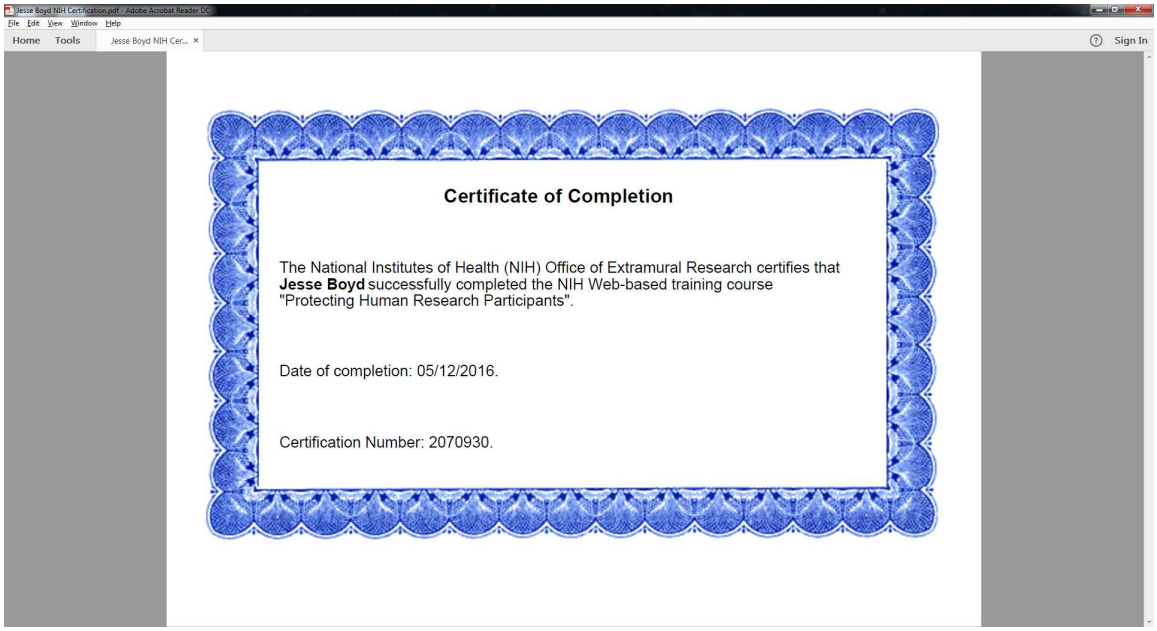
Appendix A: NIH Certificate of Completion



Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview #_____

Date_____/_____/_____

Interview Protocol

Script

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Jesse Boyd and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting my doctoral study on strategies healthcare managers use to retain their high-performing employees, which I will present in partial fulfillment of the requirements to complete my Doctor of Business Administration degree. I appreciate your participation in this study. Before we begin, I would like your permission to digitally record this interview, so that I will later be able to create a transcript of our conversation. If, at any time during this interview, you would like me to stop recording, please feel free to let me know. ***(Now, I will begin recording and briefly repeat the request so that permission to record is recorded)***. I will keep your responses confidential. I will use your responses to develop a better understanding of your views of employee retention strategies and how they may affect your organization's retention rates. Again, the purpose of this study is to explore strategies managers use to retain their high-performing employees. I am the responsible investigator specifying your participation in the doctoral study research project: Voluntary Employee Turnover: Strategies to Retain High-performing Healthcare Employees.

You agreed to participate in this study by replying to my Informed Consent email with the words, *"I consent."* You understand that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and that you may revoke your consent to participate at any time. If, at any time, you would like to take a break or stop the interview for any reason, please let me know. Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started? We will begin the interview now, with your permission.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. What leadership style was most effective to retain high-performing employees?
2. How did your high-performing employee retention strategies differ from your organization's strategies?
3. What employee engagement strategies did you use to retain high-performing healthcare employees?
4. What strategies did you employ when high-performing employees stated they were considering resigning from the organization?
5. Why did high-performing employees leave your organization?
6. What managerial strategies, in your opinion, did not work to retain high-performing employees?
7. How did job satisfaction affect retention of high-performing employees?
8. What more can you add to benefit this study concerning retention of high-performing employees?