2019

Strategies Nonprofit Organizational Leaders use to Retain Volunteers

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Abstract

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MS, Troy University, 2006

BS, Albany State University, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Nonprofit organizations' functionality is impacted by a shortage of volunteers. The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders implemented to retain volunteers. The conceptual framework for this study was Maslow's functional motivation theory. Data were collected using semistructured interviews with 3 leaders of nonprofit organizations in Georgia who implemented effective strategies for retaining volunteers for at least 1 year. Data analysis of the interview responses and archival documents consisted of compiling the data, coding the data, disassembling the data into common themes, reassembling the data into themes, interpreting the meaning, and reporting the themes. The 5 major themes from the findings of this study were strategies for providing proper training to volunteers, strategies for keeping volunteers engaged and motivated, strategies for showing volunteers the effects of their volunteering, strategies for building relationships with volunteers, and strategies for providing volunteers with a positive and fun experience. Nonprofit organizational leaders could use the findings of this study to implement successful strategies for recruiting and retaining volunteers. The implications for positive social change include creating a balance between the nonprofit organizations and the volunteers who provide their service to contribute to the communities they serve.

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Dedication

I dedicate the blood, sweat, and tears throughout the pages of this dissertation to my Heavenly Father. Without Him, none of this would have been made possible. To my three amazing children, Isaiah, Grayson, and Taylor Rose, Mommy did this for you! I love you all so much, and I want you to know and understand that everything I do is because of the three of you. Continue to follow your dreams and know that anything is possible with God. Trust and believe in Him. To my mom Anita, words could never express what you mean to me and your grandkids. Thank you for changing your entire life for US! All the late nights, early mornings, being a Super Nana to my children and all the other million things you do for me, thank you! I did it Ma! We did it! To my forever always, my Daddy. I wish you were here to see this moment. I wish I could hear you say just one last time how proud you are of me. Just know that all I ever wanted to do was make you proud. I did it daddy! I finally earned my doctorate degree. Thank you for instilling in me the value of education. This is for you! I love you, daddy, and miss you dearly.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Sarah Matthey. Thank you for your support, guidance, and commitment to seeing me through the end and getting my study completed. Thank you for your endless support and always being an e-mail/phone call away. I will forever be grateful because of you. To my second committee member, Dr. Janie Hall, and my URR member, Dr. Jorge Gaytan, thank you both for your continued support throughout this entire process. My deepest appreciation goes to each of you because without you, there would be no study. Finally, to all of my family and friends, thank you for dealing with all of my tears and allowing me to miss so many of your milestones so I could focus on getting this done.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Volunteers often perform critical functions for nonprofit organizations. Volunteers perform many duties, including clerical functions, fundraising, program planning, maintenance, mentoring, and tutoring (Curran, Taheri, MacIntosh, & O'Gorman, 2016). Individually and collectively, volunteers provide time, skills, and services to organizations and communities (Huynh, Xanthopoulou, & Winefield, 2014). Volunteerism is a means of civic engagement, community development, and social responsibility (Curran et al., 2016). However, nonprofit organizational leaders often face problematic issues when it comes to volunteer retention and turnover. There is limited research on how nonprofit organizational leaders can retain volunteers. Retaining volunteers is a challenge, as the dependence on volunteers' increases as budgets and financial contributions decrease.

Turnover among volunteers is a concern for nonprofit organizational leaders. Leaders are experiencing high levels of turnover among volunteers (Renz, 2016). Due to the decreasing number of U.S. volunteers, leaders must understand the driving forces behind volunteer engagement in order to improve volunteer retention (Harp, Scherer, & Allen, 2016). The success of future volunteer programs relies heavily on the attraction and retention methods implemented by the organization. Without the assistance of volunteers, several attempt efforts from various nonprofit organizations would decline (Walker, Accadia, & Costa, 2016).

The recruitment and retention strategies used by nonprofit organizations requires organizational leaders to grasp concepts of volunteer engagement. Volunteer engagement involves individuals demonstrating loyalty to their duties and responsibilities to serve (Harp et al., 2016). Volunteers who feel a sense of engagement within their organizations are more prone to continue serving (Huynh et al., 2014); therefore, if nonprofit organizational leaders can determine what influences engagement, these efforts may potentially contribute to volunteer retention (Harp et al., 2016). The lack of research in the area of volunteer retention makes it difficult to develop effective programs and environments to recruit and retain volunteers.

Problem Statement

Nonprofit organizations depend on the effectiveness of volunteer involvement in order to carry out the organization's mission and purpose (Nesbit, Christensen & Brudney, 2018). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), 24.9% of people in the United States volunteered in 2015, which was lower than the 2014 rate of 25.3%. The general business problem is that a shortage of volunteers impacts the functionality of the nonprofit organizations. The specific business problem is that some nonprofit organizational leaders lack the strategies to retain volunteers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders implement to retain volunteers. The targeted population consisted of three nonprofit leaders from three organizations in Georgia who implemented effective strategies for retaining volunteers. Nonprofit organizations can use the results of this study to improve the strategies they need to retain volunteers and enable the organizations to better serve communities.

Nature of the Study

The three research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method. I chose the qualitative method for this study. Qualitative researchers investigate participants' behaviors, experiences, and perceptions related to an issue (Silverman, 2016). I sought to learn about the participants' experiences of strategies to retain volunteers using interviews, which made qualitative research suited for this study. Quantitative researchers investigate phenomena using mathematical and statistical models and techniques to examine the relationships between variables through testing hypotheses (Smith, 2015). Mixed-method research involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods using multiple data collection and analysis techniques (Mertens, 2014). I did not choose the quantitative or mixed-methods approaches because I did not explore leaders' experiences in developing and implementing strategies about volunteer retention by examining numerical values.

I considered three designs for this study: case study, ethnography, and narrative. Ethnographic scholars engage with participants in the field and immerse themselves in the groups' cultures being studied (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). Ethnography design was not suited for this study because ethnography does not include observations of participants' perceptions and behaviors for characterizing their culture. A narrative design entails the written, spoken, or visual representation of individuals and their lives as told through their own stories (Lundberg, 2003). I did not choose a narrative design because I did not report participants' lives through stories. Scholars use a case study to explore current, real-life phenomenon through the contextual analysis of a selected number of occurrences or circumstances and the relationships between them (Aczel, 2015). I chose a case study because I conducted an in-depth analysis of volunteer retention strategies and initiatives with a small group of individuals. Scholars can conduct a multiple case design to enhance the data collected from one agency (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I used a multiple case study to determine how nonprofit leaders in three nonprofit organizations retain volunteers.

Research Question

What strategies do nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain volunteers?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to retain volunteers?
2. What are key barriers to implementing your successful strategies for retaining volunteers?
3. How did you address the key barriers in order to successfully retain volunteers?
4. How have you assessed the effectiveness of your strategies to retain volunteers?
5. What else would you like to share with me about strategies you use to retain volunteers?

Conceptual Framework

I used the functional motivation theory derived from Maslow's (1943) work for the conceptual framework for this study. According to Wymer (2011), the motivation behind a person's attitude and persuasion (circumstances or factors) to perform certain tasks or activities can be evaluated using motivation theory. Finkelstien (2009) determined that attitude and persuasion influence a person's decision to volunteer. People perform certain activities or join groups to fulfill individual goals or to meet psychological needs (Silverman, 2016). Individuals' motives to volunteer stem from rewarding psychological functions at the time of performing services (Clary & Snyder, 1999). People are more likely to begin and continue volunteering if the service fulfills their motivation affects (Clary et al., 1998). Using the functional theoretical approach to explore volunteer motivation based on personal decisions and psychological functions provided me with the lens for exploring and understanding successful strategies for retaining volunteers.

Operational Definitions

Extrinsic motivation: Extrinsic motivation includes external factors, including compensation, approval, or praise; that inspire someone to participate in activities or behaviors (Tear, 2015).

Intrinsic motivation: Intrinsic motivation includes internal factors, including personal satisfaction or interest; that inspire someone to participate in activities or behaviors (Tear, 2015).

Longevity: Longevity is the long-term, instead of short-term or one-time behavior associated with volunteering (Swarup, 2014).

Nonprofit organization: A nonprofit organization is an agency that provides a service to the public and has an internal revenue service, nonprofit designation as of January 1, 2013 or earlier (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016).

Nonvolunteer: A nonvolunteer is a person associated with a non-profit organization but does not serve in a volunteer capacity (e.g., client or employee; Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016).

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is the belief that people have about their abilities to successfully accomplish tasks or challenges (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017; Lloyd, Bond, & Flaxman, 2017).

Volunteer: A volunteer is a person who performs tasks at a nonprofit organization and does not receive monetary compensation (Harp et al., 2016).

Volunteering: Volunteering is work that a person performs without expecting a reward and that creates social results that in other conditions would demand the work of an employee (Willems & Dury, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions serve as the basic foundation of any research and they constitute what the researcher takes for granted (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The first assumption for this study was that all participants were truthfully and accurately describing their experiences as volunteers for nonprofit organizations. A second assumption was that the inclusion criteria of the sample were appropriate and that the participants had all experienced the same or similar phenomenon of this study. An additional assumption was that all participants had a sincere interest in my research and did not have other motives to alter this study in any way.

Limitations

A limitation is an uncontrollable threat to the internal validity of a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). One limitation of this study involved the unknown factors or conditions of the facility where the participants volunteer that could have potentially influenced the participants to provide biased responses. In addition, I had to ensure that there were enough participants to adequately draw conclusions. Another limitation was getting truthful information from volunteers without them fearing being ostracized within the organizations they serve.

Delimitations

Delimitation is a process that gives the researcher control to limit the scope of the data included in their investigation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Delimitations impacted the external validity or generalizability of the results of the study. The participants for this study were delimited to people who were currently volunteering their time for at least one nonprofit organization. This study was delimited to individuals who had 12 consecutive months of service within nonprofit organizations. This study was delimited to nonprofit organizations in the state of Georgia.

Significance of the Study

Nonprofit leaders and administrators need to understand what motivates people to volunteer and continue their service (Salamon, 2015). Some nonprofit leaders may not understand why volunteers choose to provide service and continue doing so (Briggs, Peterson, & Gregory, 2010; Salamon, 2015). Once nonprofit leaders expand their scope of knowledge about strategies that increase the retention of volunteers, they can develop strategies, programs and services to encourage volunteers to continue their service on a long-term basis.

Contribution to Business Practice

Leaders of nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders can use or adapt the findings of my study to provide them with information about strategies to increase volunteer retention. Through my research, I informed nonprofit leaders of the program and strategic planning efforts related to volunteerism. Curran et al. (2016) determined that nonprofit organizational leaders can use funds from other nonmission-related endeavors to advance operations through volunteer retention. Nonprofit leaders can use the results of this study to retain volunteers within their organizations.

Implications for Social Change

Through my research, I provided nonprofit organizational leaders with strategies to help retain volunteers and increase their contributions to the organizations. Volunteers provide many services to nonprofit organizations and the communities. Volunteers frequently provide services directly to clients of nonprofit organizations (Renz, 2016). These services may include tutoring, medical care, counseling, or meal delivery (Kramer & Danielson, 2016). In this study, I sought to provide nonprofit leaders with potential strategies to use to retain volunteers and enable nonprofit organizations to meet their missions of serving communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In this literature review, I provide information about what motivates people to volunteer. Components of the literature review include an overview of the conceptual framework and volunteer retention and engagement. The conceptual framework review includes the two schools of thought about motivational theory (the identified theory and rejected theories). The review of literature about volunteers includes the following topics: nonprofit organizations, nonprofit economic impact, value of volunteers, reasons individuals volunteer, and volunteer motivation and retention.

I used several research databases and organization and federal reports to find sources for the literature review. I searched the following databases in Walden University's library: ABI/INFORM Collection, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, GuideStar, ProQuest, and Regional Business News. I used the following search terms: *nonprofit, nonprofit economic impact, nonprofit organization, nonprofit leadership, nonprofit volunteers, volunteer retention, and volunteer motivation.* I initially selected articles published within the last 5 years (between 2015 and 2019) and historic texts providing background of the topic. The initial review of the following databases yielded 98 articles published since 2015. Of the 98 articles, 89 (90.8%) were published by peer-reviewed journals with the full text available online.

Conceptual Framework: Functional Motivation Theory

I used Maslow's (1943) motivational theory as the conceptual framework to guide this study. Maslow first published the theory in 1943 to describe human behavior based on motivation. Maslow (1954) determined that human motivation is based on individuals seeking change through personal growth and self-fulfillment. I used motivational theory, developed as an alternative to psycho-analysis and behaviorism, to explain the self-actualization desire in people. In the motivational theory, Maslow described five levels of needs presented in a hierarchical sequence that comprises the stages of self-actualization. The five needs expand from lower-level or basic needs such as food, water, and shelter to higher-level complex needs of fulfilling and realizing a person's full potential. People master each level before progressing to the next. Most people, 85% of the population, master the lowest level and few, 10%, reach self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). People rarely reach the self-actualization stage because working through the lower-level stages, such as securing food and water occur first, and people rarely expand to higher levels. Maslow's motivational theory, which describes the various types of human needs, is best suited to tackle the concept of motivation among volunteers.

