


2017

# Transformational Leadership Strategies for Addressing Voluntary Employee Turnover

Chris A. Osiogi  
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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Chris A. Osiogu

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

Abstract

Transformational Leadership Strategies for Addressing Voluntary Employee Turnover

by

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BS, Abia State University, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2017

## Abstract

For every standard deviation of increase in employee turnover, organizations could suffer a roughly 27% decline in financial performance. Current voluntary employee turnover rates hover between 15% - 40% and the associated unquantifiable indirect costs affecting customer loyalty and creating reputational risks for business leaders. Furthermore, when employees leave an organization for another, a minimum of 95% leave with trade secrets, strategic skills, and acquired knowledge. As a result, turnover has evolved into a significant concern for organizational leaders. Using the transformational leadership concept, the purpose of this single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The participants included bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria who had demonstrated experience in developing and implementing strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover. The data collection was through person-to-person interviews with 10 bank leaders and review of the company's documents on employee turnover. The process for analyzing data was supported by word frequency analysis, coding of related phrases, and creating of themes around the codes. The themes from the study revealed that transformational leaders use the following to reduce voluntary employee turnover: remunerations and benefits, career growth and development opportunities, and roles of leadership. Reduction in voluntary employee turnover may contribute to social change by empowering business leaders with requisite strategies for employee engagement and business profitability, enhancing job creation opportunities, and improving the social and general wellbeing of families and communities.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation and its successful execution to God, my family, the business world, and to positive social change. God enabled me to accomplish this challenging yet motivating task. My wife and children gave me the affirmation to pursue this task and motivated me in many ways. The ever-changing business world provided an opportunity for me to see a business problem to which I could dedicate my intellect completely. My deeply felt passion for contributing to the community to which I dedicate this work created the resilience and fortitude that the completion of this work required.

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I thank my wife and our children for their unwavering understanding and thoughtfulness throughout the duration of my doctoral study, which kept me from them for seemingly endless amounts of time. I also acknowledge and thank my extended family members and friends for their patience and understanding while I undertook this study.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

People are one of the most critical resources in organizations (Alkahtani, 2015; Vomberg, Homburg, & Bornemann, 2015). Although organizational leaders are responsible for defining strategies to enhance their organizations' competitive advantage and productivity, the employees of such organizations are responsible for successfully implementing such strategies (Appiah-Adu & Amoako, 2016). Despite the importance of employees as a resource, business leaders experience a high rate of voluntary employee turnover (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2015).

Employee turnover is costly for businesses (Alkahtani, 2015; Wang, Wang, Xu, & Ji, 2014). The costs of employee turnover are multifaceted and, in addition to direct costs, include such indirect costs as (a) staff replacement, (b) retraining of new employees, and (c) customer retention (Alkahtani, 2015; Dusek, Ruppel, Yurova, & Clarke, 2014). Organizations that witness a high level of staff turnover are likely to suffer declines in their customer loyalty indices (McMurrian & Matulich, 2016). As there is a direct relationship between customer loyalty and organizational profitability (Mozammel & Haan, 2016) and given that business leaders seek the maximization of shareholders' value, there is significant value in understanding how voluntary employee turnover dulls an organization's competitive edge and depletes business profitability.

### **Background of the Problem**

Employee retention in organizations remains a strategic goal for most human resource managers (Vivek & Satyanarayana, 2016). Managers induct, train, and equip employees with the expectation that the employees will develop organizational

commitment and contribute to promoting business objectives (Tse, Huang, & Lam, 2013; Wilton, 2016). However, employee mobility within and across industries remain high (Anitha & Begum, 2016). As employees move from one organization to another, they move with business strategies. Such movement, therefore, gives competitors some tactical advantages over previous employers of the repositioned employees (Lloyd, Boer, & Keller, 2015; Waldman, Carter, & Hom, 2015). In addition, business leaders consider staff replacement as a costly venture (Anvaria, JoanFub, & Chermahini, 2014).

Hays (2013) reported that 11.9% of employees in the United Kingdom left their organizations in 2013, and Smith and Macko (2014) observed that a greater percentage (24%) of employees within the United Kingdom sought opportunities for a change of employment. Furthermore, Hays estimated that the 11.9% employee voluntary resignations in 2013 implied a cost of about USD54billion in the economy of the United Kingdom.

Similarly, Anvaria et al. (2014) reported that 30% of companies in China and Hong Kong also witnessed a high rate of employee turnover between 11% and 40% respectively. Waldman et al. (2015) calculated that for every standard deviation of turnover increase, organizations could suffer a roughly 27% decline in financial performance. Therefore, the subject of voluntary employee turnover must be a matter of major concern to business, the community, and national leaders.

### **Problem Statement**

When employees leave an organization for another, a minimum of 95% leave with trade secrets, strategic skills, and acquired knowledge (Lloyd et al., 2015). The total

cost of replacing an employee averages 10 times the cost of retaining an existing staff or one-fifth of a worker's salary (Nagabhaskar, 2014; Wang et al., 2014). The general business problem was that some organizational leaders lose competitiveness and profitability due to employee turnover. The specific business problem was that some bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria lacked leadership strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The target population comprised 10 leaders of a bank in southwestern Nigeria. The participants from the specific bank had demonstrated experience in developing and implementing strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover. The implications for the realization of positive social change included the potential for business leaders to improve employment opportunities, moderate poverty thereby reducing crime rate through enhanced employee retention.

### **Nature of the Study**

Researchers adopt any one or a combination of the following research methods for their studies: (a) quantitative, (b) qualitative, or (c) mixed methods (Dasgupta, 2015). Quantitative researchers focus on numbers and observable facts, while qualitative research method is appropriate when researchers seek to gain a thorough understanding of behaviors and motivations of people (Barnham, 2015). Quantitative studies describe behaviors using numbers, qualitative endeavors describe actions using words (Barnham,

2015). Mixed method researchers adopt a combination of both research methods often to achieve methodological triangulation for their data (Spillman, 2014). The quantitative and mixed method approaches were not suitable for this study because my focus was to understand a phenomenon rather than test relationships or differences among measurable variables. Therefore, I adopted a qualitative research method.

Qualitative researchers commonly use designs such as (a) ethnography, (b) phenomenology, (c) narratives, and (d) case studies. Ethnographic design researchers explore the prevalent culture within a community (Baskerville & Myers, 2015). I decided not to use ethnographic design because societal culture does not constitute any part of the research problem. Researchers who adopt the phenomenological design focus on the lived experiences of individuals (Dasgupta, 2015). The phenomenological design may be limited in scope and therefore was unsuitable for this study. Furthermore, narratives, as a research design, are about life stories as explained by people (Knoblauch, 2014). A narrative design was inappropriate for this study because the design does not relate to real and present situations. Researchers who employ case study designs generally explore the development of an event, a situation, or the experience of an individual (Yin, 2014). The case study design was most appropriate for this study because I undertook a broad analysis of a given social phenomenon with an opportunity for generalization. Dasgupta (2015) indicated that researchers adopt a case study design when they study a given concept within the environment of occurrence.

## Research Question

The overarching research question for this study was: What leadership strategies do some bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover?

## Interview Questions

1. What motivated the organization to address voluntary employee turnover?
2. How did voluntary employee turnover impact the performance of the organization?
3. What challenges did you face in strategizing methods of reducing voluntary employee turnover?
4. What improvements have you witnessed in voluntary employee turnover because of your efforts?
5. What process do you adopt to assess the effectiveness of the strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover?
6. What might you change in your approach to reducing voluntary employee turnover to encourage better retention of employees?
7. What else would you like to share, which could be relevant to this topic?

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I employed in this study draws upon *transformational leadership theory*, as originally conceived by Burns (1978) to describe and explain transformational leadership. Researchers subsequently incorporated *followers* into the theory as an integral and necessary component of leadership (McCleskey, 2014).



Bass (1990) made additional contributions to the theory of transformational leadership by emphasizing the social exchange relationship between leaders and followers.

Transformational leadership theory focuses on followers' development and well-being and on what inspires them to work towards common and organizational goals (Zhu & Akhtar, 2014). Researchers consider transformational leadership as the bedrock of the success and effectiveness of leaders from different spheres of life, such as business, military, family, and culture (McClesky, 2014). The key constructs underlying the theory of transformational leadership are: (a) idealized attributes, (b) idealized behaviors, (c) motivation, (d) stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration (Trmal, Bustamam, & Mohamed, 2015).

### **Operational Definitions**

Readers need to understand the terms in a study to appreciate the value of the study. Therefore, I have listed and defined technical terms that are not in a basic academic dictionary to aid readers' comprehension. I obtained the definitions from scholarly sources.

*Employee turnover intention:* Employee turnover intention refers to an employee's consideration to leave an organization (Cohen, Blake, & Goodman, 2016).

*Transactional leadership:* Transactional leaders are leaders who lead by maintaining a mutually beneficial exchange relationship with followers (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

*Transformational leadership:* Transformational leaders are leaders who motivate people to go beyond the normal expectations by surpassing individual beliefs for the benefit of the organization (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

*Voluntary employee turnover:* Voluntary employee turnover refers to when an employee exercises a personal choice to stop working for an organization (Li, Lee, Mitchell, Hom, & Griffeth, 2016).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions, four of which were applicable in this study, are reasonable but unverified facts upon which a researcher relies while conducting a study (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2014). The first assumption was that the participants would understand the context, purpose, and the direction of this study. The second assumption was that the participants would have sufficient confidence in the integrity of the researcher to share their personal lived experiences willingly during the interview. The third assumption was that the participants would answer the interview questions promptly and truthfully. The fourth assumption was that the number of interviews would lead to data saturation and suffice for drawing valid and reliable conclusions.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations in a study, three of which were applicable herein, are weaknesses and gaps that are beyond the control of the researcher and that may potentially reduce the generalizability of a study (Robinson, 2014; Singh, 2015). Specifically, the location for this study was a function of convenience, and this limited the depth of data and variety of

experience of the participants. The sample size was also limited to 10 leaders who had developed strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover within the banking profession in southwest Nigeria. Robinson (2014) indicated that the views from interviewing additional participants might reveal richer data and perceptions when compared to interviewing fewer participants. Furthermore, although a single case study design was most appropriate for this study, single case study designs typically limit the generalizability of the research findings (Yin, 2014).

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are elements under the control of the researcher that define the scope and boundaries of a study (Ody-Brasier & Vermeulen, 2014). I used a single case study design to explore how leaders addressed voluntary employee turnover within the banking industry. There were three identifiable delimitations in this study. The first delimitation was the inclusionary requirement that the sample group comprised leaders who had been involved in implementing strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover in their organizations. The second delimitation was the selection of a purposive sampling method to identify qualifying participants. Researchers use purposive sampling techniques to ensure participants are capable of responding to the research questions (Patton, 2015). The third delimitation for this study was the restriction of the study to one company. The choice of a single case study was to ensure the culture and experience within the organization epitomized the phenomenon. Yin (2014) noted that conducting focused studies within an organization constricts the generalizability of the result but other researchers could apply or adapt the study design to other populations.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings from this study could offer potential value to businesses because the outcomes of the study would provide strategies for business leaders to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The subject of leadership and voluntary employee turnover remains a strategic discussion amongst business leaders and has a direct effect on the competitiveness of organizations (Kessler, 2014). Employees are integral to organizations and they are the means by business leaders achieve productivity for institutions (Vomberg et al., 2015). Organizational leaders can achieve increased profits for their businesses if they succeed in reducing staff replacement costs attributable to voluntary employee turnover (Kessler, 2014).

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Voluntary employee turnover remains a costly attribute for managing businesses (Lloyd et al., 2015). The potential contributions of this study to business practices include: (a) helping business leaders develop employee retention strategies, (b) enhancing relation between business leaders and employees through leadership strategies, (c) increasing organizational competitive advantage through employee engagement and commitment, and (d) making businesses profitable by reducing costs of voluntary employee turnover. This study could benefit human resource managers as partners in formulating human resource policies through increased understanding of how they could contribute to the development of strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover. In addition, the findings of this study could help employees enhance their organizational

commitment and citizenship behavior. When employees are committed, they stay and give their best to the organization (Gathungu, Iravo, & Namusonge, 2015).

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for positive social change included the potential for job retention resulting in employment opportunities for others, a contribution to the management of poverty levels, a reduction in criminal activities in communities, and a better standard of living for families. In addition, the findings from this study could affect an enhancement in the relationship between leaders and employees resulting in the retention of key high-talent employees with attendant benefits for the families and communities. When leaders have strategies to affect a reduction in voluntary employee turnover, they contribute to the reduction of crimes and poverty in communities (Umaru, Donga, Gambo, & Yakubu, 2013).

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Absent from the research literature are studies based upon Nigerian data concerning leadership strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover among bank workers. Although there are several attempts by researchers in other countries to study the subjects of leadership and voluntary employee turnover, only a few researchers like Benjamin (2012) and Gberevbie (2010) explored some issues on voluntary employee turnover among bank workers in the Nigeria context. Benjamin (2012) studied the effect of human resource development climate (HRDC) as a predictor of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and also examined the relationship with voluntary turnover intentions (VTI). Benjamin concluded that the organizational climate has a significant

relationship with employees OCB and VTI. Equally, Gberevbie (2010) studied the relationship between employee retention and organizational performance in the Nigeria banking industry. Gberevbie noted the importance of instituting strategies for retaining employees, such as enhanced remuneration, employee participation in decision-making, brand enhancement, and fairness to employees.

Others have studied employee turnover from the perspective of the Nigeria environment for the industries of education, hospitality, medicine, and healthcare. Omonijo, Oludayo, Eche, Uche, and Ohunakin (2015) researched the factors that motivate nonacademic staff in Nigerian universities to contemplate resignation. Ominijo et al. identified some contributory factors to voluntary employee turnover among nonacademic staff in Nigeria universities as (a) job dissatisfaction, (b) poor remuneration—salaries and fringe benefits, (c) nonconducive work environment, (d) lack of training, (e) unfair management policies, and (f) weak relationships between leaders and employees. Similarly, Olusegun (2013) observed that there was a significant relationship between job satisfaction and employees' turnover intentions among library personnel in some public universities in southwestern Nigeria. Olusegun opined that unfavorable working conditions and lack of motivation from the leaders activate turnover intentions among employees.

Likewise, Karatepe and Aleshinloye (2009) noted that emotional stress and conflict might cause frontline employees to consider leaving an organization. The apparent dearth of research focused on leadership and voluntary employee turnover among workers in the Nigerian banking industry creates an opportunity to add value to

the existing literature on the subject. The literature review section includes a review, analysis, and synthesis of existing literature, books, and peer-reviewed journals on the subjects relating to and on the phenomena of leadership and voluntary employee turnover.

