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# Employee Turnover in Frontline Hospital Staff

Jeanne Lynn Wilson  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Jeanne Wilson

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Walden University  
2016

Abstract

Employee Turnover in Frontline Hospital Staff

by

Jeanne L. Wilson

MBA, Florida Institute of Technology, 1995

BBA, Loyola University – New Orleans, 1991

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2016

## Abstract

Employee turnover is costly in service-intensive organizations where employee-customer interactions directly affect the organization's success. The purpose of this multiple case study was to identify strategies community hospital leaders use to reduce frontline support employee turnover. The study population consisted of leaders of a community hospital in southeast Louisiana. The conceptual framework for this study is Kahn's model of employee engagement. Semistructured interviews were conducted with eight hospital leaders in southeast Louisiana who were selected through census sampling. Interview transcripts were analyzed and coded following Yin's case study analysis process. Methodological triangulation allowed for a comparison of the findings of the interviews with information derived from exit interviews and employee engagement survey results. Four themes emerged from the interviews and document review: leadership, hiring and onboarding strategies, pay and compensation, and organizational-related factors. Reducing turnover among frontline hospital support employees can positively affect the quality of care provided to patients, and improve the level of service provided by the hospital to the community it serves. Beyond increasing organizational efficiency, the findings of this study can contribute to social change benefits for employees as continued employment allows individuals to provide for themselves and their families.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this study to my father, Donald Wilson, who instilled in me a love of learning and the confidence that I can do whatever I set out to do. Although he is no longer physically with us, his spirit lives on through those he touched. I also dedicate this to my mother, Jean Wilson, my best friend. I was fortunate to be blessed with the best parents anyone could have asked for. You taught me from a young age that through Christ all things are possible.

## Acknowledgments

I acknowledge those who have walked with me through this journey. First, my family, especially Karissa and Linda, who continually supported me on this journey. You show me on a daily basis how lucky I am to have you in my life. Second, my friends who encouraged me and patiently listened to me complain. I believe the lyrics from *For Good* apply to how you have influenced me.

I would especially like to acknowledge the leaders of the organization who allowed me to use the hospital as the basis for my study. You are true leaders who make a difference in people's lives every day. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules. I also appreciate the confidence you have shown in me by allowing me to expand my role in taking on new challenges.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee turnover is costly to organizations, with replacement costs estimated to range from 32% to 114% of an individual's annual salary (Collins, McKinnies, Matthews, & Collins, 2015). The cost of employee turnover extends beyond the actual cost of replacing the employee, having a negative impact on productivity and customer service (Park & Shaw, 2013). Voluntary turnover occurs when the individual chooses to leave the organization of his or her own volition (Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012). Turnover among frontline support employees within a hospital can affect the organization's ability to deliver safe, quality care.

### **Background of the Problem**

Employee turnover is challenging in service-intensive industries such as health care where the employees have a direct impact on the quality of patient care (Zuberi & Ptashnick, 2011). The cost to replace an employee is a nonvalue added expense to an organization's budget (Hayes et al., 2012; Park & Shaw, 2013). The costs include recruiting, hiring, and training, and extends to organizational productivity, as replacement employees are slower and require additional training (Cohen, 2012; Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, & Keiser, 2012). The cost of turnover for entry-level employees is 30% to 50% of their annual salary (Laddha, Singh, Gabbad, & Gidwani, 2012). While previous research addressed turnover in food service (Jung & Yoon, 2014; Mohsin & Lengler, 2015) and the hotel industry (Mohsin, Lengler, & Kumar, 2013), little research has focused on strategies to reduce turnover of frontline support employees in hospitals.

### **Problem Statement**

In 2015, one in four healthcare employees left their place of employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2015). Turnover is costly to organizations, with the average cost of replacing an employee often exceeding 100% of the employee's annual compensation (Bryant & Allen, 2013). The general business problem is that some hospital leaders are unable to retain frontline support employees, which negatively affects patient care and organizational productivity. The specific business problem is that some community hospital leaders lack strategies to reduce frontline support employee turnover.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that community hospital leaders use to reduce frontline support employee turnover. The target population comprises hospital leaders of a single community hospital located in southeast Louisiana who have strategies to reduce frontline support employee turnover. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to benefit society through continued, steady employment of individuals in entry-level positions.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a qualitative methodology for this study. A qualitative method was appropriate for this study as this method allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon within the context of the participants, in their natural setting (Yin, 2014). Qualitative methods also allow the researcher to interpret information considering the situational context, seeking to understand the individual's point of view (Stake, 2010). The study of

strategies to reduce turnover of frontline support employee is situational, with the data collection based on the perspective of leaders who have developed such strategies. A quantitative method was not appropriate for this study as those methods are associated with a positivist worldview, using deductive reasoning in an attempt to test theories through statistical evidence (Christ, 2013). Mixed methods was not an appropriate approach for this study it is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, based in the pragmatic worldview (Christ, 2013; Venkatesh, Brown & Bala, 2013). The basis for this study was the single worldview of constructivism, which is associated with the qualitative method (Stake, 2010).