The five levels of Maslow's (1943) motivational theory include physiological needs, safety needs, social needs/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Physiological needs include basic needs required for human survival such as air, shelter, water, and food. Any other need become secondary if people fail to possess these basic tenants necessary for living. Safety needs include the need to feel safe and secure. People demonstrate achieving this need by seeking employment, adequate shelter, and health care (Healy, 2016). Less demanding than physiological needs, safety needs encompass financial, physical, and emotional security or contentment (Baumeister, 2016). Social needs/belonging needs include associations with others and feelings of love and affection (D'Souza & Gurin, 2016). Cornerstones of the social needs/belonging level include developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships (romantic relationship, family connections, religious or community groups, and/or platonic friendships). Esteem needs includes personal development and reflection and social recognition, such as receiving external recognition for personal characteristics and accomplishments (Healy, 2016; Houston, 2006). The highest level, self-actualization, involves more in-depth reflection for personal benefit and less concern about recognition from others (Maslow, 1943). The five levels of Maslow's theory include factors that contribute to human behavior. In most cases, people achieve each level in sequence; however, this does not always occur. People may search for a new job to make it easier to master the first level need or fulfill the security need. Maslow's theory explains human behavior in various areas, including volunteering.

Maslow’s theory can be summarized as follows:

- An individual’s wants and desires may be influenced by their behavior.
- Only needs that are unsatisfied influence behavior; satisfied needs do not.
- Individuals have various needs, and they are prioritized in order of importance, beginning with basic needs down to difficult needs.
- Individuals advance to the next level of needs only when they feel their lower level of need has been slightly satisfied.
- As individuals advance up the hierarchy, the more individuality, humanness, and psychological health a person will show (Maslow, 1962).

Volunteer participation would decline steadily if there was no motivation to volunteer. Ortega (2013) examined Maslow’s theory of motivation to explain volunteering and found that individuals feel the need to volunteer and continue volunteering when they feel motivated to do so. Maslow suggested that an individuals' basic level of need has to be met first before the individual has motivation towards the self-fulfillment need. According to Ortega, people often fluctuate between the levels of hierarchy due to their life experiences. These experiences may include loss of job, loss of loved one, or any other traumatic event. Maslow (1962) claimed that only one in 100 people develop the self-actualization level because society rewards motivation primarily based on social needs, such as esteem and love. Ortega indicated that volunteering predominantly falls under the needs of belongingness and love. Once an individual feels a sense of belongingness, he or she become motivated to continue serving.

Individuals volunteer because they want to feel a sense of belonging to a greater cause. Brown (2005) recommended that is it useful to categorize human motivation in terms of a hierarchy of need based on Maslow's (1943) motivation theory. According to Brown, once a level of need is satisfied, the next level of need becomes significant. Volunteers seek to become masters of their assignments only to be recognized for their contributions in order for them to fulfill their esteem needs (Brown, 2005). Brown determined that while volunteers exhibit the notion of self-actualization, they are still motivated by lower-level factors of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Volunteerism is a desired progression of the continuing development of service.

Other scholars have also used motivational theory as the theoretical framework to conduct studies pertaining to volunteering. Sullivan (2017); Lee and Brudney (2015); Costello, Homberg, and Secchi (2017); and Webb, Perry, and Fennelly (2015) used motivational theory as the theoretical framework for research studies. People who volunteer do so to achieve higher order levels, such as esteem or self-actualization (Sullivan, 2017; Webb et al., 2015). Sullivan indicated that volunteers demonstrated self-actualization skills as they served after recognizing a need and wanting to change social conditions without needing recognition or praise. The volunteers considered their service their biblical responsibility to help the less fortunate (Sullivan, 2017). Lee and Brudney (2015) explored the volunteering efforts and motivating factors for people employed by nonprofit organizations. Lee and Brudney determined that people employed within the nonprofit sector will continue to volunteer beyond their work day, especially employees satisfied with their professional experiences and responsibilities. People who are satisfied with their nonprofit jobs are more likely to be motivated to volunteer at other organizations (Lee & Brudney, 2015). Costello et al. (2017) provided an overview of the various factors that motivate people to volunteer and found that people volunteer because of self-sacrifice, compassion, commitment to public interest, or their overall civic duty. Webb et al. indicated that people continued to volunteer, arrive on time, and volunteer for more/longer shifts when they felt valued and appreciated. Maslow connected volunteering with people who achieved higher levels of motivation (i.e., self-actualization). Scholars (e. g. Sullivan, 2017; Webb et al., 2015) used Maslow's hierarchy theory as the theoretical framework to conduct studies about volunteer motivation.

Scholars have examined motivation to volunteer based on the age groups of volunteers. For example, Ertas (2016) studied Millennials; Stankiewicz, Seiler, and Bortnowska (2017) studied college students; Cho, Bonn, and Han (2018) studied members of Generation Z; and Yamashita, Keene, Lu, and Carr (2017) studied volunteering at various points of the life cycle. Ertas examined volunteers from the Millennial age group and found that Millennials who are employed by the government or other nonprofit agencies are more likely to volunteer in formal capacities when compared to their peers employed in the private sector. Motives for volunteering include helping others, giving back, changing the community, and personal development (Ertas, 2016). Stankiewicz et al. studied college students' motives to volunteer and determined that volunteer motivation includes students wanting to network in their desired career, learning new skills, spending time with friends, meeting new people, and helping others. Cho et al. studied volunteering motivation, attitudes, and job performance for people from Generation Z and found six prevalent motives for volunteering: career, learning, self-esteem, social, and value. Yamashita et al. studied the motives of volunteering for people throughout the lives (early, middle, and late adulthood stages) and found that career development and advancement and community service are considered motivations to volunteer among people at all stages of life. Building and maintaining social networks are a motivating factor for volunteers (Yamashita et al., 2017). Some motives for volunteering are consistent among people from various age groups and others varied throughout the life cycle.

Other researchers explored incentives as a motivating factor for volunteering. The incentives studied included nonmonetary rewards (Gallus & Frey, 2016; Wheatcroft, 2016) and staff volunteering programs (Knutsen & Chan, 2015). Wheatcroft (2016) explored the connection between providing nonmonetary incentives and volunteering and found that awards increased performance for current volunteers but did not encourage initial volunteering in general or at a specific agency. Nonmonetary incentives include awards for increased performance for current volunteers (Wheatcroft, 2016). Gallus and Frey (2016) studied the impact of incentives or awards on volunteer motivation and found that although awards are not frequently used in the volunteering arena, the presence of awards may positively impact motivation as evidenced by number of hours served and performance. Additionally, there is not a significant difference associated with the value or type of incentives provided (Gallus & Frey). Volunteer satisfaction levels vary based on the individuals' motivation for volunteering in addition to the activities they are performing while volunteering. Knutsen and Chan (2015) explored the employees performing volunteer activities to determine the motivating factors associated with performing these duties. Knutsen and Chan determined that staff volunteering programs are motivating factors for employees to provide service to designated organizations. Volunteer programs do not motivate employees to volunteer with organizations beyond the identified period or function or to volunteer with other organizations in the community after the conclusion of the formalized process (Knutsen & Chan, 2015). As a result, employees tend to perform tasks promoted by their employer. White (2016) indicated that individuals volunteer for personal reasons rather than financial compensation. Volunteers gain some level of satisfaction or fulfillment when they perform certain tasks without the expectation of financial compensation (White, 2016). An individual's motivation to volunteer may change over time as the volunteer's personal motivations change. Maslow (1943) determined that an individual motivated behavior is based on his or her satisfaction and expression of basic needs. Motivation is a driving force behind why individuals volunteer and continue to do so.

Researchers used Maslow’s motivation theory to describe volunteering as an action performed to fulfill higher levels of personal evolution. According to scholars (Sullivan, 2017; Webb et al., 2015), people volunteer to feel appreciated or to achieve the self-actualization stage. Maslow described self-actualized individuals as those who feel accomplished and doing all they are capable of. The various characteristics and rational associated with volunteering include religious beliefs, personal experiences, challenges overcome, or empathy for a group in need. As people grow and develop, they want to make decisions to make an impact on the world and strive to reach higher levels within Maslow's hierarchy of needs. I used Maslow's theory as a guide when I explored factors that motivate people to volunteer and continue doing so because the theory includes multiple levels that may influence people's decisions to volunteer.

Competing Theory: Skinner's Reinforcement Theory

Skinner's reinforcement theory was a response to the limits of classical conditioning. Skinner thought classical conditioning was too elementary of a method to explain the complexities of human behavior. Skinner described human behavior as responses to consequences: positive or negative reinforcement. People repeat behaviors after experiencing positive consequences associated with the action. Conversely, people halt or deter other actions after correlating negative reinforcement with the behavior. Positive reinforcement involves people providing tangible or intangible rewards for desired behaviors (Skinner, 1953). Negative reinforcement comprises the absence of incentives from the environment. People often continue actions or behaviors after encountering positive reinforcement. People stop the action or behavior to remove the adverse reinforcement from their lives. Skinner's theory can be applied to volunteer motivation. People may volunteer after experiencing positive associations with serving others or being recognized for their efforts. Conversely, people may limit their volunteer efforts when negative experiences occur. Skinner's motivational theory can be used to address volunteer motivation in regard to volunteers experiencing positive or negative reinforcement associated with providing service.

Daly (2017) used Skinner's motivation theory to explore people's motives to volunteer. Using the case study method, Daly determined if a relationship existed between volunteers' motives and required initial training programs among participants at two volunteer agencies. In the case of this study, the presence of mandatory training was considered a form of reinforcement. How volunteers perceived the mandatory training, either as positive or negative, was associated with the length of time people volunteered. Participants who considered training a form of positive reinforcement (e.g., awarded for completed training) volunteered longer than others. Conversely, participants who considered the training program a form of negative reinforcement did not volunteer with the organization for extended periods of time (Daly, 2017). Daly concluded positive motivation was positively associated with volunteering and negative motivation was negatively associated with volunteering. Daly used the presence of mandatory training as a variable for the study. Leaders of nonprofit organizations should consider how policies and volunteer requirements may impact volunteers' motivation. Requirements, such as mandatory training, allow volunteers to learn about the organization and expectations but may also deter them from long-term participation with the organization.

Leaders of nonprofit organizations might consider rewards of any kind as a form of positive reinforcement and continue to volunteer based on the presence of nominal tokens. Lu, Cheng, Lin, and Chen (2017) explained that positive reinforcement (i.e., recognition, awards, and gifts) influence participants to continue volunteering. In addition, Thibaut (2017) argued that organization leaders should develop recognition programs and continue to provide positive reinforcement to encourage volunteers to remain engaged. Leaders can use awards and recognition on the small scale to motivate volunteers to continue service with the organization, to serve more hours or on a long-term basis, and to contribute to the goals and mission of the organization (Cady, Brodke, Kim, & Shoup, 2018; Studer, 2016). Volunteers do not expect to earn a salary or compensation; however, volunteers are motivated when they receive awards and recognition for their efforts. Simple acts such as telling volunteers how their work helped others or how they contributed to the team meeting certain targets motivates volunteers to continue serving at the organization (Stukas, Hoye, Nicholson, Brown, & Aisbett, 2016; Yamashita, Lopez, Soligo, & Keene, 2017). Nonprofit leaders can distribute gifts after a period of service or special occasion.

Although Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory is related to what motivates people to volunteer at nonprofit organizations, it was not suited as a conceptual framework for this study. According to reinforcement theory, people assume certain tasks or behaviors based on positive, pleasurable, or favorable consequences (Allen & Mueller, 2013; Thibaut, 2017). People cannot use the presence of extrinsic rewards to explain all human behaviors, such as fighting fires, raising funds, tutoring children, or volunteering with the Peace Corps (Komaki, Coombs, Redding, & Schepman, 2000). Although extrinsic motivation can influence volunteer participation, Skinner's theory is guided by extrinsic motivation and consequences associated with actions and behaviors. People volunteer with organizations or for causes related to their experiences or interests instead of the presence of awards or consequences. In most cases, people do not expect to receive compensation or recognition for their volunteer efforts. This theory was not suited to guide this study because it does not address internal factors associated with volunteerism. Moreover, the theory does not address people who choose to volunteer without receiving positive or negative reinforcement.

Competing Theory: Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1976) developed the self-efficacy framework to explain human behavior. Self-efficacy involves people’s thoughts and beliefs about their capabilities and abilities to accomplish tasks (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy includes four determining factors (determinants): (a) personal mastery of tasks, (b) social modeling by observing others’ performance social persuasion, (c) receiving suggestions, and (d) physiological reactions arousing an emotional state (Bandura, 1997). Researchers use self-efficacy to predict human behavior due to the reported positive association between human behavior and perceived efficacy. For example, a person with high levels of self-efficacy may complete certain tasks because he or she is confident the desired outcome occurs or a person with low self-efficacy may not attempt a task because he or she does not think the anticipated conclusion will transpire. People may volunteer at organizations that have a history of successfully recruiting and retaining their volunteers. Volunteers in these types of organizations or roles reinforces volunteers' self-efficacy and self-worth. Conversely, people rarely volunteer in areas where they have limited knowledge or experience because they do not want to perform tasks that could diminish their self-efficacy or self-value. Volunteers gain experience and confidence by providing service and seek opportunities to reinforce personal skills and characteristics.

