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Increasing Employee Retention Within the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

Santoria Lushell Williams
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Review Committee

Dr. Hilda Sheppard, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Clarence Williamson, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Anne Hacker, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2018

Abstract

Increasing Employee Retention Within the Georgia Division of Family and Children

Services

by

Santoria Lushell Williams

MPA, Walden University, 2012

BSW, University of Alabama, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

In Fulton County, Georgia, the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) child-welfare workers (CWWs) voluntarily separate from the agency at a rate higher than among other similar agencies in the state of Georgia. The problems of retention among CWWs in Fulton County have caused a subsequent problem in terms of the continued provision of quality services to foster children and families. This phenomenological study used McGregor's conceptualization of theory X-Y as the foundation for the exploration of the experiences of former Fulton County DFCS CWW workers related to their reasons for voluntary separation. Data were acquired through interviews with 10 CWWs who voluntarily separated from their positions with Fulton County between the years of 2013 and 2015. These interview data were transcribed and then coded and analyzed using a modified van Kaam procedure. Findings revealed that workers experienced what they perceived as a lack of administrative empathy, devaluation of workers, disrespect, and burnout, as well as the differences in knowledge between child welfare workers and management about the depth of CWW job duties. Two additional themes emerged regarding longevity that included motivation from peers and children safety. The positive social change implications of this study include recommendations to DFCS to engage CWWs in organizational decision making regarding child welfare policy and to seek opportunities to enhance feelings of value and inclusiveness among CWWs in strategic planning and policy making.

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Dedication

My beloved, late father, Eddie Cleo Williams, fought a long and tiresome battle with dementia and cancer. Many times, while sitting with him, his present memory would only allow him to see me as a school-aged girl. He would tell me to get ready for school so he could drive me; yet, I was a grown woman, independent of my parents and completing my master's degree at the time. He encouraged education. He reminded me that no one on this earth could take away my education and to pursue it with diligence. He was a hard worker, whether it was at his long-time job at the chemical plant or in his garden from where he fed the entire community. My father gave me the confidence and discipline to pursue anything great. He transitioned on December 1, 2012. This dedication is to him, my angel.

To my mother, Vera Knight Williams, a woman of strong faith. Thank you for praying for me when I thought that I could not endure any longer. My goal is to make you and Daddy proud continuously. I watched how hard you and Daddy worked to provide for seven children. The sacrifices that you made were only of a loving mother and father. Thank you. This dedication is to you, my prayer warrior.

To my friend and mentor, Dr. Greg Shealey. Thank you for investing in me and my future and giving me those extra pushes that were truly needed. You aligned yourself with my needs, and for that, I am forever indebted. Thank you.

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To all my brothers, sisters, and friends who walked this path with me, thank you for listening to my rambled thoughts. Thank you for encouraging me through my tears, and most importantly, thank you for praying for me. To my dissertation committee, Dr. Sheppard, Dr. Williamson, and Dr. Hacker, thank you for holding me to the highest standard of scholarly research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

There has been an increasing rate of employee turnover within the state of Georgia, especially in Fulton County, Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). As reported by Wallace and Gaylor (2012), employee turnover costs billions of dollars annually to businesses in the United States. It is the responsibility of the caseworkers to protect children who are allegedly abused and neglected within child welfare organizations (O'Reilly, Luck, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2011). Employee turnover among child-welfare workers (CWWs) who are tasked with assessing, promoting, and protecting the welfare of children has had a significant impact on the efficiency and productivity of child-welfare organizations (Boyas, Wind, & Kang, 2012a). For example, organizational efficiency is affected when experienced workers in leadership positions are lost (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Moreover, productivity is affected when inexperienced employees are unable to take full charge of their positions (Mowday et al., 1982). Thus, leaders of thriving organizations should regard their employees as assets and align them with organizational strategies to increase employee retention (Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2010).

Although researchers have conducted studies on the retention of CWWs, little has been done on exploring strategies to retain CWWs to ensure employee continuity and the continuity of services. This study was designed to explore reasons why CWWs voluntarily left child-welfare organizations; specifically, I examined the perceptions of those who had voluntarily left the Fulton County DFCS. I also explored strategies on how to minimize employee turnover. In this chapter, I provide

a summary of this phenomenological study, which includes the background of the problem, problem statement, the purpose of the study, theoretical framework, research questions, nature of the study, assumptions, definitions, scope, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study. I conclude with a summary and transition to Chapter 2.

Background

The rate of employee retention is calculated by determining the number of workers employed within an organization and dividing that number by the number of employees who remain employed at the end of a specified length of time. Many published research articles exist wherein researchers have (a) focused on the variable of employee retention, (b) analyzed the turnover rates of CWWs, and (c) assessed the impact of the organization, compensation, and stress factors related to employee retention. A significant issue facing leaders of child-welfare organizations is how to retain employees (Johnco, Salloum, Olson, & Edwards, 2014). The Georgia Child Welfare Reform Council has reported an increased turnover rate among CWWs each fiscal period (State of Georgia, 2015). The CWWs who work in the Fulton County DFCS ranked high in the number of employee separations from the organization, even though these employees had an overall initiative to protect the welfare of children (State of Georgia, 2015).

When exploring employee turnover and retention, it became apparent that significant costs were incurred by the organization when employees resigned. Organizational leaders must, therefore, consider the costs related to turnover to find a balance (Hwang & Hopkins, 2015). Although employee turnover results in many accountable expenses, expenses upon which no monetary value can also be placed

occur. Those expenses include the quality of services provided; when considering CWWs, who were commissioned to foster the welfare of children and families, the continuation of quality services suffers (State of Georgia, 2015). The duration of services provided to children in foster care, their families, and amended child-welfare practices are factors paramount to the retention of CWWs (Haynes-Jenkins, 2012).

Employee retention is an essential focus for an organization with invested resources to recruit, train, and hire a good employee. It is in the organization's best interest for leaders to maintain and provide professional development for employees. Professional development is an asset for the organization and provides continuous value to the group so long as the workers are employed by the association (Boyas, Wind, & Ruiz, 2012b). Employers must also, however, motivate employees to contribute to organizational value (Kopelman, Prottas, & Falk, 2010, 2012; Kruzich, Mienko, & Courtney, 2014). When leaders of an organization fail to notice the needs of employees and focus only on the needs of the organization, turnover is more likely to occur (Kopelman et al., 2012). More than half of CWWs have voluntarily left the Fulton County DFCS, and the turnover rate within this workforce is steadily increasing each year (State of Georgia, 2015; Westbrook, Ellett, & Asberg, 2012).

In 1957, social psychologist and economist, McGregor developed theory x and theory y to explain the positive and negative reinforcement-management theory. This early work was then updated almost 50 years later. McGregor (1957, 2006) concluded that, with theory x, employees need micromanagement, and the administration holds a pessimistic outlook regarding employees. McGregor also concluded that, with theory y, employees are self-motivated, and management holds a more optimistic outlook concerning employees (McGregor, 1957, 2006). Besides

theory x-y (McGregor, 1957, 2006), three salient factors affect employee retention: (a) factors involving learning organizations and cultures (Duffy & Wong, 2016; Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner, 1994), (b) the role of trust within organizations (Cho & Poister, 2014; Pozil, 2015) and (c) career longevity (Ausbrooks, Benton, Smith, & Wildberger, 2014). I further discuss these three theoretical and conceptual foundations later in this dissertation, but I mention them here as precursors to introduce theories possibly applicable within the Fulton County DFCS. The increased turnover within an organization was a key indicator that these salient management theories should be assessed.

Systemic factors which have resulted in the voluntary resignation of CWWs, such as organizational culture, supervisory practices, the quality of organizational communication, and a large number of work demands have been previously explored. Based on these studies, leaders of child-welfare organizations have been encouraged to promote stability to improve child-welfare practices (Boyas et al., 2012b; Westbrook et al., 2012). The perceptions of CWWs, however, were not included in any of the studies reviewed for this dissertation. Discovery of these perspectives provided knowledge in the research, which aided the understanding of factors which influence retention, workforce strategies, and policies.

A review of the current literature also revealed a gap in knowledge regarding the provision of incentives for CWWs to promote better safety, health, and permanency results for foster children and families. Moreover, no evidence was found that identified the extent of the need for leaders of child-welfare organizations to identify and execute effective workforce strategies. These strategies are crucial in the retention of qualified CWWs who have the education, skill sets, and commitment

to providing quality services to vulnerable families and children.

Problem Statement

The Fulton County DFCS experienced a turnover rate among CWWs as high as 16% per fiscal period between the years of 2012 and 2015 (State of Georgia, 2015). Georgia officials had additionally reported that two out of every three of employees who resigned did not state the reasons for their decision (State of Georgia, 2015). Currently, the high turnover rate within the Fulton County DFCS has resulted in the inability to meet the protocol requirements (State of Georgia, 2016a). Previous researchers indicated instability among CWWs due to the stressful employment demands (Westbrook et al., 2012). Moreover, little attention had been directed to the goals of policies and practices of the Fulton County DFCS that were intended to improve the distribution of quality child-welfare services, safety, wellness, and permanency outcomes for foster children and families (State of Georgia, 2015).

The need existed to explore systemic factors which have affected the high turnover rate within the Fulton County DFCS. The problem of employee turnover (a) impacts the number of foster children who are served by the DFCS, (b) disrupts follow-up services for foster children placed in homes, and (c) increases operational costs for the organization and thus the taxpayers. Many possible factors, such as large caseloads, employee burnout, and perceived inadequate compensation, have contributed to the problem of poor employee retention (Haulenbeek, McLean, Mantey, & Kollar, 2013; Hwang & Hopkins, 2015; Johnson, Ford, & McCluskey, 2012; Westbrook et al., 2012).

This research is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge and offer new information which might assist in improving the current system. It is critical to

acquire related knowledge, as leaders of this system provide services to families in need when child abuse and neglect has occurred. This study additionally addresses the question as to why 16% of employees have resigned. In addition, identifying systemic employee-retention issues from the employees' perspective may contribute to the development of more effective retention policies and workforce strategies.

Purpose of the Study

In this phenomenological research, I aimed to explore ways of increasing the retention of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. Child-welfare services provided by CWWs adhere to the basic framework of the child-welfare outcomes, which include safety, welfare, and permanency. The retention of CWWs impacts service distribution to children in foster care and their foster families, a vital community service.

Research Questions

The central research question which guided this research is as follows: How could McGregor's theory x and y explain the perceptions of DFCS workers who voluntarily resigned from their jobs between the years 2013 to 2015? Two subquestions which assisted in answering this research question were as follows:

1. What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to their resignation from the county child welfare office?
2. What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to CWWs remaining on the job in the county child welfare office for as long as they did before resigning?

Theoretical Frameworks

In this study, I used the theoretical framework involving theory x-y (McGregor 1957, 2006) to explore events which contributed to the continuous cycle of high turnover of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. This model applied to public-service organizations which served the human needs of clients and employees. McGregor's theory was categorized according to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow's theory identified a hierarchy of needs and characteristics such as physiological needs and psychosocial needs. Safety, companionship, self-esteem, and self-actualization are additional psychosocial needs (Duff, Rubenstein, & Prilleltensky, 2016; Maslow, 1943). People are first stimulated by the lowest-level needs on the hierarchy, and once those needs are satisfied, people are then more concerned with the fulfillment of the next higher level (Maslow, 1943).

Theory x-y (McGregor, 1957, 2006) uses two interchangeable assumptions about motivating employees. Theory x represents cynical assumptions that management holds about employees, and theory y represents more positive assumptions about employees (McGregor, 1957, 2006; Singh, 2016). Theory x describes an employee's characteristics at the lowest caliber of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, while theory y describes characteristics of employees at an advanced hierarchy level (Boykins et al., 2015; McGregor, 1957, 2006; O'Connor & Yballe, 2007). This theory declared management's assumptions about employees that became indirect or direct predictions apparent within organizational behavior (McGregor, 1957, 2006).

In addition to theory x-y (McGregor, 1957, 2006), learning organizations and cultures, as well as trust, are integral in contributing to an organization's ability to

excel because employees who feel supported and trusted are more apt to remain employed within an organization (Pozil, 2015; Senge et al., 1994).

Conceptual Framework

Learning Organizations and Cultures

Senge et al. (1994) indicated that, for employees to be committed to an organization, the leaders should provide learning and growth opportunities for each worker at any level needed. These opportunities will, in turn, increase the commitment the workers feel to the organization (Duffy & Wong, 2016; Senge et al., 1994).

Four criteria should be met to create a learning organization (Duffy & Wong, 2016; Senge et al., 1994). The first criterion is that, as people determine the goals they want to achieve, they constantly broaden their capacity to accomplish the results. An additional criterion is that people nurture extensive and new patterns of thinking (Duffy & Wong, 2016; Senge et al., 1994). Moreover, people are free to set goals cooperatively and to work together to accomplish them. Finally, an atmosphere of continuous learning for all individuals, at all levels of learning is important for employees to envision the goals and work collaboratively to achieve them (Duffy & Wong, 2016; Senge et al., 1994). Because employees work together to achieve goals, trust is important in the relationship between not only the employees but also between the employees and organizational leaders (Pozil, 2015).

Because leaders of an organization and the people who work within them share the same basic goals for the organization, it is important for all to realize that they partner equally within the organization. This concept is important because the goals cannot not be achieved without the participation of each party (Pozil, 2015). To

achieve goals, open communication, alignment of goals, the amount of influence, and trust are all crucial to achieving success. Pozil (2015) defined trust as a proven history of performance, transparency, integrity, and virtue.

The Role of Trust

Trust within an organization is critical, as many of the jobs within an organization require employees to share opinions, views, and responsibilities (Cho & Poister, 2014). Employees who perceive that they can trust each other can work together to accomplish the tasks and goals within an organization (Cho & Poister, 2014; Pozil, 2015). The way trust is built varies for different people; for the organization to be successful, all employees have to understand that they are partners and should feel comfortable in admitting mistakes without blaming others (Pozil, 2015).

Career Longevity

The conceptual framework of career longevity (Ausbrooks et al., 2014) was also used to explore events which contribute to the continuous cycle of high turnover of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. Based on the work of Darling-Hammond (2003), four major aspects influence employees' decisions concerning career longevity: (a) salary, (b) work conditions, (c) administrative support, and (d) the ability to be prepared. Baslevent and Kirmanoğlu (2013) expanded the concept of career longevity by including the need to promote positive employee attitudes.

Nature of the Study

In this phenomenological research, I used an exploratory design to collect qualitative data and explored systemic factors which influence employee turnover of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. In addition, I followed procedures to

acquire the perspectives of former CWWs involving ways in which administrators of the Fulton County DFCS increased employee retention. The phenomenological research method helped me to discover the emotions, perceptions, and judgments of participants (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, & DeWaard, 2014; Vogt & Johnson, 2011).

The phenomenology design also assisted me in improving the knowledge of employee-retention policies and procedures and helped to provide insight into the challenges of retaining CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. This approach additionally provided me with direction for interviewing research participants, analyzing data, and interpreting the data (see Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2014; Spiegelberg, 1994; Vogt & Johnson, 2011). The phenomenological design also assisted me in gaining an understanding of the needs of CWWs, which was useful in improving employee retention and providing a quality continuum of services to families and children in the foster-care systems. The primary objective of the phenomenological method is to expound upon and justify the data (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2014).

In this study, I collected data through semistructured interviews from 10 former CWWs of the Fulton County DFCS who voluntarily resigned between 2013 to 2015. All participants were screened to ensure they met the inclusion criterion for the study, and I also recruited participants using the social media site Facebook.

I did not recruit managers because turnover among CWWs was higher than that of managers. In a phenomenological study, a direct source is ideal for collecting data. Former CWWs were sought to ensure data fidelity. Sampling former employees did not require the administrative approval of the Fulton County DFCS, yet seeking

the perceptions of former employees provided sufficient insight into factors affecting employee retention. I maintained contact with a former Fulton County DFCS administrator and used this connection to assist in establishing contact with former CWWs to participate in this study. Another reason for maintaining contact was to gain the confidence of the participants to ensure honesty when sharing information. Purposive sampling was applied to focus on former CWWs of the Fulton County DFCS who better avail relevant information to the study due to their experience and roles at the Fulton County DFCS (see Creswell, 2009).

Definitions

Child welfare : This term includes an assortment of services to assure the safety of children, ages 18 and under, to provide indispensable support to families with the goal of enabling them to become self-adequate in caring for their children (Child Welfare, 2016). *Child-welfare workers (CWWs)*: Typically managing a caseload of foster families and children, CWWs are case managers and social workers in the profession of child welfare (Child-welfare workers, 2016a). *Employee retention*: An organization's ability to retain workers is referred to as employee retention (Mobley, 1982). *Foster care* : This child-welfare practice involves a situation wherein a minor child has been legally placed in the custody of CWWs (Foster care, 2016). *Foster child* : A child who (a) is a legal ward of the state, (b) is placed into foster care, and (c) receives daily care and management by a caregiver who is not the natural parent is a foster child (Foster child, 2016). *Foster parent*: A state-certified adult caregiver of a foster child is a foster parent (Foster parent, 2016).

Assumptions

In research, assumptions are factors which cannot be controlled by the

researcher, and their absence could render the research irrelevant (Leedy & Omrod, 2012; Simon, 2011). Assumptions are accepted as plausible and may affect the conclusion of the study (Creswell, 2012). This study had four assumptions: (a) The factors surrounding the voluntary resignations among the participants was similar, (b) each research participant would provide candid responses without bias, (c) the results of the study may challenge a lack of administrative sensitivity to the well-being of CWWs, and (d) the findings of this study could enlighten program administrators as to ways this stigma can be improved. The above assumptions were very crucial to this study because they provided a basis for the development of study instruments which influenced the development and implementation of the research process. Additionally, these assumptions directly influenced my relationship with the participants and how I reported my findings (see Becker & Niehaves, 2007; Carter & Little, 2007).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was to understand why CWWs voluntarily left the Fulton County DFCS. The scope of a research study involves the limitations of the study functions (Simon & Goes, 2012). The focus of this study was on turnover and an examination of how child-welfare organizations could increase retention of CWWs. There were approximately 200 employees at the Fulton County DFCS, and thus they formed part of the population for this study from which participants were extracted.