The organization of this section was as follows: The first part explains the literature search strategy and identifies the various databases that constitute the basis for the peer-reviewed journals and other literature that I examined for this study. The second part of the section focuses on the conceptual framework that grounds the qualitative single case study. The third part contains discussions on resources associated with relevant keywords, such keywords as *evolution of leadership*, *role of leadership*, *transformational leadership*, *transactional leadership*, *turnover intentions*, *voluntary employee turnover*, *causes of employee turnover*, *cost of employee turnover*, and *reducing voluntary employee turnover*. The fourth part of the section highlights future research opportunities regarding leadership and voluntary employee turnover.

The literature search strategy adopted for this review included searches within multiple subjects and multidisciplinary databases such as human resources, management and business related databases, education, health sciences, nursing, and information systems and technology. The search also included publications such as journals articles, books, and recently approved dissertations. I relied on Walden University Library and Google Scholar as primary search tools to retrieve online materials from databases such as Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, ScienceDirect, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, Emerald, and Sage Premier. The literature review consisted of

206 articles made up of journal articles, government publications, published books, and dissertations. Of the 206 articles, 182, representing 88%, were published within 5 years from 2013 while 96% of the entire sources were peer-reviewed.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The study population comprised of these banking industry leaders who have demonstrated the capacity to institute strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover in their organizations. The study's central research question was: What strategies do bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover?

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

The transformational leadership theory was the foundational theoretical concept for this study. Burns (1978), in his conceptualization of the theory, viewed a transformational leader as one who provides clarity about an organizational outcome and motivates followers to prioritize the realization of such persuasive institutional visions. Burns conducted a significant review of the theory and subsequently, the theory has evolved as one of the broad categories of leadership styles and as a means for measuring the effectiveness of leaders in different spheres of life (Appelbaum, Degbe, MacDonald, & Nguyen-Quang, 2015; Latham, 2014). The constructs that are fundamental to transformational leadership theory are (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Banks, McCauley, Gardner, & Guler, 2016). Banks et al. explained that transformational leaders promote idealized influence through their charismatic disposition as role models for



followers. Transformational leaders also prompt employees to exceed their normal performance tendencies by developing a compelling vision for the future through inspirational motivation (Phaneuf, Boudrias, Rousseau, & Brunelle, 2016). In addition, leaders exhibit intellectual stimulation when they compel followers to continuously search for innovative and better ways of achieving results and remaining productive for themselves and the organization (Phaneuf et al., 2016). Furthermore, leaders who practice transformational leadership style consider and engage followers as individuals by helping each employee develop and grow through individualized consideration (Trmal et al., 2015). While Gilbert, Horsman, and Kelloway (2016) further considered idealized influence from the perspectives of followers' attributes and leaders' behaviors, Phaneuf et al. (2016) suggested that researchers could classify the concepts of inspirational motivation and idealized influence as a single attribute, namely, *charisma*.

The concept of transformational leadership is different from other leadership styles by virtue of transformational leaders developing the organization by enabling their followers (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Avolio (1999) supported the views of Pradhan and Pradhan (2015) when he posited that transformational leaders focus on developing followers. Likewise, Zwingmann et al. (2014) defined transformational leaders as leaders who create compelling visions and motivate employees to seek the higher goals of organizations. While explaining how transformational leaders engage employees for the development of organizations, Bass (2008) stated that transformational leaders convince followers to rise above their self-interest for the good of the organization. Although Bass presented this concept in a broader approach, Keskes (2014) aligned with Bass but

offered a more detailed explanation of how transformation leaders connect with employees for the good of the organization. Keskes noted that transformational leaders motivate employees with intangible reward attributes like (a) personal growth, (b) enhanced self-value, and (c) professional growth. Trmal et al. (2015) concurred that transformational leaders influence organizational outcomes, as postulated by Pradhan and Pradhan (2015), but also noted that such leaders achieve employee engagement by motivating employees to internalize rich organizational cultures.

**Complementary theories and roles of transformational leadership.** Schmidt et al. (2014) projected transformational leaders in a manner that was consistent with the reviews in Dunkl, Jimenez, Zizek, Milfelner, and Kallus' (2015) and Chakraborty and Chakraborty's (2004) studies. Chakraborty and Chakraborty attempted to reconcile the roles of transformational and spiritual leaders, but Jamaludin et al. (2011) argued that transformational and spiritual leadership styles differed because of the lack of spiritual constituent in the moral standing of leaders. Schmidt et al. indicated that transformational leaders are motivators who promote employees' wellbeing by creating a thriving work environment. Dunkl et al. explained that transformational leaders are comparable to health-promoting leaders as they focus on enhancing the work environment to reduce work-related stress. The views of Dunkl et al. are comparable to the statement of Schmidt et al. who argued that health management has become an emerging responsibility for business leaders. Schmidt et al. claimed that organizational leaders are responsible for defining prevalent culture in organizations and that the culture defines the health of the employees. Further, a distinctive character of transformational leaders is the creation of a

higher and more compelling vision for organizations (Khalifa & Ayoubi, 2015; Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015; Tromp & Blomme, 2014; Zwingmann et al., 2014). Gathungu, Iravo, and Namusonge (2015) argued that transformational leaders develop followers who evolve and commit extra efforts to supporting the goals of the organization. Mathew and Gupta (2015) characterized transformational leaders as smart people who use emotional connections to bring out the best in employees for the benefit of the organization.

Although Mathew and Gupta (2015) suggested that transformational leaders motivate followers to strive for the good of the organization, Effelsberg, Solga, and Gurt (2014) discovered that beyond living the organizational vision, followers display organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in anticipation of being recognized and rewarded. Effelsberg et al. also tested and supported the view that transformational leaders make followers transcend their personal benefits for the sake of the organization.

**Elements of transformational leadership.** Banks et al. (2016), Keskes (2014), and Zwingmann et al. (2014) identified four distinct behaviors that characterize the leadership style of transformational leaders, namely, (a) charismatic, (b) inspirational, (c) concerned for the individual, and (d) intellectually stimulating. In addition to listing the four distinguishing features of transformational leaders, Ghasabeh, Soosay, and Reaiche (2015) noted that these four dimensions make leaders complete and effective managers of human resources. Bottomley, Burgess, and Fox (2014) identified the behaviors that define transformational leaders using the following terms: (a) vision builders, (b) standard bearer, (c) integrators, and (d) developers. Through charisma, transformational leaders mentor and instill confidence in followers to achieve results for the organization

(Hamstra, van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014; Mhatre & Riggio, 2014). Likewise, Priyanka and Taranjeet (2016) asserted that the charismatic element in transformational leaders sustains organizational performance. In addition, transformational leaders employ inspirational tools to motivate and persuade followers to pursue and realize daunting tasks. Zwingmann et al. (2014) observed that transformational leaders employ inspirational motivation to create excitement about the future for employees.

Further, transformational leaders adopt individualized consideration by assigning individual recognition to followers, thereby enhancing their followers' personal self-worth. When followers perceive an improved personal self-worth, they become motivated to perform above expectation (Trmal et al., 2015). Transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation to challenge followers to seek innovative ways of overcoming obstacles. Trmal et al. (2015) agreed with works of Keskes' (2014) constructs for effective transformational leaders, namely, (a) idealized influence—leaders acting as role models, (b) inspirational motivation—leaders inspiring followers, (c) intellectual stimulation—leaders enhancing the self-sufficiency of followers, and (d) individualized consideration—leaders identifying with individuals and treating them as valuable team members. Yang (2012) demonstrated that leaders identify with individuals separately but fairly. Ejere and Abasilim (2013) added the notion of an idealized attribute as part of the variables of a transformational leader. Idealized attribute is a confirmation from a follower about the charismatic nature of the leader (Ejere & Abasilim, 2013). Jauhari et al. (2017) identified five elements that transformational leaders promote, specifically, (a) vision, (b) inspirational communication, (c) supportive leadership, (d) intellectual

stimulation, and (e) personal recognition. Transformational leaders understand that it is hard to achieve followership if the organizational vision lacks a direction and excitement (Breevaart et al., 2014). Caillier (2016) asserted that the cardinal effects of transformational leadership are (a) enhanced positive employee work attitudes, (b) increased organizational commitment, and (c) reduced turnover intentions.

**Transformational leadership and employee productivity.** Trmal et al. (2015) found that the leadership style of transformational leaders enhances employee productivity. Similarly, Breevaart et al. (2014) found that transformational leaders create a positive work environment that promotes employee engagement and productivity. Furthermore, Gathungu et al. (2015) supported the idea that the role of transformational leaders in organizations enhances employee organizational commitment. Ghasabeh et al. opined that transformational leaders are the bedrock for driving organizational competitiveness and promoting a culture of employee innovativeness. While some researchers demonstrated that transformational leaders engender employee engagement and productivity (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015; Trmal et al., 2015), Radda, Majidadi, and Akanno (2015) added that employee discretion was an attribute that enhances employee organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). This notion concerning employee discretion resonated with Effelsberg et al. (2014), who observed that although transformational leaders positively impact the commitment of followers, employees still exercise some selfish desire for recognition and rewards.

Singh (2015) argued that organizational culture is yet another factor that affects the effectiveness of transformational leaders. Singh conducted a study within the banking

industry in India and concluded that transformational leadership was best suited to foreign-owned banks while transactional leadership style was ideal for locally-owned banks. Singh conjectured that because the culture in India permitted leaders to exert power, transformational leadership style may actually depress organizational growth. Similarly, Mozammel and Haan (2016) conducted a study within the banking industry in Bangladesh and found there were no significant correlations between transformational leadership and employee engagement. Mozammel and Haan identified other factors that could enhance employee engagement in the emerging financial sector in Bangladesh, such as (a) personality, (b) banking practices, and (c) compensation. Mozammel and Haan suggested that culture, geography, and industry could affect how transformational leaders mediate employee engagement. Fasola, Adeyemi, and Olowe (2013), who studied leadership concepts in the Nigerian banking sector, concluded that transformational leadership style has a positive but insignificant relationship to organizational commitment but that transactional leadership style predicted a substantial influence on organizational commitment. Fasola et al. recommended that leaders in the Nigerian banking industry should promote positive rewards to motivate expected behaviors and apply sanctions to correct nonproductive behaviors.

**Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence.** Arnold, Walsh, Connelly, and Ginis (2015) conducted research on the approach leaders adopt in connecting with the feelings of employees. Arnold et al. posited that there are three emotion-regulation strategies leaders display when relating with followers, namely, (a) surface acting, (b) deep acting, and (c) genuine emotions. Transformational leaders

combine deep acting and genuine emotions because they empathize with followers passionately (Arnold et al., 2015). Arnold et al. identified that early burnout and stress as likely outcomes for transformational leaders because of their profound concern for their teams. Dabke (2016) observed a positive effect associated with the sincere care exhibited by transformational leaders in dealing with their followers. Followers stay engaged and committed to transformational leaders because they perceive them to be trustworthy and selfless (Dabke, 2016). Mathew and Gupta (2015) revealed that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership.

Transformational leaders are smart people who drive the performance of their teams through the emotional connection they have with their followers (Mathew & Gupta, 2015).

In other research, Verma, Bhat, Rangnekar, and Barua (2013) called attention to different decision-making styles adopted by leaders, namely, (a) rational (b) intuitive, (c) dependent, (d) avoidant, and (e) spontaneous. Verma et al. stated that transformational leaders embrace a rational decision-making model because of their deep empathy with their followers. Zhu and Akhtar (2014) examined why followers are always willing to help transformational leaders achieve organizational aspirations. Zhu and Akhtar observed that there is a link between followers' willingness to help and their pro-social motivation. Zhu and Akhtar added that transformational leaders use relationship-based strategy to sustain the affection between the leader and the team.

**Transformational leadership and transactional leadership.** Researchers have appraised and confirmed the value and influence impact of transformational leadership in

driving organizational goals, but leaders should balance transformational and transactional leadership styles to achieve maximum impact on followers and organizational outcome (Birasnav, 2014; Zeb, Saeed, Rehman, Ullah, & Rabi, 2015). Although the findings from a study conducted by Dabke (2016) indicated that transformational leadership behaviors promote the effectiveness of leaders. If leaders do not institute a structured transformational engagement process, followers may derail the transformational leadership concept with negative consequences for both the employees and the organization (Jamaludin et al., 2011). Jamaludin et al. (2011) argued that transformational leadership approach has the tendency to make followers place unlimited trust and reliance on leaders. Likewise, Wang et al. (2016) noted that employees tend to follow transformational leaders without exercising their rights to question the actions of the leaders because of the trust element in the relationship. In effect, both transactional and transformational leadership styles are equally important, and leaders should understand when to apply and balance the relevant concepts for maximum productivity and employee engagement (Breevaart et al., 2014; Ejere & Abasilim, 2013). More recently, Oberfield's (2014) concluded that the leadership styles of transformational and transactional leaders should be viewed as complementary, noting that transformational leaders depend on the structure defined by transactional leaders. The conclusions of Oberfield were re-echoed by Nguyen, Mia, Winata, and Chong (2017) who opined that transformational leaders could not motivate employees to rise above self-interest without first defining objectives and rewards. Conversely, Hamstra et al. (2014) opined that transformation leadership style is ideal for organizations that are focused on learning and



developing of the workforce, whereas organizations that are interested in creating a performance-driven system should institutionalize a transactional leadership style. Ultimately, transformational and transactional leadership styles are critical for both employee engagement and organizational productivity.

**Transformational leadership and laissez-faire leadership.** Gilbert et al. (2016) identified laissez-faire leadership as a leadership style but considered it subordinate to transformational and transactional leadership styles. Laissez-faire leaders typically avoid being actively involved in the process of leadership; specifically, they exhibit avoidance tendencies involving decision-making (Gilbert et al., 2016). Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) stated that leaders with a laissez-faire tendency deliberately avoid situations that could expose them to the need to make a decision. Smith, Eldridge, and DeJoy (2016) found that laissez-faire leaders are not proactive in providing feedback to followers. Consequently, employees working for laissez-faire leaders are most likely to develop apathy for the job, lose motivation, and consider quitting the organization (Smith et al., 2016). Unlike transactional leaders who attempt to employ reward mechanisms to drive employee engagement and productivity, laissez-faire leaders do not exercise any form of initiative to propel followers (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016).