A multiple exploratory case study design was appropriate for this study based on Marshall and Rossman's (2016) statement that the researcher should select the design based on the purpose and intended use of the study. The multiple case study design is appropriate to explore a contemporary event where the researcher has no control, and where there is no clear delineation between the phenomenon and context (Yin, 2014).

A phenomenological design allows the researcher to explore the lived experiences of the participants, or the meaning of a common event shared by all participants where the context and setting may be clearly delineated (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). An ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study as ethnographic studies are characterized by the researcher's immersion in the situation and natural setting of the participants of the study focusing on the participant's actions, not the participant's interpretation of their activities (Hinder & Greenhalgh, 2012). The phenomenon of

strategies to reduce frontline support employee turnover and the context of turnover within a hospital are inter-related, and there is no clear delineation between the phenomenon and context.

### **Research Question**

A qualitative research design calls for a central question and a related set of sub questions. The central question of the study was: what strategies do community hospital leaders use to reduce frontline support employee turnover?

### **Interview Questions**

A benefit of open-ended questions using the semistructured interview technique is that it gives the participants a chance to provide their point of view while at the same time ensuring specific topics are addressed (Mojtahed, Baptista Nunes, Tiago Martins, & Peng, 2014; Rabionet, 2011). This allows for follow up on emerging issues discovered through the participants' responses to questions (Rabionet, 2011). Participant viewpoints led to the development of themes and patterns to identify community hospital leaders' strategies in reducing frontline support employee turnover.

### **Interview Questions**

1. What are some of the forces that influence frontline support employee turnover?
2. What strategies do you use that are most effective in reducing frontline support turnover?
3. What strategies were the least effective in reducing frontline support

employee turnover?

4. What are some of the barriers to implementing strategies that reduce frontline support employee turnover?
5. What other information would you like to provide regarding this topic?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The basis of this study of frontline support employee turnover is Kahn's (1990) concept of employee engagement. Employee engagement describes the employee's willingness to expend discretionary energy on behalf of the organization (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Employee engagement differs from job satisfaction; satisfaction does not necessarily encompass the energetic enthusiasm of the connotations in the term engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Employee engagement is a desired condition, where the individual exhibits connection to the organization's purpose, demonstrates focused effort, and is passionate about their work (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Engagement is both attitudinal and behavioral, where the individual directs their efforts toward the betterment of the organization (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Job and organizational engagement predicts employee outcomes, including intention to quit (Lowe, 2012; Saks, 2006). The concept of employee engagement applies to this study as previous research supports the link between employee engagement and reducing frontline support employee turnover.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Employee engagement:* The degree to which an individual commits their personal



self physically, cognitively, and emotionally to the roles they perform within the workplace (Kahn, 1990; Saks & Gruman, 2014).

*Job satisfaction:* The individual's attitude toward their job, either positive or negative (Lu, Barriball, Zhang, & While, 2012).

*Organizational Commitment:* The individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

*Turnover:* The rate of gains and losses of employees within an organization, with departures classified as either voluntary or involuntary (Anvari, JianFu, & Chermahini, 2014; Roche, Duffield, Homer, Buchan, & Dimitrelis, 2014).

*Voluntary turnover:* Employee-initiated separation from the employing organization (Hom et al., 2012).

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

Assumptions provide a framework for the study identifying the areas assumed to be true, based on the research design and method (Ellis & Levy, 2009; Vogt, 2005).

Limitations are those areas considered uncontrollable within the research environment, and delimitations are those areas that are outside the scope of the research (Ellis & Levy, 2009; Vogt, 2005). The disclosure of these assumptions, limitations, and delimitations supports the desire for objectivity in researching the experiences of the selected study population.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are statements presumed to be true, denoting the conditions under

which the research is performed, and identifying the things accepted as true and factual without firm evidence (Ellis & Levy, 2009; Vogt, 2005). My first assumption was that the leaders of the selected organization were willing to participate in this study. A second assumption was that those who willingly participated answered answer questions honestly and candidly, with the understanding that their responses were confidential. My third assumption was the information shared by the selected participants reflected the perspective of those who have experience in developing and implementing strategies to reduce frontline support employee turnover.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are those situations surrounding or inherent to the study which are uncontrollable by the researcher, and which threaten the validity of the study (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Diefenbach (2008) argued that participant subjectivity in telling their story influences interview-based qualitative research. The nature of the study limits the research to the specific departments involved in the research. Another limitation of the study was that the findings may not be transferable to other departments within the same hospital or to similar departments within other community hospitals. The study is limited to participants identified through census sampling namely the senior management team, the department directors, the supervisors of the housekeeping and dietary departments, and the director of human resources. No correlation or causality could be determined based on statistical analysis on the information.