In research, delimitations are situations and incidences within the control of the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2012), and this study had five delimitations. The first delimitation of this study was that the target population consisted of former CWWs

within the Fulton County DFCS who voluntarily resigned from their employment positions and did not work for Georgia state or county agencies. The second delimitation involved the prescribed period which I examined, which included years 2013 through 2015. The third delimitation was that former CWWs had at most two years of work experience with the Fulton County DFCS. The fourth delimitation excluded participants above the age of 60. The average retirement age of a state of Georgia employee is 60, provided that the employee has reached at least ten years of creditable service. The final exclusion was any employee I supervised. I worked for the Fulton County DFCS as a case manager and supervisor from 2008 to 2014. I excluded them to avoid biases either on their or my part.

Limitations

In research, a limitation is an area of the study which could impend the validity of the study yet is beyond the control of the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012; Simon, 2011). The ability to make participants feel comfortable talking about their past employment experience with the Fulton County DFCS was a challenge and thus a limitation of this study. Prior personal experiences in a workplace are sometimes traumatizing, and many people are hesitant in talking about their past work experience. Another limitation was the comparatively small sample size. Due to these three limitations and the nature of sampling method, findings of this research were not applied to the population of CWWs throughout the state or across the United States.

In this study, I used the purposive sampling method, which was mostly coupled with several limitations: (a) Purposive sampling is theoretically plausible, but practically, several issues (sample frame bias, practicality, and logistics, gatekeeper

bias) arise that present doubt on the validity of the sample generated (Groger & Mayberry, 1999); (b) the death of a participant before the data collection process begins can hamper the study, and respondents have the right to withdraw from the study due to personal or idiosyncratic reasons, which consequently affect the research negatively (Tuckett, 2004); and (c) some participants in a research might relocate to another geographical area and may withdraw from the study upon change of location (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

Significance

The Georgia foster-care system contained 7,676 children as of September 30, 2013, and 13,675 children were housed within the system by the end of that year (State of Georgia, 2015). Additionally, caseworkers exhibited a high rate of turnover because of burnout, resulting from an overload of work and a low rate of pay for a difficult job (State of Georgia, 2015). These employment factors are not indicative of the responsibilities of CWWs as individuals who contribute to the best interest of children and help maintain children's safety and wellbeing. Working in a protective capacity, CWWs protect children from unpardonable conditions while, at the same time, strive to promote permanency.

Exploring the reasons for the low retention of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS helped in proposing ways to amend existing program and administration guidelines to increase the retention of CWWs throughout the county. To achieve this, I conducted this phenomenological study by interviewing 10 former CWWs. During the interviews, I allowed participants to offer their perspectives on both organizational and personal factors which contributed to their decisions to voluntarily resign from the Fulton County DFCS. If found worthy, findings can be

integrated into the Georgia Child Welfare Reform Council recommendations and can be used to improve the quality of future services provided to foster families and children. Additionally, increasing employee retention can enable employees of the Fulton County DFCS to serve better and protect its clients.

Recommendations and suggestions of study findings may close the gap between policy and exercise of employee retention by amending Georgia's child welfare policies, which works through the laws of the state to assist in the prevention of child neglect and abuse while assuring the safety, stability, and well-being of children (State of Georgia, 2016a, 2016b). Moreover, the results of this research may add to the knowledge body of literature in the fields of public policy and social work in determining effective processes of employee retention which benefit child-welfare organizations. Because CWWs are often stigmatized due to the public's negative view and distrust of the child-welfare system (Kemp, Marcenko, Lyons, & Kruzich, 2014), their involvement/participation was consistently highly stressful (Buckley, Carr, & Whelan, 2011).

Summary

The problem in this phenomenological research was that CWWs voluntarily left at an increased rate within the state of Georgia and specifically in the Fulton County DFCS. In this initial chapter, I introduced the importance of conducting this phenomenological study. I aimed to explore ways to increase the retention of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. Findings may contribute to the knowledge body of literature for increasing retention of CWWs not only in Fulton County but perhaps within other similar agencies throughout the state. In this chapter, I presented the overview of this study and the study questions. The next chapter, Chapter 2, is a

review of pertinent literature which addresses factors about the turnover and retention of CWWs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

CWWs have voluntarily left at an increased rate within the state of Georgia, specifically in the Fulton County DFCS. In this research, I aimed to explore ways to increase the retention of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. The need for the study was justified based upon the turnover rate of 16% per fiscal period between the years of 2012 and 2015 (State of Georgia, 2015). In exploring the literature regarding CWW turnover and retention, several themes emerged. Themes of turnover and retention included organizational culture, communication between management and workers, supervision, caseload sizes, and burnout emerged (Haulenbeek et al., 2013; Hwang & Hopkins, 2015; Kimberly, Ford, & McCluskey, 2012; Westbrook et al., 2012). Investing time in learning while at the same time managing workload simultaneously was a challenging task (Haulenbeek et al., 2013).

This chapter provides an overview of the literature search strategy, theoretical substructure, and a review of literature relevant to the identified topic. I conclude the chapter with a summary and transition to Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

A broad search of the literature was aimed at identifying research and data which addressed the retention of CWWs. The literature presented in this review is a result of database searches within the disciplines of social work and public policy. I primarily sought articles in peer-reviewed journals. This search included Google Scholar, Science Direct, and ProQuest electronic databases. Keywords in the database research were *child welfare*, *child-welfare worker*, *foster care*, *foster-care worker*, *child-welfare worker retention*, *turnover of child-welfare workers*, *division of*

family and children services, social workers, employee retention, organizational theories, human resources theory, theory x and theory y, employee retention strategies, phenomenology, and qualitative research design.

Theoretical Foundations

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

American social psychologist McGregor (1957) initially proposed theory x-y in his book, *The Human Side of Enterprise*. McGregor based his work and conceptual framework upon Maslow's hierarchy of needs by applying theory x to the lower-order needs and theory y to the higher-order needs (McGregor, 1957, 2006). Human needs usually arise when more prominent ones have been satisfied, and they are briefly classified as self-actualization needs, love needs, esteem needs, safety needs, and physiological needs (Maslow, 1943). According to Geller (2016), Maslow's hierarchy of needs was meant to motivate humans.

Maslow (1943) identified basic human needs and maintained that these needs should be met in a specific order. Physiological survival, shelter, and food are the first category of needs which people are motivated to fulfill. The second type of need is to feel secure and safe. Third in the hierarchy is the need to feel accepted socially and the wish to feel supported, have friends, and belong. The subsequent need is to develop self-esteem by feeling respected, successful, and worthwhile. The final need is to achieve self-actualization by realizing life goals and achieving individual meaning in life (Geller, 2016; Maslow, 1943).

Theory x-y expanded on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs when McGregor (2006) indicated that jobs provide opportunities to increase both self-actualization and self-esteem (Duff et al., 2016; Rebbitt & Erickson, 2016). Self-esteem is the fourth

need in Maslow's hierarchy, while self-actualization is the fifth need (Geller, 2016). Maslow's work has been used in the public sector because it is simplistic and adaptable and provides assistance to administrators within organizations by providing a model to improve employee motivation (Duff et al., 2016).

As McGregor (1957, 2006) indicated, theory x proposed that people would work only for reward. Theory y proposed that a sense of fulfillment was a key motivator to work. Larsson and Vineberg (2010) agreed with McGregor's findings after completing their review of the aspects of the leadership-behavior theory involving the connections among job satisfaction, efficacy, health, productiveness, and quality within organizations. When establishing this management theory, McGregor declared that management's theories about employees became either indirect or direct prediction or were thus apparent in organizational behavior.

Theory x-y (McGregor, 1957, 2006) provided awareness into supervisors' perspectives and assumptions related to their employees (Kopelman et al., 2012). Theory x holds a cynical view of employee demeanor by constantly insinuating that in order to maintain good organization and efficiency, employees need to be micromanaged and even penalized for poor performance. This theory predicts that employees look for ways to avoid work responsibility and are ultimately lazy. Furthermore, theory x suggests that money and compensation are key motivators for hard work (Kopelman et al., 2012).

Theory y, on the other hand, holds an optimistic outlook on employees (Kopelman et al., 2012; McGregor, 1957, 2006). This theory surmises that employees desire to work and attempt to do a good job while working. Moreover, job fulfillment is an encouraging factor (Kopelman et al., 2012). Theory y surmises that employees

are self-adequate, dependable, and capable. Kopelman et al. (2012) declared that most supervisors view themselves as more aligned with theory y than theory x.

Theory x-y continues as a central principle to increase positive management styles and methods. Kopelman et al. (2008), in their analysis of human behavior in organizations, used McGregor theory x-y to identify fundamental assumptions used by managers in an organization. McGregor's concept of theory x-y remains essential to organizational culture and development (Russ, 2013). Organization culture encompasses assumptions, beliefs, underlying interpretive processes, and values which shape an organization (Bligh & Hatch, 2011). The organizational culture has a direct influence on staff satisfaction, learning, and commitment, which ultimately reduce employee turnover (Khalili, 2014; Wang, Chen, & Chen, 2012). Organization culture also influences organizational efficiency, effectiveness, performance, and employees' work outcomes (Aktaş, Çiçek, & Kiyak, 2011; Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011; Mathew, Ogbonna, & Harris, 2012; Zehir, Ertosun, Zehir, & Muceldili, 2011).

McGregor (1957, 2006) explained that organizations have a supervisor and subordinate hierarchies which shape a manager's outlook on external controls of centralized decision making in the workplace. These two contrasting theories illustrate how human behavior and organizational culture interact. McGregor's theory x-y serve as theoretical frameworks for the essential rules for managing employees. Since the development of theory x-y (McGregor, 1957, 2006), the concepts of learning organizations and cultures (Deem, DeLotell, & Kelly, 2015; Duffy & Wong, 2016) and the importance of developing trust (Gibson & Petrosko, 2014; Pozil, 2015) have become essential techniques which assist with managing employees.

Learning Organizations

Learning organizations consist of five disciplines: (a) systems thinking, (b) achieving personal mastery, (c) shifting mental models, (d) building a shared vision, and (e) team learning (Senge et al., 1994). Systems thinking is learning from the information received (Senge et al., 1994). The second discipline occurs when an employee must take the information received and learn about it to the point where it could be explained to someone else (Senge et al., 1994). Shifting mental models is the ability to take the individual perspective and then merge and align it with the organizational perspective (Senge et al., 1994). The fourth discipline of learning organizations occurs when the employees of the organization collaborate to achieve a common goal (Senge et al., 1994). The final discipline is where the employees learn together and help one another to accomplish the organizational goals (Duffy & Wong, 2016; Menaker, 2016; Senge et al., 1994). Throughout the five disciplines identified by Senge et al. (1994), the evaluation and examination of beliefs should be an ongoing process within organizations, as these factors influence employees to strive to learn and to use the knowledge already achieved within the organization (Duffy & Wong, 2016). In addition to the five disciplines, learning organizations consist of a learning culture.

Learning Culture

As defined by Schein (2010), a learning culture is a group of expectations which individuals share about what the world is like in comparison with how the world should be. The expectations determine behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the individuals. A learning culture is manifested in three levels (Deem et al., 2015; Schein, 2010). The first level is shaped by the expectations of the

organization; the second level consists of the ideas and values that the group believes the organizational environment should be like (Deem et al., 2015). The last level is accomplished when the individuals have compromised and molded their values with organizational expectations to fit the actions required for the exact situation in daily life (Deem et al., 2015).

The three levels of learning cultures consist of past achievements, basic assumptions, and values within the organization (Deem et al., 2015). Moreover, organizations may contain more than one culture, making it difficult to implement change and be effective overall (Deem et al., 2015). Once the values that the group of individuals has adopted within learning cultures have been used and proven to work to some degree within the workplace environment, they are then introduced to new employees as the right way to think, feel, and perceive workplace problems (Moon & Ruona, 2015; Schein, 2010). The learning cultures increase job performance, competence, and knowledge. Though learning organizations and cultures are important, the introduction of related values to new employees are most effective when trust is a present factor (Gibson & Petrosko, 2014; Pozil, 2015).

The Role of Trust

Trust within an organization is very crucial, as managers and employees who trust each other can balance the power between the two groups (Pozil, 2015). Trust takes time to build. In order to achieve trust, the need exists to develop shared objective and goals as well as to create opportunities to interact with employees and managers (Gibson & Petrosko, 2014). Because of this need, organizational leaders who want to be successful should implement strategies to promote trust among the employees (Pozil, 2015). While earning and giving trust is imperative for employees

who work together, integrity is also important in that other employees' perceptions could alter the trust factor.

Trust between employees and administrators is something which should be built and sustained to promote job satisfaction and reduce the number of employees voluntarily resigning (Gibson & Petrosko, 2014). Because of the need for trust development, employees and administrators should work together to keep a balance of trust with each other to sustain positive results over a long period. Outcomes which occur because of trust are improved (a) job performance, (b) commitment, (c) satisfaction, and (d) teamwork (Cho & Poister, 2014). When trust is established, tasks are accomplished with a greater focus and with an overall improved outcome (Gibson & Petrosko, 2014; Pozil, 2015). Consequently, the establishment of trust among employees and administrators contribute to the career longevity of employees.

Career Longevity

A high rate of turnover among CWWs has historically been a widespread problem (Chen, Park, & Park, 2012). A survey conducted nationally revealed that a great number of resignations from CWWs could have been prevented. Because of ongoing resignations, the agency administrators face significant costs to replace and train CWWs (Ausbrooks et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2012). Additionally, the remaining workers experience an increased workload. Families and children who are receiving services from the CWWs who leave also experience feelings of instability and the loss of someone they trusted. As a result, children often have extended stays within the child-welfare system (Chen et al., 2012).

To promote career longevity, agency administrators should (a) promote feelings of belonging by assisting CWWs to achieve success, (b) give CWWs

opportunities to feel like they make a change in the lives of families and children, and (c) encourage CWWs to find the area in which they fit within the agency (Ausbrooks et al., 2014). Another area wherein agency administrators could assist CWWs is to promote self-esteem by supplying pay and benefits that are sufficient. Self-actualization can also be met by achieving a balance between personal, work, and family time (Chen et al., 2012). Support from supervisors and coworkers, as well as ample training, also helps to meet this need (Chen et al., 2012; Collins-Camargo & Millar, 2012).

In agreement with Ausbrooks et al. (2014) and Chen et al. (2012), Darling-Hammond (2003) stated that four major aspects influence employees' decisions concerning those remaining employed within a career. The four aspects were salary, work conditions, mentoring support in the early years, and the ability to be prepared. For an agency administrator to improve working conditions, the provision of tangible resources to assist employees with job performance, administrative support, and the ability to take part in decision making are all important factors (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Employees who feel prepared are usually those who have had a significant amount of training. Agency administrators who work to meet these aspects have greater success achieving increased career longevity among their employees. Baslevant and Kirmanoğlu (2013) expanded the understanding of characteristics to promote career longevity by including the highest ranked preferences to promote advantageous employee attitudes and attributes on the job. He conducted a quantitative study to determine if preferences indicated by employees influenced job attitudes and attributes. In addition, Baslevant and Kirmanoğlu gathered data to decipher if the preferences line up with the hierarchy of needs identified by Maslow

(1943).

A survey was used that indicated the significance of the job attributes, including high income and the perception of security for participants. The data were collected from employees within 20 countries (Baslevent & Kirmanoğlu, 2013). This survey was conducted biannually and monitored behaviors and attitudes of employees over a period. Questions on the survey focused on employment status and factors which affected the employees' wellbeing, family experience, and work. Baslevent and Kirmanoğlu (2013) stated that it was crucial to deal with matters such as discretion, job-related skills, security on the job, and conflicts between work and family in order to achieve career longevity. Results, based on survey results, indicated that the most important attribute was job security. The ability to combine responsibilities for family and work was the second highest-rated attribute (Baslevent & Kirmanoğlu, 2013). The third attribute was a high rate of pay, followed by the importance of the ability to use ingenuity and to be supplied with ample training opportunities within the workplace. The participants additionally specified that the attributes that were the most important were the ones that served basic needs. For example, job security was an attribute which satisfied the basic need of existence in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs (Baslevent & Kirmanoğlu, 2013).

Theories Not Investigated

Several theories were not discussed in other studies which related to this study. Herzberg's theory stated that majority of employees desire to do a good job (Steers, 2002). To achieve this desire, managers/supervisors should place the employees in positions where they can utilize their talents to the optimum and where there are no chances for failure (Mathis & Jackson, 2007). Additionally, employees

should not be overloaded with tasks which are impossible or difficult to accomplish (Tyani, 2001).

The organizational turnover theory is deemed by some researchers such as Crean (2017) to play a significant role in examining how employees attitudes impact their job performance. The existing literature reveals that there are different factors that impact a caseworkers' choice to exit or remain in an organization (Flint, Haley, & McNally, 2012). For organizations to prosper, the employees need to have an affirmative work attitude (Munir, Ghafoor, & Rasli, 2012). Organization achievements are also determined by staff members cautionary performances and positive perspectives (Jin & Li, 2015).

Job embeddedness theory focused on factors which made an employee stay more in his job and those that made them resign from employment. These factors can be work-related (good health benefits, positive relationship with co-workers and supervisors) or non-work related (parents or spouses living within the same area) (Mitchell et al. 2001).