### **Transactional Leadership and Employee Engagement**

Burns (1978) operationalized the transactional leadership concept. Burns explained the relationship between transactional leaders and followers in the context of performance and reward for the benefit of the organization and the employee. Transactional leaders create commitments for employees using concepts of commercial

contracts, economic exchange, or cost-benefit, and usually in the short-term to achieve a common goal for the organization (Burke & Cooper, 2016; Ceri-Booms, Curseu, & Oerlemans, 2017). Deichmann and Stam (2015) explained that transactional leaders connect with their followers through an exchange relationship. Caillier (2016) agreed with the view of Deichmann and Stam (2015) that the relationship between transactional leaders and their followers arise primarily as exchanges of rewards for achievements. In addition, Caillier (2016) observed that followers do not experience creativity and innovativeness because of the constricted contractual engagement with transactional leaders. The value in the exchange relationship could be in terms of, economic, political, or psychological motive (Masa'deh, Obeidat, & Tarhini, 2016). However, Pradhan and Pradhan (2015) observed that for employees to evolve and develop a commitment to organizations, the leaders need to exercise more than mere exchange relationships. Pradhan and Pradhan surmised that a compelling vision, motivating and inspiring leadership, and productive engagements are some attributes followers expect to derive from the association they maintain with organizations.

Deichman and Stam (2015) found that transactional leaders pre-inform followers of the expectations accentuating the exchange relationship between the leaders and the followers. Epitropaki and Martin (2013) argued that transactional leaders are deliberate in communicating goals and expectations to followers. Epitropaki and Martin claimed that the reason transactional leaders elucidate engagement objectives is that such leaders appraise performance by rewarding excellence and sanctioning failures. Similarly, Girma (2016) found that while transactional leaders reward employees who achieve results, the

leaders also sanction followers whose performance does not meet the standard. Birasnav (2014) discussed the value of transactional leaders in the contexts of job specification and rewards but also highlighted the importance of defining the timelines for achieving goals that had been agreed upon. Martin (2015) in explaining the transactional nature of the leader and follower, demonstrated the importance of defining a time limit for the completion of contracted tasks. Martin theorized that when transactional leaders communicate rewards, followers become motivated and passionate about accomplishing the task quickly to obtain the reward. However, Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) noted that the relationship between transactional leaders and their followers is restricted to the ideals of tasks, performance, and rewards.

Although Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) considered the interaction between transactional leaders and employees as commercial, Rahimi, Khezrib, and Niknafs (2016) indicated that transactional leaders help followers to build confidence and become productive. Contrary to the findings of Rahimi et al. (2016), Yulk (2010) found that the nature of the relationship between the leader and the follower would not engender commitment and passion on the part of followers. Tyssen, Wald, and Spieth (2014) supported the views expressed by Deichmann and Stam (2015) and Epitropaki and Martin (2013). Tyssen et al. (2014) defined transactional leaders as leaders who are task-oriented. Ceri-Booms et al. (2017) observed that, although transactional leaders are driven and motivated by performance, they are equally careful in explaining tasks and the steps for actualizing the assigned duties. Tyssen et al. (2014) compared transactional and transformational leaders and concluded that while transformational leaders focus on

developing people for the good of the organization and the individual, transactional leaders focus on achieving goals and rewarding performance. Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) also compared transformational and transactional leaders. They found that transformational leaders work for the future while transactional leaders maintain the status. Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) also considered transactional leadership style as a foundation for transformational leadership style.

**Concepts of transactional leadership.** Burke and Cooper (2016) highlighted three concepts that drive the behaviors of transactional leadership, namely, (a) contingent reward, (b) active management-by-exception, and (c) passive management-by-exception. Ejere and Abasilim (2013) observed that leaders who adopt the contingent reward approach compensate followers when they achieve predefined targets. Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) found three instances when transactional leaders use the contingent reward approach: (a) when goals are accomplished on time, (b) when goals are accomplished ahead of time, or (c) when the leader intends to keep the employees focused on working and achieving set targets. In situations where leaders practice active management-by-exception, the leaders consistently monitor performance by establishing mechanisms to screen errors (Burke & Cooper, 2016; Smith et al., 2016). Ejere and Abasilim (2013) observed that leaders exercise a passive management-by-exception style by allowing followers to make mistakes before intervening to sanction the follower. Fasola et al. (2013) asserted that transactional leaders monitor followers and intervene promptly to correct mistakes when they occur. Transactional leaders proactively engage with followers and adopt variable reward mechanisms to enforce compliance (Fasola et al.,

2013). Wei, Wei, Lee, and Kwan (2016) found that the primary difference between active management-by-exception and passive management-by-exception is the timing leaders use when they mediate followers' mistakes. Mohamad and Yahya (2016) postulated that transactional leaders are more tactical than they are strategic, which defines the characteristics of transformational leaders. Fasola et al. (2013) asserted that transactional leaders are best suited for crises and project assignments with compacted timelines. Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) confirmed the same opinion as expressed by Fasola et al. (2013) but included that transactional leaders complete projects by addressing each element of the task as a separate unit. However, Kriger and Zhovtobryukh (2016) indicated that transactional leaders, like other charismatic leaders, mediate teams and organizations' successes through effective leadership and clarity of goals. Furthermore, Mohamad and Yahya (2016) observed that transactional leadership style enhances individuals' performance level while strengthening the competitiveness of organizations.

**Transactional leadership and organizational performance.** Transactional leaders mediate between the organization and the employees usually to promote the competitive advantage of organizations while offering rewards to motivate individuals (Mohamad & Yahya, 2016; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Yahaya and Ebrahim noted that transactional leaders focus on discussing the expected level of performance on the job and compensations for employees who actualize the terms and conditions of the contract. Followers, in a transactional leadership setting, lack the right to innovate, risk-taking, teamwork, and assumptions due to the contractual nature of the relationship with the organizational leaders (Fasola et al., 2013; McCleskey, 2014). Breevaart (2014)

contemplated that a right blend of transformational and transactional leadership styles could contribute to increasing business productivity. Likewise, Kriger and Zhovtobryukh (2016) argued that leaders need to combine the follower-development approach of transformational leaders and the economic exchange characteristics of transactional leaders to achieve effectiveness in leadership. Furthermore, Fasola et al. (2013) found that transactional leadership is well suited for improving business performance as transformational leadership. However, Mgeni and Nayak (2016) indicated that while transactional leadership style is a valuable concept for managing organizations, the style is appropriate only in select situations. While comparing the level of influence achieved by transformational and transactional leaders, Girma (2016) found that transactional leaders focus on influencing followers to achieve pre-defined tasks through negotiations. Usually, the affected employees believe that the attainment of such goals has inherent personal benefits (Girma, 2016).

### **Evolution of Leadership Styles**

Leaders are responsible for instituting the right influence in organizations through people engagement, vision and culture setting, and providing solutions to challenges that affect the organization. Because of the role of leaders in organizations, researchers have been interested in studying the evolution of leadership as a concept and the impact of leadership on employees' wellbeing, work-motivation, retention, and productivity (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Samad, Reaburn, Davis, & Ahmed, 2015). Leadership occupies a systemic importance and offers competitive value to organizations (Keskes, 2014; Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Latham (2014) identified some categories of leadership

styles as (a) transformational leadership, (b) transactional leadership, (c) spiritual leadership, and (d) servant-leaders. Samad et al. (2015) highlighted laissez-faire as another class of leadership styles. The most prominent broad classifications of leadership styles are the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles (Amankwaa & Anku-Tsede, 2015; Tarsik, Kassim, & Nasharudin, 2014). In addition to the three leadership styles, Antonakis and House (2014) argued that the full-range leadership classification should include the instrumental leadership style. Antonakis and House opined that the effectiveness of leaders was beyond demonstrating influence; but should incorporate leaders' skills, strategies, and expertise. Leaders' effectiveness should include providing tactical and strategic solutions to organizational problems (Antonakis & House, 2014). Similarly, Rowold (2014) found that instrumental leadership incorporates leadership values and behaviors that transformational and transactional leaders lack.

**Leadership and employee engagement.** Ikpefan and Agwu (2015) defined leadership as influence and ability to institute motivation within a team. Ikpefan and Agwu opined that leaders do not need to compel people to accept their leadership because followers are passionate in following great leaders. Leaders influence the behaviors and engagement level of followers (Mulki, Caemmerer, & Heggde, 2015; Popli & Rizvi, 2015). Likewise, Collins, McKinnies, Matthews, and Collins (2015) reiterated that retaining employees is a key concern for most leaders. Leaders use their leadership skills to keep employees engaged and to sustain organizational productivity (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015; Mgeni & Nayak, 2016). Bhuvanaiah and Raya (2015) discussed other factors

that contribute to employee engagement such as (a) the authority for employees to participate in decision-making, (b) opportunities for growth and development, and (c) empowerment and fair treatment. Leaders are responsible for creating a community of engaged employees (Gupta, 2015) and they are accountable for employee motivation and retention (Korsakiene, Stankeviciene, Simelyte, & Talackiene, 2015; Soundarapandiyar & Ganesh, 2015). Likewise, leaders who create job satisfaction for employees and enhance their engagement level, enhance the employees' commitment in contributing to developing the organization (Babalola, 2016). Lloyd et al. (2015) found that supervisors could enhance employee engagement by creating an environment where employees believe their views are important and should be heard.

**Leaders' strategic responsibilities.** Pradhan and Pradhan (2015) described other strategic responsibilities that leaders bear, such as (a) determining and managing merger and acquisition deals, (b) organizational development, (c) allocation of resources, (d) converting resources into valuable products and services, and (e) value creation for stakeholders. While Breevaart et al. (2014) thought that the manner in which leaders influence followers was the most topical discussion on leadership, Asrar-ul-Haq and Kuchinke (2016) noted that researchers are interested in the style leaders adopt in leading their teams. Ultimately, leaders bear the responsibility of creating and communicating the larger organizational vision and motivating the workforce to understand, own, and drive that vision.

Antonakis and House (2014) stated that leaders harness organizational resources to achieve business objectives and strategic goals. Every form of organization such as (a)



country, (b) companies, and (c) teams, require leadership (Antonakis & House, 2014). In a study conducted by Ikpefan and Agwu (2015) on leadership theories and the evolving operational landscape in Nigeria banking industry, the authors recorded that leaders assume responsibility for adjusting and converting problems for business growth and differentiation. Likewise, Carnes, Houghton, and Ellison (2015) noted that the organizational selection process for leaders should assume other non-traditional approaches aside from the formal interviews because of the strategic and evolving roles leaders occupy. Similarly, Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) identified with the strategic importance of leaders in an organization by attributing to effective leadership (a) sustained profitability, (b) productivity, and (c) organizational competitive advantage.

### **Employee Turnover Intentions**

Turnover intention refers to the consideration that employees give to ending employment voluntarily with their current employer (Borah & Malakar, 2015; Tziner, Rabenu, Radomski, & Belkin, 2015). Lu and Gursoy (2016) extended the definition of employee turnover intentions to include the employee's search for an alternative job opportunity in other organizations. Cohen, Blake, and Goodman (2016) and Cho and Lewis (2012) opined that several researchers have been interested in studying the subject of turnover intention because such intentions predict actual turnover. Likewise, Borah and Malakar (2015) stated that an intention to leave was the last stage in the voluntary employee turnover process. Because voluntary turnover could have a negative connotation for organizations, Chauhan (2014) argued that leaders should focus on retaining employees who contribute to enhancing the value of the organization. Chauhan

(2014) and Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, and Pemberton-Jones (2015) observed that as existing employees exit, such exits create opportunities for the recruitment of new people with fresh perspectives. Cloutier et al. (2015) reiterated the view of focusing on the retention of key talent employees as expressed by Chauhan (2014). Cloutier et al. (2015) argued that employee retention should be a strategic focus for leaders and that business strategies should be directed at motivating the engagement of critical staff members. Consequently, one could conclude that turnover is dysfunctional for an organization when key employees leave and functional when non-productive employees exit (Wang et al., 2014).

**Turnover intention and actual turnover.** Although Jung (2012) argued that there is no direct relationship between employee turnover intention and actual turnover, Cohen et al. (2016) asserted that intentions and eventual actions are directly related. Therefore, employees who reflect on the possibility of leaving an organization are most likely going to leave should an internal shock or an external lure arise (Borah & Malakar, 2015; Hofaidhllaoui & Chhinzer, 2014). Similarly, Wynen and Op de Beeck (2014) characterized the pull and push forces that propel turnover intentions as (a) external environmental factors, (b) individual demographics and personal characteristics, and (c) organizational and work-related elements. Furthermore, Klotz and Bolino (2016) considered employee turnover intentions as a predictor of staff resignations in an organization. Christian and Ellis (2014) showed that employees' consideration given to quitting an organization is a significant contributor to resignations in organizations. Klotz and Bolino's (2016) findings were consistent with those of Christian and Ellis (2014). Nei, Snyder, and Litwiller (2015) confirmed that there is a relationship between turnover

intention and actual turnover, but they identified the strength of the relationship as being moderate. Likewise, Waldman, Carter, and Hom (2015) showed an association between turnover intention and employee resignations but found that only about 14% of staff members who develop the thought of leaving an organization actually consummate such a plan. In addition, Borah and Malakar (2015) hypothesized that the intention to quit is more damaging to organizations than the actual act of turnover.

**Factors that promote the intention of employees to leave.** In their view, Borah and Malakar (2015) found that employees begin contemplating leaving an organization due either to internal issues that they consider to be not aligned with their personal goals or to external attractions, which propel a planning and a thought to leave. Pandey (2015) identified some factors that could cause employees to consider leaving one organization for another as (a) an unhealthy work environment, (b) an inappropriate work-life balance, (c) a lack of opportunities for career growth, and (d) poor compensation. Holmes et al. (2013) found that disengaged employees are likely to consider leaving their organizations. Employees who lack training, mentoring, knowledgeable leadership, and effective communication may become disengaged and could consider resignation (Holmes et. al., 2013). Kessler (2014) expanded on the work of Borah and Malakar (2015) by including the finding that the nature of the job and assignments that leaders apportion to staff may stimulate the thought of leaving among employees. For instance, in a study conducted by Kessler (2014), among IT employees in India, Kessler concluded that allocating marketing targets to IT specialists triggers thoughts of resignation instead of serving as a motivation to stay. Assigning unrelated job targets could lead to stress and

burnout in employees, according to Kim (2015). Kim observed that burnout was significantly related to turnover intention. In addition, Das and Baruah (2013) concluded that factors such as (a) age, (b) level of satisfaction on the job, (c) tenure on the job, (d) job image, and (e) unaligned expectations, could stimulate thoughts among employees to exit an organization. Cohen et al. (2015) and Van Dam, Meewis, and van der Heijden (2013) found that age contributes to more frequent turnover considerations. Wynen and Op de Beeck (2014) found a negative relationship between age and turnover intention. The older workers become, the more likely they are to value stability and less likely they are to consider resignation (Wynen & Op de Beeck, 2014). Lu, Sun, and Du (2016) determined that career development opportunities are a factor that could prompt an intention to stay or an intention to leave among employees, while Anvaria, JianFub, and Chermahini (2014) considered the possibility of higher wages and career opportunities as motivators for seeking new employments. Some other concerns may lead to an increased likelihood to exit employment. Among these concerns are (a) stress on the job, (b) conflicts between work and family time, (c) job complexity, (d) team membership and interrelations, and (e) rewards and career path (Nei et. al., 2015). Findings by Nawaz and Pangil (2016) identified salary consideration as a factor that prompts thoughts about leaving, but Nei et al. (2015) reported that organization size, salary, and employment status were poor predictors of leave intentions among employees. However, team spirit and leadership play significant roles in controlling employees' desire to seek employment elsewhere. Nei et al. (2015) found that followers who enjoy team cohesion and work with supportive and communicative leaders do not consider exiting the company.