## **Delimitations**

Delimitations within a research study specify the characteristics of the population or sample included in the study, distinguishing what the researcher will not include (Ellis & Levy, 2009; Vogt, 2005). Delimitations define the scope and set the boundaries of this study to provide context and acknowledge considerations regarding transferability and applicability to other settings (Thompson & Perry, 2004). The first delimitation of this study was that it was focused on the housekeeping and dietary departments of a community hospital in southeast Louisiana. Strategies developed and implemented by hospital leaders to reduce frontline support employee turnover was another delimitation of this study. Another delimitation is that turnover of professional and clinical staff was not included as part of this study.

## **Significance of the Study**

Hospitals rely on clinical and support staff to operate effectively and efficiently. Turnover among frontline support employees can affect the hospital's ability to deliver quality care and in providing necessary health services to the community. The intent of this study was to explore strategies used by community hospital leaders to reduce frontline support employee turnover.

## **Contribution to Business Practice**

This study is of value to the practice of business because of the costs, reduced productivity, and decrease in patient satisfaction associated with employee turnover. Previous studies have addressed turnover among nurses in various contexts, yet few

studies have examined the support staff responsible for maintaining a clean environment and providing meals for patients (Zuberi & Ptashnick, 2011). Frontline staff members influence customer satisfaction and engagement when they positively interact with customers in delivering service (Cambra-Fierro, Melero-Polo & Vazquez-Carrasco, 2014). Housekeeping staff are considered key frontline staff, as their job responsibilities are directly linked to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) patient satisfaction standards, particularly the measure assessing the patient's perception of room cleanliness (CMS, 2013). Turnover among hospital employees negatively relates to patient satisfaction (Reilly, Nyberg, Maltarich, & Weller, 2014).

The findings of this study may contribute to business practice as successfully developing and implementing strategies to reduce frontline support employee turnover can improve patient satisfaction and the organization's financial performance. Reducing turnover of frontline support employees has the potential to contribute to effective hospital operations. Improving patient satisfaction and the quality of patient care through reducing support employee turnover could influence the level of reimbursement, which is contingent on patient satisfaction and outcome measures.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Continued employment gives a person a means of income to provide for themselves and their families. The frontline support jobs, which were the focus of this study, are full-time and part-time positions, which are all eligible for health insurance and other benefits. The implication for social change is that continued employment provides

steady income for these individuals and their families, as well as providing access to health benefits that might not be available if the individual is unemployed.

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

Turnover is costly for organizations; replacement costs range from 32% to 114% of an individual's annual salary (Collins et al., 2015). The average turnover rate based on survey participant reports was 20% in 2012 (Collins et al., 2015). Eleven percent of U.S. hospitals reported turnover rates between 24% and 42% (Collins et al., 2015). Contemporary researchers address the issue of turnover through two paths, voluntary or involuntary turnover (Hom et al., 2012). Voluntary turnover occurs when an individual chooses to leave the organization of his or her own volition (Hom et al., 2012). Problems with identifying causes of turnover can occur when the reason for an individual's leaving the organization is categorized post-departure (Hom et al., 2012). This process of retrospective categorization causes leaders to form incorrect assumptions regarding the causes of employee departures (Hom et al., 2012), and thereby create a lack of development of effective strategies to increase retention. A better understanding of turnover requires exploring the post-departure employment destination, not just the classification as voluntary or involuntary. Hom et al. (2012) recommended including a new construct of proximal withdrawal states, classifying employees as enthusiastic leavers, reluctant leavers, or reluctant stayers. The distinction between categorization of leavers is the determination of the person making the decision to terminate the relationship (Hom et al., 2012). Those termed enthusiastic leavers choose to withdraw

from the organization in a planned leave such as retirement, or for a better job offer (Hom et al., 2012). Individuals classified as reluctant leavers include those who leave due to downsizing, those who are involuntary terminated, those who leave pre-emptively to avoid termination, or who leave for personal reasons unrelated to the job itself such as personal or family issues (Hom et al., 2012). Understanding these proximal states allows managers to create strategies to retain valued employees based on the mindset of employees prior to departure (Hom et al., 2012).