Motivational theory: reviewed suggests that CWW is leaving the child welfare industry at an alarming rate (Burn, 2011). Employees become frustrated when the organization does not meet their needs and thus tend to seek other employment (Crean, 2017). Consequently, when organizations meet employees needs, employees are more self-regulated, excited about their work, and they are sure they will continue working for their agencies (Perryer, Jordan, Firms, & Travaglione, 2010). As Demirkaya (2012) states, several factors ignite motivation in organizations as each employee differs in their values, interests, attitudes, and needs.

Conceptual Framework Not Investigated

In his conceptual framework Griffeth and Hom (2001) differentiated employee turnover into voluntary (caused by employee decision) and involuntary (management decision). Organizations should differentiate between the two turnovers and take action to stop voluntary resignation (Loquercio, 2006). In his study on 'Employee Resourcing, *Absence and Turnover*' Taylor (1998) further divided voluntary turnover into functional (relates to sub-standard performers) and dysfunctional (relates to effective performers leaving). Dysfunctional turnover impacts heavily on an organization's general performance, and hence it is a great concern to any organization. He further classified dysfunctional turnover into avoidable (caused by poor working conditions, lower compensation, etc.) and unavoidable (serious illness, death, etc.) over which the organization cannot control. Transferability of the theories and concepts to other organizations will not be applicable since this study involves a small sample of former CWWs of Fulton County DFCS (Merriam, 2009).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Child Welfare

Allegations of child neglect and abuse are investigated by the Department of Human Services Division of DFCS (Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services, 2016a). If representatives of DFCS substantiate child abuse or neglect or substantiate that a child's living environment is deplorable, the child is then moved into foster care (Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services, 2016a). To ensure the outcome measures of safety, well-being, and permanency, DFCS representatives administer a set of services. Georgia data reflect a total of 8,807 children in foster care as of July

2014 (Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services, 2016b). Once a child is deprived into foster care, CWWs are responsible for working with the child's family to minimize the specific risks which caused the agency's involvement within the family.

Child Welfare Workers

The primary responsibilities of CWWs are to promote the health and safety and of children and self-sufficiency among the families to gain permanency. When children enter foster care, the CWW is responsible for key components, the primary of which is to ascertain the availability of food and shelter to meet the foster children's physical needs. In addition, the CWWs are responsible for ensuring the children's medical, mental, and emotional needs by following up with medical and therapy providers. Also, CWWs are responsible for ensuring the children's educational needs are met by enrolling the children in the appropriate academic setting. Assisting caregivers and the family of origin in finding community resources is an added responsibility of CWWs. A review of these responsibilities reflects that CWWs are critical to the experience of foster children, foster families, and the family of origin. The knowledge, awareness, support, and permanence of CWWs help regulate the quality of services from DFCS (Foster care, 2016).

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture and social identity theories form contextual frameworks for studies related to diversification of social welfare (Hwang & Hopkins, 2015). Employee turnover within the child-welfare profession continues to be an ongoing issue. Westbrook et al. (2012) defined organizational culture as the values, norms, assumptions, and routines of all systems within an organization. The organizational

culture and the intent of CWWs to stay in the child-welfare vocation collectively challenge the efficacy and quality of work as well as the continuum of services (Burke, 2011).

Madden et al. (2014) completed a longitudinal study which sampled CWWs over a span of 10 years to explore the issues of retention and workplace interventions as well as factors which affected the organizational culture. The variables under study were gender, education, job desirability, and the perceived support of the child-welfare organization. Madden et al. (2014) found that both organizational and personal factors weighed equally with the retention of CWWs. Madden et al. (2014) presented findings which pointed to a cynical organizational culture and concluded that employee centered support strategies were needed to work toward building a positive organizational culture.

According to Westbrook et al. (2012), voluntary employee turnover is likely to decrease with an improved organizational culture. Recent research has highlighted concepts of organizational interventions to develop and maintain a positive organizational culture which would likely impact the turnover and retention rates of CWWs (Basso, Cahalane, Rubin, & Kelley, 2013). The concepts of organizational culture are multifaceted, and increased efforts to investigate these concepts have occurred to decrease the number of CWWs who resign annually (Johnson et al., 2012).

Several researchers who have observed organizational culture within foster-care organizations have fixated on reducing the turnover rate by accentuating the organizational culture (Hwang & Hopkins, 2015; Johnson et al., 2012). Scholars in this field have proposed evidence-based models which measure staff turnover and the

quality of services (Hwang & Hopkins, 2015; Johnson et al. 2012). Through these studies, child-welfare organizations are challenged to improve the outcomes and quality of services for the foster families and children they serve.

Hwang and Hopkins (2015) conducted a study to determine what role employee attitudes have on employee behavior in the field of child welfare. Participants included 621 randomly selected administrators, supervisors, and CWWs. Participants completed a survey to identify perceptions regarding whether they felt a part of decision making and involvement in the workplace. Results indicated that employees' level of commitment played a role in their perceptions of being included and their intention to resign. Based on findings of the study, Hwang and Hopkins (2015) indicated that organizational leaders should combine strategies to help improve employees' attitudes as well as the structure of the organization.

Hwang and Hopkins (2015) also maintained that the high rate of employee turnover among CWWs resulted in elevated financial costs for staffing, hiring, and training new employees. Child-welfare organizations are plagued with numerous and constant effects caused by the frequent turnover which decreases the quality of services provided to foster families and children (Hwang & Hopkins, 2015). Employee turnover resulted in the delay of services and increased the time that children spent in dangerous situations instead of maintaining the safety, health, and permanency of foster children within the child-welfare system (Hwang & Hopkins, 2015).

Before the study conducted by Hwang and Hopkins (2015), Johnson et al. (2012) conducted a researched to convince leaders of a substance-abuse program to implement one quality, out of three, that would increase the patients' retention and

access to treatment while also improving transitions between different levels of care. Johnson et al. (2012) measured data from participants' survey responses. The three qualities which were measured were participant interest, program implementation, and participants' decision to abstain from drugs. Participants were asked to complete a voluntary survey by phone or online. Results indicated that the perceived effectiveness of the program was dependent on the progress of participants to embrace new practices.

Westbrook and Crolley-Simic (2012) implemented a study to evaluate various perceptions of employees about supervisory and administrative support within a child-welfare system while also comparing perceptions of employees who held a social work degree with those who did not. Westbrook and Crolley-Simic (2012) utilized data from a larger study which was conducted wherein the participants were the administrators, supervisors, and CWWs employed within DFCS offices. Approximately 3,200 employees participated in this study. Surveys included questions regarding demographics, the participants' intention to remain employed, and an inventory concerning the organizational culture. Results indicated that CWWs with degrees in social work perceived that they did not receive as much support from supervisors and administrators in the agency as employees without degrees. Employees' perceptions of the culture in the workplace are integral to gaining employees' obligation to the organization (Boyas et al., 2012a; Kruzich et al., 2014).

Through other studies, researchers have found that assessing the sensitivity of the organizational culture and implementing necessary changes may increase employee commitment (Downey et al., 2014; Kruzich et al., 2014). Findings reflected that decision making among workers reduced voluntary employee turnover,

increased employee involvement, and ultimately improved the organizational culture. Studies involving child-welfare retention are emerging, and researchers are gradually investigating an organizational change to reduce dynamics which may add to negative work environments and the turnover of CWWs (Armstrong et al., 2014; Glisson et al., 2012; Wright, Christensen, & Isett, 2013). Research indicates that change in organizational culture is challenging. The collective recommendation is that change should be incorporated in the future literature involving organizational culture and changes in practice within the field of child welfare (Armstrong et al., 2014; Glisson et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2013).

Communication

Child-welfare organizations are county and regionally based throughout the state of Georgia. They are complex organizations which encompass a state governing body. The work is crisis-oriented and centered on the welfare of children. Every case involving child neglect and abuse is unique and has different dynamics. As a result, the work of CWWs is unpredictable. Researchers implemented the Comprehensive Organizational Health Assessment to assess both the condition of organizational culture in child-welfare agencies and the goal for change (McCrae, Scannapieco, Leake, Potter, & Menefee, 2014). McCrae et al. (2014) incorporated an explanatory sequential design to collect qualitative data from agency leaders and CWWs regarding their perceptions of leadership and how they believed they affected the organizational culture. In responses, CWWs expressed distrust of the leaders of the child-welfare organization due to not having a voice in practice-model values (McCrae et al., 2014). Based on findings of the study, county leaders expressed that the culture of the organization needed improvement and that better communication with front-line staff

was necessary. Similarly, other researchers have suggested setting better communication initiatives to gain increased commitment from front-line staff (Haulenbeek et al., 2013; Wulczyn, Alpert, Orlebeke, & Haight, 2014).

Continual organization communication between team members and the supervisors increased feedback from the start of a project to completion at all levels. Staff turnover heavily impacts on project development (Haulenbeek et al., 2013). Results of the McCrae et al. (2014) study indicated that internal organizational communication presented challenges within the workforce. In survey responses, CWWs reported that changes affecting the work and organizational culture were not always communicated. Poor communication was evident at every level of the organization and brought about a sense of disconnect between supervision and front-line staff (McCrae et al., 2014). The CWWs reported that the cause of the disconnection they felt from supervisors and administrators within their organization was a result of poor communication. In addition, CWWs reported a breakdown in communication from the central office, as they were not allowed to participate in the policy and procedure making process. Based on findings, McCrae et al. (2014) identified communication as a factor that needed improvement and encouraged members of executive management to consider ways of involving CWWs in decision making. Other researchers similarly found that leaders of child-welfare organizations need to develop strategies to improve strategic communication to improve organizational culture (Haulenbeek et al., 2013).

Supervision

The annual turnover rate for CWWs increases each year (Westbrook et al., 2012). Researchers have suggested that the causes of high turnover include

inadequacy of supervisory support and a lack of professional development for novice CWWs (Hair, 2012; Westbrook et al., 2012). New CWWs need adequate coaching and mentoring, and supervisors are failing to provide such tools, in part, because they must manage too many workers. This leads to the systems of support being negatively impacted by the workers' perceptions (Westbrook et al., 2012).

Adequate supervision is needed for the fortification and guidance of CWWs due to the difficulty of each child neglect and abuse case (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). Such supports help to develop a constructive relationship between CWWs and the organization. The better the rapport between the employees and systems of support, the greater the intentions for CWWs to remain with the agency and within the child-welfare profession (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). A theoretical review conducted by Westbrook et al. (2012) suggested that supervisory support systems which increase respectability and organizational standards are key in the retention of CWWs. This conclusion was supported by data derived from state child-welfare organizations and the analysis of the elements of the organizational culture. In similar research, Webb and Carpenter (2012) suggested that dimensions of the organization, such as supervisory and administrative support, should be strengthened to increase the intent of CWWs to remain employed. Findings additionally implied the need to support staff through professional development, rewards, and the provision of adequate resources. Strong dimensions of the organization are likely to produce positive attitudes in workers while also increasing positive perceptions of the organizational supports (Webb & Carpenter, 2012).

The significance of adequate leadership in the overall quality of organizational

culture and the retention of CWWs is acknowledged in the professional literature (Armstrong et al., 2014; Glisson et al., 2012; Manthorpe, Moriarty, Hussein, Stevens, & Sharpe, 2013). For example, Armstrong et al. (2014) conducted a mixed method study to develop further an understanding of the steps to implement change within a child-welfare system. Because of the varying needs of the families and children served through the system, Armstrong et al. (2014) maintained that it is difficult to implement change. Armstrong et al. (2014) further indicated that a network was established in 2008 to provide consultation, training, research, and technical assistance for CWWs and administrators that would improve the system and bring sustainable change.

Within the network, leadership was visually present, training was provided for CWWs and administrators, the office of CWWs provided coaching and consultation, and different agencies and counties had to work together within the system's intervention (Armstrong et al., 2014). Moreover, administrators assisted with policies and provided CWWs with aids to promote effectiveness and provide support to assist CWWs in accomplishing goals through review of the case files (Armstrong et al., 2014). Each center used a different approach to train and assessed the effectiveness of the various approaches.

Data were gathered from interviews, online surveys, plans for the projects, and discussions with evaluators and staff. Participants included four tribal projects and 20 state projects within all ten areas of the offices of the Children's Bureau in the United States. Two samples were taken from 19 projects which were rated over a period of 6 months, and 24 projects which were rated over a period of 12 months. Results indicated that approximately half of the projects utilized assistance from the

implementation center to design and establish a practice model, 17% implemented supervisory strategies, and 8% implemented an existing practice model. The five remaining projects (a) centralized intake statewide, (b) applied the Indian Child Welfare Act, and (c) made more than one change in their practice model and supervision strategies (Armstrong et al., 2014).

Results indicated that stakeholders are brought together with a common mission, framework, and goals. Communication regarding the work to be completed was integral as well; moreover, coaching and training were indicated as a necessary strategy for the new techniques used within the study (Armstrong et al., 2014). Prior to the study conducted by Armstrong et al. (2014), Glisson et al. (2012) conducted a comparative study to examine the effects of organizational climate and culture on CWWs. Similar to the findings of the research conducted by Armstrong et al. (2014), Glisson et al. (2012) conducted a quantitative research to assess and illustrate the use of the organization social context system within a sample of child welfare systems across the United States. Additionally, Glisson et al. (2012) estimated the association of organizational climate and culture profiles with the level of commitment and job satisfaction of CWWs. Participants included 1,740 CWWs from 81 child welfare systems. The survey used in the research was designed to measure the stress, level of engagement, and functionality of the climate in which CWWs work (Glisson et al., 2012).

Findings suggest that CWWs who are in agencies with a high level of engagement remain involved and concerned about the clients and perceive that they are accomplishing positive things in their jobs (Glisson et al., 2012). The CWWs who are in functional climates also understand how to perform their work successfully and

perceive that coworkers and administrators will cooperate and assist them when needed (Glisson et al., 2012). Conversely, as also described by Lee et al. (2013), CWWs who are in stressful climates are overloaded, conflicted, and emotionally exhausted with all of their job responsibilities (Glisson et al., 2012). As a final component of the study, work attitudes were measured by examining the level of commitment and satisfaction perceived by the participants.

Results indicated that work attitudes would improve if the stress employees perceived was reduced and a focus established on (a) improving collaboration, (b) clarifying roles, (c) having the opportunity to participate in making decisions, (d) cooperating to support the efforts of CWWs, and (e) providing a functional environment with a high level of engagement (Glisson et al., 2012). This study relates to the theoretical foundations of theory x-y, learning organizations and culture, trust, and career longevity because findings highlighted the importance of increasing positive management styles and methods, the workplace culture, and the support of co-workers and administrators. Subsequent to the study conducted by Glisson et al. (2012), Manthorpe et al. (2013) conducted a study investigating supervisory practices involving CWWs.

Manthorpe et al. (2013) conducted a mixed-methods research to assess how often supervision was received and the type of supervision that was provided to CWWs. Data were collected from three online surveys; one focused on novice CWWs, the second focused on agency directors, and the third focused on supervisory managers. Participants included 23 managers of CWWs, 280 CWWs, and 150 directors of CWWs (Manthorpe et al., 2013). Through survey responses, CWWs specified that supervision dwindled with the more experience they had at the job and

that the supervision they received was very limited and irregular. Despite the limited supervision, CWWs indicated that the supervision which was given was appreciated and that it affected the level of engagement and commitment to their work.

Supervisory managers of CWWs indicated that there was inadequate time to provide adequate supervision. Directors indicated that they perceived supervision as important but that it was less likely to occur, as additional support was required for novice CWWs during their first year within this line of work (Manthorpe et al., 2013). This study relates to the theoretical foundations of theory x-y, learning culture, and career longevity because findings underscored the importance of support and supervision within the workplace.

Research indicates that effective leadership in child-welfare organizations improves system-wide performance (Teo, Pick, Newton, Yeung, & Chang, 2013); Wright et al., 2013). Supervisors have a major influence over CWWs, and followership promotes the buy-in of an organizational shift. Manthorpe et al. (2013) implied that improving employee retention may result in a positive system and organizational change. Quality leadership involving training, and the mentoring of workers bring about the effective implementation of sustained system change.

Caseloads

Supervisors acknowledge that CWWs face unrealistic work demands, high caseloads, increasing accountability, and high job-related risk (Johnco et al., 2014). Moreover, CWWs and supervisors expressed the immense stress level associated with high caseloads. In a profession of increasing accountability, program adjustments need to be made for the best fit for CWWs to manage the demands of the position. High caseloads are problematic because of long work hours and challenging stressors

on CWWs. As Johnson, et al. (2012) held, policy needs to be analyzed to determine appropriate caseload sizes assigned to CWWs.

Graham et al. (2012) maintained that only limited recommendations exist regarding how to improve the long-standing retention issue of CWWs. Moreover, Glisson et al. (2012) maintained that retention results in improved satisfaction within the profession. Glisson et al. (2012) examined organizational and professional contentment of social workers in the child-welfare vocation. The study was exploratory and designed to assess contributing factors of job satisfaction. Based on his findings, Glisson et al. (2012) concluded that the retention of social workers resulted in the social workers being satisfied with their requested case assignment preferences. In addition, granting requested case-assignment preferences, including requests for specific presenting issues and demographics of the caseload, will ultimately result in the increased satisfaction of CWWs within the child-welfare profession.

Haulenbeek et al. (2013) provided a comprehensive review of support systems and strategies of casework teaming designed to reduce caseloads and improve service effectiveness while also improving the morale of CWWs. Haulenbeek et al. (2013) indicated that casework functions and decision making shared among CWWs and their supervisors would help to meet client needs promptly while also reducing caseworker isolation and the work of CWWs. The confidence of CWWs also improved from supervisory and administrative support, resulting in improved employee morale and quality of services to families and children. With casework teaming, CWWs also have increased self-sufficiency, recognition of diverse viewpoints, and likelihood to ask for assistance instead of feeling isolated

(Haulenbeek et al., 2013). Additionally, casework teaming improves the learning curve of novice CWWs, while the team approach increases worker efficacy.