Borah and Malakar (2015) found that employees begin to generate leave intentions when they develop dissatisfaction with their jobs and with their organizations. In addition, employees who lack commitment to the organization have a higher tendency to consider quitting (Lloyd et al., 2015). While Borah and Malakar (2015) found the lack of job embeddedness and psychological disconnection to the job content are factors that cultivate unhappiness in employees, Lloyd et al. (2015) observed that employers' withdrawal from employees, such as a lack of attention, reduces employee motivation. Avey, Wu, and Holley (2015) identified job embeddedness as a critical factor in reducing employee-quit intention. Tews, Michel, Xu, and Drost (2015) showed that the more embedded a staff member is in an organization, the less likely it is that this person would consider resigning from the organization. Employees who are embedded connect within the organization and maintain a high level of commitment and loyalty (Borah & Malakar, 2015). Borah and Malaka (2015) and Avey et al. (2015) observed that job embeddedness reduces turnover intentions. However, Botsford, Morgan, and King (2012) found that workload and work schedule flexibility acted as positive stimulants to turnover intentions. Campbell, Im, and Jisu (2014) observed that conflicts between employees' abilities and the employers' expectations produce stress in employees, who may, therefore, consider leaving the organization. Employees who do not align with a company culture company are likely to be thinking about searching for other job opportunities (Christian & Ellis, 2014; Gialuisi & Coetzer, 2013). Bryant and Allen (2013) argued that withdrawal is a visible sign that employees becoming disconnected from the work environment and the company's work culture. Leaders need to develop skills to identify

such signs and to address them for employees that the company wishes to retain (Bryant & Allen, 2013).

Wong and Laschinger's (2015) study noted that among healthcare managers, leaders who feel pressured to perform on lean resources may be compelled to begin considering leaving the organization. There is a direct and a significant relationship between work-related exhaustion and turnover intention (Wong & Laschinger, 2015). In a related finding, Wong and Laschinger identified other factors that facilitate intention to leave, such as work overload, work-life imbalance, lack of resources, and inability to ensure and sustain quality care. Pandey (2015), in supporting the findings of Wong and Laschinger (2015), identified the work-life balance as one of the motivating factors in employees' decision to leave their employment. Pandey (2015) also identified other causes of employee turnover, including remuneration, career growth opportunities, and the work environment.

**Employees' leave intention and leadership.** When employees perceive that organizational leaders treat employees fairly and equally, they are most likely to stay and contribute to enhancing the productivity of the company (Bligh, 2017; Hwang, Lee, Park, Chang, & Kim, 2014). Babalola, Stouten, and Euwema (2016) found that employees stay with ethical leaders because such leaders respect the views of employees and enhance employees' self-esteem. Equally, followers connect with and remain under the leadership of transactional leaders because transactional leaders use equal and fair predetermined models to reward and sanction followers (Wells & Peachey, 2010). Bertotto (2015) postulated that the following leadership behaviors could stem employees' thoughts of

leaving an organization: (a) assigning equal value to behavioral objectives as apply to performance objectives, (b) leaders caring for the individual employees as much as they care about the organization, and (c) giving employees tasks that align with their strengths. Leaders' closeness to and relationships with employees could help in controlling the build-up of intentions to leave among followers (Debbie, 2015). Employees who build relationships with leaders and other workers in the organization experience deeper levels of embeddedness and such experiences are negatively correlated with turnover intentions and voluntary employee turnover (Peltokorpi, Allen, & Froese, 2015).

### **Voluntary Employee Turnover**

Voluntary employee turnover is associated with employees' decision to stop working for a company (Alkahtani, 2015; Kessler, 2014). Zainol et al. (2016) observed that employees leave their employers when they become dissatisfied with the job conditions. Kessler (2014) stated that there are negative implications for organizations when employees elect to leave. Holtom and Burch (2016) indicated that employee turnover could be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary employee turnover refers to instances where employees exercise a personal decision to leave an organization while involuntary employee turnover refers to the termination of the employee by the organization (Holtom & Burch, 2016). Usually, when employees opt to leave, key talent employees, who contribute to building strategic value for the organization, are the first to leave because there are several organizations searching for their talents (Li, Lee, Mitchell, Hom, & Griffeth, 2016). The result of a study conducted by Peacock (2010) revealed that an average of 10.4% of United Kingdom workers voluntarily left their

employer in 2010. Skagert, Dellve, and Ahlborg (2011) determined that turnover among Swedish healthcare managers was as high as 40% over a 4-year period. Therefore, as Nobuo (2014) concluded, employee turnover is a global phenomenon and affects all business types. Wynen and Op de Beeck (2014) and Li et al. (2016) found that voluntary exit of employees presents a negative outcome for organizations. The negative effect of employee turnover notwithstanding, some researchers believe there are values in employee turnover. Smith and Macko (2014) found that bringing in new people into the organization is an opportunity to introduce fresh perspectives and innovation to work and productivity. Although Smith and Macko concurred that, the negative effects of employee turnover dwarf the possible inherent benefits.

**Why employees leave.** Brown, Fraser, Wong, Muise, and Cummings (2013) found that various authors highlight different reasons why employees leave their employers. Nei et al. (2015) cited factors such as (a) individual personality, (b) job characteristics, (c) level of job satisfaction, (d) organizational culture, and (e) leadership style Kessler (2014) offered two broad classifications for these causes, namely, organizational causes and extra-organizational causes. Alkahtani's (2015) work led him to suggest a third category, that of environmental factors. As contributory organizational causes, Kessler (2014) named (a) human resource management, (b) organizational culture, (c) policies and procedures, (d) job structure and content, and (e) leadership. Further, Kessler named personal characteristic of the employee and the dictates of the labor market as extra-organizational causes of employee turnover. Additionally, a study by Kessler-Ladelsky and Cataa (2013) aligned with the views noted by Kessler (2014).



Kessler-Ladelsky and Cataa (2013) found that human resource management, culture, and leadership are organizational causes of voluntary employee turnover. Tandung (2016) found that employees' negative perception of human resource (HR) practices were key contributors to employee turnover. Tandung measured four HR attributes (service quality, employee well-being, cost reduction, and exploiting employees) and concluded that when employees perceive HR practices positively, their level of job satisfaction increases. One of such HR practices includes defining performance management and career growth opportunities in the organization as a driver for staff retention (Chitsaz-Isfahani, 2013; Oladapo, 2014).

**Cost of employee attrition.** Voluntary employee turnover is costly for organizations and the cost components are multifaceted (Babalola et al., 2016; Kim & Fernandez, 2015). Alkahtani (2015) classified the cost elements of voluntary employee turnover as visible—recruitment costs, reference checks, security clearances, training costs, and induction expenses—and invisible—losses of organizational knowledge, losses of clients, missed deadlines, and failures in customer relations. Nei et al. (2015) also noted that voluntary employee turnover has a negative effect on customer satisfaction, impacts the growth of organizational productivity, and shrinks revenue. Along with Nei et al. and Alkahtani (2015), Holtom and Burch (2016) also found that employee turnover impacts the relationship with customers. Reilly, Nyberg, Maltarich, and Weller (2014) opined that service quality may decline because of the time it takes to replace employees who exit and this time gap has a negative impact on the performance of organizations. Holtom and Burch (2016) posited that customers find it difficult adjusting to new staff

members, and employee turnover usually leads to customer turnover. In addition, when employees leave, the morale of the other staff members is adversely affected and this reflects negatively on the efficiency of the organization (Alkahtani, 2015). While Abbasi and Hollman (2000) suggested that the financial cost of employee turnover could exceed \$11 billion annually, Tracey and Hinkin (2008) posited that organizations record losses of productivity that are as much as two-thirds of the total turnover costs because of voluntary employee turnover. Furthermore, Wells and Peachey (2010) noted that employee turnover has several other possible implications beyond the dollar amounts. For example, as shown by Abbasi and Hollman (2000), exiting employees would always leave with the knowledge and skills they acquired in the organization.

**Leaders' roles in reducing staff turnover.** The task of motivating employees to stay and remain productive in an organization is a responsibility of leadership. Employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance levels are enhanced by rewards but employee turnover intention is not linked to any particular reward type (De Gieter & Hofmans, 2015). Generally, employees stay or leave due to culture-related issues and leaders are responsible for creating organizational culture—from recruitment to retention. Alkahtani (2015) argued that organizational leaders could reduce voluntary employee turnover by undertaking structured recruitment processes, providing adequate budgeting for staff training, ensuring leadership presence and support in the organization, and creating sustainable career opportunities for staff. Alkahtani claimed that some organizations have not been able to control voluntary employee turnover because of the poor accounting practices that prevent managers from taking responsibility for employees

who exit their teams. Caillier (2013) showed that leaders play a significant role in controlling voluntary employee turnover. When employees perceive that their leaders are committed to promoting their welfare and enhancing their careers and well-being, they are compelled to display organizational citizenship behaviors and to show loyalty to the organization. Hughes, Avey, and Nixon (2010) identified an inverse relationship between transformational leaders and employees' intentions to quit. Cailler's later research (2016) showed that employees are likely to stay longer in organizations that have transformational leaders because of the individualized attention such leaders offer. Furthermore, because of the strategic importance of treating each employee individually, Caillier (2016) recommended that business leaders should institute a process for helping managers develop the skills of individualized consideration. Waldman et al. (2015) also noted that employees remain in organizations because of the leaders in the organization. Waldman et al. referred to the leaders as the pull-to-stay factor that motivates employees' retention.

Radda et al. (2015) found that leaders take responsibility for instituting retention strategies in organizations. Radda et al. argued that leaders, through the human resource function, should promote employee engagement. Engaged employees are motivated to display organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Radda et al., 2015). The researchers also observed that employees who care about their organizations exercise commitment and willingness to remain in the organization. Like Radda et al. (2015), Avey et al. (2015) found that job embeddedness is one strategy business leaders adopt to induce employees to remain with the organization. According to Avey et al. (2015), enriching

employees' job content is a critical factor in moderating employee attrition. In addition to job enrichment, Aruna and Anita (2015) noted that leaders need to understand their employees' demographics in order to create an engagement process and a work structure that appeal to the passions of the employees. For instance, Aruna and Anita noted that because generation Y (GY) employees are open-minded, intelligent, informed, and social-minded, the engagement tool for this set of workers would be different from that of generation X.

### **Transition**

In section 1, I presented the problem statement, the purpose statement, the nature of the study, and the conceptual framework. In addition, I highlighted the quantifiable and unquantifiable implications of voluntary employee turnover on both leaders and the organizations they lead. The literature review incorporated concepts around leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, voluntary employee turnover, employee turnover, causes of employee turnover, the cost of employee turnover, and strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover.

In section 2, I discussed my role as the researcher and the eligibility of participants. The other elements that made up this section included (a) the research design, (b) research method, and (c) population and sampling. Furthermore, subsections like ethical research, instrument and strategies for collecting, organizing, and analyzing data were included in this section. The concluding part of section 2 included discussions on reliability and validity.

In section 3, I focused on the presentation of findings. I discussed the findings as they applied to professional practice and possible implications for social change. Finally, the section provided for the researcher to make recommendations for action and further research.

## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The targeted population comprised 10 leaders of a bank in southwestern Nigeria. The participants from the specific bank had demonstrated experience in developing and implementing strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover. The implications for positive social change included the potential for business leaders to improve employment opportunities, moderate poverty, and reduce crime rate through enhanced employee retention.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In a qualitative single case study, the researcher plays a central role of (a) being the primary instrument for collecting data, (b) recruiting the participants for the study, (c) managing the interview process, and (d) transcribing, and analyzing data from the interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Yin, 2014). The procedure for this study included the use of semistructured and face-to-face interviews with leaders within the banking industry in southwestern Nigeria. My roles, as the researcher, were to recruit study participants and act as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data from semistructured interviews and company documents. The process for the interview involved the use of predefined interview questions (see Appendix A) and an interview protocol (see Appendix B).

The focus of this proposed qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria employ in addressing voluntary employee turnover. Researchers' direct relationship with the participants may cause bias and compromise the quality of a study (Joseph, Keller, & Ainsworth, 2016) but researchers could highlight and identify existing relationships to enhance objectivity (Srinivasan, Loff, Jesani, & Johari, 2016). I maintain a distant professional relationship with the organization and participants having worked at strategic management positions within the banking industry in Nigeria and another African country for over 10 years.

The Belmont Report (1979) recommended the protection of research participants by ensuring they are duly informed of the research process, willing to participate, and aware of the roles of the participants and the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In addition, the National Institute of Health (NIH) web-based course (1848474 09/12/2015) emphasized the significance of protecting human research participants. Therefore, as an ethical researcher, I adhered to the behaviors expected, namely, (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, (c) justice, (d) requiring a signed informed consent to participate, and (e) allowing participants the right to withdraw at any time during the study should they so elect.

Researchers hold their personal worldview and may approach a study from that perspective (Dwyer & Chauveron, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Brod, Tesler, and Christiansen (2009) stated that the process of transcript review and member checking controls personal bias in a qualitative study. Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, and Kleinman (2017) also argued that allowing participants review interview transcriptions revalidates

the correctness of the records and sets aside personal sentiments. Consequently, I mitigated subjectivity in this study by recognizing and discountenancing personal opinions with semistructured interview questions, an interview protocol, data saturation, transcript review and validation, and member checking.

The use of an interview protocol sets the tone, establishes order, facilitates uniformity, and helps participants understand their rights (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Salterio, Kenno, and McCracken (2016) opined that an interview protocol promotes a uniform interview pattern and enhances collection and saturation of data. Furthermore, O'Reilly and Parker (2013) revealed that interviewing additional participants using the same questions and interview protocol, improves data saturation. Therefore, I adopted the use of a predetermined list of interview questions and procedures to organize the interviews with participants and to guarantee uniformity.