The literature review is organized by key themes such as employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, all of which have been linked to reducing turnover. Understanding the causes of turnover is necessary for leadership to address the antecedents of turnover. The literature review was conducted through EBSCOhost Business Source Complete, ProQuest, Emerald Management, Sage Premier, Science Direct, and Google Scholar, using keywords *employee turnover*, *employee retention*, *intention to turnover*, *employee quit*, *employee engagement*, *job satisfaction*, *organizational commitment*, *organizational culture*, and *leadership*. The literature review included journals, books, and industry and government websites. The total number of resources used in the study was 236, with 85% of the peer-reviewed journal articles published within 5 years of anticipated approval of the Walden University Chief Academic Officer.

### **Voluntary Turnover**

Previous research has focused on the many variables and the relationships

between variables that influence an individual's decision to leave their place of employment voluntarily, (Lee & Mowday, 1987). Pioneers in the field of turnover research such as Steers and Mowday, as well as Mobley identified the influence of (a) job expectations, (b) organizational characteristics and experiences, (c) job performance, (d) the availability of alternatives, and (e) outside influences such as family and personal relationships on voluntary turnover (Lee & Mowday, 1987). A model of employee turnover risk factors using quality function deployment (QFD) by Wang, Wang, Xu, and Ji (2014) categorized factors influencing turnover as external, internal, and employee status. External factors in Wang et al.'s (2014) QFD model include job availability, economic conditions, and the location of the entity. Internal factors include development opportunities, compensation, culture, and socialization (Wang et al., 2014). Employee status includes job satisfaction, work expectations, personality, family, education, and health (Wang et al., 2014). They argued using tools traditionally associated with other business functions such as product design and quality improvement can apply to turnover risks, as turnover reduces cohesiveness and has a negative impact on the organization's competency.

Lee and Mitchell (1994) suggested in their unfolding theory of voluntary turnover that individuals interpret unexpected events as a shock that becomes associated with their perceived employment situation. The shock may then activate thoughts of leaving their job as an alternative to the current situation following the shock (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Lee and Mitchell (1994), further noted that individuals can follow four decision paths

from shock or event to the decision to leave their job. These four paths are planned departure, push factors, pull factors, and dissatisfaction (Kulik, Treuren, & Bordia, 2012). Profiles emerging from research found five types of quitters based on the two dimensions: alternative job opportunity versus none, and degree of planning (none, definite, or conditional) (Maertz & Kmitta, 2012). Shock events set the decision-making process into motion, but may not be the proximal cause of the final decision to quit (Maertz & Kmitta, 2012). The shock events that influence turnover may also be related to the individual's tenure with the organization (Holtom, Tidd, Mitchell, & Lee, 2013). Shocks that cause a newly hired employee to quit, such as a poor first performance appraisal or failure to receive a pay increase, could be different from shocks that cause a seasoned employee to quit (Holtom et al., 2013).

Studies in various fields of work have found similarities and differences in reasons for the individual choosing to leave their place of employment. Causes of turnover or intention to resign include: job satisfaction, pay-promotion, supervisor-employee relationships, group dynamics, job content, and work environment (Mobley, Griffith, Hand, & Meglino, 1979).

The reasons why nurses quit their jobs include: the nature of the work or tasks involved in the job, the work environment, personal reasons, and economic reasons (Currie & Carr Hill, 2012). The nature of the work and work environment included not only the physical work environment, but also leadership and other managerial factors, poor skill mix, and lack of inclusion in decision-making (Currie & Carr Hill, 2012;



Dawson, Stasa, Roche, Homer, & Duffield, 2014). Personal reasons that might cause an individual to leave their job include home life, age-related factors, disparity in the values and ethics of the individual versus the organization, and other career opportunities (Currie & Carr Hill, 2012). Increased patient expectations, limited career and employment options, poor staff attitude, workplace culture, lack of control, and management practice influenced nurses to consider leaving the organization (Dawson et al., 2014; De Cuyper, Mauno, Kinnunen, & Mäkikangas, 2011).

Russell and Van Sell (2012) challenged what they termed the *black box* approach to voluntary turnover, namely the focus on attitudinal inputs, correlation, and resulting outcomes of turnover decision making. The model tested by Russell and Van Sell (2012) sought to examine how individuals weigh and combine various pieces of information in deciding to quit their job. These simulation-based tests administered among nurses found the turnover decision-making process was similar among members of the same grouping of employees (Russell & Van Sell, 2012). Perceived decreases in desired job characteristics resulted in tendency to quit voluntarily, whereas nurses remained with the organization after perceived increases (Russell & Van Sell, 2012).

This study expanded previous work by providing an alternative to traditional attitudinal path models (Russell & Van Sell, 2012). Russell (2013) presented a further critique of turnover models stating that the current models do not provide for an understanding of more than 80% of the variance in the decision to quit. His critique claimed the embeddedness and unfolding models did not adequately predict voluntary

turnover (Russell, 2013). Research as to the reasons for turnover does not provide managers with a strategy for dealing with turnover problems (Russell, 2013). Russell recommended further research into how groups of similar people are different in how they weigh and combine information (Russell, 2013). Individuals also differ as to the type of information incorporated and weighed as part of the decision making process.