The self-efficacy theory is also applicable to those who volunteer. As volunteers' performance increases, their self-efficacy also improves (Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002; Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016). Senses-Ozyurt and Villicana-Reyna (2016) studied volunteers and nonprofit leaders' roles within the organization using self-efficacy as a theoretical framework. Volunteers seek opportunities to serve if they are likely to succeed. For example, athletic people will likely volunteer for sports-related projects and artistic people are likely to serve in creative environments. In addition, Barron and Rihova (2016) argued that volunteers' self-efficacy increases when they perform tasks successfully while serving clients of the nonprofit organization. Nonprofit leaders should allow volunteers to serve in capacities where they can personally improve while contributing to the goals of the organization. Limited budgets adversely impact nonprofit leaders' abilities to disseminate rewards to provide extrinsic rewards to motivation volunteers. However, nonprofit leaders can develop creative and cost-effective strategies to promote rewards and recognition.

Leaders of nonprofit organizations should consider recognition programs, thanking volunteers, and allowing them to shine to promote self-efficacy. As France et al. (2016) explained, volunteers' self-efficacy is measured based on receiving feedback from nonprofit organizational leaders. For example, volunteers who receive encouraging calls thanking and congratulating them for their contributions, make more donations to nonprofits than volunteers who receive follow-up telephone calls thanking them for their service (Culp, Eastwood, Turner, Allen, & Stephenson, 2015; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Members in an intervention group who think positively of their abilities to give back, are more likely to perform a task (Harrison, Xiao, Ott, & Bortree, 2017; Walker et al., 2016). Nonprofit organization leaders can use the concept of self-efficacy to encourage volunteers by recognizing their strengths and contributions to the organization as a form of motivation.

Volunteers perform service within nonprofit organizations for self-efficacy reasons. Volunteers develop and hone skills while performing service to others. As volunteers cultivate or improve skills and abilities, their self-efficacy increases. This approach to volunteer motivation is more frequent among younger volunteers. Volunteer leaders should realize that volunteers agree to service for various reasons and to cultivate skills to foster volunteers' senses of self-efficacy (Weber, Weber, Schneider, & Sleeper, 2018). Leaders of nonprofit organizations can nurture self-efficacy among volunteers by providing positive feedback or encouragement to others (Harp et al., 2016; Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). People choose to perform and find fulfillment in tasks where they demonstrate success. The continued successes contribute to increased self confidence in these areas and it promotes self-efficacy.

Individuals volunteer based on self-efficacy rather than the desire for them to gain an external reward. People continue to perform actions and skills based on previous successes (Bandura, 1997). People participate in volunteer endeavors based on internal instead of external benefits used to motivate them. However, self-efficacy theory only applies to a particular component of volunteer motivation. Self-efficacy theory was not suited for this study because most people volunteer for reasons other than their ability to successfully perform a task. People accept volunteer roles to serve a community or organization instead of performing tasks for self-promotion and esteem.

Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit entities are formal organizations that provide services or resources to benefit the public good instead of earning profits for shareholders or owners. These nonprofit organizations emerge in a variety of ways, including soup kitchens, religious organizations, neighborhood associations, fraternal organizations, museums, or educational institutions (Leroux & Feeney, 2015). The size of the nonprofit organization varies in terms of employees, volunteers, and people served. The mission of most nonprofit organizations fulfills at least one of the following roles: service, advocacy, culture, civic, or vanguard (Bryson, 2018). Nonprofit service organizations provide services, such as tutoring, housing, or training. Those nonprofits with a mission to support advocacy represent targeted communities and promote an interest to enact change or reform (Ott & Dicke, 2016). Nonprofit supporting organizations expose values and traditions of artistic or cultural significance such as museums (Macedo, Pinho, & Silva, 2016). Civic organizations build communities and foster civic engagement among the people they serve. The vanguard role includes providing occasions for innovation and experimentation such as educational institutions and think tanks (Bryson, 2018). However, all nonprofit organizations share the following characteristics: organized (with a structure for operations and policies), private organizations, self-governing, not bound to generate profit to distribute to others, and a volunteerism focus.

Nonprofit organizations can earn money and produce financial profits; however, leaders cannot distribute the funds to stakeholders, board members, or owners (Valentinov, Hielscher, & Pies, 2015). Additionally, leaders must allocate the funds earned or solicited to support the operations and projects associated with the organization. The purpose of nonprofit organizations is to provide services or support to people in need or to advance causes using funds earned or collected through donations (Ott & Dicke, 2016; Smith, Stebbins, & Grotz, 2016). The people who work for nonprofit organizations are not expected to earn personal gains through their association, which differs from those involved with for profit entities.

People united to serve communities or implement projects in their communities. Volunteers did so to help the needy or advance cultural, educational, or social causes. Early volunteers considered service a religious duty, and they organized through their churches or other religiously affiliated organizations (Leroux & Feeney, 2015). Organized individuals led to the creation of formal nonprofit organizations, usually financially supported by wealthy benefactors (Bryson, 2018). Volunteers' functions within nonprofit organizations shifted after the government began providing services and financial resources for citizens after the Great Depression (Smith et al., 2016). Wealthy people and business leaders created endowments to support private foundations and nonprofit organizations in the mid 1900s (Bryson, 2018). The services provided by volunteers working with nonprofit organization shifted based on societal events and government responses to helping citizens in need. The prevalence of nonprofit organizations decreased during the President Lyndon Johnson's term when Great Society legislation was created to support community projects (Leroux & Feeney, 2015). Conversely, the number of nonprofit organizations and their fundraising efforts increased during the Reagan administration when funding for federal and state programs to serve citizens in need decreased (Ott & Dicke, 2016). Nonprofit organizations emerged in society as people joined forces to help those in need. People wanting to change the social conditions of the unfortunate or tackle similar social justice issues developed nonprofits to address the needs in a collaborative fashion.

Leaders of nonprofit organization can apply for one of two major federal statuses: 501 (c) (3) or 501 (c) (4), which apply to nonprofit organization tax position. These codes apply to the type of provisions granted within the federal tax code, and they include conditions pertaining to fundraising, tax-deductible benefits, and organizational operations (Smith et al., 2016). Although both forms of nonprofit status include tax exemption, only 501 (c) (3) designated organizations receive tax-deduction benefits for individual and corporate donors (Bryson, 2018). Nonprofit organizations in the other category, considered welfare organizations, include civic leagues and advocacy establishments designed to provide services and speak on behalf of others. Examples of these types of organizations include Planned Parenthood and fraternal organizations (Leroux & Feeney, 2015). The number of organizations in the United States with federal nonprofit status surpassed 1 million in 2016 (1,571,056), and they represented the following categories: 1,097,689 public charities, 105,030 private foundations, and 368,337 other types such as fraternal or civic organizations (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2018). It is difficult to fully quantify the total number of nonprofit organizations because small entities, or those with less than $5,000 in annual revenue, are not required to make reports to the IRS (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2018). In addition to the provisions created by the IRS, nonprofit organizations contribute economic growth by providing training or filling voids for those in need. Additionally, volunteers make an economic impact within nonprofit organizations by providing services and in-king and monetary contributions.

Economic Impact of Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations positively impact domestic and international economics. More than one 25% of people in the United States volunteered more than 8 million hours and donated more than $373 million to support nonprofit organizations (Ott & Dicke, 2016). Today, volunteers serve more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations and provide services to the needy, especially for services that lack government support (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2018). In addition to providing services to those in need, volunteers in nonprofit organization also make an economic impact on the country and must adhere to IRS guidelines. Charitable giving accounted for 2% of the gross domestic product in the United States, with 71% of contributions coming from individuals instead of corporations (Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2016). On average, more than 140 million people volunteered in 37 countries annually (Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2016). The contributions of the 140 million volunteers equates to 20.8 million full-time jobs and a $400 billion economic impact across the globe (if volunteers were paid the average wage in their respective countries; Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2016. Domestically, volunteers' services would represent between $113 and $161 billion annually if they were paid by the nonprofit organizations (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2018). Nonprofit organizations contribute to the economic impact of society by filling financial, training, and services (i.e., child care, housing, or medical treatment) needs for the less fortunate and relieving the government from providing services or assistance to those in need.

Nonprofit organization leaders' roles also include advocacy and training. In addition to the direct financial impact, nonprofit organization leaders advocate for economic development issues, train clients for employment in a variety of fields, and prepare volunteers for careers in the nonprofit sector (Bryson, 2018). Nonprofit stakeholders also prepare citizens for jobs in sectors lacking qualified and trained employees, such as technology and health care (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Volunteers who never considered the sector a career option may purse employment opportunities with nonprofit organizations (McHugh et al., 2016). Essentially, nonprofit organizations provide a pipeline for volunteers for careers in the public or nonprofit sectors. Volunteers and benefactors also provide financial and contribute to the financial solvency of these organizations.

The absence of volunteers would adversely impact the domestic and global economy. Leaders of nonprofit organizations could not fulfill their missions with the limited budgets if employees needed to be added to the budget to perform the duties conducted by volunteers (Wellens & Jegers, 2016). The quality and status of nonprofit organizations could be negatively impacted by the lack of volunteers who are motivated to pursue careers in the nonprofit sector and become future leaders in the arena (Smith, 2017). Volunteers provide many services and functions within nonprofit organizations. The impact and ability of leaders to nonprofit organizations to fulfill the organizations' missions is directly linked to volunteerism.

The Value of Volunteers

Nonprofit organizations rely on volunteers to fulfill their missions and commitments to external stakeholders. Volunteers become members of the organization who do not receive monetary compensation for their efforts and provide the services without expecting rewards (Tonurist & Surva, 2017). People in the United States volunteer within a nonprofit at schools, faith-based organizations, sports programs, and charities (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2018). Approximately one quarter (25.4%) of U. S. adults volunteered in 2013, which represented 62.6 million people who served nonprofit organization with 7.7 billion hours of service (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2015). If the service were monetized, volunteers would earn $173 billion (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2015). Volunteers fill monetary and budget gaps for nonprofit organizations. Leaders of nonprofit organizations could not survive or thrive without the contributions provided by volunteers. Hiring employees to fulfill the duties would be cost prohibitive for nonprofit managers. Nonprofit organization leaders might be forced to restructure their operations and services provided or close without volunteers.

Volunteers provide many services within nonprofit organizations. Although more than 62 million people in the United States freely offer their services to nonprofit organizations annually without compensation, limited research exists about their performance (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2015). The lack of scholarly attention to the subject is surprising considering the role volunteers play in programmatic operations (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2015; Renz & Herman, 2016). Renz and Herman stated that researchers have addressed business and public enterprise because of the roles these sectors play in the marketplace and economy. On the other hand, the nonprofit sector and its volunteers received limited attention. Considered a diminutive or third sector, nonprofit organizations receive less attention in academic research and public perception when compared to corporate entities (Bryson, 2018). Renz and Herman (2016) also argued that volunteers may be taken for granted and their contributions of time and effort are not recognized. However, volunteers play a role in the nonprofit sector and society (Maier, Meyer, & Steinbereithner, 2016). Several topics related to nonprofit volunteers should be addressed: motivation, contribution to nonprofit organizations, type of services performed, and amount of time spent volunteering. Due to volunteers' contributions, more scholarly treatments should address their role in organizations.

Reasons Individuals Volunteer

People volunteer for various reasons. People volunteer to feel needed, give back, develop skills, or to gain personal satisfaction (Neff, 2017). Some people volunteers for altruistic reasons (Brown, Meer, & Williams, 2018). Others volunteer because they believe in the cause they are supporting (Chen, 2015; Tonurist & Surva, 2017). People rarely volunteer at organizations in which they are not dedicated or express some form of appeal (Ottoni-Wilhelm, Vesterlund, & Xie, 2017). People also want to make a contribution to organizations and society through their service (Renz, 2016; Renz & Herman, 2016). Volunteers select their duties, roles, and locations to provide service based on personal experiences or interests. The diversity of nonprofit organizations, missions, and services provide many opportunities for volunteers to serve based on their interpersonal rational for offering service. Personal experiences may include receiving past support from the same or similar agency and personal or academic interest in the community or type of service provided.

Some people choose to volunteer after being asked or if they are recruited. Renz and Herman (2016) asserted that people volunteered with organizations or activities after being asked. Thus, volunteering as an expression of identity is intrinsically rewarding (Tonurist & Surva, 2017). Personal requests, instead of those made in writing or over the telephone, also influence people to volunteer. People also volunteer because of their passion for a cause; they believe in the cause and have a commitment to the organization

(Renz, 2016; Tonurist & Surva, 2017). People usually do not volunteer if they do not have a personal or familiar connection to the sports team or troop (Brown et al., 2018; Chen, Xu, & Chen, 2018). Renz and Herman stated that people begin volunteering after friends or family members invite them to get involved. Tonurist and Surva (2017) believed that once an individual begins volunteering, he or she becomes a believer and is passionate about the cause. People choose to volunteer for many reasons. Internal reasons impacting the decision to volunteer include feeling needed, gaining skills, or volunteers being asked to serve.

Another theory of volunteer motivation, the functional approach, provides a framework to explain personal values, career placement, social status, and development of personal enhancement. According to the functionalism approach to motivating volunteers, various psychological functions impact individuals' actions and goals (DeVaro, Maxwell, & Morita, 2017; Rodell, Breitsohl, Schroder, & Keating, 2016). Researchers (Cuskelly, 2016; Rodell et al., 2016) claimed that, according to the functional approach, people volunteer to fulfill psychological functions. These types of motives fulfill the need for self-promotion instead of helping those in need or advancing a particular cause. The service, organizations, and clients become secondary to personal gains received through volunteering. The functional theoretical framework is useful to both scholars and volunteer leaders.