### **Participants**

The right set of participants contributes to the fulfillment of a study (Oleszkiewicz et al., 2017). Participants should be eligible and knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study so that they can provide the needed inputs and perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The focus of this single case study was on how transformational leadership style could address voluntary employee turnover. A purposive sampling technique was ideal for this study because it ensured the involvement and inclusion of the right participants. Yin (2014) recommended the use of a purposive sampling technique to select individuals who are qualified to address a study concept. The primary criteria for selecting participants for this study required that participants be bank leaders who had



developed successful strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover in the organization. The banking organization and participants for this study were located in the southwestern part of Nigeria. The choice of an organization in the southwestern part of Nigeria was a function of convenience, time, and resources.

Researchers need to gain access to participants who are willing and qualified to participate in a study to conduct a successful study (Peticca-Harris, deGama, & Elias, 2016). The human resource manager in the organization facilitated access to the right participants. Furthermore, another medium adopted for accessing and recruiting participants was the use of direct personal contact with other leaders who were qualified to participate in this study through internal referrals. I reached out to the identified participants via phone calls and requested face-to-face appointments to discuss the need for their participation. The use of email, upon the indicated consent of the selected employees, also helped in formalizing the engagement with the participants. As part of the process to enhance ethical research, the email contained important information about the study, especially (a) the purpose and business impact of the study, (b) the anticipated social change implications of the study, (c) the basis for selection, (d) the assurance of confidentiality, and (e) the right to freely participate and withdraw without consequence at any time (Peticca-Harris et al., 2016; Yin, 2014). The existing professional relationship within the same industry made access to the participants faster and productive.

Establishing a working relationship with participants strengthens the engagement and makes the research process less cumbersome (Srinivasan et al., 2016; Yin, 2014). Therefore, I used existing industry association and personal contacts in the company to

sustain a working relationship with the participants. In addition, I made the participants comfortable by assuring them that the study will focus on their views and experiences while protecting their identity and sustaining their right to discontinue the study.

Participants are motivated to get involved in a study if they believe in the researcher and the objectivity of the research (Dasgupta, 2015; Tunheim & McLean, 2014). I did not offer the participants any honorarium for contributing to this study. However, to motivate participants' involvement, I conducted the interviews and other activities involving participants at places and time that considered the convenience of the participants. I determined the length of the interviews based upon my assessment of the body language and other non-verbal signals from the participants, in accordance with Englander (2010). Englander recommended that interviewers should limit interview processes to one hour.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

The qualitative research method was ideal for this study because the focus was to explore leadership strategies for addressing voluntary employee turnover. Voluntary employee turnover was the phenomenon providing the context for the study. Researchers use the qualitative method to understand the social and cultural context of a phenomenon (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016; Yin, 2014). In addition, qualitative researchers engage in observation of the behaviors of participants, the study of documentary evidence, and conduct of interviews with participants (Hoon, 2013). I used semistructured interviews for eliciting the experiences of participants regarding the phenomenon. The approach of

using open-ended interviews creates opportunities for participants to express themselves fully and freely on the subject (Gustafsson Jertfel, Blanchin, & Li, 2016).

Researchers adopt quantitative research methods to test hypotheses and to examine relationships between variables (Bernard, 2013). Likewise, quantitative researchers draw upon numbers, statistics, and quantitative measurements as a basis for representing findings (Barnham, 2015). The design concept of this study was to explore real interactions among humans and how the relations observed informed the issue of voluntary employee turnover. Therefore, a quantitative research method did not apply, as there were no variables or hypotheses to test. In addition, and for the same reason, a mixed method, which combines qualitative and quantitative attributes, was also not appropriate (Bernard, 2013).

### **Research Design**

I selected the single case study design. The use of the *how* and *why* questions in this study facilitated an understanding of why employees voluntarily left organizations. The available research designs in a qualitative mode are (a) case study, (b) phenomenological, (c) ethnography, and (d) narrative (Knoblauch, 2014). Yin (2014) identified three key elements that justify the use of a case study design, namely (a) type of research question (*how and why*); (b) the lack of necessity to control behaviors, and (c) the focus of the study is on emerging issues. These three elements were present in this study. Furthermore, Yin (2014) surmised that the single case study, as opposed to multiple case studies, is ideal when researchers wish to test an existing theory critically.

Dasgupta (2015) opined that the phenomenological design is ideal when researchers focus on the lived experiences of individuals. The phenomenological design may be limited in scope and ungeneralizable. My intent, however, was to study a real-world issue in an organizational setting a deep understanding of which could be beneficial to other organizations. Ethnographic researchers concentrate on studying the cultural settings of a group through observation and participation (Baskerville & Myers, 2015; Knoblauch, 2014). The ethnographic design was inappropriate for this study because societal culture does not constitute any part of the research problem. Furthermore, researchers adopt the narrative design to capture historical life stories and experiences of persons (Knoblauch, 2014). Narrative designs do not relate to real and present situations, which made such designs unsuitable for this study.

Furthermore, data saturation is a critical consideration and a basis for enhancing the validity of a qualitative study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The data in a study is classified as saturated when researchers do not observe new patterns of information in incremental data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015). Tran, Porcher, Tran, and Ravaud (2016) emphasized the importance of qualitative researchers being deliberate in the approach adopted in achieving data saturation. Consequently, I employed the following techniques in achieving appropriate data collection and data saturation: (a) use of the same set of interview questions for all participants (see Appendix A), (b) use of an interview protocol (see Appendix B), and (c) recruitment of additional participants if data saturation was not achieved after interviewing the initial 10 participants. O'Reilly and

Parker (2013) also recommended that researchers should report challenges encountered in trying to achieve data saturation.

### **Population and Sampling**

The targeted population for this study consisted of 10 leaders in a bank within the southwestern part of Nigeria who implemented strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover. I used the purposive sampling method to identify participants who had experienced the phenomenon. Purposive sampling enables researchers to select the appropriate participants with the requisite experience and knowledge in the field of study (Grossoehme, 2014; Richardson & Taylor, 2012). Purposive sampling was ideal for this study because the process facilitated interaction with people who could share their lived experience. I selected a sample of 10 leaders across various functions relating to the subject of leadership strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover in the organization as participants for this study. Qualitative researchers identify participants based on the relationship with the research question and the phenomenon that the research question addresses (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Walker (2012) argued that the sample size should be large enough to engender data saturation and address the research questions. However, Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that there is no standard determinant for data saturation. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) explained that a qualitative researcher achieves data saturation when the researcher has sufficient information to ground the study. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) opined that six interviews could lead to data saturation. Burmeister and Aitken (2012) asserted that data saturation was more about the depth of the data and not numbers. Therefore, to guarantee data saturation, I made

provision for adding additional participants until no new aspect of the phenomenon evolved from the interview process.

The process differs for determining sample sizes in qualitative and quantitative studies (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2015). While quantitative studies adopt power calculation methods to determine ideal sample size, there are no specific rules for sample sizing a qualitative study (Malterud et al., 2015). Carlsen and Glenton (2011) stated that the lack of a standard process for determining saturation in a qualitative study could lead to a premature claim of saturation by researchers. I mitigated this risk by using an interview protocol (see Appendix B) and a set of interview questions (see Appendix A) to interview people who had been involved in designing strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover. Therefore, I achieved data saturation through the interview process and the recording of emerging themes until no new themes evolved regarding the concept. Fusch and Ness (2015) explained that a study is saturated when new themes no longer evolve.

### **Ethical Research**

Historians study past events, and scientists study physical, chemical, and non-human-related substances (Yin, 2014). However, case study researchers explore human subjects in the context of current and real life settings (Yin, 2014). Yin stated that case study researchers bear the moral burden to ensure that they adopt the highest ethical standards possible in securing the comfort and protection of study participants. Researchers use an informed consent form to obtain the agreement of participants to participate in a study (Newington & Metcalfe, 2014; Wall & Pentz, 2016). Wall and

Pentz (2016) indicated that investigators should not view the consent form as an ordinary document for obtaining the signatures of participants, but a conversation process with the intent of acquiring the understanding of the participants. Therefore, Wall and Pentz specified that consent forms should be unambiguous and easy to understand. I complied with Walden University policies and standards on ethical research, and obtained the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before engaging with the participants and included the IRB approval number (05-25-17-0578539) in the final doctoral study. According to Walden's standards, these research types require IRB approval: first, students participating in research assignments through data collection and analysis involving human subjects, and second, all doctoral capstones (dissertations and doctoral projects). The IRB is responsible for granting approvals to conduct any study involving human subjects (Yin, 2014). Particularly, the IRB validates researchers' procedure of engagement with participants and data collection instruments (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, the IRB checks how researchers, using the informed consent form, protect participants from harm, assure them of their privacy, and sustain the confidentiality for participants' data (Bernard, 2013). In addition, participants who were qualified and participated in this study signed the informed consent form as evidence of understanding the requirements and conditions for participation. The names and other unique and identifiable attributes of the organization and participants were unspecified. I used secure but retrievable codes to represent the names of the participants, thus achieving confidentiality. For instance, the code PT0 symbolized the name of the organization, and PTL 01-10 denoted the 10 participants in leadership positions. Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013) recommended

ensuring the confidentiality of participants to avoid unnecessary exposures for the participants.

Among the responsibilities of the researcher is the education of the participants as to their rights while participating in a study. Involvement in a study is voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw from the process at any time during the engagement (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2014). Participants can choose to discontinue the engagement by sending an email to a pre-agreed email address, or by telephone (verbal or message), or face-to-face in person. The consent form (see Appendix B) contained contact information to enhance communication. Although Watson, Robinson, Harker, and Arriola (2016) argued that extending incentives to participants encourages participation, participants did not receive incentives to participate because participation was voluntary. Furthermore, data storage and retention are other factors that promote or compromise the confidentiality of participants (Seidman, 2013). Consequently, I will store the collected data for 5 years and secure the data content in a password-protected database with access restricted solely to me.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Researchers who adopt a qualitative case study design serve as the main tool for collecting data from respondents (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Yin, 2014). Therefore, I was the primary data collection instrument through semistructured interviews and the collection of secondary data from the organization's documents. Yin (2014) noted that organizational records serve as additional evidence to substantiate the data gathered through interviews. The participants for this study provided the required data through a



semistructured face-to-face interview process. Dasgupta (2015) explained that semistructured interviews promote the collection of key information from respondents, and allowance for interviewees to provide additional information on the study concept.

The semistructured interviews included six concept questions and one wrap-up question (see Appendix A). The use of the interview protocol (see Appendix B) established a structure around engaging each participant in promoting consistency of approach during the interviews. An interview protocol promotes data gathering and saturation, ensures fairness, and enhances study generalizability (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Subject to the consent of the participants, I deployed two devices for the audio recording of the interviews. In addition, I took hand-written notes as the respondents gave their responses to the questions, and exercised care to observe and note the body language of the respondents. Tunheim and McClean (2014) suggested that audio recording and note taking are two key approaches to conducting effective interviews. I read the notes and listened to the audio recording of the interviews to extract and define emerging themes from the different responses. Therefore, the feedback from the participants formed the data field from which I identified broad themes and had the respondents reconfirm these through a member checking process. The member checking process promotes (a) correctness of transcription, (b) study objectivity, and (c) study validity (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014; Tunheim & McClean, 2014). Furthermore, Tunheim and McClean (2014) recommended follow-up engagements with the respondents if the member checking process point to the need to correct some elements of the transcription.

### **Data Collection Technique**

In a qualitative case study, documentation, archival records, direct observations, and interviews are some of the effective media for data collection (Bernard, 2013; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) stated that interviews are the most efficient way to obtain, record, and retain evidence in a case study. The interview process allows the researcher to ask targeted questions while permitting the interviewee to address the phenomenon through open-ended questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Yin, 2014). However, Yin also stated that case study should not depend on a single source of evidence. The validity of a study is enhanced when the conclusions are derived from multiple sources (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Oleszkiewicz et al., 2017). The research question for this study was: “What leadership strategies do some bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover?” Consequently, the semistructured face-to-face interview process was appropriate for collecting data from leaders who had experienced the subject phenomenon. I worked with the selected participants to choose a preferred location for the interviews with emphasis on ensuring their convenience, promoting confidentiality, and protecting their privacy.

The interview process in research accords both the researcher and the participants the opportunity to clarify and, possibly, rephrase questions and answers (Cole & Harbour, 2015). In addition, unlike surveys, to which respondents may not reply, interviews are pre-arranged and offer interviewees the opportunity to express themselves while explaining their experience on the focus of the study (Cole & Harbour, 2015; Yin, 2014). Thomas (2016) noted that case study interviews are not restrictive because of the open-

ended nature of the questions. However, respondents may be busy, distracted, or uninterested in a study, especially if they perceive the study as a matter of academic routine (Dasguta, 2015). The respondents may also have unanticipated schedule disruption that might hamper their availability or willingness to sustain participation (Tunheim & McClean, 2014). Cole and Harbour (2015) also noted that interviewers could swing the direction of interviews to align with their personal views. To address the inherent disadvantages of using interviews as a technique, I (a) explain the purpose of this study, (b) organized interviews at locations and timings suitable for participants, and (c) ensured the questions followed the recommended open-ended format for case studies.

Assigning unique numbers to identify the organization and the individual employees enhances the protection of their confidentiality (Dasgupta, 2015; Gibson et al., 2013). Therefore, the code PT0 represented the organization and PTL 01-10 represented the 10 leaders from the organization. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) as a tool to direct the engagement commencing with an appreciation for participation, introducing myself and the purpose of the study, execution of the informed consent form, and then asking, listening, recording, transcribing, and observing the interview process. The validity of the findings in qualitative research is subject to the researcher transcribing the information as expressed by the respondents accurately (Cole & Harbour, 2015). To ensure data validity, the participants reviewed the transcriptions and confirmed the appropriateness of the content and intent. The member checking process of allowing participants review and confirm data correctness integrates respondents into the study by

elevating their interest and involvement in the study (Koelsch, 2013; Tunheim & McLean, 2014).