In response to Russell's (2013) critique, Hom and Griffeth (2013) stated that Russell (2013) was too pessimistic in his judgment of attitudinal path models. Hom and Griffeth (2013) agreed with Russell's assessment that decision factors identified by unfolding and embeddedness could be invaluable, along with expanding simulation scenarios to address not only satisfaction antecedents, but also factors such as shock and forces that further embed individuals into the organization. Russell (2013) advocated for longitudinal studies on turnover decision-making factors. In response, Hom and Griffeth (2013) posed concerns regarding the appropriate time periods that would be most effective for follow-ups, as well as questioning the practicality of follow-ups. They further stated that a longitudinal design would require respondent identification that might cause some participants to refuse to participate, or not to answer the survey candidly (Hom & Griffeth, 2013). An alternative approach was set forth to expand criteria to include involuntary turnover, and different reasons for individuals remaining with an organization (Hom & Griffeth, 2013). Hom and Griffeth also claimed that Russell (2013) failed to offer a theoretical basis as to why people weigh decision options differently. According to Hom and Griffeth (2013), Russell and Van Sell's (2012) model

provided results; however, concern remained regarding the theoretical underpinnings and methodology deployed in the modeling.

Maertz and Boyar (2012) identified a gap in turnover research as the lack of a comprehensive model to explain employee turnover. Research addressing the reasons people quit has failed to include all of the key antecedent categories into one comprehensive model. The eight forces framework developed by Maertz and Griffeth (2004) categorized previously identified predictor variables, used to develop the Turnover-Attachment Motive Survey (TAMS) (Maertz & Boyar, 2012). According to Maertz and Boyar (2012), the development of the TAMS instrument improves the quality of turnover research by filling gaps in measurement and overlaps in previous instruments.

Unique to this research agenda was the inclusion of a new measurement dimension: behavioral inertia. Behavioral inertia occurs when the individual resists changing jobs because the actions needed to change employment form barriers to quitting. The individual may wish to leave the organization, but the very act of leaving is costlier than remaining in an undesired position. Maertz and Boyar (2012) recommended that managers identify motives for turnover prior to the individual's actual decision to quit so that appropriate interventions can be used to avoid losing critical talent and to reduce turnover that impedes the organization's effectiveness. Additional research to support the Eight Forces Framework sought to understand the antecedents of turnover mediated through these eight identified forces (Maertz, Boyar, & Pearson, 2012). One or more of the eight forces mediate organizational identity, work satisfaction, pay

satisfaction, and location attachment, with the outcome variable of turnover (Maertz et al., 2012). Based on these findings, Maertz et al., (2012) proposed a ninth force for consideration: community or location embeddedness, as an individual's attachment to their community can account for variance in withdrawal intention.

As Maertz and Boyar (2012) noted, identification of reasons individuals choose to leave their jobs could allow leaders to reduce turnover by addressing those factors that influence turnover intention. Employees in healthcare often experience emotional exhaustion and burnout due to the nature of the work, which is dealing with critically ill or terminal patients on a day-to-day basis (Bartram, Casimir, Djurkovic, Leggat, & Stanton, 2012; Thanacoody, Newman, & Fuchs, 2014). According to Yang, Wan, and Fu (2012), five main factors influence turnover: company-related, compensation and promotion, personal emotion, the nature of the job or industry, and work content. Dissatisfaction with work content or organizational culture creates frustration, which leads to the decision to terminate employment (Yang et al., 2012). Job quality can influence intention to turnover among hotel housekeepers (Knox, Warhurst, Nickson, & Dutton, 2015). Housekeeping jobs are sometimes considered low quality work, as these jobs are typically characterized as low-paying, requiring low skill, allowing little work schedule flexibility, and having limited growth or opportunity (Holman, 2013; Knox et al., 2015). Those employees holding jobs as housekeepers can fall into four categories of workers: willing and trapped, willing and transient, unwilling and trapped, and unwilling and transient (Knox et al., 2015). Those that are either willing or unwilling, or trapped,

may have limited qualifications and few employment options, thus turnover intention is low (Knox et al., 2015). Those that are transient might have a mix of qualifications, and are looking for better employment options (Knox, et al., 2015). As opportunities for a better job or higher pay present themselves, these employees leave their current employment (Knox et al., 2015).