Haulenbeek et al. (2013) further specified that casework teaming helps to improve organizational culture and the quality of service which, in turn, results in improved employee retention. This concept of supporting employees is directly related to the self-esteem factor in theory x-y (Duff et al., 2016; Maslow, 1943).

The way in which the caseload is measured may also be imperative to retention. Further research suggests that the size of the caseload affects employee retention (Chen, Park, & Park, 2012; Kim & Kao, 2014). Hayes (2015) further suggested that future exploration needs to highlight how the caseload should be measured. Moreover, diminished child safety, well-being, permanency outcomes, and quality of services have been linked to increased caseloads of CWWs (Hayes, 2015). As employee turnover persists, agency management has to reorganize and reassign the caseloads to other CWWs (Boyas et al., 2012a). Management additionally must modify the finances dedicated to recruiting, hiring, and training new CWWs, while also endeavoring to maintain employee morale (Boyas et al., 2012b; Burns, 2012).

Job Burnout

The turnover rate is defined as the calculated percentage of CWWs who left the organization monthly, calculated over a 12-month timeframe, and divided by the total of CWWs. The turnover of CWWs has become the norm within child-welfare organizations. Several researchers have identified that the turnover rate of CWWs has increased due to the stressful nature of the profession and the absence of support from agency management (Burns & Christie, 2013; Lizano & Mor Barak, 2012, 2015).

The increased turnover rate causes insecurity in job performance and results in low

autonomy as well as poor job satisfaction. Studies have identified job burnout as a stress condition contextualized within intricate workplace relationships (Boyas et al., 2012a; Lizano & Mor Barak, 2015).

Job burnout includes physical and emotional exhaustion as well as feelings of disassociation in response to constant exposure to workplace stress (Lizano & Mor Barak, 2012). Burnout additionally causes a reduction in workers' emotional state and personal energy (Westbrook & Crolley-Simic, 2012). As a response to the constant workplace stress, burnout leads to poor job performance which includes withdrawal and diminishing opportunities for rewarding work experiences (Westbrook et al., 2012). Mental exhaustion, referring to the feeling of being overextended mentally, is the fundamental measurement of job burnout (Lizano & Mor Barak, 2012; Westbrook & Crolley-Simic, 2012; Westbrook et al., 2012). Researchers have suggested that being overworked and dealing with personal work conflict are the primary causes of exhaustion (Westbrook & Crolley-Simic, 2012; Westbrook et al., 2012). Burnout is related to workers' perceptions of their rapport with their supervisors (Carpenter, Webb, & Bostock, 2013). Carpenter et al. (2013) similarly reported that the rapport between CWWs and their supervisors' impact work fulfillment. Where workers reported a negative rapport with their supervisors, an association with mental exhaustion and depersonalization also existed. Workers reported feelings of detachment and insignificance and lost track of maintaining their personal needs. Mental exhaustion was considerably higher for CWWs who perceived inadequate support from their supervisors (Carpenter et al., 2013).

The precursors to job burnout among CWWs have been studied (Carpenter et al., 2013; Lizano & Mor Barak, 2012, 2015). While a sense of awareness,

connectedness, and identity are precursors that emerge from job satisfaction, cynicism, feelings of being less significant, and an increased awareness of the need for good organization within the workplace have been tied to burnout among CWWs (Carpenter et al., 2013; Lizano & Mor Barak, 2012, 2015). Burnout has resulted in poor job satisfaction and ultimately resulted in employee turnover. Workplace happenings that intimidate the emotional wellbeing of CWWs also cause a threat to child-welfare organizations. Job burnout can result in inferior job performance because of dissatisfaction with the job, inadequate worker commitment, and the loss of desire to stay with the organization (Carpenter et al., 2013; Lizano & Mor Barak, 2012, 2015).

Lizano and Mor Barak (2015) tested projected interrelationships between organizational needs and resources as indicators of the progression and effect of job burnout on the emotional wellbeing of CWWs. Longitudinal data were accumulated from CWWs. Lizano and Mor Barak (2015) examined the gaps in data relevant to the connection between job burnout and the health of CWWs and then tested the outcomes of job burnout on emotional health. Conclusions reflected that limited research exists regarding this topic in child-welfare studies. Moreover, studies exploring the effects of job burnout and job gratification among CWWs often rely on regression analysis (Lizano & Mor Barak, 2012, 2015).

Job burnout additionally involves a stress response exhibited by employees who have intense involvement with others during a normal workday (Lizano & Mor Barak, 2012, 2015; McFadden, Campbell, & Taylor, 2014). Historically, burnout was identified as occurring mainly in child welfare, nursing, and education (McFadden et al., 2014). Job burnout among CWWs has been conceptualized with

depersonalization, mental exhaustion, and a sense of diminished accomplishment (McFadden et al., 2014). Researchers have attempted to link the effects of job burnout with job performance and found that contributing factors of job burnout include organizational culture, job satisfaction, and the combination of work and family demands (Kim & Kao, 2014). Additionally, burnout is a psychological process linked to the ambiguity of roles in the workplace and the organizational effects of workplace behaviors (Zeitlin, Augsberger, Auerbach, & McGowan, 2014).

Several researchers have found that job-related stress is the main factor in job burnout and a key factor in the intent of workers to leave the child-welfare profession (Boyas et al., 2012b; Westbrook & Crolley-Simic, 2012). The course of experiencing an increased level of job stress, however, is significantly associated with an absence of managerial support and communication (Westbrook et al., 2012). In addition, increased supervisory and coworker support were positively linked with decreased mental exhaustion (Westbrook et al., 2012). Moreover, an increase in job-related stress is significantly associated with an increase in mental exhaustion and depersonalization (Westbrook et al., 2012). Researchers have further concluded that job stress is significantly correlated to the decision of CWWs to leave their jobs; consequently, higher levels of job stress seem to predict higher employee turnover (Boyas et al., 2012b; Westbrook & Crolley-Simic, 2012; Westbrook et al., 2012).

Stability in child-welfare organizations is crucial to the protection of children. Disruptions in services to foster families and children due to staff shortages and staff changes can delay permanency for foster children. In this framework, the turnover and retention of the child-welfare workforce must be further examined to provide insight into the contributing reasons underlying the high turnover in this profession.

In their study, Söderfeldt and Warg, (1995) state that previous burnout literature suggested that the demanding job roles in a social work environment are the contributing factors to CWWs burnout. According to De Croon, Sluiter, Blonk, Broersen, and Frings-Dresen, (2004), high social worker turnover absenteeism is experienced in social workers who are frustrated and burnt out with their jobs. In calculating a collective analysis, possible association and group structures in data will help child-welfare organizations better identify the definite needs of CWWs and ultimately be useful in reducing turnover and increasing retention.

High turnover rates within the child welfare workforce can cause negative consequences for the families and children who rely on related services. As consistently noted in a review of the literature, the youth in foster care are negatively impacted by the turnover of CWWs. Strolin-Goltzman, Kollar, and Trinkle (2014), for example, conducted an empirical study involving the collection of data from youth in foster care. The researchers created two focus groups, one consisting of 12 youths and the second consisting of 13 youths, and held in-depth discussions about their experiences in foster care. The youths were asked about the number of times they were required to switch caseworkers and how those changes affected them. The researchers additionally asked participants for ideas on how to retain caseworkers. Findings of the research revealed that the turnover of CWWs presented instability and distrust among the youth as well as a failing system of the change in the practice of social work (Strolin-Goltzman et al., 2014). These findings illuminate the need for stability in the child welfare system and the need to provide a continuum of quality services to foster children and their families. According to Chen et al. (2012) and Kim & Kao (2014), high turnover rates of CWWs obstructs the crucial progression of

secure relationships with foster children.

Foster parents also seek support, both practical and emotional, from CWWs (Blythe, Wilkes, & Halcomb, 2014). The skilled emotional support from CWWs helps to channel optimal care of the foster child by protecting the child's safety and health. In an integrative study, Blythe et al. (2014) recognized that foster parents' relationships with CWWs helped with managing and behaviors of foster children. This conclusion stemmed from the cross-sectional sampling of foster parents with varying experiences involving child-welfare organizations and CWWs. As another example, Metcalfe and Sanders (2012) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing foster parents to explore the parents' experiences involving child welfare organizational supports. Metcalfe and Sanders (2012) highlighted that the social workers, support groups, training, and provision of respites provided positive fostering experiences. Foster parents additionally reported that relationships with social workers increased the levels of their trust, emotional connection, and stability. Based on findings of the study, Metcalfe and Sanders (2012) held that the retention of social workers promotes trust between foster parents and the child-welfare organization.

The turnover effect on foster children and families contributes to the break in the continuum of services and deplete financial resources to hire new workers (Boyas et al., 2012b; Haynes-Jenkins, 2012). Child-welfare turnover interrupts the continuity of services because foster children and families must reestablish a rapport and relationship with novice CWWs when there is a change in the workforce (Griffin et al., 2013; Levy & Poertner, 2014). Child-welfare organizations invest time and revenue in CWWs and therefore, agency leaders must reduce voluntary employee

turnover (Hamama, 2012).

Trends that Affect Retention

The child-welfare workforce has been studied most notably within the realms of organizational culture and management. Likewise, factors which influence employee retention are studied in many different bodies of literature. Researchers approach the quandary of the turnover of CWWs and increasing retention by drawing upon the education of the child welfare workforce and the types of services provided to the vulnerable and susceptible population of children and families accommodated by child-welfare organizations (Scannapieco, Hegar, & Connell-Carrick, 2012). The retention of CWWs was an area of concern which exists in scholarly literature and points to the need for meaningful research and increased understanding. Researchers have approached this problem by defining concepts of organizational culture and by identifying that improved supervision and communication between management and workers may contribute to reducing attrition within the child welfare workforce. Conversely, in this same approach, the literature narrowly focuses on research concepts of the organizational policies and strategies thought to be related to the stability of CWWs.

Turnover rates are high in the child-welfare vocation affecting not only the workforce and organization but the children and families being accommodated (Auerbach, Schurdrich, Lawrence, Claiborne, & McGowan, 2013; Johnco et al., 2014). Research suggests that social and organizational characteristics and demographics, psychological traits have been linked to increased staff turnover; there is limited literature, however, on why these factors are essential (Berg & Lune, 2012; Bergman et al., 2012; Hill, 2012). The reality of child-welfare work is complex. The

turnover has implications on increased costs to organizations. Complicated and increased caseloads weigh down the remaining employees and impact the quality of services to clients (Daniels, Beesley, Wimalasiri, & Cheyene, 2012; deJonge, Spoor, Sonnentag, Dormann, & van den Tooren, 2012). While factors relating to the turnover of CWWs have been recognized, a gap in literature remains on how these factors affect employees. A second gap in the literature exists concerning the perceptions of CWWs at different phases of employment and ways in which to control workplace issues. Moreover, additional gaps are evident regarding ways to improve employee retention and to garner viewpoints of CWWs. A greater understanding of the precursors of the turnover rate of CWWs was essential to organizational change (Preston, 2013a, 2013b, 2015).

Albeit, most recent research trends implicatively insinuate that organizational influences are the main contributors to child-welfare turnover, personal influences have additionally related to employee turnover within the organization. Moreover, systematic features, psychological aspects, job characteristics, and policies and procedures additionally associated with employee turnover (McFadden et al., 2014; Salloum, Kondrat, Johnco, & Olson, 2015). In contrast to the literature on the turnover of CWWs, there was insignificant literature relating to the factors that positively influenced employee retention.

Salloum's et al. (2015) research supports the importance of retaining CWWs. Leaders of child-welfare organizations must be equipped with ample staff to meet the needs and outcome measures of safety, health, and permanency of foster children within the system. The literature suggests that, in many cases, employee turnover can be prevented. Several areas contributing to the turnover of CWWs include

organizational culture, inadequate supervision, large caseloads, and job burnout.

These factors can contribute to employee turnover by depleting the job satisfaction of CWWs. The overall organizational culture, however, was the main factor to consider when measuring the job satisfaction of CWWs (Boyas et al., 2012b; Westbrook et al., 2012).

Summary and Conclusions

High turnover among CWWs was challenging in the organizational culture but mainly of concern because it was a multifaceted quandary associated with the continuum of quality services to foster children and families. What remained to be studied was the focus on the practical aspects of policies and workforce strategies to be effective in creating sustainable systemic change to increase the retention of CWWs for the internal and external needs of the organization and the population served by the organization.

Chapter 3 describes the phenomenological research design. The phenomenological approach will contribute to the gap in the body of literature relating to the retention of CWWs. The research design will provide an outline to help answer the central research question and subquestions and will potentially identify areas for future research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this study, I aimed to explore how to increase the retention of CWWs; specifically, within the Fulton County DFCS. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, instrumentation, recruitment, participation, data accumulation, data analysis, ethical procedures, issues of trustworthiness, and provide a summary of the key points of the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The central question which guided this research was as follows: How could McGregor's theory x and y explain the perceptions of DFCS workers who voluntarily resigned from their jobs between the years 2013 to 2015? Two subquestions which assisted in answering this research question are as follows:

1. What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to their resignation from the county child welfare office?
2. What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to CWWs remaining on the job in the county child welfare office for as long as they did before resigning?

The questions allowed insight into and knowledge of child-welfare turnover and retention. The questions also focused on general fundamentals that CWWs perceived to be linked to turnover and retention. These fundamentals were organizational culture, communication, supervision, caseloads, job burnout, and effects of turnover on clients. The interview questions were intended to be open-

ended and uncomplicated for the research participants to answer (see Creswell, 2012). Through the research questions, I intended to discover commonalities and the fundamental nature involving the background knowledge of CWWs regarding various experiences related to the organizational culture and job requirements.

The central focus of this study was the turnover and retention issues as perceived by CWWs. I employed the methodology of phenomenology to gather and analyze data and establish findings with the purpose of investigating how theory x-y was applicable within the conceptual framework (see Sloan & Bowe, 2014). A phenomenology is a specific approach used to research or study the perceptions of participants regarding a specific topic (Moustakas, 1994; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). A phenomenological study also explores and analyzes the experiences of the participants to identify their perceptions derived because of the experiences (Husserl, 2014; Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

Husserl (2014), whose original work on phenomenological design started in 1913, indicated that it was established to explore perceptions involving concrete issues and to avoid speculation within various theories of philosophy. This study was designed to collect qualitative data, which allowed the use of conversations and interviews (see Husserl, 2014). The phenomenological method allowed me to analyze the perceptions and experiences of individuals' perceptions, and, in the case of this study, I acquired through semistructured interviews. Moreover, the goal of phenomenology was to describe these perceptions instead of explaining them (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative inquiries, the researcher is key in the data collection process

(Moustakas, 1994). The researcher applies fact-finding strategies which include research instruments for data collection. The researcher identifies research participants, interviews regarding following ethical procedures, and then categorizes and analyzes the data to present the findings. As the researcher for this study, I was in contact with the participants, collecting data and analyzing the perceptions of former CWWs who acted in the professional role of implementing safety, health, and permanency of children in foster care.

I worked for the Fulton County DFCS as a case manager from 2008 through 2011 and served in the capacity of a supervisor from 2011 to the end of my work tenure in 2014. I left the Fulton County DFCS to work for a nonprofit child-placing agency in the role of a supervisor and then received a promotion away from child welfare direct services to a position where I provide management consulting, technical support and training, and quality assurance. No professional relationship existed with any of the research participants. Questions on the qualification screener (Appendix A) ensured the participants had never worked with or were supervised by me between 2008 and 2014 with Fulton County DFCS.

Having experience in this field could have increased the potential for researcher bias. To minimize my bias, I validated my interview questions with a nonresearch respondent. I also maintained appropriate body language and tone of voice during all interviews to avoid the influence of participant responses. I had research participants review relevant transcripts and present the given data avoiding manipulation of results (see Creswell, 2012). To help maintain the ethics of this study, I was in a professional position where there was no conflict of interest, as there was no contact with current or former Fulton County DFCS CWWs involved

in this research.

Methodology

Population Size

The heterogeneity of the population most often influences the sample size (Bryman, 2012). I used a population of 200 employees from the Fulton County DFCS (Fulton County DFCS, 2016). In particular, I focused on former CWWs of the Fulton County DFCS. According to Sargeant (2012), the number of respondents to be included in a study depends on the number of phenomenon elements required to be studied until a data saturation is reached, that is, when additional interviews result to no new concepts being identified. I determined data saturation as I collected and analyzed as the data in an interactive cycle (see Sargeant. 2012).

Sampling Strategy

In this study, I applied purposive sampling which used single stage strategy. Purposive sampling allowed me to deliberately identify and choose key participants who had knowledge and experience about the Fulton County DFCS (see Creswell & Plano, 2011; Patton, 2002; Suri, 2011; Tongco, 2007). The key participants I selected had specific experience relating to the Fulton County DFCS and had a detailed understanding of the central research question (see Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Justification of the sampling strategy involved the following seven principles, as identified by Kemper, Stringfield, and Teddlie (2003): (a) efficiency of the practicability of the sampling scheme, (b) transfer or generalization of conclusions to other populations or settings, (c) practicability of the feasibility of the sampling strategy, (d) ethical nature of the sampling strategy, (e) possibility to draw clear inferences and valid explanations from the data, (f) a thorough database obtained from

the sample selected, and (g) a sampling strategy which arises logically from the research questions and conceptual framework addressed by the study. In addition, as Chesebro and Borisoff (2007) and Creswell (2013) recommended, the sampling strategies are justified by guidelines for sampling in qualitative research, the aim of the study, available resources, and time constraints.

In order to sample the participants from the pool of individuals that contacted me and met the participant criterion, I developed a sampling frame from the names of the former Fulton County CWWs and used a systematic random sampling method to identify participants whom I sent the invitation letter to participate (see Appendix B). This means that I selected every second person from the sampling frame to participate in the research until I achieved data saturation. The process was iterative as I picked the final sample of 10 participants, interviewed them, and analyzed the data, and then picked another sample until I obtained no new concepts from expanding the interview. The data collection approach involved the use of the participant's assigned pseudonyms to preserve anonymity.