When individuals volunteer, the sense of enjoyment they gain from volunteering brings out various interpersonal purposes. Cuskelly (2016) revealed six personal and social functions that are evoked through volunteering: values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement. People who volunteer express their personal values such as humanitarianism or altruism. People's perceived value of the activity influences initial and continued volunteering (Stukas et al., 2016). People continue to volunteer if they learn new things or participate in new experiences. In the case of understanding, people select volunteer experiences that help them develop knowledge, skills, and abilities. The third function, enhancement, includes opportunities for personal development and growth. This function focuses on the growth and development of the ego, which impacts the ego's affirmative determination (Veludo-de-Oliveria, Pallister, & Foxall, 2015). In the fourth function, career, people volunteer to gain career-related experiences or connections/relationships. According to the fifth function, social, people volunteer to develop and strengthen social and interpersonal relationships. People also continue to volunteer when they develop and maintain relationships in the process (Cuskelly, 2016). The sixth function, protective, means that people may volunteer to decrease guilt or blame associated with wealth or education divides compared to others or to address personal problems (Ott & Dicke, 2016). In addition to serving those in need or advancing a cause, volunteers also receive personal benefits from the actions. Nonprofit leaders can attract and engage volunteers based on the mission of the organizations and personal development by understanding the various benefits associated with volunteering.

The functional approach only includes six functions that influence people's initial and continued service in the nonprofit sector. People may volunteer for reasons aside from the six functions. Jimenez-Crespo (2015) found three additional motives to volunteering not reflected in the volunteer functions inventory: religiosity, enjoyment, and team building. Religiosity motives include reflections after reading certain scriptures that guide volunteerism (Ott & Dicke, 2016). Others choose to volunteer in fun environments. Lastly, working with others either coworkers or friends, give common goals for increasing morale. People volunteer to fulfill social and religious needs. Moreover, people volunteer to complete their religious mandates and expectations, personal satisfaction, and to commune with like-minded people (Lee, Reisinger, Kim, & Yoon, 2014; Renz, 2016). People volunteer for religious or faith-based reasons in nonprofit organizations. People want to fulfill their spiritual duty to help others through volunteerism; people who are motivated to volunteer for religious reasons often make an effort to serve when government-funded programs decrease. These types of reasons are not applicable to previously stated motivational theories used to explain why people volunteer. Understanding reasons why individuals volunteer can lead nonprofit organizational leaders to develop strategies to retain volunteers.

Volunteer Retention

Nonprofit organizational leaders adopt marketing practices to increase volunteer recruitment and retention. Retention of volunteers can be considered an outward manifestation of volunteer satisfaction (Maier et al., 2016). Neff (2017) reported an inverse relationship between volunteer activity and volunteer engagement; as a volunteer activity decreases, leaders at nonprofit organizations need to increase volunteer engagement. Just as nonprofit leaders need to engage donors and funders, they also need to develop ways to attract volunteers to their respective organizations. Considering the role volunteers serve to support operations in nonprofit organizations, leaders should make recruitment and retention efforts a priority. Nonprofit organizational leaders need to develop the tools to engage and manage volunteers to better serve their target population and fulfill their missions.

Nonprofit leaders must address volunteer demands to engage unpaid personnel to serve the organization and foster retention. Organizational leaders must recognize the difficulties that volunteers face in order for them to increase volunteer engagement (Harp et al., 2016; Nemteanu &Tarcza, 2015). To lesson constraint on organizational operations, volunteers should be properly trained and equipped with the essential information to successfully fulfill their duties (Dekker & Halman, 2003; Liket & Mass, 2015). Organizational leaders should provide volunteers with an outline of their duties and responsibilities; organizations should complement these materials with some form of training, so volunteers may have a better understanding of the organizations' expectations of them (Ariza-Montes & Maria Lucia-Casademunt, 2016). Organizational leaders will have a better understanding of volunteers' perceptions and needs if they check in on them periodically as they carry out their duties and responsibilities (Freeman, 1997; Harp et al., 2016). By monitoring and surveying volunteers periodically, this allows organizational leaders to monitor progress of volunteers. Periodic checks from volunteers provide organizational leaders opportunity to gain feedback about their experience. When organizational leaders check the progress of volunteers, they are able to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of each volunteer. In order for an organization and the community it serves, to realize the benefits of volunteer service, organizational leaders must monitor volunteer progress.

Transition

Considering the vital role volunteers play within organizations and communities, exploring how to attract and retain volunteers can aid nonprofit leaders. The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies that nonprofit leaders use to increase volunteer retention. The lack of research in the area of volunteer motivation makes it difficult to develop effective programs and environments to recruit and retain volunteers. In this section, I provided an overview of volunteer motivation and a context for the study. I shared three theories and determined which was most suitable to use as the conceptual framework for this study. I also included a description of nonprofit organizations (i.e., historical underpinnings, various purposes, types of services rendered, and economic impact). Volunteers' financial and in-kind contributions to nonprofit organizations were also present in this section. A description of methods to retain volunteers was also provided in this section.

Section 2 includes a description of the project. The section begins with the purpose statement. The role of the researcher and the description of the interview process are also addressed. The method used to select participants is also discussed. Section 2 also includes a description of the qualitative research design used to conduct this study. Components of ethical research and data instrumentation, collection, organization, and analysis techniques used to conduct this study are presented in Section 2. The section ends with a description of reliability and validity associated with this study.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I will discuss the methodology of my study. I used the qualitative research method to explore the strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain their volunteers. I provide information related to the population under study, which included three nonprofit leaders from three organizations in Georgia who implemented effective strategies for retaining long-term volunteers. I then present a discussion of the ethical considerations related to this research study. This section includes details of the research method, research design, sampling technique, data collection, data organization, and data analysis. I conclude this section with an examination of reliability and validity followed by the transition and summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain volunteers. The targeted population consisted of three nonprofit leaders from three organizations in Georgia who implemented effective strategies for retaining volunteers. My study may lead to positive social change by providing nonprofit organizational leaders with the strategies they need to retain volunteers and enabling the organizations to better serve communities.

Role of the Researcher

The qualitative researcher has many roles, including ensuring integrity, reducing bias, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting the findings. In qualitative research, the researcher uses an interpretive approach wherein the researcher is personally involved with participants (Finlay, 2013; Wickham & Woods, 2005). In qualitative research, the researcher is responsible for immersing themselves in the study process (Berger, 2015). In qualitative research, the quality of the data collected is only as good as the interviewing skills of the researcher (Rossiter, 2008; Drennan, 2003). In this case study, I collected data by listening to participants' responses to interview questions and by conducting an archival analysis of company documents.

The researcher must gain the necessary training and experience to avoid collecting biased information. Scholars who are familiar with the participants and study topic gain more insight into the topic, understand participants, and make participants feel at ease to get an accurate description of the condition studied (Saldana, 2015). However, researcher familiarity may contribute to unconscious bias as the researcher may make assumptions about how participants should respond or lead participants to answer questions in certain ways (Morse, 2015). As with most qualitative researchers, I was familiar with the topic of this study. I served as a volunteer at two nonprofit organizations. I have volunteered at each of these organizations for more than 5 years, and I have met leaders of the organizations several times. However, I did not have personal relationships with the leaders as most of my service involved working with the youth and evening staff members. My lack of direct contact with leaders of the organization helped to mitigate bias in the study.

The Belmont Report provides a guide for researchers to follow related to ethics and protocol. Researchers adhere to the Belmont Report guidelines by ensuring equality and fairness to those involved in the study (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of

Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). The purpose of the Belmont report is to provide ethical guidelines for researchers working with human subjects based on three principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Respect for persons involves guarding participants' autonomy, treating participants with courtesy, and receiving informed consent from all participants (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Beneficence means doing no harm and not putting participants at risk during or as a result of their involvement with the study (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). To achieve beneficence, I protected participants' names and nonprofit organization names by using pseudonyms and storing files in secured locations. I showed respect for participants by speaking to them with a calm voice; confirming their understanding of the study and their role; answering any questions or concerns about the study or their participation; and conducting interviews in a safe, moderately tempered, and convenient location. Justice involves treating all participants equally (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I applied justice by asking all questions in the same way and order during the interview process. Although there was minimal risk associated with my study, I was committed to adhering to the research guidelines mentioned in the Belmont Report.

To address bias, scholars must understand how bias can negatively affect the outcome of the study. In qualitative research, researchers must mitigate bias; this is necessary when the researcher has a direct association with the participants (Malone, Nicholl, & Tracy, 2014; Miracle, 2016; Nicolaides, 2016). Qualitative researchers must minimize error and researcher bias. The presence of bias in studies may reflect a lack of trustworthiness about researchers' competence or findings and recommendations provided by the researcher. I mitigated bias by adhering to institutional review board (IRB) protocols, maintaining a researcher journal, and bracketing. Marshall and Rossman (2016) defined bracketing as a method of demonstrating the validity of the data collection and analysis process. Bracketing includes removing all personal experience, knowledge, or belief from the research subject (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I performed bracketing before interviewing participants and documented the results in my researcher journal. In my researcher journal, I recorded the data collection, analysis, and final report with reference to any preconception and biases.

I collected data through semistructured interviews using an interview protocol to ensure that I collected the same data from all of the participants. The interview protocol encompasses the interview procedures, interview questions, and general rules to follow throughout the interview (Yin, 2018). I asked open-ended questions to nonprofit organizational leaders from Georgia to obtain data. The interview protocol for this study included a statement of consent to participate in the study, an explanation about the voluntary nature of participating in the study, prepared interview questions, and closing remarks. In the consent portion of the interview protocol, I explained that participation in the study was voluntary and I outlined the possible dangers associated with participating in the study. Because participation was voluntary, I explained to the participants that they could conclude their participation at any time during the study without penalty or consequence. I then asked the prepared open-ended interview questions to participants. Each interview ended with closing remarks where I thanked participants for their time and contributions.

To conduct ethical research, scholars should identify and remove potential bias. Researchers must refrain from infusing their ideas or prior knowledge and perceptions about the topic during the data collection or analysis processes (Bryman, 2016; Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). Types of bias include developing biased questions, selecting biased samples, and biased reporting. Scholars develop biased questions when they draft questions with the intent to lead participants to a specific answer (Nardi, 2018). I wrote straightforward questions and refrained from leading questions. Biased samples include participants not directly associated with the stated research questions or who inaccurately represent the population or phenomenon studied (Shiraz & Doosti, 2015). Each of the participants for this study had experience working in a leadership position in a nonprofit organization. I reported the findings based solely on participant responses and my researcher journal notes.

Participants

Selecting participants is a critical decision for researchers. Researchers who use a sample, or portion of the population, must establish the eligibility criteria to select participants, strategies to recruit participants, and develop relationships to work with participants (Morse, 2015). I contacted three leaders from three nonprofit organizations where I had no affiliation to serve as my participants for this study. After receiving verbal confirmation, I sent a written request to outline the timeline (a formal request and consent occurred at a later date).

Each participant for this study met all study eligibility criteria. It is up to the researcher to determine sample section based on the research question he or she intends to answer (Merrian & Tisdell, 2015). Flick (2015) determined that researchers should use participants who can contribute their opinions and knowledge from their life situations about the phenomenon that the researcher intends to study. I only included leaders who shared similar experiences on the strategies their organizations use to retain volunteers. The criteria were directly related to the research question. First, all participants had to be over the age of 18. Second, participants had to currently serve as leaders, employed at the director or executive direct levels, within nonprofit organizations located in a Southern state. Third, the participants had to be employed with the current organization for at least 1 year and possess at least 5 years of successful experience working in the nonprofit sector. I selected the aforementioned eligibility criteria to ensure that the participants understood the operations, challenges, and needs of nonprofit organizations and the dynamics and culture of the organization in which they were employed.

To gain access to the participants, I contacted the organizations via email to allocate the researcher invitations. Once I received confirmation from the participants to participate in the study, I confirmed their ability to participate and verified their eligibility based on the participant criteria, as suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2016). Once all participants had been verified, I then distributed and explained the consent form and interview protocol.

Researchers must make every effort to ensure participants' privacy. Trust is a critical component of the participant-researcher relationship. White and Hind (2015) concluded that in order to have a productive qualitative study, it is critical for the researcher to establish a good rapport with their participants. Patton (2015) believed that if the researcher can establish mutual trust from the participants and show appreciation, this could potentially strengthen working relationships. To ensure participants' privacy, I used aliases instead of participants' real names and their identifying organization. Researchers must ensure that unnecessary risks associated with the study are eliminated (Bazeley, 2013; Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013; Neuman, 2016). I ensured that the participants' identities and nonprofit organizations remained confidential and that interviews were conducted in a comfortable location. I also described the general location of the organization and services provided to prevent readers from identifying the organization and participant.