### **Employee-Organization Relationship**

Identification of withdrawal behaviors predicates understanding causes of turnover (Paillé, 2013). Turnover occurs when employees increase the distance between themselves and the organization (Paillé, 2013). The withdrawal process impacts organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs); that is, the level of effort the employee contributes voluntarily toward the achievement of the organization's goals (Paillé, 2013). Sportsmanship, a form of OCB, causes the employee to avoid complaining about negative aspects of the job and to behave as a positive role model for other employees (Paillé, 2013). High levels of sportsmanship indicate the employee's desire to remain a member of the organization, lowering the intention to turnover (Paillé, 2013). Low sportsmanship inversely relates to turnover intention (Paillé, 2013). A second form of OCB, civic virtue, represents the employee's interest in the organization's reputation and success through voluntary involvement in activities that exceed the basic requirements of the job (Paillé, 2013). Employees who exhibit interest in the governance of the organization are more likely to remain a member of the organization, as this desire to participate in the organization's political operations is incompatible with the intention to

seek alternative employment (Paillé, 2013).

Withdrawal behaviors and moral disengagement can occur when the individual perceives a change in the relational contract (Christian & Ellis, 2014). Turnover intentions result in the employee mentally *checking out* and distancing themselves from the organization (Christian & Ellis, 2014). This disengagement creates an environment whereby employees may express a wider range of deviant behaviors such as theft, property damage, and rudeness to co-workers and customers (Christian & Ellis, 2014). Leader recognition of withdrawal behaviors is critical in avoiding undesirable behaviors associated with moral disengagement, particularly when withdrawal is an antecedent of turnover intention (Christian & Ellis, 2014).

Withdrawal behaviors relate to the perceived breach of the psychological contract. The psychological contract, based in social exchange theory, creates perceptions of a reciprocal relationship between the employee and the organization (Rodwell, Ellershaw, & Flower, 2015). Perceived obligations or promises constituting the psychological contract may be explicit, such as policies or performance appraisal processes, or inferred and interpreted subjectively by the employee (Hartmann & Rutherford, 2015). The employee's perception of continual fulfillment of the contract by the organization reinforces perceptions of fairness, and the employee is more satisfied with their job, resulting in a feeling of positive identification with the organization (Rodwell et al., 2015). A breach occurs when the employee believes the organization has not upheld its obligations resulting in decreased job satisfaction, and a reduction in identity with the

organization, both of which are associated with turnover (Rodwell et al., 2015).

Communication between the organization's leaders and the employee is needed in situations where the organization's leaders fail to, or are unable to, fulfill the perceived obligations under the psychological contract (Rodwell et al., 2015). Failure to communicate potentially results in the perception of a breach in the psychological contract, which then creates negative outcomes such as turnover (Rodwell et al., 2015). The negative relationship between the perceived fulfillment of the psychological contract and turnover intention may be stronger in new employees than those that have longer tenure (Bal, De Cooman, & Mol, 2013). Employees with lower tenure, who have high intention to turnover, may also reduce their work effort, as they do not feel the same sense of obligation to perform as those employees with longer tenure (Bal et al., 2013).

A positive view of the organization results in employee engagement when person-job fit and person-organization fit occur, consequently lowering turnover intention (Jung & Yoon, 2013; Memon, Salleh, & Baharom, 2015). People who have high service orientation experience a better person-organization fit when working in organizations that require intensive customer contact than those with a low service orientation (Jung & Yoon, 2013). Turnover in the hotel industry can be linked to the employee's age, low unemployment rates, pay, work schedules, lack of career growth opportunities, and poor working conditions (Mohsin et al., 2013). When the job market is favorable, that is, low unemployment and a variety of available job openings, employees are less tolerant of excessive or strenuous job demands, and choose to leave the organization seeking better

working conditions (Paillé, 2013).

### **Employee-related Factors**

Along with workload and the work environment, employee demographics may influence turnover. Certain industries employ a sizable percentage of immigrant workers, particularly in lower skilled positions such as housekeeping or food service (Madera, Dawson, & Neal, 2014). Managers in these fields are challenged in communicating effectively with employees who may speak limited English (Madera et al., 2014). Language barriers in these situations create role ambiguity and stress for managers, which then directly relates to the manager's intention to quit (Madera et al., 2014).