Criterion for Participant Selections

Research participants were those with experience in working with children and families in foster care. Participation criteria for study respondents included (a) at least 2 years of working experience as CWWs who was responsible for ensuring the safety, physical well-being, and permanency of foster children within the Fulton County DFCS; (b) those who voluntarily resigned from the organization within a 3-year time span, from years 2013 through 2015; (c) participants who were less than 60 years of age at the point of resignation; and (d) participants whom I did not supervise during 2008 to 2014 as a case manager and supervisor at the Fulton County DFCS. Any

CWWs who had left the organization before 2013 were not recruited or considered for participation. In order to establish whether the participants met the selection criteria, I asked six screener questions related to the specific criteria needed to participate in this study.

Sample Size and the Rationale

The sample size for this research was 10 participants. Sample sizes for qualitative studies are customarily smaller than those of quantitative studies. Ritchie and Lewis (2011) asserted that, with a qualitative sample, there is a point of depreciating return; that is, as information is accumulated from participants, increased data do not indispensably lead to more information. I determined the sample size adequacy was determined by the quality and completeness of the information given by the participants and not the number of interviews (see Morse, 1994).

Participant Selection Logic

The first step in data collection in this qualitative study was the selection of participants. Unlike quantitative research which requires participants to be selected randomly and procedures to be standardized, qualitative study selection of participants is purposeful (Englander, 2012).

Specific Procedures for Participant Identification, Contact, and Recruitment

I used a former DFCS administrator who now serves as an associate professor in Orangeburg, South Carolina, to get in contact with former Fulton County CWWs. This former DFCS administrator resigned from Fulton County DFCS in 2010 and no longer works for the Fulton County DFCS in any capacity. This individual had maintained contact with former Fulton County managers and CWWs, and her role was to introduce me via email and provide my contact information. The email

provided general information about the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and my contact information (see Appendix C). I also recruited participants via purposive sampling, as needed, from social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn (see Appendix D).

Once potential participants contacted me, I provided by return email, additional information in the invitation to screen letter (see Appendix E). The invitation to screening letter was to request that the individual provided a telephone number so that I could contact them. Once a participant responded via email indicating their interest, I called and administered the qualification screener to validate that they met participation requirements. If the participant did not qualify, I advised the participant over the phone of disqualification, thanked the participant for their interest, and ended the call. If the participant qualified, I sent via email an informed consent form to each participant and requested them to fill and scan the signed document back to me via email. As the participants returned the consent form, I created a pseudonym for the participant and entered it on the consent form to ensure anonymity. Only the pseudonym name was entered into the spreadsheet and kept separate from the actual consent form. The former DFCS administrator who served as an associate professor did not know who contacted me or agreed to participate.

Relationship Between Saturation and Sample Size

The sample size was reliant on factors that are adequate to achieve theoretical saturation, a point at which data analysis no longer leads to more information related to the research question or subquestions (see O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). With this being noted, the sample size for this study was 10 participants. Qualitative research is

especially profound and intensive, and thus studying a large sample could be both tedious and impractical (see Creswell, 2013).

Instrumentation

For this phenomenological study, I used a semi-structured interview as the source for data accumulation (Appendix G). Semi-structured interviews permit research participants to offer open and accurate feedback to the interview questions while also describing personal experiences (Creswell, 2012).

The interview process established predicated on the review of the literature and the instrument guidelines presented by Berg and Lune (2012). The interview was recorded using a digital recorder as well as transcribed using Dragon Naturally Speaking 11 Home Edition software (Nuance Communications, Inc., 2016). I informed the participants that they were being recorded so that I did not miss any responses and that I was as detailed as possible so that full understanding was reached. According to Nuance Communications Inc. (2016), this software transfers speech to text with 99% accuracy. I asked the participants to check the accuracy of the audio and transcribed information (see Merriam, 1995). Once the participants verified the information to be accurate, I erased the audio tape information and destroyed the tape. I took with me the transcribed copy of the interview, coded it using the interviewee pseudonym and secured it in a locked file cabinet at home where I only had access. The interview locations were at a school, library and a church suggested by the participants closest to their homes or workplaces, and via telephone as requested by participants.

Source for Each Data Collection Instrument

Berg and Lune (2012) suggested that the interview questions be directly

connected to the study questions and the research topic. The interview questions are also structured to gather needed information that will allow for the organization of the data between interviews (Berg & Lune, 2012). The semi-structured interview lends itself to collecting qualitative data in a narrative form. This type of data promotes a protected process to establish content validity, which helps to identify themes, meanings, and any biases (Berg & Lune, 2012).

Basis for Instrument Development

I used semistructured interview questions to interview the participants as it allowed me to delve deeply into the participants' wide range of experience on the concepts that I was studying (see Chilban, 1996; Johnson, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For example, Table 1 aligned the interview questions with the related concepts of this study. The related concepts are identified in the left column of the table, and the numbered interview questions are identified in the right column. The semi-structured interview was also to allow for homogeneity of questions asked to each participant.

Table 1

The Alignment of Concepts to Questions

Concepts	Questions
Child welfare workers	3, 9, 14, 17, 18
Organizational culture	6, 7, 8, 16, 19, 23
Communication	21
Supervision	5, 15, 20
Caseloads	11, 12, 13
Job burnout	10, 22

I used Nuance software to record and transcribe the participant's responses. This software ensured the confidentiality of participant's responses. Transcribers often experience several challenges as discussed by Poland (2002) when transcribing the spoken words to text form (Poland, 2002). The challenges are categorized into four categories which include (a) sentence structure, (b) use of omissions, (c) use of mistaking phrases or words, and (d) use of quotation (see Meadows & Dodendorf, 1999). Since interviewees speak in run-on sentences, transcribers tend to make judgmental calls which can alter the meaning of an entire sentence. Nuance software has the capabilities to transcribe data with 99% accuracy. I coded and analyzed the data using NVivo software. This software saved on time reinforced completeness of sentences and made analysis procedures more systematic see (Meadows & Dodendorf, 1999).

Content Validity Establishment

To establish the validity of findings derived from this study, I pre-tested the

interview protocol with two participants. Pre-testing is the process of simulating formal data collection procedures on a small scale to troubleshoot practical problems relating to data collection methodology and instruments (Hurst et al., 2015). Pre-testing a study instrument was paramount since no amount of logical exercise can replace testing an instrument which was meant to communicate with the ordinary population (see Backstrom & Hursch, 1963). In addition, it was an effective technique that improved the interpretation of findings and validity of data collection procedures (see Brown, Lindenberger, & Bryant, 2008).

In this study, I used a cognitive interviewing technique to pre-test and improved the development of materials (see Shafer & Lohse, 2005). Shafer and Lohse (2005) define cognitive interviewing as a technique used to provide understanding on learners perception by inviting individuals to verbalize feelings and thoughts as they examine information. The results of the pre-testing resulted in a slight modification to some of the interview questions but were not significant enough to warrant additional testing.

Sufficiency of Data Collection Instruments to Answer Research Questions

Table 2 aligns questions from the instrument to the subquestions. The subquestions are categorized in the left column of the table, and the numbered interview questions are identified in the right column.

Table 2

Research Instrument Questions

Overarching question	1 – 2
Subquestion #1	3 – 15
Subquestion #2	16 – 23

Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

I recruited all participants using purposive sampling from all who contacted me via email regarding their interest in the study. All names were entered into a spreadsheet as their qualification to participate was verified. I then utilized systematic random sampling to select ten names to participate in the study voluntarily. The participants whom I selected for this study only in part mirrored the target population to be studied.

Data Collection

I collected the data in person via face-to-face interviews in a public space such as a school, library or a church for participants who reside in the area, and via telephone for participants who requested. An approval request was submitted to use the above facilities (Appendix H). I collected and transcribed the data within 34 calendar days. The length of the interview took approximately 60 minutes as determined by the administered pre-test interview.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to gather relevant data. Each participant was assigned a participant pseudonym of their choice to preserve anonymity. Interview responses were recorded while I endeavored to notice body language, voice tone, or any other signs each participant exhibited during the interview. After completion of the interviews, I listened to the recordings and provided written responses concerning any observations I made during the interview as well as the participants' responses to confirm the quality of transcription.

Follow-Up Plan If Participants Too Few

Since the nature of sampling method required a small number, social media was also employed to avoid biases. Social media can be effectively used to attract a

unique group of participants to a study. The process entailed notifying key individuals who had a social work forum on Facebook which was used to broadcast information. I used a simply written expression requesting individuals with experience in working with children and families in foster care, to participate in my study on the topic was used.

Participants' Exit from the Study (Debriefing)

I engaged each participant to ensure a clear understanding of the study and research procedures before asking any interview questions. Upon exiting the study, I reminded all research participants of the confidentiality of their participation as well as the purpose of the study. I asked the participants were asked if they had any questions, concerns, or feelings about the study. Any information gleaned from this interaction remained confidential, although I utilized information within the data collected for this study and linked with the participants' number to preserve anonymity.

Follow-Up Procedures

I employed follow-up procedures by verifying contact information and asking if they were willing to be contacted again for a follow-up interview should supplemental information or clarification be needed. When the respondents are aware of the possibility of a follow, re-contacting them becomes less daunting (Kaiser, 2009).

Data Analysis Plan

Connection of Data to Specific Research Questions

Participant responses were initially recorded to ensure accuracy and then transcribed. I used Dragon Naturally Speaking 11 Home Edition software (Nuance

Communications, Inc., 2016) for transcribing interview responses and grouping responses within categories to assist me with the analysis. I applied active listening to support the interviews. I based the sequence of questions on the interview strategy applied by Berg and Lune (2012). I also used a frequency table to begin the discussion of the coded materials.

Coding Procedure

First cycle coding was applied, as this approach did not limit the coding process. The process allowed for a specific word to symbolically capture data and themes (see Patton, 2002). Next, the modified van Kaam method of coding was utilized to enable me to understand the meaning, structure, and nature of the participants' experiences while they worked as CWWs (see Hein & Austin, 2001; Klein & Westcott, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). Each code was abbreviated, defined and meaning from the participant attached to it. This method identified whether trends or patterns were evident based on the interview responses (see Sikahala, 2014; van Kaam, 1984).

Data Analysis

Once I established themes and meanings, data was then appropriate for analysis. Initial themes derived from participant responses identified using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis allowed qualitative positivism and applied the coding process through inductive analysis. The thematic analysis allowed me to go beyond exterior meanings, and analyze the data with the objective of summarizing central themes (see Boyatzis, 1998).

Outside of coding, I used descriptive analysis approach together with NVivo software to analyze the data (see Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Richards,

2002; Richards, 1999). The procedures in the descriptive analysis approach were as follows.

Data preparation. I obtained all the respondent transcription from the Nuance software and interwove my observational notes within the transcript using a different font to enable distinguishability. I then conducted a pre-analysis by reading the whole data set to get the whole picture of the participant's response. During the pre-analysis, I deleted data which was irrelevant to the research questions such as unimportant digressions, repetitions, and obvious redundancies (see Elliott & Timulak, 2005).

i. Delineation and Processing Meaningful Units

The second step involved dividing the data into distinctive meaning units and assigning a consecutive code to them. The code helped in tracing back the full interview protocol for auditing (see Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988; Wertz, 1983).

ii. Overall Organization of the Data

The third step involved sorting the collected data into domains which provided a conceptual framework for the data. I then applied axial coding to relate the codes through deductive and inductive thinking (see Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I finally checked for various kinds of relationships between domains, including significations, temporal sequences, causes, frequency, similarity, and differences (see Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Hatch, 2002).

iii. Categorization

I obtained the categories (the aim of discerning similarities or regularities in the data) from the meanings in the meaning units. I then compared the meaning units to each other and the emerging concepts until I arranged the whole data (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I finally categorized the categories of each meaning units and then

conducted a cross-case analysis to evaluate the similarities and dissimilarities across the cases (see Elliott et al., 1994; Hill et al., 1997). I represented the relationships in the form tables.

iv. Abstraction and Interpretation of Main Findings

The above categorization procedure led to a taxonomy that described and interpreted the whole concept as it was contained in the collected data. I followed the rule of essential sufficiency (the simplest way of depicting the phenomenon) to abstract the main findings of the research questions. I then used graphs, tables, narratives, figures and diagrams to communicate the results contained in the taxonomy (see Elliott & Timulak, 2005). Finally, I linked my research findings to the study's research questions, and interview questions.

Treatment for Discrepant Cases

According to Bird (2009), researchers should first address the issue of missing data and non-response errors. Oppenheim (1992) suggests two techniques of dealing with missing data, i.e., pairwise deletion and list-wise deletion. Research participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time (Patton, 2002). No participant requested to withdraw from the study. Recognizing and analyzing discrepant data is key in validity testing, as any data which cannot be explained through interpretation can present defects in results of the study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The benchmarks to confirm the efficacy of a qualitative study include credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability (Creswell 2012, 2013). Patton (2002) suggested that the researcher's credibility was of utmost importance because this individual was the one collecting and analyzing the data. I gained

credibility by allowing research participants to review interview transcripts for accuracy. Participants were allowed access to collected data, its interpretation and the conclusions derived from it to either correct errors, clarify their intentions or provide additional information which they deemed necessary. I gained transferability by thoroughly describing the study's framework and assumptions which were essential to the study. Sufficient contextual information essential to research studies enables a researcher to make the necessary transfers. Thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation guarantee confidence during transferability to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Firestone, 1993). Generalizing the study's results to be transferred to other frameworks can also be useful in establishing external validity (Creswell, 2012, 2013). In this study, generalization was not possible because I used cognitive sampling method and therefore there wasn't a normal distribution of representation for the participant interviewed. Additionally, the sample size for this study had a low statistical power which could be used to detect significant relationships or differences. Dependability of qualitative study involves the reliability and precision of the data (Creswell, 2012). This applies that if any other researcher repeated this study within the same context and using the same method and participants, they would obtain similar results as I have presented them. I achieved conformability by repeatedly reviewing and rechecking the data to eliminate any possible negative instances or biases (see Creswell, 2013). This ensures that the study findings are the results of the ideas and experiences of the participants rather than my preferences. As indicated by Patton (2002), conformability was a concern which was just as paramount as objectivity.

Content Validity

The credibility of the study findings helped me in establishing the trustworthiness of this study (see Lincoln & Guba, 1994). I gained credibility and internal validity of the data through data saturation and truthful reporting of the study's results (see Creswell, 2013). According to Bear (1990); Burns and Grove (1997); Cook and Campbell (1979) and Isaac and Michael (1995), an outcome is valid if it represents a phenomenon consistently and accurately when explaining, describing or theorizing. I made the following provisions to instill confidence which I had accurately recorded the phenomena under study:

(a) A Systematic Random Sampling of Participants

This random approach helped me negate from being biased in the selection of the participants, and it helped to ensure any unfamiliar influences were spread evenly within the sample (see Preece, 1994). According to Bouma and Atkinson (1995), random sampling procedures provided a guarantee that the respondents selected be a representative sample of the larger population. Since I used purposive sampling, I had control over the choice of informants, and there was a possibility of selecting cooperative and articulate participants.

(b) Tactics to Ensure Honesty of Participants

The participants of this study had the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the research due to personal or other idiosyncratic reasons. This ensured that those who participated genuinely took part and gave information for free (see Shenton, 2004). I encouraged the participants, to be frank from the onset of each session. I aimed at establishing a rapport at the start of each interview, and I indicated to the interviewee that there were no wrong or right answers to the questions I asked.

(c) Iterative Questioning

I incorporated specific ploys such as probing to uncover deliberate lies and to elicit detailed data. In case a contradiction occurred, and there was evidence of falsehood, I discarded the suspected data (see Lincoln & Guba, 1994).

(d) Member Checking

Member checking was the single most important activity which bolstered the credibility of my study (see Lincoln & Guba, 1994). I checked the accuracy of the information during the interview process and at the end of the interview. I also asked the respondents to verify the accuracy of the information they had provided by listening to the audio file from the Nuance software and then followed up with each respondent separately to review the transcripts to confirm accuracy. All audio files and transcripts were confirmed to be a replica of the interviewee responses as respondents agreed with the audio files and transcripts.

(e) Examination of Previous Research Findings

This activity assisted me in assessing the degree to which this study's results confronted to those of past studies. My ability to relate the findings of this study to the existing body of literature was a key criterion in evaluating studies of qualitative inquiry (see Silverman, 2000).

Ethical Procedures

When conducting a qualitative study, ethical procedures must be followed to maintain trustworthiness (Creswell, 2012, 2013). Identifying the research questions, purpose, and the researcher's role is a component of ethical procedures (see Patton, 2002). Identifying the sampling strategies, sample size, and procedures involving the collection and analysis of data also establishes the ethical nature of a research study.

In addition, research participants must be given anonymity for protection, and the researcher should remain unbiased (Patton, 2002).

To maintain ethical procedures, I upheld social values to human research participants. It was unethical to put participants at risk of harm (Patton, 2002). Moreover, to maintain ethical research, any and all risks were as low as possible. To maintain low risks and address ethical concerns associated with recruitment materials and processes, I meticulously reviewed information involving research participants predicated on merit while eliminating any discriminatory purposes. I also presented the requirements for participation and the scope and focus of the study in a truthful manner, also placing truthful advertisements to eliminate any misleading representation. I followed all measures identified by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to protect all participants' rights. I received approval from the Walden IRB (approval number was #06-22-17-0254445, expiration date June 21, 2018).

Moreover, measures were taken to ascertain confidentiality and support of the research participants. Confidentiality meant that the participants' responses were kept secret and anonymous, and responses did not have a name on them. I kept respondents' identifying information confidential and I reported data anonymously. This helped to maintain the integrity of the research study. In addition, I reminded research respondents of their right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

Informed consent documents were provided to all research participants to gain access to participants and to collect the data. The agreement explained how I would conduct the research and how I was to collect and archive the data. I administered consent forms to each research participant wherein confidentiality and the right to

withdraw from this research were addressed (Patton, 2002).