### **Data Organization Technique**

The research interview procedure involves the gathering of data from respondents while the documentation process entails obtaining written information from the company's records (Cole & Harbour, 2015; Dasgupta, 2015). Thomas (2016) stated that the audio recording, the interview transcriptions, copies of company's documents, and the researcher's copy of the consent form all constitute a critical database for a qualitative study. The primary data storage was the memory of a personal laptop and two external hard drive devices as back-ups. In addition, online platforms such as the Dropbox storage tool, which facilitated password-protected online data storage and retrieval, served as a third backup option for the electronic data. Furthermore, the coding process, identification, and sustaining of the confidentiality of the organization and participants remain key requirements in qualitative investigations (Gibson et al., 2013; Grosseohme, 2014). The codes PTO served for the identification of the company and PTL 01-10 for the 10 participants who occupied leadership positions in the organization. Therefore, I stored the hard copy documents, interview transcriptions, audio tapes, and the student's copy of the consent form in a personal fireproof secure safe with a private access. A 5 year period is the ideal storage time recommended for such research evidence (Skelton, 2015); while the researcher destroys the documents when the time elapses (Brimstin, 2013). Consequently, the process of maintenance, storage, and securing all the hard and

electronic data will span over a period of 5 years, afterward, deleted or destroyed in the most efficient manner to sustain content and participants' confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative case study researchers depend on multiple sources of triangulation to substantiate their findings (Dasgupta, 2015; Yin, 2014). Marshall and Rossman (2016) explained that the reason for data analysis is to make meaning out of the data from a research process. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Hence, the qualitative single case study was the most appropriate research approach to extract lived experiences from selected respondents who, as a criterion for participation, must have experienced the phenomenon. Yin (2013) indicated that case study approach allows researchers conduct comprehensive reviews of a difficult subject. Likewise, Schultze and Avital (2011) explained that qualitative researchers conduct their studies with the intent of understanding the personal experiences and stories of the participants. Furthermore, Schultze and Avital stated that for an interview process to constitute value, the data generated from the interview should be deep and rich in content. The depth of information from respondents supports the reliability and validity of a qualitative study (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Therefore, to enhance the depth of data in a study, with the objective of presenting precise and usable conclusions, researchers adopt triangulation as a medium to achieving resonance in data (Denzin, 2012; Thomas, 2016). Yin (2014) presented four types of triangulation:

(a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation.

### **Triangulation and Use of Computer Software in Data Analysis**

**Methodological triangulation.** The methodological triangulation approach was applicable to this study because qualitative single case study researchers use method triangulation to enhance validity and deepen understanding (Yin, 2013). Yin indicated that the use of more than one source of information to compare and enhance the depth and conviction in a study qualifies as triangulation. Therefore, the methodological triangulation for this study involved the use of semistructured interviews with leaders in the selected organization, the member checking process after transcribing interviews, and the appraisal of the company's documents.

**Transcribing the data.** The process for the data analysis involved interviewing the participants using audiotapes and keeping journal notes to back-up the information given in interviews by respondents. Transcribing interviews facilitates data analysis (Fletcher, Massis, & Nordqvist, 2016) and improves the quality of engagements with subsequent participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Dasgupta (2015) explained that researchers should listen to recorded responses carefully and severally to ensure accurate transcription. The correctness and conclusions of the study is a function of the precision of the transcription (Dasgupta, 2015). Yin (2014) also noted that, although there are software that assist researchers to collect, code, and analyze data, the student remains the key factor for producing a perfect study. Although the computer system has contributed in making research efficient and complete (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Yin, 2014), the

computer should not replace the pride scholars experience from undergoing a painstaking data analysis exercise (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Therefore, the transcription of all recorded responses followed a carefully repeated listening, writing, and reviewing processes to ensure that all required data reflected in the summative analysis. To achieve a secure and retrievable storage process, I used Microsoft Word to document the interview records. The transcription of data, which followed a slow-speed playback process, took place within 48 hours of completing each interview. Thereafter, participants received their individual files with the transcribed data for their review and for them to make changes, if necessary. The respondents received a forwarding letter extending my appreciation to them for their involvements and requesting they conclude their reviews within 10 working days to facilitate a follow-up interview for member checking and other verifications. Cole and Harbour (2015) noted that defining themes and patterns in an interview is critical for data analysis. Interviewers need to practice attentive, careful, and repeated listening techniques to identify and define themes from a recorded engagement (Cole & Harbour, 2015). Furthermore, Cole and Harbour suggested that qualitative researchers could use color-coded post-it notes to identify trends and relationships to the research questions. Therefore, the process of reading through the data assisted with identifying patterns and organizing the responses from the participants in formats that enhanced analysis.

**Use of software.** The use of software like NVivo aids researchers in managing the time spent on data and refocuses scholars on understanding and interpreting feedback from respondents (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Furthermore, Bazeley and Jackson stated

that NVivo software has the capacity to (a) manage data, (b) manage ideas, (c) query data, (d) visualize data, and (e) report from the data. In addition, NVivo software enhances auto-coding and the identification of themes and patterns to guarantee that the set of data for analysis is comprehensive (Trotter, 2012). As a result, I used the NVivo software for coding, mind-mapping, and identification of themes. The coding, themes, and pattern identification stages followed a pattern of compiling, disassembling, and reassembling of data.

The conceptual framework for this study was the transformational leadership theory. The other key element of this study was voluntary employee turnover while the research purpose was to study the strategies leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Consequently, the conceptual framework, the literature review, the research purpose and question served as primary considerations when identifying themes for data analysis.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Silverman (2016) indicated that both qualitative researchers should be interested in achieving reliability and validity for their research. The ideal models for verifying the trustworthiness of a research design include (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Anney, 2014; DeVault, 2016). Yin (2014) referred to the four elements as construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) opined that credibility is a critical element in securing the reliability of a study. Furthermore, Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter



(2016) noted that triangulation and member checking are medium for establishing the credibility of a research data.

### **Reliability**

Thomas (2016) denoted reliability as the assurance that the data collection process is repeatable and the results, replicable. Likewise, Shenton (2004) associated reliability with dependability indicating that the measurement for dependability in a research is having similar conclusions if a researcher adopts a related procedure under the same research conditions. However, adopting same procedure and producing comparable results depend on proper documentation by the prior researcher (Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2014). In addition, data saturation enhances the reliability and dependability of a study; scholars achieve data saturation through interviews and adopting a planned interview execution protocol for consistency (Denzin, 2012; Yin, 2013). Similarly, member checking procedure is another tool researchers use to accentuate the reliability of qualitative studies. The member checking process identifies and eliminates the possibility of researcher's bias especially during collection, interpretation, and analysis of data (Anney, 2014; De-Vault, 2016). Triangulation is another exploration tool that contributes to the reliability and dependability of a study. To fulfill triangulation, students ask same questions to different study participants and assemble data from various sources (Anney, 2014, De-Vault, 2016). Anney (2014) noted that triangulation works in two ways: reduces the researcher's bias and confirms the veracity of participants' responses. Therefore, the processes of transcript review, member checking, data saturation, and triangulation strengthened the dependability of this study.

## **Validity**

I applied methodological triangulation and member checking to establish the validity of this inquiry. There are four factors that contribute to the validity of a qualitative research: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Grossoehme (2014) stated that validity is related to the level of credibility and conviction a study presents relative to the phenomenon and the research process.

Holloway and Wheeler (2010) explained credibility as the assurance offered by the research findings. Likewise, Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated that credibility in a study is the confidence that the conclusions are representative of the feedback provided by participants. Researchers secure research credibility through (a) peer examination, (b) triangulation, (c) member checking, (d) interview technique and protocol, and (e) prolonged field experience (Anney, 2014, Yin, 2014).

Transferability, in a research, refers to the extent to which the conclusions in a particular study could be generalized and applied to other circumstances (Anney, 2014; DeVault, 2016). The depth of the data and purposive sampling approach are some of the ways researchers employ to facilitate the generalizability of a study (Anney, 2014; DeVault, 2016). Anney (2014) argued that it is the responsibility of the inquirer to provide an in-depth description of the research process, especially, the data collection process, to make transferability feasible. In addition, DeVault (2016) stated that purposive sampling enhances transferability because the community of participants who

provide the research data is specific. Consequently, the use of purposive sampling and thick research process narrative promoted and enhanced the transferability of this study.

The value of dependability in a study is the test of the constancy of the findings over a period of time (Bitsch, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Bitsch (2005) noted that the dependability of a study is upheld if the findings are the same when an inquirer studies similar respondents under related conditions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that credibility and dependability are interwoven because the achievement of one ensures the performance of the other. Shenton (2004) noted that detailing the research process promotes the dependability of a research. Likewise, Anney (2014) indicated that keeping an audit trail, triangulation, and peer examination are some of the factors that enhance dependability. Therefore, the use of a detailed and documented study process and triangulation sufficed to accomplish the dependability of this study.

Confirmation refers to the extent to which the conclusions in a study can be reverified by persons independent of the inquirer (Anney, 2014). Tobin and Begley (2004) indicated that the purpose of confirmability is to uphold the original intent and views of respondents by eliminating researchers' bias. Reflexive journal, audit trail, and triangulation are some of the ways of ensuring the confirmability of a study. Anney (2014) explained that a reflexive journal is part of the documentation of the researcher that aids the researcher to separate personal history from the series of events that occurred in the field. I probed the respondents during the interview sessions, deployed member-checking techniques, and adopted triangulation to enhance study confirmability.

Ensuring data saturation enhances the overall credibility and validity of a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). O'Reilly and Parker (2013) explained that data saturation occurs when an interview process is devoid of the emergence of new themes. In addition, using an interview protocol facilitates the interview process by promoting an interview pattern and securing data collection and saturation (Draper & Swift, 2011; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Although there was an initial set of 10 participants, I would have used the same interview protocol to engage additional leaders in the organization if I did not achieve data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, I presented key issues around the role of the researcher, the process for selecting participants, and justifications for adopting a qualitative single case. In addition, I expounded on the process for data saturation, the value of ethics in research, and the approach for collecting, organizing, and analyzing data. In section 3, I discussed and applied the details of the findings to professional practices and social change. Furthermore, I provided logical and actionable recommendations from the findings, make suggestions for further research, and drew a conclusion for the entire study.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This section contains the findings from the study on transformational leadership strategies for addressing voluntary employee turnover. Specifically, I will discuss the overview of the study, the findings from collecting and analyzing data, the application of the study to professional practice, and the implications of the study for social change. Furthermore, this section includes recommendations for action drawing from my research findings, recommendations for further research, personal reflection on the doctoral process, and my concluding statements.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the leadership strategies that bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Walden University IRB approved data collection after I obtained a letter of cooperation from the research partner. Thereafter, I interviewed 10 leaders who had demonstrated experience on the phenomenon of developing strategies for addressing voluntary employee turnover. Each of the participants received and executed a consent form after understanding the intent of the form, the voluntary and confidential nature of participation, and their rights to participate and or withdraw. The 10 participants responded to seven open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A) which I transcribed and, through a member-checking process, shared the results with the participants for revalidation. Furthermore, to achieve accuracy in data classification and analysis, I used NVivo 11 for coding and separation of data into themes. The findings showed that the leaders reduced voluntary employee turnover by offering competitive compensations and

benefits, listening to the voice and feeling the pulse of employees, adopting proactive and credible leadership styles, engaging employees through formal and informal methods, and using unconventional methods to acknowledge employees' contributions.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do bank leaders in southwestern Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover? I used semistructured interviews to elicit responses from participants willing to share their personal lived experiences on the subject. The participants signed and received personal copies of the informed consent form before the interviews. To enhance data transcription, I sought and obtained permissions from each participant to record the interviews. I held the interviews, which lasted an average of 25 minutes and an additional 15 minutes for member-checking and validation, at locations preferred by the participants. To enhance the confidentiality of participants, I used codes PTL 01-10 to label the data transcription for each of the 10 participants; where PTL 01 represented participant 1. After the member-checking process, I transferred the content into the Nvivo 11 data analysis software to identify words that occurred more frequently. These recurring phrases qualified as codes from which themes emerged. The research question and the transformational leadership conceptual framework were the guiding principles for choosing applicable themes. The results of the data analysis produced three key themes: (a) remunerations and benefits as tools for employee retention, (b) career growth and development opportunities, and (c) roles of leadership.

### **Theme 1: Remunerations and Benefits as Tools for Employee Retention**

The first theme that had a consensus from all the participants was on the importance of remunerations and benefits. The 10 participants (100%) alluded to the fact that remunerations and benefits were key elements in reducing voluntary employee turnover. For instance, PTL01, 02, 03, 05, 06, 07, 08, and 10 (80%) confirmed that the organization experienced severe voluntary turnover in the past due to relatively poor remunerations and benefits. This outcome of voluntary employee exits substantiated some of the findings in the literature review. For instance, Pandey (2015) indicated that poor compensation activates turnover intentions among workers. In addition, Anvaria et al. (2014) stated that higher wages are one of the factors employers use to attract and hunt for talents. PTL 01 further underscored the importance of monetary benefits for employees as a retention tool by classifying salaries as a *hygiene factor*. Although Nei et al. (2015) reported that salary consideration was a poor predictor of leave intention among workers, the responses from the participants suggested otherwise.

Further analysis of the responses by the participants highlighted five codes relating to the theme of remunerations and benefits as tools for employee retention. The codes identified were: (a) competitive landscape (b) rate of inflation and cost of living excellent brand, (c) environmental factors and local peculiarities, (d) employees personal goals and aspirations, and (e) benefit-in-kind.

The majority of the participants (90%) emphasized the consequences of the competitive landscape as it bears on voluntary employee turnover. For instance, PTL 03, 05, and 06 corresponded that the spate of competition in the financial industry has

become very severe and a contributory factor to the level of successes and failures in the industry. In response to the level of relentlessness in competition, PTL 03 indicated that some competitors now “throw unrealistic remunerations to attract your best hands.” In addition, the participant added that although the bank was miles ahead of other banks but as the competitive landscape became steeper, competitors moved ahead and the bank lost people, position, and money. To accentuate the impact of competition, PTL 05 stated that as new banks came into the industry they targeted recruiting from the organization. PTL 06 emphasized that “the organization was under attack” as other organizations kept looking at recruiting from the company. On his part, PTL 03 indicated, “the banking business is a business where, if you do not maintain your competitive edge, you lose customers.” Furthermore, some of the respondents, PTL 01, 03, 06, 08, and 09 (50%) stated that the foremost competitive edge of the organization was its people. Particularly, PTL 01 indicated that:

And of the key values of enabling progress is having the best people around and retaining the best people; because when you have the best people around, you can be innovative, you can have continuity, and they become attractive to others who will like to join them. You can have the best of systems but if the people are not there, you cannot achieve the overall objectives of the business.

The participants’ affirmations that employees constitute and create a significant competitive advantage for organizations aligned with the findings of previous literature sources. Alkahtani (2015) and Vomberg et al. (2015) opined that human resources are critical to business successes. Appiah-Adu and Amoako (2016) noted that as leaders



define competitive strategies, they need the employees to implement the schemes tactfully. Furthermore, all the participants observed that the organization began to lose competitiveness because competitors were attracted to the quality of staff in the organization. PTL 03 represented his thoughts in this manner:

What we found out was that, at a time we were not just top of the industry, we were miles ahead of the competition. When you are miles ahead of the competition and that gap begins to reduce, what it means is that you find yourself in a situation where the competition goes ahead of you; and once the competition goes ahead of you, you lose business; and remember, we are in business to make money and if you start losing too many people, then whatever targets you set for yourself as an organization to achieve—if you do not make enough money, shareholders expect to get good returns for their investment. If they are not getting that return, or the return you had gotten the previous years start reducing, you find yourself in a situation where whatever judgment, in terms of performance, will always be judged by what is the bottom-line. The bottom-line is one of the key judgment people use. So, no one wants a situation where staff leave and the bottom line begins to be affected. People try to do everything that is necessary to keep their best hands so the bottom-line is not impacted.