Research Methodology

Methodology

Quantitative researchers conduct empirical studies using numerical data. This frequently used method accounts for almost 75% of scholarly articles published (Hair, Wolfinbarger, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2015). Quantitative researchers provide the framework for scholars to test hypotheses, mathematical models, or theories. This research method involves using measurements to establish a connection between observable behaviors and occurrences in the general population (Walliman, 2017). Researchers conducting studies in the fields of economics, marketing, health care, or physics often use the quantitative method (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Informed by the scientific method, quantitative research often includes generation of models, instrument development, and data modeling and analysis. Scholars use data to generate statistical models or mathematical equations to determine a correlation or relationship between variables (Hjorth, 2017). Instrument development involves creating a survey or questionnaire (Hair et al., 2015). Although the results of quantitative studies can be generalizable to the entire population, a weakness of this method includes the inability to determine the rationale associated with the results (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Researchers conduct quantitative studies to examine intentionality and relationships between variables.

The quantitative method was not suited for my study. I did not plan to examine causality for my study. I collected data from interviews, observations, and document review instead of empirical data. Due to the types of data collected, I did not analyze the data using regression or factor analysis. Instead, I coded data to identify themes. I did not conduct a quantitative study because I used non-numerical data such as interviews and document reviews.

Mixed-methods research involves a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research strategies. This research method is most often used in social science instead of physical science disciplines (Mertens, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2015). Three types of mixed method include quantitative-driven approach, qualitative-driven approach, and the interactive approach. In the quantitative-driven approach, a scholar emphasizes quantitative data supported by qualitative data (Brannen, 2017; Imel, Kerka, & Wonacott, 2012). In the qualitative-driven approach, a researcher stresses qualitative data supplemented by empirical data used for quantitative analysis (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The interactive approach, often used by teams of researchers, involves an equal use of qualitative and quantitative methods (Palinkas et al., 2015). Researchers select mixed-methods approaches when both forms of data are available and applicable to the study. Mixed-methods researchers have the best of both worlds: numerical data generalizable to the entire population and qualitative data to provide an in-depth analysis of the topic.

Although the mixed-methods design incorporates qualitative data and analysis techniques, the method was not the best choice for my study. I did not include the quantitative or interactive approaches to conduct my study. I conducted this study independently instead of with a group of researchers. The absence of quantitative and interactive components supports my use of the qualitative method.

Qualitative research is another method used to collect and analyze data. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to conduct scientific research (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative scholars address concepts, characteristics, symbols, and descriptions of people or phenomena occurring in society (Patton, 1987; Smith, 2015). Researchers from a variety of disciplines, particularly the social sciences (i.e., education, social work, and political science), use this method. Researchers develop an in-depth understanding of participants' behaviors. The purpose of qualitative research is to answer questions such as how and why associated with human behavior (Bryman, 2016; Sigler & Aamidor, 2005; Silverman, 2016). Qualitative researchers allow scholars to explore past and present conditions in an in-depth manner.

A variety of data and analysis tools are available to conduct qualitative research. Examples of data collected include interviews (structured, semistructured, or unstructured), observations, and document reviews (Taylor et al., 2015). In structured interviews, researchers ask the same question in the same manner to each participant. Researchers can only ask the prepared questions and not include follow-up questions to gain additional information (Bryman, 2016). Semistructured interviews involve researchers preparing questions as starting points for interviews and allowing researchers to ask follow-up or additional questions. Unstructured interviews involve researchers developing questions during interviews based on the topic and information gained during the conversation (Smith, 2015). Observations, as the term signifies, includes the process of witnessing or watching participants in their natural environment or study site/location (Bryman, 2016). Document review involves collecting documents (i.e., photographs, reports, letters, etc.) pertaining to the topic (Taylor et al., 2015). In the analysis process, researchers to make meaning of the data collected to develop findings of the topic.

I used the qualitative methodology to conduct this study. I chose this method because of the nature of the study and my access to suitable data. Without an existing instrument directly related to my topic or an ability to successfully quantify nonprofit organizational leaders' perceptions in developing and implementing strategies about volunteer retention, conducting a quantitative study would be fruitless. The absence of quantitative data pertaining to my topic also helped me make the decision to exclude the mixed-methods approach. Qualitative research on my topic allowed me to gain an understanding of the topic based on the experiences of leaders in the field.

Qualitative Design

Several qualitative research designs exist, including ethnography, narrative inquiry, and case study. Each design includes unique characteristics. Researchers select the design based on the nature of the research (Morse, 2015; Stake, 1995). I will describe three qualitative designs and provide my rationale for selecting or rejecting them to conduct my study.

I will describe the ethnographic design first. Ethnographic researchers study people and cultures (Forde, 2017). Researchers commonly used this design to conduct studies in sociology, history, and communication studies. Researchers use this design to investigate cultural phenomena through the view of people involved in the experiences (Hammersley, 2016; Parker, 2014). Ethnographic data collection includes observation or examining behaviors. Researchers observe participants in their natural environments in order to tell the story about the phenomenon studied (Pink, 2016). The researcher reviews participants' behaviors and describes the verbal, physical, and nonverbal cues present (Forde, 2017). The results of ethnographic research include a description or account of a cultural occurrence (Pelto, 2017). The ethnographic design is most applicable to study cultures through the eyes of members of communities investigated.

I did not select an ethnographic design to conduct my study. This design is best suited to describe the beliefs, behaviors, and languages among members of cultural groups (Pink, 2016). This was not fitting for my study because leadership or volunteering within nonprofit organizations does not signify a culture. Additionally, members of the community do not possess a unique language. After consideration, I decided not to use this design.

Another qualitative design is the narrative inquiry. The purpose of this design is to understand personal narratives or how people create the meaning of life experiences or circumstances (Kim, 2015). Narrative inquiry scholars focus on the knowledge of one or a small number of participants to understand their view about a situation or experience (Silverman, 2016). Narrative researchers emphasize participants' memories, communication techniques and styles, and making meaning or describing the environment (Clandinin, 2016). This design emerged in the management science field and transitioned into knowledge management (Smith, 2015). This design is also suitable to conduct studies in the fields of sociology, education, organizational development, and cognitive science (Abowitz & Toole, 2009; Kim, 2015). Narrative inquiry scholars use field notes, interviews, photos, journals, life experiences, conversations, and other artifacts to collect data (Smith, 2015). The narrative inquiry data collection and analysis process involves developing the research question, selecting and collecting raw data, organizing the data, and interpreting the data using a paradigm or theory as the guide (Clandinin, 2016). The narrative inquiry design is best suited to conduct studies to describe participants' personal stories and how they make meaning of their daily lives.

I decided not to use the narrative inquiry design to conduct my study. Although I studied people's life experiences, I was not interested in exploring how they make meaning or interpret their environment. Additionally, I was not interested in participants telling their stories to showcase the lives of leaders of nonprofit organizations. Instead, I investigated participants' work with volunteers to determine how to increase retention and training efforts. My research structure and data collection plan are not aligned with the narrative inquiry design.

Finally, I will describe the case study design. This qualitative design involves developing an in-depth and up-close examination of a subject or case (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Researchers consider the case study design a more formal approach to the qualitative discipline (Yin, 2018). Researchers most often use the case study for the following areas of study: sociology, psychology, political science, education, and anthropology (Brannen, 2017). The purpose of the case study design is to explore a case or organization, event, action, or person during a time period and location (Gog, 2015; Merriam, 1998). Researchers explore claims, arguments, positions, or phenomena (Yin, 2018). Researchers can conduct case study research using single or multiple cases. Single case studies involve one location or group studied to conduct the project. Studies with multiple cases explore more than one setting about the same topic (Brannen, 2017). Researchers use both qualitative and quantitative data to conduct case study research (Gog, 2015). Case study design is used by researchers to investigate a condition or situation based on one or more groups or organizations.

I selected the multiple case study approach to conduct my study. The purpose of my study was to examine leaders within organizations at a specific time and place: leaders at nonprofit organizations in late 2018 or early 2019. The term case refers to the nonprofit sector. I studied three organizations to explore the strategies used by nonprofit leaders to recruit and retain volunteers. I studied nonprofit leaders from three different organizations to gain a better understanding of the various strategies used to manage their professional responsibilities. I used the multiple case method with three cases instead of the single case method to determine if the findings are more generalizable to the nonprofit section instead of specific to one person, agency, or case.

Data saturation impacts the quality of the research conducted. Researchers achieve data saturation when they capture all of the information that is needed to answer the research question (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). The failure to reach data saturation can hinder content validity (Bowen, 2008). To ensure that I achieved data saturation, I interviewed my participants until no new information emerged and I captured all of the information needed to answer my research question.

Population and Sampling

I used the purposive sampling method to select participants for my study. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability method frequently used in social science disciplines (Bernard, 2017). Scholars use this sampling method to select participants based on the nature of the study. Researchers use this sampling method when ideal participants possess skills or expertise in a particular area, or if the topic targets a certain group or field (Taylor et al., 2015). I chose purposive sampling for my study. I investigated leaders of nonprofit organizations who had successfully retained volunteers. I used a targeted approach to ensure that I selected participants with direct knowledge and understanding to provide the data to address my topic.

Selecting participants is a component of qualitative research. Researchers determine the most effective sampling strategy after establishing the selection criteria for participants (Colwell, Aung, Kanetkar, & Holden, 2008; Koerber & McMichael, 2008). A sampling method frequently used to conduct quantitative research, purposive sampling, involves a nonprobability selection of participants (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). Researchers use purposive sampling to select participants based on desired characteristics and the purpose of the study. This type of sampling is less time consuming than other methods, such as proportionality sampling (Orcher, 2016). The goal of purposive sampling is to select targeted participants to address a specific topic and gain an understanding of circumstances and phenomena instead of the ability to draw generalizable conclusions (Silverman, 2015). In the case of purposive sampling, the sample selected is directly and intentionally applicable to the study (Bernard, 2017). Researchers use purposive sampling to target participants best suited for the study without concern for generalization.

I used the purposive sampling method to select participants. The advantages associated with the purposive sampling method include small sample size and targeted participants (Orcher, 2016). Purposive sampling is best suited for small samples (Silverman, 2015). Considering the directed selection process associated with purposive sampling, researchers use less time confirming participates (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). I chose the purposive sampling method based on the aforementioned benefits. The ability to use a targeted approach to select participants ensured I selected participants with direct knowledge and understanding to provide the best data to address my topic.

I selected three leaders from three different nonprofit organizations as participants for my study. An appropriate sample size is identified by the population of the study (Sandelowski, 1995). It can be determined by the researcher by having a large sample in order to provide more accuracy. Large samples can be costly, so researchers may choose a fraction of a study or base it on past studies. This is not optimal, so size should be based on the analysis (Patton, 2015). Denzin (2012) determined that in a qualitative study, the number of participants needed to achieve saturation could range from five to 50. My research question can be adequately addressed by using three participants. Yin (2018) determined that a researcher can use a small sample size, such as two or three participants, to explore a phenomenon. I achieved saturation by selecting three nonprofit leaders from three different organizations based on their diverse experiences and number of years in their current positions and the nonprofit sector. The number of participants and their background allowed me to answer my research question.

I ensured that I reached data saturation during the data collection process. Trotter (2012) described saturation as the point at which participants no longer offer new information. In addition to conducting interviews and reviewing archival documents and organizational websites, I also used member checking to ensure data saturation. Scholars use member checking to allow participants to verify their responses to confirm the accuracy of data collected by the researcher (Flick, 2015). I provided the participants with my interpretation of their answers to the interview questions. I then asked the participants to verify the accuracy of their answers. I also asked participants if they had additional feedback or information to provide. The member checking process continued until each participant had no additional feedback or changes to offer. Walliman (2017) determined that researchers achieve data saturation when the data they gather from additional interviews reveals that there are no new information or themes. I continued the member checking process until no new information or themes developed.

People who volunteer as nonprofit organizational leaders in Georgia met the criteria for participation for this study. All participants possessed the following characteristics: reside in a Southern state, be over the age of 18, currently serve as leaders, be employed at the director or executive direct levels within nonprofit organizations, be employed with the current organization for at least 1 year, and possess at least 5 years of successful experience working in the nonprofit sector. I selected the aforementioned eligibility criteria to ensure that participants understood the operations, challenges, and needs of nonprofit organizations and the dynamics and culture of the organization in order to understand how to retain volunteers. I was able to provide a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view during the in-depth interview by delving beneath the surface and soliciting detail. I conducted interviews at convenient times and locations for the participant and me. Ecker (2017) suggested that researchers should use an interview site with little or no distractions. Participants and researchers can benefit from a comfortable interview location where the participant may disclose their experience (McCarthy, 2016). My preference was to conduct interviews off-site from the participants' work location. Follow-up interviews occurred via the telephone as needed.

Ethical Research

Each participant granted consent for me to include them in my study. Researchers use informed consent as a means of emboldening ethical values from participants (Patten & Newhart, 2017). I asked participants who agreed to participate to sign an informed consent form that described the study, ethical considerations, and agreement to participate after I received approval from the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB). Informed consent forms should be straightforward and easy to understand (Walliman, 2017). I sent electronic copies of the informed consent form to every person who agreed to participate. I asked the participants to return the copies to me electronically with the words “I Consent” and to provide hard copies when we meet for the interview. I gave one copy to the participants for their records, and I retained the original and electronic copy in a secured location for 5 years after the conclusion of the study. By signing the informed consent form, all participants in the study agreed to participate. Participants also received a copy of their signed consent form.

Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants must be able to withdraw from the study at any time without retaliation or adverse consequences (Menikoff, Kaneshiro, & Pritchard, 2017). Patten and Newhart (2017) recommended that the researcher disclose the option for participants to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I reviewed the consent form and participant responsibilities with the interviewees to gain trust among participants. Additionally, I reinforced participants’ abilities to withdraw from participation at any time without being negatively affected in any way. I made the participants aware that if they decided to participate, they can refuse to answer any of the questions that may have made them uncomfortable. I included information about the lack of repercussions for withdrawing from the study. If a participant decided to terminate his or her involvement in the study, he or she had to submit a statement in writing (hard copy or via e-mail). Participants could submit their termination in writing at any time after I received the completed informed consent form, up until the dissertation was published. There were no consequences associated with participants withdrawing from the study.

I also conducted interviews in a temperature-controlled environment convenient for participants to locate. I built trust with each participant by ensuring their privacy and all data collected would only be used for this study. In addition, I did not provide monetary or any type of compensation or incentives for the participants to participate in this study. It is vital to remain ethical during the research process by adhering to a governing body, informing participants of the intentions for the interview data, and ensuring participant privacy (Qu & Dumay, 2011). I chose not to provide compensation or incentives to participants because I wanted participants invested in the subject instead of motivated by awards or payments. I provided a copy of the completed study to each participant.

I ensured that the ethical protection of participants was adequate. In order to ensure the wellbeing of the study participant, the researcher must exercise ethical responsibility (Chan, Teram, & Shaw, 2017). I conducted interviews in a private location, and I stored data in a secured location. I stored all hard copy documents (e.g., consent forms) in a locked file cabinet and electronic files on a password-protected hard drive computer that I had sole access to. I did not reveal the name of participants or their organizations or include any identifying information in my study. I made every effort to ensure each participant understood the intent of the interview questions by repeating questions as needed. The interview questions were nonthreatening. Data are stored in a secure location to guarantee protection and confidentiality of participants' information. Corti (2012) defined data archiving as the process of securing and storing research data for future audits in order to verify research findings. All data will be maintained in a safe place for 5 years to protect the rights of each participant. After a 5-year period, I will ensure confidentiality by shredding and destroying all participants' data. My doctoral manuscript includes the Walden IRB approval number. Walden University's IRB approval number is 01-10-19-0057513 and it expires on January 9, 2020.

I protected each participant's identity. Participants' confidentiality is a necessary part of the data collection process. Researchers should reassure participants of their confidentiality to promote honest responses to interview questions (Bryman, 2007; Kawar, Pugh, & Scruth, 2016). I did not require participants to use their names or the names of their employers for the questionnaire or during the interviews. Voluntary participant consent is a fundamental standard of ethical research (Won Oak, 2012). I did not include other identifying information of individuals or organizations in this study. I gave the participants identifying numbers to distinguish between them: Participant identifiers included Volunteer 1-3. I completed the National Institutes of Health Certificate (NIH) certification training course to ensure my compliance with ethical and moral standards. I was the only person who had access to the data. I also coded the data and stored them in a secure location.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the instrument for this study as I collected the data shared through both open-ended interviews and the collection of archival documents. Neuman (2014) determined that researchers conduct face-to-face interviews to insert themselves into the interviewee's contextual environment. I used semistructured, open-ended questions during the interview process that provided the participants the opportunity to share the strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders use to increase volunteer retention. Panagiotakopoulos (2014) suggested that semistructured interviews allow the researcher to ask open-ended questions without predetermined answers. Open-ended interviews will allow participants, who have experienced the phenomenon of retaining volunteers, to communicate their lived experiences effectively (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). I also logged the participants' nonverbal expressions in my researcher journal to provide in-depth responses.

I created an interview protocol to ensure that I conducted interviews in the same way with each participant. Mason (2017) concluded that interviews are one of the most popular methods of collecting data in qualitative research. The interview protocol included the process and script to conduct interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested before beginning interviews in a qualitative study, the scholar should create an interview protocol in order to ensure a common approach to each interview. The interview protocol began with me explaining the research process, informed consent, and participant rights and responsibilities. I also asked each participant if he or she had any questions and to give me permission to record the interview. After I confirmed approval and collected the signature informed consent forms, I began the interview. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Yin (2018) determined best practices for a semistructured qualitative interview as (a) not guiding the interviewee, (b) not dominating the conversation, (c) maintaining objectivity, (d) following protocol, and (e) developing follow-up questions during the interview. I recorded each interview, pending participant consent, using Dragon Dictation software. Following each interview, I reviewed the transcribed interview to ensure that all of the data were accurately recorded. I then drafted a summary and analysis of the interviews. I sent the transcripts to each participant for his or her review during the transcript checking process. I then conducted member checking that lasted approximately 30 minutes. Harvey (2015) concluded that member checking is useful in research because participants are able to clarify responses and/or provide additional data to confirm the accuracy of the data collected. During member checking, I asked each participant follow-up questions and asked if he or she ha anything they wanted to add about the study topic. This process continued until each participant was confident that the text accurately reflected their thoughts and perceptions, and they had no additional feedback to offer.

I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data in the least subjective manner as possible to ensure that this study had reliability and credibility. Triangulation is the best practice to ensure studies meet reliability standards (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2017). Triangulation is the act of using many data collection methods, sources, and theories to confirm the validity of research findings (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Researchers use triangulation to support validity by combining information from different sources to form themes or categories in the study (Homburg, Klarmann, Reimann, & Schilke, 2012). I adhered to the interview protocols, reviewed interview transcripts, and performed member checking. Interviews, document analysis, and observations are frequently used data collection methods during the triangulation process (Gall et al., 2003). To ensure each participant was asked the same question in the same order, I needed to follow an interview protocol. By reviewing transcripts, I ensured the data analyzed accurately reflected participants' words in the exact manner delivered during the interviews. Participants had the opportunity to confirm their responses and make adjustments, if necessary, during member checking (Turner et al., 2017). To ensure the data collected was consistent with what occurred in the environment and supports reliability, it was important to follow these steps.

Data Collection Technique

For this study, I used face-to-face, semistructured interviews as the data collection technique. Yin (2018) determined that interviews are the most critical source of data collection. The interview questions for the study were open-ended so that the participants could relate their experience from working with nonprofit organizations in their words. Open-ended interviews begin with a social conversation intended to generate a relaxed atmosphere where participants have a sense freedom to express their views (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Mason (2017) indicated that in semistructured interviews, the researcher can develop a deeper understanding of the participant's experience. I also included an interview protocol (Appendix A) to guide the interview process. Each interview was audio and visually recorded with the participants' permission using an iPad. Nonverbal communication, tone, and vocal fluctuations were included in the notes during the recording of interviews. All of the interviews were transcribed, and the participants were called to ask if they had follow-up information during member checking. I prepared questions to guide the discussion and asked follow-up or supplemental questions as necessary.

In addition to conducting semistructured interviews, I collected data from archival documents from each nonprofit organization. Bryman and Bell (2015) suggested that when the interviewees are well informed, they may provide critical understanding into the phenomenon of inquiry as well as leading the researcher to additional sources of evidence. I collected data from the organization’s electronic correspondence, including marketing plans, data reports, and financial analysis in order to compare to data trends. Singh (2014) suggested artifacts are useful for tracing the timeline of the organization and announcements presented by prominent individuals within the organization. I collected archival documents from the organization’s archives as well.

I used the Dragon Dictation application to record and transcribe the interviews. Instead of collecting and analyzing the data concurrently, I collected and then analyzed the data. Data collection should include thick and rich information on the participants’ perspective of an issue (Wahyuni, 2012). I analyzed the qualitative data, archival documents, and field notes using Enviro. The coding process includes grouping similar responses into themes and subthemes based on the research questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I entered the data into the software for the purpose of coding.

The interview protocol that I used when collecting data is provided in Appendix A. Participants can express their thoughts and opinions in interviews (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). Each interview process began with an introduction and a discussion of the phenomenon under exploration by building a rapport with the participants to make them feel comfortable (Rowley, 2012). I began each interview by greeting the participant. My opening remarks included thanking the participants for allowing me to interview them, reviewing the purpose of the study, and outlining their roles as participants and the interview process. I also reminded them about the contents of the informed consent form they completed and that they may withdraw their participation in the study at any time. I reminded each participant that his or her names and organizations would not appear in the final dissertation and all records of the interviews will be stored in a secure location until destroyed 5 years later. I also explained the interview process, including member checking where I gave my interpretation of participants' answers to interview questions back to the participants to ensure I accurately interpreted their responses. I asked each participant if he or she agreed to be recorded before starting the recording device. I activated the recording device after getting permission to record the interview. I asked each question in the same manner and asked follow-up questions as needed. I thanked each participant for allowing me to interview them and shared the timeline for me to return the transcribed interviews and my notes to them. I asked the participants how they preferred I distribute the files and solicit feedback. I adhered to each participant's preference.

There are advantages and disadvantages associated with conducting interviews and with analyzing archival documents. Qu and Dumay (2011) believed that in order to collect data effectively and conveniently, the qualitative interview must be maintained. The interviews provide in-depth data not easily obtained through survey style question-and-answer interview approaches (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The disadvantages of interviews are that the analyzing and the interpreting of the interviews can take much more time and money compared to online questionnaires and surveys (Cairney & St. Denny, 2015; Rowley, 2012). In addition to conducting semistructed interviews, I collected archival documents. Analyzing content within an organizations' documents can provide an advantage by enabling researchers in developing theses and patterns (Deci & Ryan 1987; Vaismoradi, Thurunen, & Bondas, 2013). Using an organizations' documents as a data collection technique can provide a disadvantage due to the probability of inaccuracy and inadequate information (Casey & Murphy, 2009). By using both semistructed interviews and analyzing archival documents, I was able to achieve more in-depth results.

I used member checking during the data interpretation process. Qualitative researchers use member checking as a tool to ensure accuracy and validity during the data collection and analysis process (Thomas, 2017). The member checking process involves the researcher cross-checking the data collected with the original or other sources during the interview or after the interview process (Brit, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Seidman, 1998). I conducted member checking after I conducted each interview. I sent my interpretation of participants' responses to each participant to review and provide feedback. I also asked follow-up questions if I needed additional information from the participants. This process continued until each participant agreed with the narrative and had no additional feedback to provide.

Data Organization Technique

I used member checking, triangulation, and researcher logs to ensure that the results accurately reflected the data and the phenomenon being studied. The researcher is able to combat any personal biases and challenge preconceived notions by continuously making comparisons between member checking, methodological triangulation, and researcher logos (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Investigators are able to break through subjectivity and bias by open coding and the use of questioning. I used methodological triangulation as another method to verify the data and analysis and prevent the infusion of bias. Methodological triangulation includes using multiple data collection methods, sources, and theories to confirm the validity of research findings (Gall et al., 2003). During the triangulation process, interviews, document analysis, questionnaires, and observations are frequently used data collection methods (Marsick & Watkins, 1997; Turner, 2010). I used methodological triangulation to help eliminate biases that might result from relying exclusively on any one data collection method, source, analyst, or theory. I used member checking to verify the accuracy of the data collected. To complete the member checking process, I sent each participant my interpretation of the participant’s answers to interview questions and asked the participant to verify the answers. I also maintained a researcher log as I collected data, interviewed participants, and analyzed the data. Flick (2015) recommended that researchers take notes during field studies and store them efficiently for easy retrieval for later use. I documented what I saw and heard from participants and my thoughts and perceptions about the research process. I used my researcher log as a data source.

In order to maintain participants' confidentiality, I stored the data in a secure location. Paper documents and journals were stored in a locked file cabinet, and electronic files were stored on a password-protected computer, as suggested by Lokke and Sorensen (2014). Yin (2018) recommended that researchers store data collected from the study participants in chronological order and then by categories or major topics. I will retain all records for 5 years.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important element of research. Data analysis is a way to process qualitative data and to share the outcome with the audience (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, and Walker (2018) emphasized that data analysis is the most difficult phase of qualitative research. Yin (2018) identified five steps for data analysis in qualitative research that include: (a) compile the data, (b) disassemble the data, (c) reassemble the data, (d) interpret the data, and (e) review the data to draw conclusions. To address the strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain volunteers, I developed a central research question. The central research question that guided the data analysis was the following: What strategies do nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain volunteers? I used the findings from the data analysis to help me discover the strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain their volunteers.

The first step, compiling the data to form groupings, involves organizing the data collected. During this step, I grouped the data (interview transcripts, notes, and researcher journal) collected based on content similarities. The second step, disassembling the data to reduce consistent themes, involves reviewing the data critically to develop themes (Yin, 2018). During this stage, I identified consistent themes present in all of the data sources. This was the first opportunity for me to analyze the data collectively instead of as individual data sources. The third step, reassembling the data and grouping core themes, involves narrowing the themes developed during the previous step into core themes (Yin, 2018). During this step, I developed core themes more directly related to each of the research questions. The fourth step, checking patterns, involves reviewing all of the data sources to identify patterns reflected in the interview transcripts (Yin, 2018). During this step, I determined if the information provided in the interview transcripts aligned with the other data sources. The final step, reviewing the data to draw conclusions, involves assessing the data to make connections to the research questions (Yin, 2018). During this step, I developed conclusions related to the research questions and the core themes developed during previous steps. As I completed the final step, I prepared the final results of the study based on participants' perceptions related to the research questions.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability, as a research concept, involves to what extent the results of a study will lead to the same or similar results for another report. For example, the results from studies with high reliability scores would produce similar results if the same research methods were used (Leung, 2015; Silverman, 2016). Noble and Smith (2015) concluded that in order for researchers to adhere to the highest standards of academic research, reliability is critical. Cypress (2017) determined that reliability is a necessary component of a study that researchers should take into consideration when designing a study and analyzing the results. I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data in the least subjective manner as possible to ensure readers and other researchers consider this study to have high reliability. Scholars ensure that studies meet reliability standards by collecting data using semistructured interviews and organizational documents (Turner et al., 2017). In addition to maintaining objectivity, I adhered to interview protocols, reviewed interview transcripts, and performed member checking. Following interviewing protocols ensures that each participant is asked the same question in the same order (Silverman, 2016). Member checking is an opportunity for participants to confirm their responses and adjust their responses, if necessary (Turner et al., 2017). Following these steps was important to ensure that the data collected were consistent with what occurred in the environment, which supports reliability.