I kept particular attention to the methods and efficacy of maintaining participant anonymity. With the approval of the dissertation chair, access to transcripts of interviews, with no identifying information, were made available to committee members only for the duration of the dissertation. I maintained exclusive access to all data, which was stored in a secured and locked file cabinet. I will destroy all data, still maintaining anonymity, by shredding all accumulated data after the required 5-year timeframe from Walden University (see Walden University, 2016).

As the researcher, I abided by a strict code of confidentiality and maintained information obtained in a locked cabinet where I only had access. I coded participant's information with a participant's chosen pseudonym from the onset of the research and I did not represent any other identifiers throughout the research. I upheld the ethical principles stipulated by the IRB of Walden University to protect all participants' rights. These include beneficence, justice, and respect for persons (Walden University Institutional Review Board, 2015).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the qualitative research design and rationale, methodology, and the role of the researcher. I presented the data collection method, processes involving data analysis, ethical procedures, and issues of trustworthiness. Through this study, I used a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the issues of turnover and retention of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. Purposive sampling was the suggested sampling method, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data for this study. I used first cycle coding and descriptive analysis approach were utilized for data

analysis. After implementing the study, I dedicated Chapter 4 to data presentation.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The intent of this phenomenological research was to address how McGregor's theory x-y might explain the perceptions of DFCS workers who voluntarily resigned from their jobs. Child welfare services provided by CWWs adhere to the basic framework of child welfare outcomes, which include welfare, safety, and permanency. Retention of CWWs impacts service distribution to children in foster care and their foster families, which is a vital community service.

The core research question which guided this study research was as follows: How could McGregor's theory x and y explain the perceptions of DFCS workers who voluntarily resigned from their jobs between the years 2013 to 2015? Two subquestions assisted in answering the central research question were as follows:

1. What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to their resignation from the county child welfare office?
2. What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to CWWs remaining on the job in the county child welfare office for as long as they did before resigning?

Pretest Study

I conducted a pretest study using two participants to establish the validity of findings derived from the interview protocol. According to Cannell, Kalton, Oksenberg, Bischooping, & Fowler (1989), researchers with considerable experience in a certain field may need fewer pretest interviews as compared to less experienced researchers. During this process, I was able to simulate formal data collection

procedures on a small scale, which enabled me to troubleshoot practical problems such as misinterpretation of questions, the ambiguity of words, sensitive questions, and inability to answer a question. After pretesting the instruments, I was able to structure questions properly to help me communicate with the respondents. The pretest study also improved the interpretation of findings and validity of the data collection procedures. Through the pretest study, I was able to examine if the respondents' understanding of the questions in the interview protocol as poorly designed questions would result in irrelevant information. Nonetheless, data obtained from participants from the pretest study were not included in the final research results.

In this study, I used a cognitive interviewing technique to pretest and improved the development of materials. Shafer and Lohse (2005) defined cognitive interviewing as a technique used to provide understanding on learners' perceptions by inviting individuals to verbalize feelings and thoughts as they examine information. The purpose of this method is to understand whether the participants will comprehend the questions both consistently across the various segments, be able to retrieve relevant information, make a relevant judgment, and accurately provide an answer to the question (Collins, 2003). This method of interviewing provided an understanding of participants' perceptions when they were invited to verbalize their feelings and thoughts as they examined the information on the interview protocol. The results of the pretesting resulted in a slight modification to some of the interview questions but were not significant enough to warrant additional testing.

Demographics

During the implementation of this study, there were no personal or organizational conditions that affected participants or their experience that could

affect the interpretation of the study results. All the participants in this study met the age inclusion criteria, which included having a minimum of 2 years employment with the division, having voluntarily resigned from the agency between the years of 2013 to 2015, had never worked under my supervision during my 2008 to 2014 tenure with the agency, and were less than 60 years of age at the point of resignation.

Data Collection

Forty-one research participants responded, but only 33 (80.5%) met the inclusion criteria. I managed to gain 15 qualified participants from a former colleague's email introduction and 18 qualified participants from posting in the National Association of Social Workers Georgia Chapter SW Facebook page. Among the 33 participants who met the inclusion criteria, I randomly selected 10 participants from a spreadsheet and assigned a pseudonym and identified as so in the transcripts. During the interview process, data were recorded and later transcribed using Nuance software. After completion of each interview, I listened to the recordings and provided my written responses concerning any observations that I made during the interviews as well as the participants' responses to each respondent to confirm the quality of transcription.

There were a proposed 60 calendar days for the full recruitment and data collection phase, but data were collected and transcribed within 34 calendar days. Therefore, no additional time was required to accumulate data from participants. Four participants were interviewed via telephone because they no longer resided in the Atlanta area. All other participants were available for a face-to-face interview. During the whole interview process, both the face-to-face and the telephone interview, there were not any unusual circumstances that occurred which could hamper data

collection.

Data Analysis

I used a descriptive analysis approach together with NVivo software to analyze the data. The procedure that I used to move data inductively from coded units to larger representations is as follows:

Data Preparation

I obtained all the respondents' transcriptions from the Nuance software and interwove my observational notes within the transcript using a different font to enable distinguishability. I then conducted a preanalysis by reading the whole data set to obtain the whole picture of the participant's response. During the preanalysis, I deleted data that were irrelevant to the research questions such as unimportant digressions, repetitions, and obvious redundancies.

Delineation and Processing Meaningful Units

The second step involved dividing the data into distinctive meaning units and assigning a consecutive code to them. The code helped in tracing back the full interview protocol for auditing. From the analysis, I obtained four categories of codes, which included global codes, expressing and feeling codes, hierarchical challenges to job codes, and distancing self from job codes. The NVivo software generated these codes.

Overall Organization of the Data

The third step involved sorting the data into relevant domains, that is, significations, temporal sequences, causes, frequency, similarity, and differences that provided a conceptual framework for the data, as shown in Figure 3. I then applied

axial coding to relate the codes through deductive and inductive thinking. I finally checked for various kinds of relationships between domains.

Categorization

This procedure involved first cycle coding of the meaning units within each of the organized domains. This is because this type of coding method does not limit the coding process. I obtained the categories from the meanings in the meaning units. I then compared the meaning units to each other and the emerging concepts until I arranged all the data. I finally categorized the codes of each meaning units and then conducted a cross-case analysis to examine the relationship with the research questions. I represented the relationships in the form of a table (Table 3).

Abstraction and Interpretation of Main Findings

The above categorization procedure led to the description and interpretation of the whole concept as it was contained in the data. I followed the rule of essential sufficiency to abstract the main findings of the research questions. I then used tables, narratives, and figures to communicate the results contained in the taxonomy (see Elliott & Timulak, 2005). Finally, I linked my research findings to the study research questions and interview questions as shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows resulting systemic factors, themes, and implications.

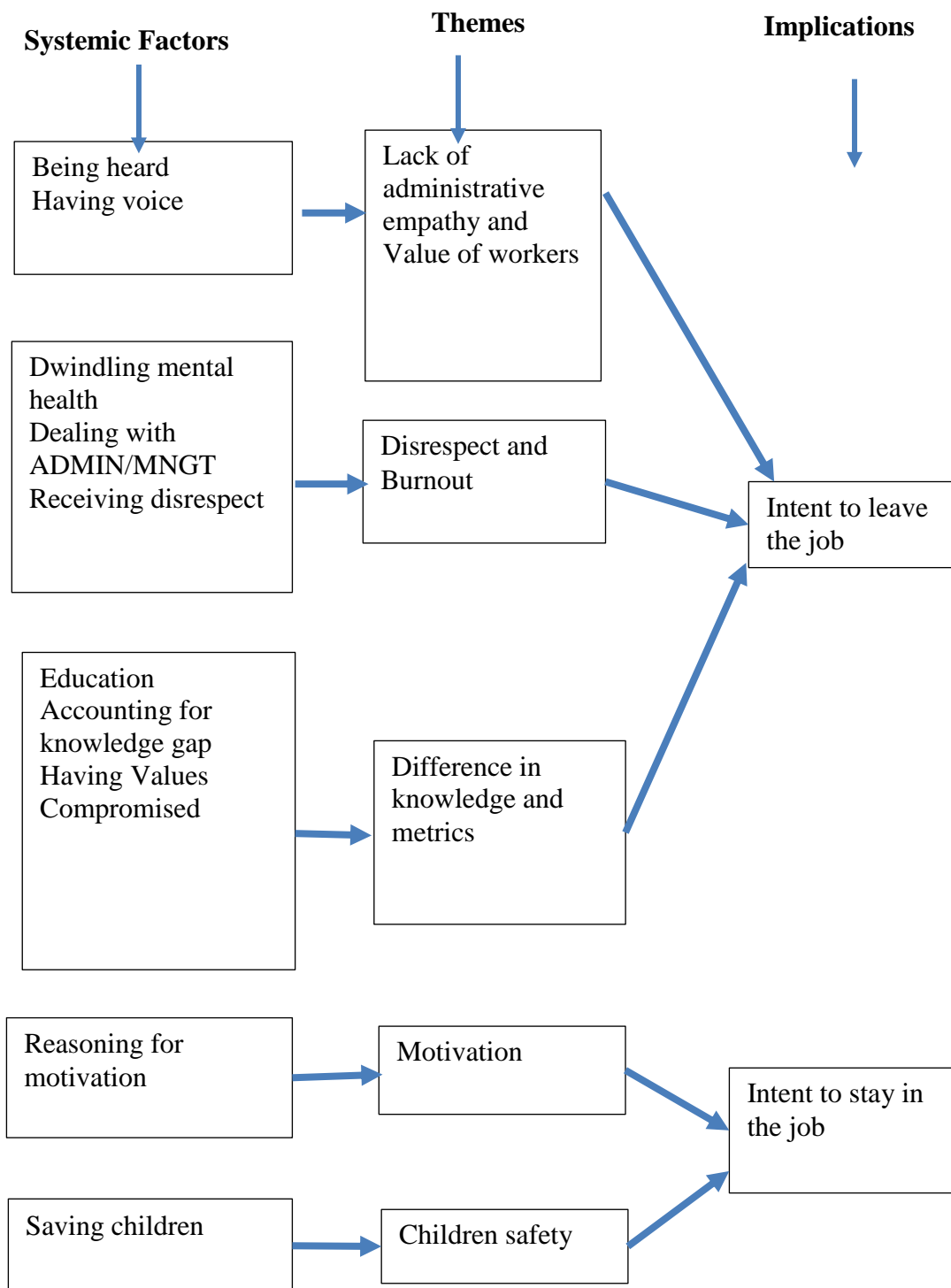


Figure 1. The relationship between systemic factors that result to CWWs leaving or staying in a job.

Specific Codes

First cycle coding was applied to code the data, and then the modified van Kaam method was utilized to help in the understanding of the meaning, structure, and nature of the participant's experiences while they worked as CWWs. The code name was abbreviated followed by its definition and then an example of the participant response given.

I classified the themes into two categories based on the subquestions they were related to. The first category relates to subquestion 1 and the other category relates to subquestion 2. The first category of themes includes,

I. Lack of Administrative Empathy and Value of Workers

One hundred percent of the participants felt that they did not receive empathy or felt undervalued from the administration and management for their work and dedication. Wil33 stated, "They did not care about anyone. My administrator did not care enough about my well-being. Not even a little bit of empathy." In addition, Wil28 said, "We did not have a voice. We were talked to, and our voices were never heard, or at least taken into consideration."

Seventy percent of the participants explained that they stayed in their jobs only because of their deep dedication to the children's well-being, but that being overworked, underpaid, and undervalued contributed to them leaving their job. For example, one participant felt that the failure of an employee lied in their disempowerment: Wil6 stated, "Your workers not having a voice, rude management, and lack of pay."

II. Disrespect and Burnout

In addition to being undervalued and not supported by the administration and management, 66% of the participants felt disrespected and burned out by their jobs. Despite their call to help children in need, participants felt that the stressful conditions of the job and the disrespectful way their superiors treated them led them to leave the job. Wil1 stated, "It all boiled down to the children happiness. If I knew they were happy, then I was going to show up at work. I hated to leave, but I was offered a position with less stress and more pay."

Wil 31 shared,

I left DFCS because of the very stressful caseloads and stressful court hearings. I had one judge that ripped me to shreds every time we had court...she treated the case managers like crap. She painted us as incompetent every time we were in her courtroom. I did not like dealing with all of that.

Participants explained that they were disrespected by judges, as well as by administration and management who often didn't support or interact with them. Wil4 stated, "The caseworkers were also abused by judges, and administration never said anything." Wil1 also stated, "The administrators did not talk to the workers."

As Wil6 put it, "I was burned out from the oversized caseloads with minimum pay." Several other participants explained that the job environment, particularly the heavy workload without proper support or compensation from the administration, was debilitating to their health and well-being. Wil1 stated, "[The doctor] told me I had brain fog and referred me to a psychiatrist...I wanted to be there for the kids, but Fulton County just wore me out. I had to put my health first."

Wil28 shared,

I had gone out on medical leave from being burned out and having anxiety from this job. I was relaxed while on leave, but as soon as I came back to work, anxiety and blood pressure shot through the roof. I could not live like that, and then they were piling more work on me. I quit when my administrator tried giving me more cases. I could not do it anymore.

Seventy percent of the participants noted that it was the stress of the administrative changes (dwindling mental health), rather than the job itself, that contributed to their burnout and desire to leave their jobs.

Will shared,

After a few years, I was burned out. My supervisor kept changing. The whole executive management team changed every two years. Each time that changed, our processes and work changed. That was tiring because you just didn't know what to expect any more.

Wil6 shared,

After a while, I was just so burned out with the constant changes in processes, and constant changes of the management team. Each time there's a new administrator and program director, everyone knew they would come in with major changes. That constant cycle wore me out.

III. Difference in Knowledge and Metrics

Fifty-two percent of the participants felt that there was a gap in knowledge between themselves as frontline staff and administration/management. As a result of this, participants felt that those who should be supporting and advocating for them were "out of touch" with the daily stresses and conditions of the job. Wil31 stated, "I

felt like upper management just didn't take the time to learn their employees and what their daily struggle was like being front-line staff.”

Ninety-two percent of the participants were also frustrated with the administrations'/managements' approach to social work. They felt that their supervisors were more concerned with completing cases (not being heard) rather than the actual work involved with protecting the children and reunifying families.

Wil4 shared,

I refused to go to court and fight for something that was wrong. I did not believe that this lady's son needed to stay in care. She was ready. Situations like this were happening so much that I decided that I wasn't going to do it anymore. That was not social work.

Wil14 also stated, “I just don't think those people understood child welfare. We are dealing with people's lives. They were all about numbers. I do not believe they cared about the children as much as the workers did.”

The following category of themes represents participants patterns in relation to subquestion 2.

I. Motivation

One hundred percent of the participants remained on the job as long as they did because of motivation from others within the organization.

Wil28 stated, “I had a few good friends there, and that was motivation to come to work some days.” Wil4 also stated, “My supervisor was very personable and understanding. She motivated me a lot. Even motivated me to look for ways to promote within DFCS.” Wil6 also shared “...I made some pretty good friends there,

and we would meet up once a month for happy hour, and just have a vent session. After venting, we would motivate each other to withstand another day.”

II. Children Safety

Sixty-five percent of the participants felt that the children were insecure and needed someone to look after them. The feeling was intrigued by individual's experiences in foster homes, and they believed that without some form of guardianship, the children would not be happy and safe. Wil33 stated, “I did like working with the foster kids. Saving children and finding them stability. That gave me a little joy.”

Trustworthiness

I gained trustworthiness of the data through the following:

1. **Credibility:** I allowed research participants to review the transcribed data for accuracy. One hundred percent of the participants confirmed that the data was accurate.
2. **Transferability:** I thoroughly described the study's framework and assumptions which were essential to the study. By thoroughly describing the study's framework and assumptions, I was able to evaluate the extent to which my conclusions were transferable to other situations, settings and times.
3. **Dependability:** I gained reliability and precision of the data by only engaging participants who met the inclusion criteria.
4. **Conformability:** I repeatedly reviewed and rechecked the data to eliminate any possible negative instances or biases.

Results

I asked the participants 25 open-ended questions which are found in Appendix G. The participants' responses were then coded and then linked with the two subquestions. Table 3 shows specific codes which relate to each subquestion. The left column identifies the subquestions, and the right column identifies the specific codes.

Table 3

The Relationship Between the Subquestions and Specific Codes

Research question	Codes
1. What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to their resignation from the county child welfare office?	Dealing with admin, management
	Being heard
	Receiving disrespect
	Having values compromised
	Accounting for knowledge gap
	Dwindling mental health
	Having voice
	Removing self from harm
	Taking action
	Acknowledging instability
2. What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to CWWs remaining on the job in county child welfare office for as long as they did before resigning?	Reasoning for motivation
	Class, inequalities
	Education
	Family
	Saving children
	Gender

Figure 2 shows the percentage of participants' reasons for wanting to stay on the job. The vertical portion of the chart represents the specific codes, and the horizontal portion accounts for the percentage reporting. Education and reasoning for motivation were the most recurring comments, with 100% of the participants mentioning these reasons. Ninety percent of the participants mentioned class and inequalities as related to socioeconomic conditions which impacted retention. Being in a role of saving children and having family support paralleled at 60% of participants' responses, and 20% of participants mentioned gender as associated with their gender role.