Another code under remuneration and benefits as a tool for reducing voluntary employee turnover was the rate of inflation and cost of living in the geographical context. PTL 03, 05, 06, 07, 08, and 10 (60%) discussed the importance of the organizational leadership being proactive in making relevant salary and benefit adjustments to reflect

changes in the costs of living as occasioned by inflation. While PTL 05 and 06 considered prompt adjustments of benefits to inflation, PTL 03, 07 reasoned that there is a limit the management could go in addressing human resource cost elements because of other competing business cost items. Furthermore, the participants captured inflation as one of the external factors that increase the cost of living for employees and cause them to consider exercising voluntary turnover. Particularly, PTL 08 indicated that being a multinational organization, it is important for the global leadership to factor in local peculiarities when considering reviews of salaries and other benefits. The participant argued that while inflation may hover around 2-4% in the developed economies where the parent company has a presence, the situation in the local system experiences double-digits inflation with the attendant impact on the cost of living.

Closely related to inflation and cost of living, the other code highlighted by the participants was environmental factors and local peculiarities. Aside from two participants, all the other participants discussed the importance of organizational leaders being sensitive and proactive in addressing issues from environmental and local peculiarities perspectives. For instance, PTL 06 averred that leaders should be careful not to use a one-style-fit-all approach when addressing issues that affect employees' welfare. PTL 01 and 10 noted that it is imperative for business managers to understand issues that are essential and distinctive to their people and then provide solutions that positively affect the concerns of the people. PTL 02 indicated, "Understanding environmental issues is important for leaders." One of the key constructs underlying the theory of transformational leadership is that transformational leaders exercise individualized

consideration (Banks et al., 2016). In line with the conceptual framework, Trmal et al. (2015) stated that transformational leaders consider and engage followers as individuals by helping each employee develop and grow through individualized consideration. Consequently, the participants considered that leaders could motivate and retain employees by exercising respect for matters that are unique to their circumstances. PTL 07, for instance, said that because a policy operates successfully in one locality does not imply that the leaders must superimpose the same policy on other cultures without dimensioning the possible implications. In addition, PTL 06 stated that, while trying to motivate and retain employees, leaders must learn to test and ask, “Is that really what the employees want?” PTL 04, in sharing his personal experience as a leader, stated that it is through personal engagements with employees that leaders obtain critical information on “what makes the individual complete”. As an approach to increasing the experience of the employees and reducing employee turnover, PTL 08 indicated that the global leadership team of the organization engages with employees at least once in a year to obtain direct feedback on what environmental and local issues are important to employees.

Employees’ personal goals and aspirations was the other code that participants discussed under the *remunerations and benefits*’ theme. The participants shared experiences relating to employees’ personal goals and aspirations in alignment with some of the literature sources. Das and Baruah (2013) had noted that employees consider leaving an organization when their aspirations are unaligned with the objectives of the organization. In addition, Nei et al. (2015) stated that individual personality contributes to

voluntary employee turnover. PTL 02 argued that, while remunerations and benefits remain critical considerations for employee retention, leaders need to consider employee demographics when planning and executing benefits and allowances. To buttress the significance of understanding employees' demographics, PTL 02 commented:

Someone you hired at entry level, what drives that person will be different from what drives someone that has worked for instance, for 8 years and now has a family. It is also different from someone who has worked 25 years and all the children have finished from school and he is planning retirement. So we try to accommodate those other needs of employees that will make them happy and satisfied on the job without necessarily affecting the business negatively.

PTL 07 remarked that employees feel disconnected and become unproductive if they imagine that the leaders have not provided for accommodating their personal goals within the structures and strategies of the organization. The implication, as noted by PTL 02, is that such employees become disoriented and begin to look for employment opportunities in other places. Furthermore, PTL 08 mentioned that business leaders can show employees that they care about their personal goals by promoting a sustainable work-life balance operating models. PTL 03 commented: "Several things have been done to improve working conditions. They have also come up with things that enhance employee work-life balance."

The last code identified under *remunerations and benefits* was the mention of the importance of benefit-in-kind (BIK) as a tool for motivating and retaining employees. Some of the participants, PTL 02, 03, 04, 06, 08, and 09 (60%) stated that while salaries

and other cash allowances are important, organizational leaders should institute benefits in kind as perks to reduce voluntary employee turnover and enhance productivity and organizational performance. This position is in line with one of the literature sources by Ominijo et al. (2015) who indicated that poor fringe benefits contribute to voluntary employee turnover. However, PTL 02 noted that while benefits and salaries may instigate employee retention, the process is not static because of the “insatiable nature of man. The participant stated “Look at what appeals to them and what will keep them engaged and earn their loyalty. So it is not just one thing. It is a continuous process of continuous improvements...” In explaining his view on the value of BIK, PTL 03 observed:

In several ways they have tried to look at, not just in pay, they have tried to look at staff welfare in many other areas. When I joined the bank, for example, there wasn't a staff bus facility. Several things have been done to improve working conditions.

In addition, PTL 08 commented:

The efforts, which I think, they have put in place, which kept people, to a large extent,... benefits; benefits-in-kind for the past 10 years have been good. You know, in those days, managers did not have cars (official cars) but now, for the past 10 years, managers have access to cars...So, all those things have really been helpful.

Table 1

*Subthemes Under Remunerations and Benefits*

SN	Codes	No of Participants	Percentage
1	Competitive Landscape	9	90
2	Inflation and Cost of Living	6	60
3	Environmental Factors and Local Peculiarities	8	80
4	Personal Goals and Aspirations	6	60
5	Benefit-in-Kind	6	60

**Theme 2: Career Growth and Development Opportunities**

Some extant literature discussed the importance of career growth and development opportunities. For instance, Anvaria et al. (2014) noted that career opportunities propel voluntary employee turnover. Likewise, Lu et al. (2016) indicated that career development opportunities act as a catalyst for employees to remain or leave an organization. Leaders who wish to reduce voluntary employee turnover and retain key talents must create sustainable career development opportunities for employees (Alkahtani, 2015). The 10 participants (100%) mentioned career growth and development opportunities as a critical consideration for retaining employees. PTL 08 commented: “...and also growth potentials. Because if you know that you do not have growth potentials, it will be very difficult for you to stay back.” He further stated that the leaders

should also be able to “communicate and convince employees that they have potentials for growth in the organization. PTL 01 and 02 noted that there is no distinct and deliberate retention program in the organization but the entire practices in the organization communicate and promote employee retention. PTL 01 remarked “... it is just a way of life in the organization.” PTL 02, 03, and 05 observed that a career advancement opportunity was one of the major factors competitors used to compel and attract employees away from the organization. The feedback from the respondents highlighted some codes prominently: (a) training, (b) job enrichment, (c) redeployments within and outside the organization, and (d) defined career path.

As one of the literature review sources, Ominijo (2015) reported that lack of training cause employees to quit organizations. In addition, employees who lack training and mentoring become disengaged, unproductive, and begin to consider opportunities for resignation (Holmes et. al., 2013). The participants (60%) discussed extensively on the value of training as a tool for retaining employees. Although, the interviewees also noted that one of the reasons why competitors target employees from the organization is because of the quality of training that the employees receive. PTL 08 indicated that through training, the organization has built employees who represent industry standards in operations, compliance, and risk management functions. PTL 07 noted that one factor that distinguishes the organization from others is the type of training the employees are exposed to, and these become reasons why the employees remain. PTL 02 stated that employee training is an ongoing effort in the organization. The participant noted that the organization uses different training platforms to keep employees engaged and productive.

The participant remarked "... in addition to several training opportunities, the organization has a robust training platform online..." PTL 07 further stated that training makes employees more productive and enhances the level of experience. She stated, "The workforce will also benefit from it when you have more experienced people doing the job."

Furthermore, PTL 01, 02, 04, 05, 07, 08, and 09 discussed the value of job enrichment and embeddedness as tools the organization employs in retaining strategically important employees. The participants' views on job enrichment and embeddedness confirmed some of the literature review contents. As an example, Borah and Malakar (2015) indicated that employees begin to cultivate the thoughts of leaving when their job roles and functions lack enrichment. Furthermore, Borah and Malakar (2015) and Tews et al. (2015) stated that job enrichment facilitates employee embeddedness into the organization; and the more an employee is embedded, the less likely the person would consider quitting the organization. Kessler (2014) noted that the type of job leaders assign to employees might activate turnover intentions. Campbell (2014) however, warned that leaders should match employee ability and job roles to avoid creating a sense of failure in employees. Das and Baruah (2013) used the word *job image* to refer to job enrichment and indicated that employees might leave an organization if they feel poorly about the image their jobs confer on them.

The seven participants (70%) who spoke on the value of job enrichment within the company held the view that the organization exposes and empowers the employees by



enriching the value and content of their responsibilities. PTL 09 reported, “when you feel your job is important to the organization, you are happy to remain in the system.”

In addition to enriching the job content, some participants PTL 01, 02, 04, 05, 07, 08, 09, and 10 (80%) expressed deep satisfaction with the way the organization practices job rotation. PTL 08, for instance, explained how within the course of 2017 the organization sent three employees to different countries on expatriate assignments with tenors ranging from 6 months to 2 years on a renewable basis. He stated, “... the efforts which I think the organization has put in place which kept people is this job opportunity outside Nigeria; short-term rotations outside Nigeria.” PTL 04 indicated that even when employees do not get promotion frequently, the assurance of having a stint outside the home country, motivates them to remain with the organization. Aside from the foreign opportunities, the participants discussed how the leaders in the organization ensure the frequent redeployment of employees to various functions within the organization. PTL 05 observed that through these redeployments, it becomes difficult for staff members to feel demotivated or bored on the job. Furthermore, PTL 07 noted, “such frequent movements within the organization makes you an competent banker and increases your efficiency and knowledge.

Some of the participants (40%) discussed the negative relationship between defining and communicating a clear career path and voluntary employee turnover. The participants stated that when people know and understand their career path, they are most likely to remain in the organization. PTL 08 shared his thoughts:

Some people do not see money as a means to an end; some see it as a means to an end. So, it is not all individuals that really are saying I want to become an ED; so let us have a career path that is well charted. So, the guy will know that if I have done 3 or 4 years in this shop, I will definitely see something better to do in the future within the same organization.

On his part, PTL 03 remarked that because of the nature of the organization, some of the career plans might not work as contemplated, but if the leaders have always been sincere in their dealings, “...employees will stick around because they trust the leaders.” Nei et al. (2015), as analyzed in the literature review, indicated that uncharted career path is one of the concerns that make employees develop increased likelihood to quit an organization.

Table 2

*Subthemes Under Career Growth and Development Opportunities*

SN	Codes	No of Participants	Percentage
1	Training	10	100
2	Job Enrichment	7	70
3	Redeployments	8	80
4	Defined Career Path	4	40

**Theme 3: Roles of Leadership**

The 10 participants (100%) indicated that leaders have a direct responsibility for promoting employee retention and productivity. PTL 03 stated, “Leaders can no longer

take employees for a ride for too long because they are important to the organization.”

PTL 02 stated categorically that the leaders are accountable for employee turnover. In addition, PTL 06 indicated that employees, sometimes, do not leave the organization, but they are compelled to leave the boss. Furthermore, the participant also explained that some employees refuse rewarding offers from other organizations because they feel attached to their leaders. The explanations of the participants buttressed the conceptual framework - transformational leadership. For instance, Khalifa and Ayoubi (2015) and Zwingmann et al. (2014) referred to transformational leaders as leaders who motivate employees to pursue the interest of the organization by creating a compelling vision. Transformational leaders support employees to transcend their personal interest for the good of the organization (Bass, 2008; Keskes, 2014).

The following codes were prominent during the analysis of the role of leaders in reducing voluntary employee turnover: (a) formal and informal engagements with employees, (b) communication and employee motivation, (c) culture creation, and (d) leadership credibility.

The 10 participants (100%) shared the same thoughts on the importance of leaders engaging with employees. PTL 02 stated that it is through such engagements employees express their views. PTL 02 remarked:

I notice that engagements play a very important role. When employees are engaged, the likelihood that they want to leave is quite reduced. So, we have town halls; we have different forum where we engage employees to hear them out.

PTL 07 noted that beyond collecting the feedback from employees, it is important that the leaders review and address the comments. PTL 08 added that if staff members are saying similar things, it is an indication that the issue is important. Of the 10 participants, seven (70%) discussed leadership engagements with employees along two paths: formal engagements and informal engagements. While the 10 participants (100%) noted the employee satisfaction survey – voice of employee as one of the formal channels for extracting employees' feedback, three (30%) of the participants included the semi-annual and annual appraisals as the other formal tool for engaging employees. The participants noted that the employees feel excited working in the organization and they always look forward to providing feedback to the leaders using the voice of employee (VOE) tool.

PTL 01 pointed out:

We have the voice of employee which is done annually. We also have the employee pulse survey which helps the organization understand the things that are of concern to employees. The surveys give the management a pointer to issues that need to be addressed before they evolve into bigger issues.

PTL 03 believed that the leaders have created an environment that allowed employees to feel comfortable in discussing issues of concerns and providing suggestions:

There are more engagements and more general staff meetings. Even if a negative trend is observed, they talk about it. Being honest is very important. Even when people say things that are not positive, they are brought forward for discussions.

Aside from the formal engagements, the participants also noted that leaders undertake many informal engagements. PTL 04 and PTL 06 noted that employees tend to share a lot more when they engage informally under unofficial conditions. PTL 04 shared several examples how he engaged with employees outside his scope of responsibility and guided them to rescind their plan to quit the organization. The participant remarked:

A young staff will easily jump at any opportunity with a pay slightly higher than what he is earning today without subjecting that opportunity to more than difference in pay - in terms of personal development, job security, sustainability. So, it is our, can I say, my personal goal, to go the extra mile in educating, counseling, mentoring these younger ones. I know I have 2 or 3 cases I can mention where some of my staff had mentioned to me the opportunities they had and I had to sit them down to address the issues on what they are going to likely gain, which is more than that extra money which they think they will likely get. They get to change their position on that.

The experience of the participants aligned with extant literature on the roles and responsibilities of leaders. When leaders fail to engage employees, they are likely to quit (Holmes et al., 2013). Radda et al. (2015) found that if leaders engage employees, the employees begin to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) and such employees remain in the organization. Furthermore, the views of the participants confirmed the conceptual framework – transformational leadership. Trmal et al. (2015) noted that through individualized consideration, as an attribute of transformational leaders, leaders engage employees by helping each grow and develop.