Dependability involves the researcher accounting for environmental factors that could impact the study. Researchers are able to establish dependability through documenting the research procedure. In dependability, scholars address how the data and study accurately reflect the research question (Connelly, 2016; Gile & Handcock, 2010). Petty, Thomson, and Stew (2012) concluded that dependability is the magnitude to which an independent researcher can duplicate the study. To ensure dependability, I remained focused on the subject and omitted data and observations not applicable to the topic.

Validity

The concept of validity addresses the soundness of the research project. Scholars determine validity if the results of the research project accurately reflect the environment investigated (Leung, 2015). As Smith (2015) explained, qualitative scholars are responsible for ensuring credibility, dependability, and transferability of the results. I used the following concepts to ensure the validity of this study: credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

I ensured credibility for my study. Credibility involves determining if the data are believable and applicable to the participants and environment from people living the experience (Thomas, 2017; Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2016). When researchers use evidence that is free from bias, distortion, and error, they can increase credibility (Yin, 2018). I interviewed nonprofit organizational leaders to understand volunteer retention. I used member checking and allowed participants to review my interpretations of their answers to interview questions. My rationale for using these processes was to ensure the interview transcripts and my interpretation of the words accurately conveyed the intended message from participants. Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested that member checking helps reduce the misinterpretation of the participants' views. I repeated the member checking process until each participant had no other feedback to provide. I completed these processes and techniques to ensure credibility for the study.

I also addressed transferability when I reported the results of my study. Transferability involves the degree or magnitude in which the results of a study can be transferred to similar settings (Freitas, Riberio, Brandao, Reis, de Souza, & Costa, 2017; Parker & Northcott, 2016). Cypress (2017) suggested that purposive sampling may potentially improve transferability. Although transferability is not a benefit of qualitative research, people can apply the results from my study to other settings or to fill a void in the academy about the topic. To ensure transferability, I interviewed nonprofit leaders from diverse organizations in hopes that the collective responses would tell the story of nonprofit leaders in general.

I ensured that readers understood my data analysis process and discussion of the results by reviewing the data multiple times and considering various perspectives of how I drafted my findings. I wanted to uphold the confirmability concept and ensure it was applicable to my study. Confirmability involves how various people would interpret the data; would two or more researchers draw the same conclusions based on the data collected and analyzed (Ary et al., 2018; Yates & Leggett, 2016). Confirmability often involves seeking alternative stands about the data to ensure the soundest and rational conclusions materialize. Bailey and Bailey (2017) suggested that researchers connect the findings of the research to the data to accomplish confirmability. I reviewed the data multiple times and critically analyzed the data when developing themes to ensure other researchers understand how I drew the conclusions and how the findings emerged. I ensured I considered multiple perspectives and drafted the findings in a manner that readers would believe and understand.

Data saturation is another important component of qualitative research. Data saturation is the methods researchers use to ensure additional information is not revealed or available to address the research questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Failure to achieve data saturation may result in missing themes or not accurately reporting the lived experiences of participants related to the phenomenon studied (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016; Silverman, 2015). I used member checking to ensure data saturation occurred. Researchers can achieve data saturation by continuously interviewing participants until the additional information reveals there are no new themes (O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014). I interpreted participants' answers to interview questions and gave this interpretation back to the participants to validate their answers. This process occurred until each participant had no additional information to share or revise based on the written text. Once I was confident no additional data were available, I then analyzed the results.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of the research study was to explore the strategies nonprofit organizational leaders use to increase volunteer retention. I conducted the study using qualitative, multiple case research design involving nonprofit organizational leaders in Georgia. The study results could assist nonprofit organizational leaders in having the strategies they need to retain volunteers and enabling the organizations to better serve communities.

In Section 2, I stated an overview of the purpose statement, a description of the role of the researcher, and the data collection process. I analyzed the research methodology, research design, and data analysis. I explored the components of ethical research and data instrumentation, collection, organization, and analysis techniques used to conduct this study. I discussed the various reliability and validity threats in the study.

Section 3 includes identifying and analyzing each theme as well as a relation to the themes. I will compare my findings with other peer-reviewed studies from my literature review. It will analyze my findings to my conceptual framework and tie the findings to the existing literature on effective business practice.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain volunteers. In this section, I present the findings of my interviews with three nonprofit organizational leaders and the review of publicly available organizational documents. I found the following strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders implement to retain volunteers: (a) providing proper training to volunteers, (b) keeping volunteers engaged and motivated, (c) showing volunteers the effects of their volunteering, (d) building relationships with volunteers and, (e) providing volunteers with a positive and fun experience.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question for this qualitative, multiple case study was as follows: What strategies do nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain volunteers? I will discuss the themes that emerged from conducting semistructured interviews with three nonprofit organizational leaders and reviewing publicly available documentation related to volunteer retention.

Theme 1: Strategies for Providing Proper Training to Volunteers

Theme 1 pertained to leaders providing proper training to all volunteers to retain volunteers. Theme 1 emerged from the participants’ responses. Volunteer 1 expressed, “we train our volunteers through proper orientation and inform them of our past success. We make them aware and understand how important it is to build on our reputation.” Volunteer 2 added,

> We feel that providing our volunteers with the adequate training, they develop a better understanding of how our organization works. We want our volunteers to enjoy being a part of our team and in order for them to have a full understanding of our day-to-day operations, we deem training as a necessary function in their success.

Volunteer 3 agreed that

> in providing our volunteers with the necessary level of training, they become more proficient and capable of carrying out the roles and responsibilities of our organization. In providing our volunteers with training, not only are we making a statement that our organization is professional, but we are capable of doing great work and making a difference because of them.

Participants agreed that training each of their volunteers entering their organization led to an increase of productivity and commitment to the organization. Two out of three of the nonprofit organizations' volunteer handbook supported Theme 1. The organizations' policies placed importance on the value of properly training their volunteers, describing volunteers as their *most valuable resource* and stating that providing volunteer training will help volunteers manage the duties and responsibilities of the organization. The organization's leaders believed in properly training each volunteer to ensure that their organization was successful based on publicly available organizational documentation. The organizations' volunteer handbook showed that volunteer training is available to all volunteers.

Theme 1, providing proper training to volunteers, aligned with the current literature. Scholars claimed that volunteers must be given the support they need, through proper training, for them to perform the task assigned (McBee, 2002). Supervisors should provide guidance, advice, and feedback. When volunteers are properly trained, volunteers become motivated and committed to performing the duties and responsibilities set forth on behalf of the organization (Little, 1999). McBee (2002) recommended implementing training programs for volunteers to minimize any potential problems that may occur regarding volunteers performing their duties and responsibilities within the organization. When volunteers are properly trained on their roles and responsibilities within the organization, leaders ensure volunteer understanding of, and compliance with, the policies of the organization (McBee, 2002). Leaders use training to provide volunteers with the direction and skillset that they need to successfully carry out their tasks.

The theme of providing volunteers with proper training aligned with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow's self-esteem need, individuals need to feel that they are valued by others and to sense that they are contributing to the world. Self-esteem increases when volunteers are trained to perform tasks correctly because volunteers perform task with confidence (Lee & Brudney, 2015). Nonprofit organizational leaders can use effective training programs and/or orientations to increase volunteer self-esteem, resulting in increased volunteer retention. Nonprofit organizational leaders can use training programs as they fit their organizations.

Theme 2: Strategies for Keeping Volunteers Engaged and Motivated

In Theme 2, nonprofit organizational leaders explained strategies for engaging and motivating volunteers. Volunteer 1 explained that

> when volunteers feel engaged and motivated to serve, it becomes contagious. When our volunteers realize we truly love what we do, and they see other volunteers loving what they do, they take note of that. When you treat people right, they treat other people right and it's a tribble down effect from there.

Volunteer 2 added that, "when you provide volunteers with a great experience and make a good first impression, they become more engaged in the process. They feel a sense of belonging because they feel appreciated." Volunteer 3 further explained that

> people volunteer and continue volunteering with our organization because we show them that they are valued. We value their time, commitment, input and feedback. If something isn't working, we figure out why. We want all of our volunteers to know the time and commitment they give to our organization is greatly appreciated and their hard work does not go unnoticed.

Nonprofit organizational leaders can develop trust with their volunteers by actively motivating and engaging them as they volunteer. Volunteers tend to do more when they feel a sense of belonging to the organization they are serving. All three organizations' mission statements supported Theme 2 regarding volunteer engagement and motivation. The organizations' volunteer guidelines encouraged volunteers to work closely with supervisors to develop effective means of communication to meet the organizations' commitment to fostering engagement and motivation with volunteers. All three nonprofit organizations’ websites shared success stories of former volunteers speaking of their testimonies, affirming the impact that engagement and motivation played during their experience with the organization.

Theme 2, keeping volunteers engaged and motivated, aligned with the current literature. Scholars concurred that motivation plays a role in nonprofit organizations. Individuals feel the need to volunteer and continue volunteering when they feel motivated to do so (Ortega, 2013). Once an individual feels a sense of belongingness, the individual becomes motivated to continue serving. Costello et al. (2017) determined that people volunteer because of compassion, commitment to public interest, self-sacrifice, or their overall civic duty. Jigssa, Desta, Tilahum, McCutcheon, and Berman (2018) determined that volunteers are motivated by individual-level and community-level factors in which the community benefits from their service. As an individual’s personal motivations change over time, so does the individual’s motivation to volunteer.

Theme 2 also aligned with Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow (1954) determined that human motivation is based on individuals seeking change through personal growth and self-fulfillment. Maslow (year?) determined that an individual is motivated based on his or her satisfaction and expression of basic needs. Motivation is a driving force behind why individuals begin and continue to volunteer. Nonprofit organizational leaders can engage volunteers and keep volunteers motivated to increase volunteer retention. When volunteers are engaged and motivated to volunteer, they tend to continue their service.

Theme 3: Strategies for Showing Volunteers the Effects of Their Volunteering

I found that leaders claimed it was important to show volunteers the effects of their volunteering. Volunteer 1 explained that

> often times people want to volunteer with our program, but they do not understand the time and commitment that it takes. We sit down with each of our volunteers during their orientation process and go through everything there is to know about our organization. But what we spend most of our time doing is educating our volunteers of the impact that they have on the success of our organization. We show them how not only their efforts effect the organization as a whole but most importantly the impact they have on the lives of those they come in contact with.

Volunteer 2 added,

> When we sit down with our volunteers, we explain to them the importance of having them on board. We show them some of our pervious success stories. We even go to the point where we bring in current volunteers that have actually been serviced as a result of our organization. When they hear those success stories from real life people, they get to see the true effects their volunteering has on our organization and the community.

Volunteer 3 commented, “when volunteers understand the true impact of what they do, they tend to have a greater appreciation of their roles. They get to see firsthand the lives they touch simply by donating their time and being committed to serving.”

I found that the participants felt it was easier to retain volunteers when they showed volunteers the positive effects of their service.

Two out of three of the nonprofit organizations' volunteer handbooks supported Theme 3, showing volunteers the positive effects of their service. All three nonprofit organizations highlighted testimonies of former volunteers and the impact of their service to the organization on their website. Archival documentation also revealed key components of the impact of volunteer involvement, including gaining career experience and job skills.

Individuals volunteer for many different reasons; however, they may not understand the true effects of their service. Wilson and Musick (1999) indicated that volunteers can be retained when leaders show volunteers the effects of their service. Many people select an agency in which to volunteer based on the mission of the organization or personal interest (Finkelstien, 2009; Meier & Stutzer, 2008). Wilson and Musick (1999) stated that if volunteering can be shown as a positive measure of giving back to the community, perhaps more people would do it. Finkelstien (2009) argued that volunteers may be taken for granted, and their contributions of time and effort are not recognized. However, volunteers play a role in the nonprofit sector and society (Freeman, 1997). Theme 3, consisting of showing volunteers the positive effects of their volunteering aligned with the current literature.

Showing volunteers the effect of their volunteering theme also aligned with Maslow's (1943) conceptual framework. Maslow demonstrated that an individual's wants and desires may be influenced by the individual's behavior. In addition, Maslow determined that human motivation is based on individuals seeking change through personal growth and self-fulfillment. Many volunteers may not fully understand the value of their service to organizations and the impact of their service on the operations and services offered. However, nonprofit organizational leaders could show volunteers the positive effects behind their service.