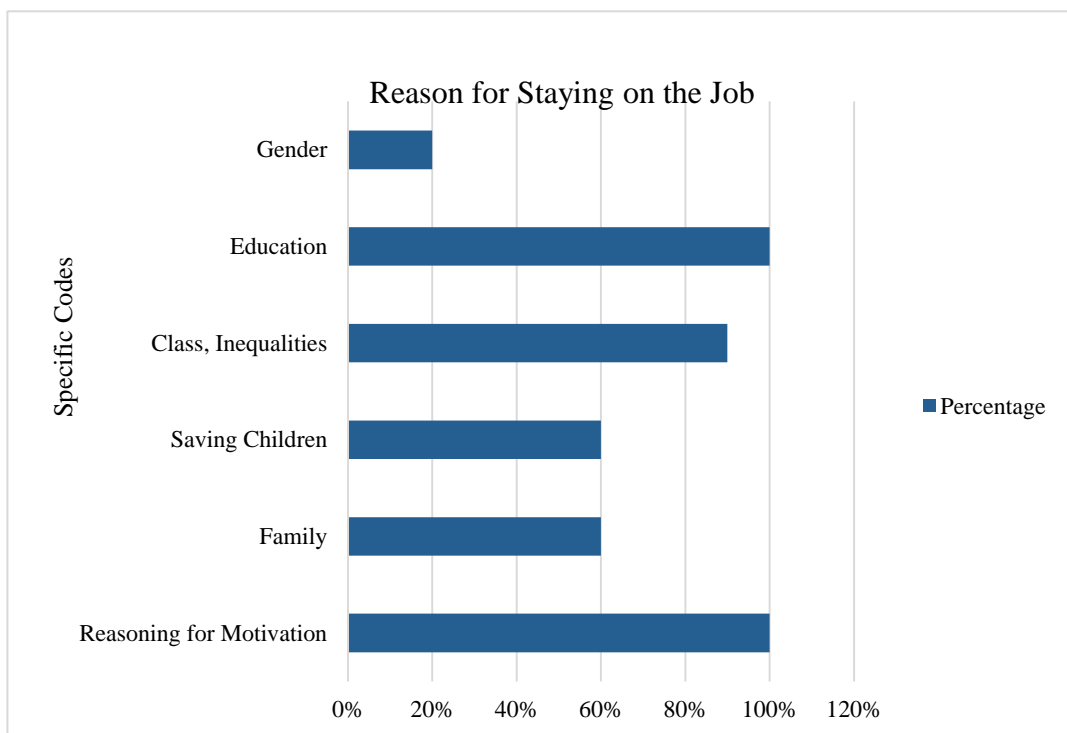


Figure 2. The percentage of participants' reasons for staying on job.

Figure 3 shows the percentages of the participants' reasons for leaving work. The vertical portion of the chart represents the specific codes and the horizontal portion accounts for the percentage reporting. Not being heard was the most frequently

occurring comment, with 90% of the participants mentioning this. Dwindling mental health correlated with job stress and burnout was the second most mentioned comment, with 70% of the participants citing this. In addition, 60% of the participants stated receiving disrespect from administration and judges, and having their values compromised contributed to their voluntary resignation. Not having a voice within the organization, and the gap in knowledge between the participants and management were mentioned by 50% of the participants. Removing self from harm and taking action paralleled at 30% of participants' responses. Also, 20% of participants mentioned instability which led to their voluntary resignation.

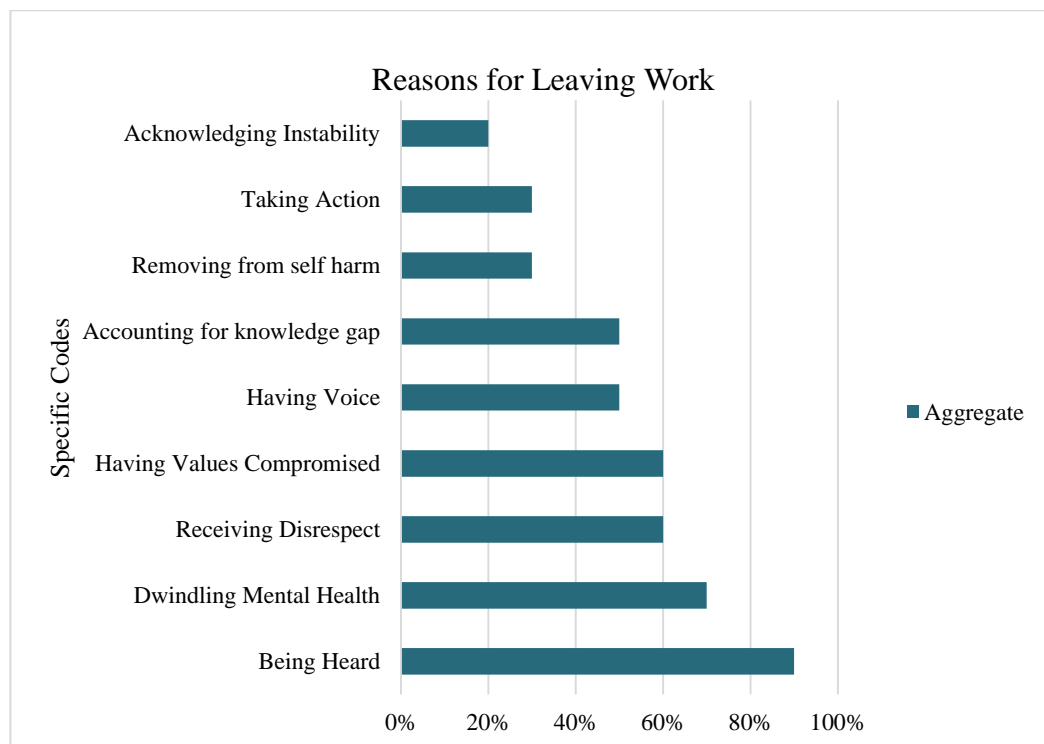


Figure 3. The percentage of participants' reasons for leaving their job.

Figure 4 shows the frequency of codes for the participants' reasons for leaving their job. The sum coverage representing the frequency of the participants' responses is identified in the left vertical column. The responses from the data source are

identified in the vertical right column. Participants mentioned dealing with administration and management a total of 65 times, and issues surrounding not being heard a total of 60 times. Dwindling mental health as related to stress and burnout was mentioned 46 times, and participants receiving disrespect was mentioned 43 times. Participants also mentioned values being compromised an overall 42 times, and not having a voice a total of 37 times. The gap in knowledge between the participants and administration was mentioned an overall 34 times, and participants mentioned removing self from harm a total of 23 times. Participants also mentioned taking action a total of 21 times, and instability a total of 14 times.

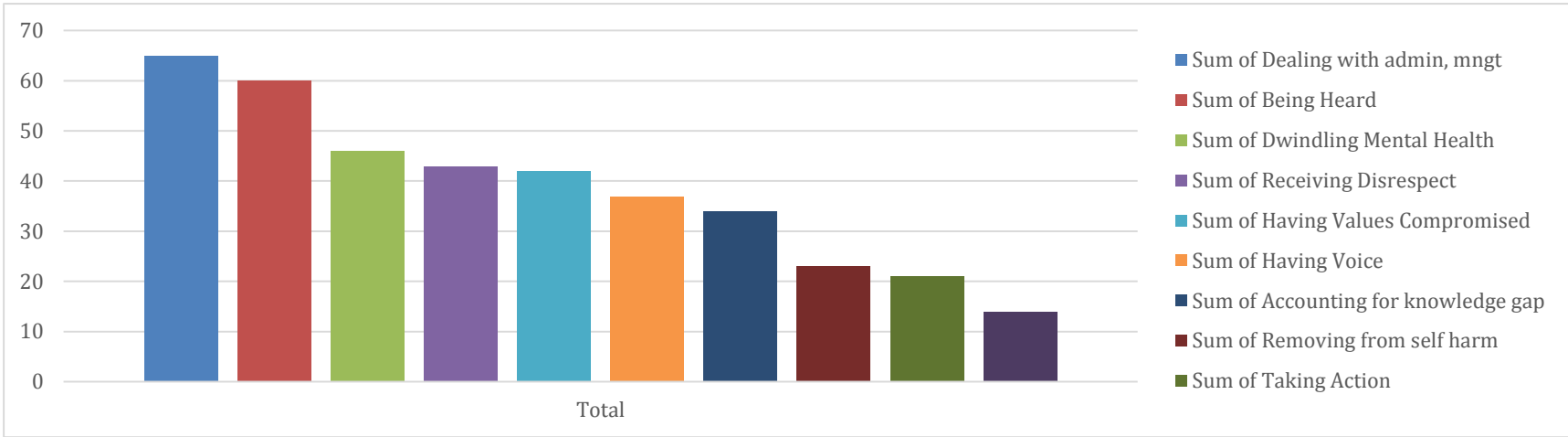


Figure 4: The frequency of codes for participant's reasons for leaving their job.

Figure 5 shows the frequency of codes for the participants' reasons for staying on the job. The left vertical portion of the chart represents the sum of the frequency of codes for the participants' responses, and the vertical right column represents the responses from the data source. Participants mentioned reasoning for motivation and education an overall 66 times. Participants mentioned class and inequalities 58 times. Saving children was mentioned a total of 43 times by participants, and family was mentioned 37 times. Gender was also mentioned a total of 12 times.

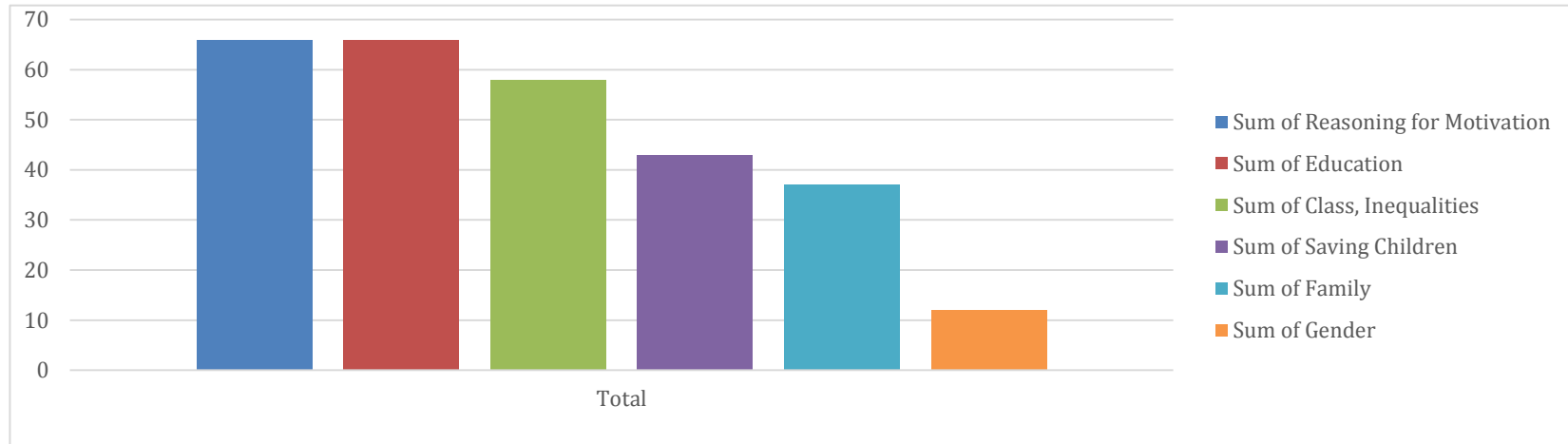


Figure 5. The frequency of codes for participants' reasons for staying on their job.

The purpose of theory x-y in this study was to infuse retention efforts with positive management and organizational culture to enable employees to perceive that they are supported and trusted by management. The study findings conform to this theory when Wil28 says that leaders who support their employees contribute to the success of an employee. On the other hand, Wil4 says that lack of support from management contributes to the failure of employees. Additionally, Wil31 stated that “Lack of support from upper management contributes to the failure of an employee.” The support system should include training and information that would help CWWs whether they are new to the agency or have been employed by the agency for years. Employees who felt supported were more apt to remain employed within an organization and thereby contributing to the excellence of the organization (McGregor 1957, 2006; Pozil, 2015).

Discrepant Cases

I first addressed the issue of missing data and nonresponse errors using pairwise deletion technique. This involved partial deletion of the missing entries in the participant responses. Although the selected participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, none of them requested to withdraw.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the study results and conduct an analysis of the data. From the analysis of the data, I was able to come up with 16 codes which I correlated to develop three themes that related to subquestion 1, and two themes that related to subquestion 2.

The first category of themes included (a) lack of administrative empathy and value of workers: 60% of the respondents felt that their work and dedication was undervalued and the administration and the management did not show empathy to them. (b) disrespect and burnout: 60% of the participants felt disrespected, and they termed the workload as stressful. (c) difference in knowledge and metrics: 50% of the participants cited knowledge gap between the employees and the management/administration staff. Therefore, the required support was not offered to the CWWs.

The second category of the themes included: (a) motivation: the motivation received from others within the organization led to 100% of the participants to stay as long as they did. (b): children safety: the need to provide security to the children and their families led to 65% of the participants to want to stay as long as they did. Chapter 5 will contain a summary discussion and conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenology study was to explore the systemic factors that result in high turnover rate within the Fulton County DFCS. The high turnover rate within the Fulton County DFCS has resulted in an inability to meet the protocol requirements. The high turnover rate has also resulted in disruptions of follow-up services for foster children placed in homes and has increased the organization operation costs, which has impacted on the number of foster children who are served by the DFCS.

In this phenomenological research, I used an exploratory design to collect qualitative data that facilitated in exploring the systematic factors that contribute to employee turnover of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. The lived experience of 10 involved participants from the Fulton County DFCS was captured through telephone and face-to-face interviews. The objective of the interviews was to provoke responses from the respondents explaining the lived experience from the viewpoint of the individuals. The responses were categorized into 16 original groupings that were then coded and then further distilled into five emergent themes. This phenomenology analysis revealed the perceptions of the former child welfare workers within the Fulton County DFCS.

This chapter binds the literature and the findings, and I discuss individual, organizational, and societal based implications and make a recommendation for future research. Answers to the central research question and the two subquestions along with an overview of the perceptions CWWs have towards their role and that of the

organization within Fulton County DFCS are discussed. I conclude this chapter by remarking on the limitations of the study, implications, and recommendations for further research on the area under study. Chapter 4 provided a comprehensive analysis of the different responses provided by the participants. From the analysis of the data, 16 codes emerged that I correlated to develop three themes that related to subquestion 1 and two themes that related to subquestion 2. These emergent themes represented the perceptions of the CWWs.

Interpretation of Findings

This study on increasing the retention of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS was steered by one central research question and two subquestions. The two subquestions formed the basis of the research aimed to answer the core research question. The data obtained, and the findings derived from the research were able to provide comprehensive and detailed answers to the central research question and the two subquestions.

As indicated by Haulenbeek et al. (2013), some of the themes of turnover and retention include burnout as well as communication between management and workers. From the research findings, 66% of the respondents felt disrespected by the management and burnout due to excess workload. Continuous communication between workers, their supervisors, and managers increase feedback from both ends, which eliminate chances of disrespect from arising. Respect from the management was categorized fourth in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs as self-esteem, which forms part of the basic human needs. Self-actualization motivates CWWs to stay within an organization, which

contrasts with theory x as suggested by Kopelman et al. (2012), who indicated that money and compensation are the key motivators to hard work.

From the research findings, 65% of the participants stayed employed as CWWs because of the joy that came by seeing that the children were safe, and their basic needs were taken care off. This finding conforms to Kopelman et al. (2012), who stated that job fulfillment was an encouraging factor within child welfare organizations. Kopelman et al. (2012), findings hold an optimistic outlook on employees, which was similar to theory y proposed by McGregor (1957). Furthermore, administrators, managers, and supervisors should create an environment that encourages the building of trust amongst employees as it promotes job satisfaction, thereby reducing the number of employees who voluntarily resign from their position (Gibson & Petrosko, 2014).

A difference in knowledge emerged as a theme that was related to employees leaving their employment. According to Duffy and Wong (2016), employees should be encouraged to learn together as this creates a platform for motivating one another. From the research findings, 100% of the participants stayed employed because of motivation received from others within the organization. According to Demirkaya (2012), shared understanding/culture of the organization enables employees to achieve organizational goals. Managers and supervisors should conduct an evaluation or an examination of employees' beliefs on an ongoing basis as this factor influences employees to strive to learn and use the knowledge achieved within the organization. Administrators should improve the work environment with additional opportunities for team learning with support systems that train and equip CWWs with information that will help them,

whether they are new or have several years of experience. This strategy is vital in assisting employees to work together and share the same values and vision of the organization.

The theoretical foundation of learning organizations and cultures, together with theory x-y, can be used to improve child-welfare organizations by administrators improving the work environment with additional opportunities for team learning, sharing ideas, and providing a support system for employees. The support system should include training and information that would help CWWs whether they are new to the agency or have been employed by the agency for years. Moreover, these strategies can assist employees to get to the point that they all work together and share the same values and vision regarding the organization. This approach works with theory x-y by increasing the positive management methods and styles that assist administrators in building the self-esteem and self-actualization of CWWs (McGregor, 2006; Russ, 2013).

Value for workers emerged as another theme that contributed to the resignation of employees from child welfare organizations. The current study findings concur with Crean's (2017) findings, which revealed that not being heard, low salary, and feeling undervalued were contributing factors to employee turnover. Ausbrooks et al. (2014) recommended that agency administrators should promote the feeling of belonging amongst CWWs to achieve success, and they should encourage CWWs to find an area in which they fit within their organizations to promote career longevity. By doing so, they meet the basic self-actualization need as proposed by Maslow (1943).

Subquestion 1

The first study question was as follows: What do CWWs who have voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to their resignation from county the child welfare office? This question was crucial because it was intended to provide answers directed at the causes of CWWs resigning from their jobs in the child welfare profession. By exploring the causes of the resignation, directives can be taken to reduce or eradicate the factors that lead to the resignation of CWWs.