**Psychological factors.** Individuals expend emotional labor when they are required to demonstrate certain behaviors expected by the organization, which may conflict with the individual's emotional condition (Bartram et al., 2012, Jung & Yoon, 2014). As burnout increases, the intention to leave increases, particularly in short-tenured employees (Jung, Yoon, & Kim, 2012). Individuals have limited mental, emotional, and physical resources to draw upon to cope with stressful situations (Karatepe & Choubtarash, 2014; Thanacoody et al., 2014). Resource depletion related to high job demands results in lost energy leading to emotional exhaustion, and thus the individual seeks to find coping mechanisms such as disengagement or intention to remove themselves from the stressful circumstances (Thanacoody et al., 2014). Expending emotional labor leads to emotional dissonance, job stress and burnout, followed by intention to leave (Bartram et al., 2012; Jung & Yoon, 2014). The nature of



frontline work influences emotional exhaustion when employees continually deal with customer problems (Karatepe & Choubtarash, 2014). Burnout occurs when there is a mismatch between the employee and the work environment, in critical areas such as workload, relationships, autonomy, and reward systems (Harrison & Gordon, 2014). Alignment between the individual and their work environment increases the potential for commitment and engagement (Harrison & Gordon, 2014). Job stress reduces organizational commitment and the quality of service provided to customers (Garg & Dhar, 2014).

Emotional exhaustion influences negative outcomes, namely intention to turnover and absenteeism, as workers leave in order to conserve their mental, emotional, and physical resources (Bartram et al., 2012; Karatepe & Choubtarash, 2014; Thanacoody et al., 2014). Generational characteristics are related to job satisfaction when coupled with exhaustion (Lu & Gursoy, 2013). Millennials (those between 1980 and 2000) experienced lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intention than their older counterparts when they felt exhausted (Lu & Gursoy, 2013). Employees who fail to develop social connections as part of their job might experience emotional exhaustion because of loneliness, which then results in lower organizational commitment and a higher intention to leave the organization (Kaymaz, Eroglu, & Sayilar, 2014). The implementation of high performance work systems (HPWS) and organizational support can reduce the individual's intention to leave (Bartram et al., 2012; Deery, Walsh, & Guest, 2011). Anxiety and role overload, however, mediate the relationship between

HPWS and turnover intention (Jensen, Patel, & Messersmith, 2013).

Quality of work life (QWL) as an expansive concept describes the employees' satisfaction with their working life, including job content, compensation, the physical working environment, career pathways, autonomy, co-worker relationships and support, job security, and work-life balance (Mosadeghrad, 2013). Low QWL increases intention to quit among employees who are dissatisfied with their career opportunities, compensation, workload, and job security (Mosadeghrad, 2013). Organizational leaders may be able to reduce turnover intention by addressing QWL issues and developing strategies that could decrease staff dissatisfaction (Mosadeghrad, 2013). Extensive work-to-family tension occurs when work interferes with the individual's family-related role and responsibilities (Nohe & Sonntag, 2014). Intention to turnover increases as the individual considers leaving their current job to reduce the tension created by the conflict between the roles, particularly when leader support is low (Nohe & Sonntag, 2014). When the leader provides a higher level of social support, the support provided mitigates the relationship between work-family conflict (WFC) and turnover intention (Nohe & Sonntag, 2014). Leaders can reduce turnover by providing work environment systems and policies that reduce WFC, such as flexible working hours and on-site childcare (Nohe & Sonntag, 2014).

Full-service hospitals operate continuously, making it necessary for staff to be available to perform tasks at all hours of the day or night (Martin, Sinclair, Lelchok, Wittmer, & Charles, 2012). Employees who work day shifts have lower turnover

intentions than those working other shifts (Martin et al., 2012). Those working weekends are more likely to quit their jobs than those working traditional weekday schedules (Martin et al., 2012). Certified nursing assistants and nurses working the night shift have a stronger intention to leave than those working traditional day shifts (Zhang, Punnett, Gore, & CPH-NEW Research Team, 2014). When organizations are unable to address employee concerns such as compensation, due to financial constraints, focusing on improved scheduling processes can increase retention (Martin et al., 2012).

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is the individual's attitude toward their job, either positive or negative, and the value the person places on certain aspects of their job (Diestel, Wegge, & Schmidt 2014; Mohsin & Lengler, 2015). Employees who do not feel good about their current job, or who are not satisfied with aspects of the job, may seek alternative employment (Mohsin & Lengler, 2015). Employees who are satisfied with their job have a lower intention to turnover (Mohsin & Lengler, 2015). Early theories of the linkage between job satisfaction and turnover stated the two constructs are linked through a series of steps starting with an evaluation of the current job (Mobley, 1977). The direct relationship between job satisfaction and turnover diminishes with each succeeding step in the process, making job satisfaction a more distal variable from the action of quitting (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978). Satisfaction is not only dependent on the nature of the job, but the individual's expectations of the job (Lu et al., 2012). This evaluation of the job can result in feelings of satisfaction or job dissatisfaction, the latter

of which manifests in behaviors such as absenteeism or intention to turnover (Diestel et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2012; Mobley, 1977).