Theme 4: Strategies for Building Relationships with Volunteers

In Theme 4, the participants expressed that building relationships with their volunteers was an essential part of their success. Volunteer 1 commented,

> One of the many reasons our organization has been so successful over the years is due to the relationships that we've built with our volunteers. We don't see our volunteers as volunteers, we see them as a part of our family. We gain a lot of our volunteers through recommendations from those that have volunteered with our organization in the past. In addition to that, we have people that have come through our organization before and later became volunteers.

Volunteer 2 added, "when volunteers feel a sense of connection to you and your organization, they tend to above and beyond what is expected of them. They tend to view their volunteering as a passion and a purpose." Volunteer 3 commented,

> Relationships are the key to the success of our organization. Without us building relationships with our volunteers, I do not think we would be as successful as we are. We treat our volunteers as family and that's what keeps our volunteers coming back home.

All participants agreed that building trust and relationships with volunteers was key when retaining volunteers. All three nonprofit organizations' volunteer handbook supported Theme 4, building relationships with their volunteers. The organizations considered building relationships between supervisors and volunteers as a significant reason behind their success. Volunteer handbooks revealed success stories of former volunteers and the appreciation of fostering lasting relationships between the organization and the volunteers. The organization acknowledged in their volunteer guidelines that building lasting relationships was a key to the success of the organization.

Theme 4, consisting of building relationships with volunteers, aligned with the current literature. Scholars discussed the advantages of having working relationships with their volunteers. Freeman (1997) and Webb et al. (2015) felt that these relationships may be established by asking individuals to volunteer. Freeman suggested that being asked to volunteer is a contributing factor to volunteering. People rarely volunteer at organizations where they are not dedicated or express some form of appeal to the organization. Webb et al. indicated that people continued to volunteer, arrive on time, and volunteered for more/longer shifts when they felt valued and appreciated. Aked (2015) determined that there is a correlation between the importance of relationships to the way volunteers affect change. When relationships are established between the nonprofit organizational leader and the volunteers, the volunteers feel a sense of belonging to the organization as a whole.

Theme 4, consisting of building relationships with volunteers, aligned with Maslow's (1943) conceptual framework. Social needs/belonging needs include associations with others and feelings of love and affection (D'Souza & Gurin, 2016). Cornerstones of the social needs/belonging level include developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, such as romantic relationships, family connections, religious or community groups, and platonic friendships. At this level, the need for emotional relationships drives human behavior. When individuals volunteer, they are fulfilling social and belonging needs because of the connection to the organization and the community.

Theme 5: Strategies for Providing Volunteers with a Positive and Fun Experience

Theme 5 consisted of participants expressing strategies for providing volunteers with a positive and fun experience when they are volunteering. Volunteer 1 stated, "we realize that volunteers come and go; it's just the nature of volunteer work. However, it is critical to provide volunteers with a great volunteer experience to keep them coming back to serve." Volunteer 2 added,

> We realize that people's availability and priorities change and the best thing we can do is continue to be flexible, to keep learning and to try new things. We realize that our volunteers could have gone to any other organization but they chose ours. Therefore, we make it our duty to ensure they have a memorable experience when they volunteer with our organization.

Volunteer 3 agreed that

> we believe in providing our volunteers with a great experience. Not only do we give off a good impression but we always make their effort worth their time, we are flexible, and we show appreciation for their service. We always look for ways

to show our appreciation for our volunteers because after all, they are committing their time to serving our organization and our community.

All participants agreed that providing volunteers with a positive and fun experience resulted in increased volunteer retention. All three nonprofit organizations' mission statement supported Theme 5, showing the importance of providing volunteers with a positive and fun experience. In organizational documentation, leaders echoed the sentiments expressed by the participants. According to the organizations' archival documents, former volunteers provided comments based on their positive and fun experience with volunteering in the organization. The documents further illustrated the importance of volunteers enjoying themselves when they volunteered.

Theme 5, consisting of providing volunteers with a positive and fun volunteer experience, was supported in the current literature. Green (2002) stated that volunteers will dedicate their time for a cause where they deem the environment to be hospitable and encouraging. Freeman (1997) concluded that volunteers working with an organization where they feel a sense of enjoyment, are more likely to continue committing their service. When volunteers have a positive and fun experience, they tend to continue serving.

Theme 5, consisting of providing volunteers with a positive and fun volunteer experience, aligned with Maslow's (1943) conceptual framework. According to Maslow, happiness is described as self-actualized individuals feeling accomplished and doing all they are capable of doing. When an individual is happy, the individual has the ability to become the best version of oneself. As a result, providing volunteers with a positive and fun experience adds value for them, and they are more likely to return to serve the organization.

Applications to Professional Practice

Volunteers assist in the day-to-day operations of nonprofit organizations. Volunteers perform many duties, including clerical, fundraising, program planning, maintenance, mentoring, and tutoring (Dekker & Halman, 2003). Individually and collectively, volunteers provide considerable time, skills, and services to organizations and communities (Kim, Kim, & Odio, 2010; Neumann, 2010). Volunteerism is a means of civic engagement, community development, and social responsibility (Bloom & Kilgore, 2003; Clary & Snyder, 1999). Some individuals volunteer because they believe in the cause they are supporting or it is important to them (McBee, 2002). Individuals also want to make a contribution to organizations and society through their service (Green, 2002). Nonprofit organizational leaders can use the findings from this study to heighten their existing strategies or to implement effective strategies to help retain volunteers.

In my interviews with nonprofit organizational leaders and my review of the organizations' archival documents, I uncovered five themes related to the strategies that the leaders use to retain volunteers. I used Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs to guide this study. All of the themes from the interviews and document review aligned with the motivational theory of Maslow. The participants agreed that their volunteers understood their organizations' mission, values and the role that each of their volunteers played within the organization. All of the participants had been with their organization well over

5 years. Other nonprofit organizational leaders can apply the findings and recommendations from this study to implement successful strategies to retain volunteers.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study may contribute to positive social change by providing nonprofit organizational leaders with effective strategies to help retain volunteers and increase their contributions to the organizations. Nonprofit organizations could develop proper training programs to effectively train volunteers. Nonprofit organizations might implement methods of keeping volunteers actively engaged and motivated whether that be through various programs or by providing volunteers with a mentor. Nonprofit organizational leaders could show volunteers the affects and benefits of their volunteering. Leaders should focus on the benefit for the individual to volunteer and what that benefit means to volunteers. In addition, nonprofit organizational leaders can build relationships with volunteers. Volunteers frequently provide services directly to clients of nonprofit organizations (Renz, 2016). These services may include tutoring, providing medical care, counseling, or delivery of meals (Kramer & Danielson, 2016). Nonprofit organizational leaders and the local community could benefit from obtaining a better approach for successfully recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Recommendations for Action

The lack of research in the area of volunteer motivation makes it difficult to develop effective programs and environments to recruit and retain volunteers. Without volunteers, several nonprofit organizations may not be able to offer the same caliber of services or continue to operate (Simmons & Emanuel, 2010). Academics and professionals may assume what circumstances motivate people to volunteer but, without scholarly evidence, the thoughts and annotates should not be the sole source of data to inform decision-making or strategic planning efforts (Shye, 2010). Considering the role that volunteers play within organizations and communities, exploring how to attract and retain volunteers can aid nonprofit organizational leaders.

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain volunteers. In the themes derived from participants' interviews and organizational documents, I found that nonprofit organizational leaders should ensure that volunteers have proper training prior to beginning their volunteer experience. First, I recommend that nonprofit organizational leaders not currently having a training program use some of the themes identified in this study to implement an effective training program to provide their volunteers with adequate training. Training programs help volunteers get to know the organization and the day-to-day operations of the organization. Although teaching volunteers to perform various task within nonprofit organizations may be difficult, it is often critical for their success. When nonprofit organizations create effective training programs, organizational leaders reduce potential problems, while making sure that volunteers have the most effective and comprehensive learning as possible.

Second, I recommend that nonprofit organizational leaders consider implementing programs where volunteers can become more involved throughout the volunteering process. Nonprofit organizational leaders should implement ways of keeping their volunteers engaged and motivated. When volunteers are giving of their time, leaders should provide them with feedback to assure them that their service is valued. Leaders could fuel their passion and help volunteers connect more on a personal level with the mission of the organization by keeping them informed and engaged. When volunteers feel appreciated, they are more prone to stay and commit more of their time to serve the organization.

Third, I recommend showing volunteers the impact that they have on the perspective organizations. Nonprofit organizational leaders need to effectively show volunteers the effects of their volunteering. Volunteers can appreciate knowing that their individual service is making an impact on the organization and community they serve. Nonprofit organizational leaders should consider ways of strategically measuring volunteer impact so that volunteers can understand their true value of their supporters, the organization, and the communities they serve.

Lastly, I recommend that nonprofit organizational leaders build relationships with their volunteers. When volunteers feel a sense of belonging, they are more probable to continue their service. Nonprofit organizational leaders should reevaluate their existing recruiting strategies related to the way they retain volunteers or implement new strategies that focus on the benefits for the volunteer committing their time and service to the organization. I will share the results of this study with the participants and publish the findings in regional nonprofit organizations’ publications.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings from this study include strategies for retaining volunteers from the nonprofit organizational leaders’ perspective. The results of this study can be used to help nonprofit organizational leaders recruit and retain volunteers. Specifically, organizations can use the results of this study to inform program and strategic planning efforts related to volunteerism. Nonprofit organizational leaders can use the results to assess their environments and create spaces that encourage initial and long-term service. I recommend conducting a quantitative study to measure the correlation between strategies for retaining volunteers and the factors or conditions of the facility where the participants volunteer. I also recommend conducting a quantitative study measuring the relationship between volunteer satisfaction and the retention of volunteers. A limitation of this study was that the study focused on three nonprofit organizations. I recommend that future researchers explore a larger sample size or even multiple participants from each organization. In addition, I conducted my study in the State of Georgia and, consequently, future researchers may focus on other geographical locations in the United States.

Reflections

My experience as a Walden University doctoral student was challenging yet rewarding. I learned to understand that there are challenges to doctoral level research. I have heightened my academic writing capability that has changed my discernment of other scholars and their research findings. Throughout the entire process, I have learned the many steps of conducting research and how to present accurate findings of a study. I would also like to add that the Walden University’s residencies, library, and Writing Center were all helpful.

My interest and desire for retaining volunteers resulted in my choice to potentially have a career shift as a nonprofit organizational leader. Although I had no preconceived notions on the topic of volunteer retention, I now have a better understanding of volunteer retention and a greater awareness of how to successfully retain volunteers. From my experience in this study, I have gained a new perspective on the value of volunteers and the importance of retaining them.

I was not concerned about adding any bias prior to the interviews; however, I ensured that I used my interview protocol. I asked the same interview questions in the same way and order to each participant. I felt a bit overwhelmed during the data analysis process. It was imperative that I immersed myself completely into the study in order to gain a greater understanding of the data collected. Through the findings of the study, I obtained a new outlook on strategies for retaining volunteers within nonprofit organizations. The findings of this study are important because the results will be shared with other nonprofit organizational leaders, providing successful strategies so that other leaders may have a better chance of retaining their volunteers.

Conclusion

Volunteers perform critical functions for nonprofit organizations. As a result, nonprofit organizational leaders are realizing more the value that volunteers bring to their organization. Nonprofit organizational leaders can benefit from effectively retaining valuable volunteers. Nonprofit organizations that implement volunteer training programs keep their volunteers engaged and motivated, show volunteers the affects they have on volunteering with the organization, and establish relationships with their volunteers, having a greater chance of retaining volunteers.

The results of my study support and align with the evidence I found in previous research on the strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain volunteers. Using data collected from participant interviews and archival organizational data, I found strategies that nonprofit organizational leaders use to retain volunteers. All participants of this study implemented successful strategies for retaining their volunteers. Participants confirmed the importance of implementing successful strategies in order for volunteers to continue their service. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations could help other nonprofit organizations' leaders understand effective strategies to implement in order to retain volunteers.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Interview Date: ______________________________ Interview Time: _______________

Interview Location: ____

Name of Participant: _______________________________ Pseudonym: _____________

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. As a doctoral student at Walden University, I Quinita Morrow, will be conducting this study. I appreciate the time you took to meet with me. Once again, the purpose of this study is to explore the strategies nonprofit organizational leaders use to increase volunteer retention. Your contribution may help nonprofit organizational leaders develop strategies to retain volunteers. I have included a copy of the interview protocol and your signed consent form for your records.

With your permission, I will record your response and all the information you provide for this study is confidential. As a reminder, you can withdraw from the interview at any time without any penalty. After today's interview, I will transcribe your responses and send you a copy of the transcript so that you can review it for accuracy. I will also set up a follow-up session to give you the opportunity to provide any additional information you may have. Thank you and we will begin the interview shortly. The interview should last no more than 60 minutes. Do you need anything before we begin such as water or a restroom break? Do you have any questions? I will record your response to the following interview questions:

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to retain volunteers?

2. What are key barriers to implementing your successful strategies for retaining volunteers?
3. How did you address the key barriers in order to successfully retain volunteers?
4. How have you assessed the effectiveness of your strategies to retain volunteers?
5. What else would you like to share with me about strategies you use to retain volunteers?

Wrap Up

This concludes our interview. Thank you again for agreeing to take part in this study voluntarily. I will send you a copy of the transcript for your review. When will be a good day and time for us to meet for a follow up interview?

Follow up interview Date: ______________________________ Time: _______________

Do you have any questions for me? Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.