Not being heard (communication) and dealing with administration and management formed the first reason the CWWs left their position at the Fulton County DFCS, which accounted for 92% and 100% respectively. According to McCrae et al. (2014), poor communication results in a disconnection between the front-line staff and the supervisors. According to Haulenbeek et al., (2013) leaders of child-welfare organizations also need to develop strategies to improve strategic communication to improve organizational culture.

The second reason that contributed to CWWs leaving their jobs included dwindling mental health (job burnout), which accounted for 71% of the responses from the 10 respondents. The research findings are confirmed by the study conducted by Lizano and Mor Barak (2012), who concluded that job burnout was a stress condition contextualized within intricate work relationships, which include physical and emotional exhaustion as well as feelings of disassociation in response to constant exposure to workplace stress.

These findings are asserted by the State of Georgia (2015) which stated that

caseworkers exhibited a high rate of turnover because of burnout resulting from an overload of work and a low rate of pay for a difficult job. A caseworker with higher caseloads experiences relatively higher burnout and as a result higher chances of turnover intentions (Haulenbeek et al., 2013). Other researchers, such as Westbrook et al. (2012), also stated that the response to constant workplace stress was burnout, which led to poor job performance which included withdrawal and diminishing opportunities for rewarding work experiences. Moreover, Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001) concluded that job burnout facilitated the relationship between caseworkers' perceived caseload stress and the likelihood to quit their jobs. They revealed that job burnout was one of the systemic factors for increased employee turnover (Demerouti et al., 2001). For instance, Wil31 stated that she left the DFCS because of the very stressful caseloads and stressful court hearings. Additionally, Wil16 stated that he was burned out from the oversized caseloads with minimum pay.

Subquestion 2

The second subquestion of the research was as follows: What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to CWWs remaining on the job in the county child welfare office for as long as they did before resigning? This question is paramount to the efforts of retaining more CWWs in the child welfare profession. Before a person is recruited into any profession, the enthusiasm to join the profession must first be acknowledged. The study question was concisely answered through the analysis of the data. The motivation of CWWs to remain in the child welfare profession was reliant on the desire to help the children and get them

a permanent home, which resulted in job satisfaction.

Child welfare is an assortment of services to assure the safety of children aged 18 years and younger to provide indispensable support to families with the goal of enabling them to become self-adequate in caring for their children (Child Welfare, 2016). Child welfare is entrusted with the role of caring and safeguarding the health of families and children. In the absence of this desire to save families and children, there will not be any interest in staying in the child welfare profession. The findings of these research questions were asserted by Day (2010) when he concluded that the craving to assist others is an inclined trait that cannot automatically be developed. These desires to assist others are an inherent factor, and the joy is attained when watching others flourish and achieve their dreams. Herzberg's (1959) theory relates to inherent facets of job satisfaction, which is aimed at career progression, achievements, and responsibilities. These elements are considered vital for job satisfaction by the theory, and they cause the employee to stay on the job.

The job embeddedness model pioneered by Mitchell et al. (2001) was also relevant. Job embeddedness deals with the link between a person and his work. This element determines the extent to which employees' personal lives mesh with their jobs. Job embeddedness model conformed to this study as 56% of the participants attributed family as the reason for wanting to stay on the job.

Central Research Question

The central research question was: How could McGregor's theory x and y explain the perceptions of DFCS workers who voluntarily resigned from their jobs between the

years 2013 to 2015? These two theories serve as theoretical frameworks for the essential rules of managing employees. The rationale behind using theory x-y, in part, to guide this study is that these theories are universally referenced in the fields of management and leadership. Additionally, I used the theoretical frameworks involving theory x-y to explore events which contributed to the continuous cycle of high turnover of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS.

The perceptions of CWWs were not included in any of the studies reviewed previously in the literature review. Discovery of these perspectives provided knowledge in the research which aided understanding of factors which influence retention, workforce strategies, and policies. Theory x-y with theoretical foundations of learning organization and cultures can be used to improve child welfare organizations by administrators improving the work environment with additional opportunities for team learning, sharing ideas, and providing support for employees. This approach works with theory x-y by increasing the positive management methods and styles which assist administrators in building the self-esteem and self-actualization of CWWs. Moreover, these strategies can assist employees to get to the point that they all work together and share the same values and vision regarding the organization. Haulenbeek et al. (2013) further specified that casework teaming helps to improve organizational culture and the quality of service which, in turn, results in improved employee retention. This concept of supporting employees directly relates to the self-esteem factor in theory x-y. The research findings concur with theory x-y as CWWs with degrees did not receive as much support from the administrators and supervisors in the agency as compared to employees without degrees.

For instance, Wil4 and Wil31 said that lack of support from management contributed to the failure of employees.

Limitations of the Study

This phenomenology study was conducted only on CWWs who worked with the Fulton County DFCS, and their explicit experiences were presented. This phenomenology study offered an introductory view surrounding the importance of increasing the retention of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. Previous research has not directly explored ways of increasing CWWs retention within the Fulton County DFCS. Limitations involved in this research include restraining factors explicit to phenomenological study. While this type of research emphasizes the lived experiences of a specific group, other aspects of the interactivity are not explored. For example, time spent between the CWWs and their administrators was not explored. Informal interactions between the two groups can be used to gauge the level of commitment offered by the two groups. The connection between the CWW and the administrators impacts the relationship between the two groups, and not having the administrators' perspective is a limitation.

Recommendations

The main objective of this study was to explore the systemic factors which result in high turnover rate within the Fulton County DFCS. In this study, only the lived experiences of the participants were studied. Interactions/communication between the employees, administrators and the managers was not explored. Crean (2017) also noted that there is still a communication gap between leaders and caseworkers. The

communication gap can be bridged by both parties coming together to revisit organization goals, missions, and values so that every party understands what is being communicated (Crean, 2017). According to Madlock and Booth-Butterfield (2008), organizational communication is positively related to employees' commitment to any organization. Therefore, future research should incorporate both the CWWs and the administrators within a child welfare organization.

Implications for Social Change

The research findings contribute to social change by adding knowledge on systemic factors which can be avoided to reduce turnover rates. Administrators, supervisors, and managers of child welfare organizations may use the strategies identified in this research to retain valued human resources as well as reducing turnover rates. In their study, Rizwan and Mukhtar (2014) noted that employees give their best if their employer provides them with a conducive environment to work. Additionally, Lu and Gursoy (2013), noted that organizational managers who implement strategies which improve the workplace environment leading to workers satisfaction tend to attract and retain workers who provide high-quality services to the society they serve.

Retaining satisfied and skilled employees is crucial to the sustainability and growth of child welfare organizations. Child welfare organization employee retention minimizes the cost associated with hiring, recruiting, and training new employees. Low turnover rates will help the society by reducing unemployment rates and will create a stable child welfare society which will foster children and families up to their last day

under child welfare care. This, therefore, means that CWWs will help in assisting in shaping the children to face the challenges of the future.

Implications for the organization stem from the fact that loss of valuable employees' impact service delivery which could cause distress and insecurity to the children they serve. The absence of skilled employees means that organizations will provide low standard services to foster children and families and thus their customer base will be eroded. Implementing strategies which assist managers and administrators understand the systemic factors involved in turnover can lead to more sustainable organizations. Therefore, understanding these systemic factors which lead to employees leaving their job is critical for organizational survival. The findings of this research indicate that lack of admin empathy, disrespect and job burnout, having values compromised, and the difference in knowledge and metrics are significant factors related to child welfare employee turnover intention.

Recommendation for Practice

The responses of the participants developed a foundation of knowledge surrounding reasons why CWWs leave or stay in their jobs. It is from these rich analogies developing from the participants' stories which I build my recommendations for practice. In chapter 2 of my proposal, I proposed that this research would have comparative implication for Georgia Welfare Reform Council. Therefore, I recommend to the Georgia Welfare Reform Council to enact this research positive social changes to improve both social and human conditions while also promoting the value, dignity, and development of both CWWs and the DFCS. Child welfare organizations should also

revise their policies to integrate CWWs into the child welfare system to avoid the feeling of stigmatization and distrust of the child welfare system. I will disseminate the study findings through various methods. I will publish the study through ProQuest for researchers and other professionals. I will also present the summary of the study to Georgia's Department of Human Services, and other state and non-profit social services organizations alike.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study assisted in understanding the systemic factors which influenced employee turnover of CWWs within the Fulton County DFCS. I interviewed 10 participants who had voluntarily resigned from the Fulton County DFCS between the years 2013 – 2015 and who did not work under my supervision. The source data was drawn from face-to-face interviews and observations. Workers experiences and perspectives provided rich data into the reasons for high turnover and applicable approaches leaders in the child welfare organizations could use to retain their employees. Although the study was coupled with some challenges, the method used to collect and analyze the data increased confidence and rigor of the research. The findings revealed that lack of admin empathy, disrespect and job burnout, having values compromised, and the difference in knowledge and metrics might be the causes of increased employee turnover. Administrators and managers must realize that caseworkers' turnover is a hidden cost and a reduction in employee turnover is a future sustainability strategy.

As mentioned in chapter 1, leaders of thriving organizations should regard their employees as assets and align them with organizational strategies to increase employee

retention. Chapter 2 presented a review of pertinent literature which addressed factors about the turnover and retention of CWWs. Chapter 3 explained the methodology used to give answers to the research questions. Chapter 4 presented the findings, and the analysis of the evidence gathered. Chapter 5 finally provided recommendations for further research as more research needs to be conducted to determine if incorporating CWWs in decision making within a child welfare organization will help in increasing employee retention.

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Appendix A: Qualification Screener

Greetings,

My name is Santoria L. Williams, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am contacting you because you showed interest in participating in my study. I am conducting a study related to employee turnover at the Fulton County DFCS. In order to confirm your participation eligibility in this research study. I have a few questions related to the specific criteria needed to participate in this study. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored in a locked and protected file cabinet.

As stated in the email invitation, the eligibility criterion is as follows:

1. Were you employed at the Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services as a Case Worker or Case Manager between January 2013 and December 2015? (Y) (N)
2. What were your exact dates of employment with Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services as a Case Worker or Case Manager (MM/YR)?

3. Are you currently a state of Georgia or county employee? (Y) (N)
4. Did I ever supervise you while you were employed at Fulton County Division of Family & Children Services between 2008 to 2014? (Y) (N)
5. Age at time of ending your employment with Fulton County DFCS:

6. When did you resign from your position as a Case Worker at the Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services (MM/YR)? _____

Based on your responses you are eligible to participate in this study. Kindly provide me with your contact information:

- i. Participant Telephone Number: _____
- ii. Participant Email Address: _____

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate Letter

Dear Prospective Research Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate from Walden University, and I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements. My study is titled, Increasing Employee Retention within the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. This is a posted email letter of invitation inviting you to participate in this research because you fit the profile criterion of the participants I am looking for in my research. The purpose of this study is to explore ways in increasing retention of child-welfare workers in the child welfare workforce. In addition, this study will explore factors related to the high child welfare worker turnover rate. There are also specific criteria to participate. The criteria include being a former caseworker or case manager of the Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services; with a minimum of 2 years employment with the division; not currently working for Georgia state or county agencies; who voluntarily resigned from the agency at the age of 60 years and below during the years of 2013 through 2015; and never worked under my supervision during 2008 to 2014.

By agreeing to participate in the study, you will be giving your consent for me, as the researcher, to include your responses in my data analysis. The data will be reported in the aggregating, and your name or any identifying information will not be included in the report. Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time before or during the interview, without fear of penalty or any consequences. If you opt to pull out from the interview, all interview responses will be deleted, including the informed consent agreement. The interview is approximately 1

hour. Your participation will contribute to the current literature about child welfare worker retention. No compensation will be offered for participation. Kindly sign and date below, and email a copy to me @ XXX@waldenu.edu to demonstrate your acknowledgment to participate in the screening and study.

If you have any question(s) about this study, you may contact me via phone: (XXX or email: XXXs@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at (612) 312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is #06-22-17-0254445 and it expires on June 21, 2018.

(Signature)

(dd/mm/yr)

Thank you for your consideration,

Santoria L. Williams

Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C: Introduction Email

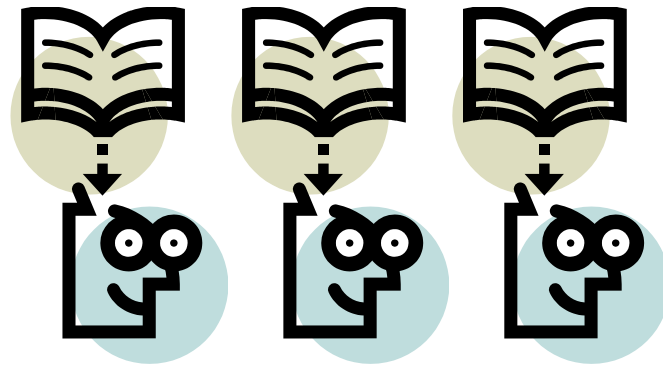
Greetings,

I would like to introduce you to Santoria Williams, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. Ms. Williams is conducting a study focusing on employee retention of child welfare workers, exploring ways to increase retention in the child welfare workforce. Her study will also explore factors related to the high child welfare worker turnover rate. Your participation is humbly requested. It is important to understand that the nature of your involvement in this study is strictly voluntary. Once contacted, Ms. Williams will further guide you on specific criterion and study participation instructions, and your information will remain anonymous. Please contact Santoria Williams via email: XXX@waldenu.edu or telephone: XXX, within three days of receipt of this email. Contact via email is preferred.

Respectfully,

XXX, Ph.D.

Appendix D: Facebook/LinkedIn Advertisement

**I NEED YOUR HELP!! I NEED YOUR HELP!!**

I am a Santoria Williams, a doctoral candidate at Walden University, and I am conducting a research study focusing on employee retention of child welfare workers. The purpose of this study is to explore ways in increasing retention of child-welfare workers in the child welfare workforce, and my study is titled, Increasing Employee Retention within the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. I am looking for participants in this study with the following criterion:

- **Former caseworker or case manager of the Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services**
- **Minimum of 2 years employment with Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services**
- **Not currently working for Georgia state or county agencies**
- **Voluntarily resigned from the Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services at the age of 60 years and below during the years of 2013 through 2015**
- **Never worked under my supervision during years 2008 to 2014.**

If you meet this criterion and would like to participate in this study voluntarily, please contact me via email: XXX@waldenu.edu and telephone: **XXX**. It is important to know that your participation is strictly voluntary, and no compensation will be provided. Also, confidentiality and anonymity of involvement will be strictly enforced.

Appendix E: Invitation to Screen Letter

Dear Prospective Research Participant,

Thank you for expressing your interest in this study. I am a Santoria Williams, a doctoral candidate at Walden University, and I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements. My study is titled, Increasing Employee Retention within the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. The purpose of this study is to explore ways in increasing retention of child-welfare workers in the child welfare workforce. In addition, this study will explore factors related to the high child welfare worker turnover rate.

This is a posted email letter of invitation inviting you to participate in a six-question qualification screener to validate your participation eligibility for this research. The specific criteria to participate in this study include being a former caseworker or case manager of the Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services; with a minimum of 2 years employment with the division; not currently working for Georgia state or county agencies; who voluntarily resigned from the agency at the age of 60 years and below during the years of 2013 through 2015; and never worked under my supervision during 2008 to 2014.

Your participation in this qualification screener is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time before or during the screening without fear of penalty or any consequences. If you opt to pull out of the qualification screening, all screening responses will be deleted.

Please provide a telephone number via email at XXX@walden.edu, or telephone

at XXX, so that I may call you to administer this qualification screener. Also, if you have any question(s) about this study, you may contact me via phone: XXX or email:

XXX@waldenu.edu.

Thank you for your consideration,

Santoria L. Williams

Doctoral Candidate

Appendix F: Interview Protocol and Questions

As a participant in this study, please be as descriptive and detailed as possible in your responses to the questions. If you have concerns about a specific question or need clarification, please ask. Your responses are completely anonymous, and all personal identifiers will also remain anonymous.

Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Sub-Questions	Participant Feedback
Introduction/Warmup	Good day.	
	1. What motivated you to join the field of child welfare?	
	2. What did you like in the field of child welfare?	
R1: What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors that contributed to their resignation from the county child welfare	3. Why did you leave your position? 4. What were the circumstances that led you to decide to resign from your position voluntarily? 5. How would you describe your immediate supervisor? 6. How would you describe the administrator(s) in the organization's	

office?

administration team?

7. How would you describe the program director(s) in the organization's administration team?
8. How would you describe the regional director(s) in the organization's administration team?
9. What was your role with the organization and what did it entail?
10. Was your role repetitive or were you engaged in various activities?
11. What were the most rewarding aspects of your role?
12. What were the most challenging aspects of your role?
13. What were the average weekly hours you worked?
14. Describe your training and professional development received from the organization.
15. How would you describe the

leadership of your immediate supervisor?

- R2: What did CWWs who had voluntarily left their positions believe were the leading factors which contributed to CWWs remaining on the job in the county child welfare office for as long as they did before resigning?
16. What are some contributing factors that made you stay with the organization?
 17. What do you think contributes to the success of an employee?
 18. What do you think contributes to the failure of an employee?
 19. What type of support did you receive from the organization's management?
 20. How would you describe the supervision model used by the organization?
 21. How would you describe the communication model used by your supervisor?
 22. How would you describe the responsibilities allocated to you?
 23. Describe the kind of motivation you were offered during your tenure.

Appendix H: Request to Use Facility

Greetings (name of concerned),

My name is Santoria L. Williams, and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. As a courtesy, I am writing to seek approval to utilize (facility) as one of my research stations to conduct my interviews. The topic of my study is Increasing Employee Retention within the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services.

I selected your facility because it will provide privacy for my participants. My sample will be approximately 10 participants, and I will obtain appropriate permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board.

I will greatly value your support in this endeavor, and I welcome your feedback. My contact is XXX, and email: XXX@waldenu.edu.

Appreciatively,

Santoria L. Williams

Doctoral Candidate