In alignment with the conceptual framework, seven of the participants (70%) discussed the need for leaders to communicate with and motivate employees . Transformational leaders create compelling visions for the organization and constantly share the vision with the employees (Tromp & Blomme, 2014). PTL 02 stated that leaders should use communication as a tool to carry followers along and should invest in the development of employees. Further, to substantiate the importance of communication from leaders, PTL 03 added:

People are told that we know you are not happy and this is what we are doing.

There is a feedback process that conveys the impression that I know how you are feeling but this is what I am doing; give me some time and around this time, this will happen.

On the part of PTL 07, the participant posited that leaders could stem the tide of voluntary employee turnover if they engage in motivating the workforce. The participant presented his views this way: “Not only should organizations have profitability goals, they should also have goals of the completeness of their employees; this completeness comes in small aspects of life.” The thoughts expressed by PTL 07 aligned with the disposition of transformational leaders. Transformational leaders focus on motivating and developing the individual and thereby influencing the organization positively (Effelsberg et al., 2014). PTL 08 highlighted that leaders should adopt acknowledgments, praise, recognitions, thank-you notes, and awards as tools for motivating the workforce. Using his personal example, he added that, “awards and recognitions make people feel happy and stay.” Furthermore, a review of the company’s internal documents showed a

consistent reduction in voluntary employee turnover from an average of 8.4% to 4.4% in the last 5 years. PTL 01 and PTL 04 attributed the steady reduction in voluntary employee turnover to formal and informal engagements with employees.

Some participants (70%) also discussed and identified leaders' strategic role in creating the right organizational culture as a tool for reducing voluntary employee turnover. For instance, PPTL 04 stated, "people started staying longer in the organization because of some changes in culture." PTL 07 added that leaders should endeavor to institute practices that endear their best talents to the institutions. In line with the literature sources, Christian and Ellis (2014) stated that when leaders build cultures that accommodate employees, the employees would less likely consider quitting. Furthermore, other authors like Nei et al. (2015) and Kessler (2014) indicated that organizational culture is one of the causes why employees choose to stay or leave an organization. As a further alignment to the conceptual framework, Pradhan and Pradhan (2015) stated that transformational leaders are deliberate in creating rich organizational cultures as a means to motivating and retaining employees.

The participants (50%) also highlighted the importance of leadership credibility as one of the codes under the role of leaders in reducing voluntary employee turnover. Out of the 10 participants, five (50%) believed that if employees trust the leaders, they would not turn on a turnover intention. PTL 03 shared his view on the value of leadership credibility, "To be fair to the senior management, they have also tried to address the issues that come up from the surveys a bit more frequently." The participant added that because the employees believe that the leaders are sincere and committed, even when

they do not fulfill their promises, they understand that there were factors that would have inhibited the fulfillment. The points raised by the participants aligned with the findings of Dabke (2016) who stated that people follow transformational leaders because of their trustworthiness and selflessness. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2016) noted that people follow transformational leaders because they trust them.

The last code under the role of leaders in reducing voluntary employee turnover was the need for leaders to build resilient brand equity. PTL 01 presented his thoughts on the subject of brand equity this way:

There are other things; like we have a good brand equity, an employer brand that people want to identify with. So what we front is not that we are the highest paying, but the other benefits that accrue to whoever works in this organization.

Additional four participants PTL 02, PTL 03, PTL 06, and PTL 08 (40%) were emphatic when they explained that some people remain in the organization because of the pride of associating with a global brand. PTL 08 added that being a global brand, employees understand that there are opportunities for them beyond the shores of the country. PTL 01 added that the culture and the brand are linked to the world's best. The importance of organizational brand, as expressed by some of the participants, aligned with some literature sources. For example, Vomberg et al. (2014) noted that strong brands and talented employees are the best assets an organization possesses. In addition, key talent employees derive motivation from identifying with excellent brand equity (Vomberg et al., 2014).



Table 3

*Subthemes under Roles of Leadership*

SN	Codes	No of Participants	Percentage
1	Engagements with Employee	10	100
2	Communication and Employee Motivation	7	70
3	Culture Creations	7	70
4	Leadership Credibility	5	50
5	Brand Equity	5	50

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The business implications of voluntary employee turnover are multidimensional. There are huge costs outlay in terms of staff replacement, acculturation of the new staff members, training and skill building for the new staff, and the risk of losing customer loyalty (Alkhatani, 2015). Notably, when organizations lose their employees, they are very likely to suffer a decline in their customer loyalty indices with attendant negative impact on competitiveness and viability (McMurrian & Matulich, 2016; Mozammel & Haan, 2016). Of all the assets in a business environment, the human capital remains the most prized resources and a rallying force for business sustainability, performance, and profitability (Vomberg et al., 2015). The results of this study could offer some significant measures of value to current and potential business leaders and human resource managers as well as employees. The findings are categorized into three key themes and other sub-themes as follows:

Table 4

*Themes and Subthemes*

SN	Themes	Sub-Themes
1	Remunerations and Benefits as Tools for Employee Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Competitive landscape</li> <li>b. Rate of Inflation and Cost of Living</li> <li>c. Environmental Factors and Local Peculiarities</li> <li>d. Employees Personal Goals and Aspirations</li> <li>e. Benefit-in-Kind</li> </ul>
2	Career Growth and Development Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Training</li> <li>b. Job Enrichment</li> <li>c. Redeployments within and outside Nigeria</li> <li>d. Defined Career Path</li> </ul>
3	Roles of Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Formal and Informal Engagements with Employees</li> <li>b. Communication and Employee Motivations</li> <li>c. Culture Creation</li> <li>d. Leadership Credibility</li> <li>e. Brand Equity</li> </ul>

The findings revealed that leaders owe the business the responsibility of creating a culture that engenders excitement in employees to desire to stay and to be productive. Leaders cannot create the right prevailing culture if they do not understand the employees

and what is important to them. The research participants spoke on the importance of leaders appreciating and providing for local peculiarities and the personal aspirations of workers. The subject of aligning individual aspirations and organizational goals is critical because whenever there is a conflict between the individual and the organization, the business loses the person or the productivity (Malakar, 2015). Additionally, the participants reiterated that leaders must engage with and know their followers in order to retain them and build value for the organization. The results further showed that informal engagements endear employees to leaders and the business more than formal engagements. Apparently, business leaders and human resource managers need to create avenues for managers to interact with employees informally. Transformational leaders operate within the attribute of individualized consideration where they get to know and relate with followers on a person-to-person basis (Trmal et al., 2015). In addition, leaders need to have a process of collecting employees' opinions, working on implementing employees' suggestions, and providing honest feedback and updates to employees on matters of interest. The participants indicated that employees are motivated when they believe that their opinions matter.

Furthermore, the participants revealed that people are happy when they work for brands that are perceived to be outstanding. Therefore, it is imperative for business leaders to understudy and understand practices that build and sustain excellent brand equity. In addition, all the participants confirmed that money and other categories of benefits are important but equally important are the overlooked little perquisites like

acknowledging, praising, thanking, and celebrating staff members when they perform outstandingly.

The cost of implementing the findings of this study is nothing compared to the implications of voluntary employee turnover to businesses. Although the movement of people across different organizations and industries remain high (Anitha & Begum, 2016), I am hopeful that as business leaders and human resource managers adopt the findings of this study, they will begin to retain their key talents and improve business performance.

### **Implications for Social Change**

When business leaders adopt sustainable strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover, they retain their talented human capital and this act results in creating successful businesses (Mozammel & Haan, 2016). A reduction in employee attrition is a direct contribution to reducing a significant element of business cost. Wang et al. (2014) noted that the cost of replacing an employee is about 10 times the cost of retaining an existing staff. Consequently, as business leaders and managers motivate and retain employees, the business prospers and records better profits (Mozammel & Haan, 2016). When business are profitable they contribute to building societies and communities through tax remittances and social responsibilities. As business managers make their remittances, they empower the government to create social amenities like roads, transport systems, water, hospitals, security, and other valuable conveniences for the citizens.

In addition, an improvement in employee retention creates employment opportunities for more people, which could lead to a reduction in unemployment and an

improvement in the standard of living among families and homes. As more people get employed, there would be a decline in poverty level and the rate of crime will nose dive (Umaru et al., 2013). More so, the findings could promote better relationships between leaders and employees, which might further make employees develop more commitment to the organization through organization citizenship behaviors (OCB).

### **Recommendations for Action**

The subject of voluntary employee turnover is crucial because of its manifold implications for business leaders, employees, and communities. Although the study was within the banking industry, the findings could apply to all business endeavors because they all depend of human resources to coordinate and make business projections and objectives a reality. Leaders of businesses and human resource managers may begin by reviewing the human resource policies they adopt in running their companies. For instance, it is important that the leaders define clear strategies for recruiting managers because they play important roles in determining if employees stay or leave. In addition, business leaders should evaluate and test how the implicit and explicit culture they operate in their organizations promote employee retention or cause attrition. Additionally, leaders of organizations should endeavor to empower people who lead smaller teams because they relate more with the employees; and the employees judge the organizational leaders by the actions of the team leads. Lastly, it is important that business leaders make sub-leaders know that employee retention is critical for the business by rewarding leaders who develop strategies and retain their key talents over time.

To disseminate the findings of this study, I will share the results with the participants and leaders in the partner organization. I will also share the results with other bank leaders within and outside the southwestern part of Nigeria. I will partner with other bloc users to achieve wider reach in sharing the findings of this study while also using formal platforms like office training opportunities, engagements with human resource practitioners, and leadership conferences.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies bank leaders in southwestern part of Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The study had three primary limitations: (a) the location, (b) the number of participants, and (c) the research design – single case study. The issue of employee turnover is not defined by location or industry because it is a general business and leadership challenge (Vivek & Satyanarayana, 2016). Although leaders and other researchers could adopt the findings of this study to address voluntary employee turnover issues, however, the results were based on feedbacks obtained from leaders without inputs from employees. Future researchers could obtain responses from employees to understand what leaders need to do to stem the spate of workers attrition. Furthermore, interviewing more leaders from different industries and geographies may turn up new insights on other strategies leaders should adopt in promoting employee retention.

In addition, quantitative researchers could also explore other research opportunities to understand if there are industries that witness recurring high number of attrition so as to understand if there is any relationship between industry type and attrition

rate. Researchers can extend the same opportunity to other variables like location and brand equity. For instance, would employees derive satisfaction and stay committed to organizations that are actively involved in corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts even if the allowances are limited? Does the pride of excellent brand equity resolve the conflict of employees drive for personal benefits? Leaders and managers could derive more insights as researchers delve further into these research opportunities.

### **Reflections**

The doctoral journey culminated in deep revealing moments for me as I went through various learning, unlearning, and relearning processes. Particularly, it was a great period coming to the realization of my personal worldview and how that shaped my choice of a research method and design. The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) process was enlightening for me because of the focus on identifying with and studying real-world business problems with impact on professional practices and social change.

The choice to research on leadership and voluntary employee turnover was informed by my passion for people and my perception of the roles leaders owe to organizations and people. My passion had the tendency to heighten my personal bias as I undertook this study. However, Walden University had a classroom engagement process that made students weed off their biases as they prepared to undertake their studies. The classroom process, which was systematic and highly informative, helped me to understand that, though I was responsible for collecting data, the input was absolutely independent of my thoughts. In addition, the National Institute of Health (NIH) web-based course (1848474 09/12/2015) (Appendix C) exposed me to appreciate the value of

being an ethical researcher who exhibited (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, (c) justice, (d) respect for participants' consent through an informed consent form, and (e) fairness to participants by informing them of their right to withdraw at any time during the study should they so elect. I overcame my personal bias by ensuring that I collected data from qualified and experienced participants who exercised mastery and authority on the subject of leadership and employee turnover. I took notes, recorded the interview sessions, transcribed the interviews, reviewed official documents, and then shared the feedback with the participants to validate the contents and interpretations. Through this disciplined process, the thoughts, comments, and views of the participants triumphed while my views were submerged. Interestingly, the findings have some level of connections with some of my experience in leading people but there were several new codes and themes that emerged from engaging with the participants.

Upon completion of my interviews and data analysis, I have come to appreciate the research process more. Each step in the learning journey connects with the other and the entire steps in the doctoral study require discipline and commitment to excellence. I have also come to understand the value of making participants trust you as a researcher.

### **Conclusion**

The findings from this study indicated that business leaders could reduce voluntary employee turnover through remunerations and benefits, career growth and development opportunities, leadership roles and responsibilities. The results of the study are important to business leaders, human resource managers, and to employees in general. The importance is hinged on the fact that unchecked voluntary employee



turnover could lead to the demise of an organization. The benefits of the study are multilayered, ranging from: reduced cost of doing business, improved business performance and profitability, enhanced relationship between leaders and followers, increased business contribution to societies and communities, improved social amenities for communities and families, and reduced poverty and crime levels.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

### Interview Questions

1. What motivated the organization to address voluntary employee turnover?
2. How did voluntary employee turnover impact the performance of the organization?
3. What challenges did you face in strategizing methods of reducing voluntary employee turnover?
4. What improvements have you witnessed in voluntary employee turnover because of your efforts?
5. What process do you adopt to assess the effectiveness of the strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover?
6. What might you change in your approach to reducing voluntary employee turnover to encourage better retention of employees?
7. What else would you like to share, which could be relevant for this topic?

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Steps	Activity	Remark
1	Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce myself as a doctoral student with Walden University.</li> <li>2. Introduce my research topic: Transformational Leadership Strategies for Addressing Voluntary Employee Turnover</li> <li>3. Introduce my overarching research question: What leadership strategies do some bank leaders in southwest Nigeria use to reduce voluntary employee turnover?</li> </ol>
2	Appreciation	Thank the participants for their acceptance to participate in the interviews.
3	Explanations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain why they were chosen to participate in the study</li> <li>2. Explain the benefits of the study and the people who could derive benefits from the study</li> </ol>
4	Consent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reconfirm if they read the consent form that was emailed to them</li> <li>2. Go through the consent form with the participants and explain their rights and the confidential nature of the study and my duty of being ethical in the research process</li> <li>3. Obtain participants' sign offs on the consent forms after they confirm their understanding and comfort</li> </ol>
5	Permissions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Request for permission to record the interviews and take hand-written notes</li> </ol>
6	Assurance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assure the participants that I will share the interpretations with them</li> <li>2. Assure the participants that I will make the summary of the research available to them</li> </ol>
7	Readiness and Questions	Reconfirm readiness from participant and if they have any questions before commencing the interviews
8	Commencement	Start conducting the interviews

## Appendix C: National Institute of Health (NIH) Certificate of Completion