The factors that link job satisfaction and turnover are documented in turnover literature. High job satisfaction coupled with low work stress can reduce turnover intention (Kuo, Lin, & Li, 2014). Training, recognition, job security and loyalty can increase job satisfaction, which reduces intention to turnover (Mohsin & Lengler, 2015). The person-environment theory posits that the match between an individual's personality traits and the attributes of the work environment affect job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance on the job (Jang & George, 2012). Individuals who are comfortable working in a polychronic work environment, where they are required to work on multiple tasks simultaneously, experience higher job satisfaction and lower intention to turnover (Jang & George, 2012). Individuals who prefer monochronic jobs, but are working in a job that requires polychronic behaviors, can experience decreased job satisfaction resulting in an increased intention to leave (Jang & George, 2012). Increases in role ambiguity could lead to relationship conflict as employees question their competency, causing stress and defensiveness, and leading to relationship conflicts with others (Hill, Chênevert, & Poitras, 2015). Over time, relationship conflict can decrease the individual's attachment to the organization, thereby increasing their intention to leave (Hill et al., 2015).

Not all factors relating to turnover are generalizable to everyone who chooses to leave a job. Subgroups of employees leaving the organization have differing thresholds

of job satisfaction, which influences the point at which they choose to quit their jobs (Kumar, Dass, & Topaloglu, 2014). When the individual reaches their threshold, turnover intention reaches 100% and the individual then decides to leave the organization (Kumar et al., 2014). Under this conceptual model, the drivers of job satisfaction vary among subgroups within a population, therefore, leaders should avoid focusing resources on individuals whose exit threshold levels are low, and instead develop strategies for those with high turnover thresholds to increase retention levels (Kumar et al., 2014). Mitchell and Lee (2013) posited the decision to leave a job occurs over time, with different criteria used in the decision making process unique to each individual, contending that a shortcoming in existing models is the inability to measure or ascertain the motivation for leaving just prior to the individual's departure from the organization.

### **Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture consists of assumptions, beliefs, norms, and values of a group of people, communicated through myths and stories about the organization (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). Learning the culture of the organization allows new members to enhance their socialization, providing them with cues as to the way they should think and feel in order to adapt to the organization (Schneider et al., 2013). The type of culture within an organization can influence outcomes. Hierarchical or bureaucratic cultures negatively correlate to job satisfaction, which has a significant negative relationship with turnover intention (El-Nahas, Abd-El-Salam, & Shawky, 2013; Nancarrow, Bradbury, Pit, & Ariss, 2014). High-support and team-oriented cultures,

when coupled with organization citizenship behaviors, may reduce turnover intentions (Sharoni et al., 2012). Individuals who feel their contributions are valued and rewarded by the organization, even without formal reward systems, are less inclined to consider leaving the organization (Sharoni et al., 2012). Organizational support and a learning culture, coupled with organizational commitment, reduce turnover intention (Islam, Kahn, Ahmad, & Ahmad, 2013). Shared perceptions of a developmental climate within an organization directly relate to organizational commitment and voluntary turnover (Spell, Eby, & Vandenberg, 2014). Organizational cultures that encourage sharing of resources, knowledge and provide support can decrease voluntary turnover (Spell et al., 2014).

In certain settings such as casual dining, coworker socializing and manager support for fun significantly and negatively related to turnover (Tews, Michel, & Allen, 2014). Organizational leaders can build constituent attachment and organizational embeddedness by encouraging fun on the job, signaling to employees that the job is not solely task-focused (Tews, Michel, et al., 2014; Tews, Stafford, & Michel, 2014). Co-worker support is key in building constituent attachment as this support moderates the impact of negative external personal events and turnover (Tews, Stafford, et al., 2014). The type of support provided by co-workers can have opposite effects on turnover (Tews, Michel, & Ellingson, 2013). Instrumental support, or task-focused support, positively related to turnover in the hospitality industry (Tews et al., 2013). The interpretation of this finding is employees receiving instrumental support may encourage feelings of

incompetence, causing the individual to choose to leave the work environment (Tews et al., 2013). Emotional support related negatively to turnover, through the development of relationships with co-workers (Tews et al., 2013).

Four occupational factors: (a) meaningful work, (b) collaboration with peers, (c) leader trustworthiness, and (d) exposure to bullying, were strongly associated with intention to quit among healthcare workers in Denmark (Suadicani, Bonde, Olesen, & Gyntelberg, 2013). In a hospital setting, work cultures that do not place value on the contribution of cleaning staff create a perception among environmental service workers that their work is not important (Matlow, Wray, & Richardson, 2012). This perception results in feelings of frustration and helplessness (Matlow et al., 2012). Work load, training of new staff members, clinical staff attitude toward cleaning staff, and appreciation, influence the degree to which these workers believe they control their work and contribute to the organization (Matlow et al., 2012). Employees who experience higher levels of mental health and effective labor-management interactions indicated a lower intention to turnover (Zhang et al., 2014). The working environment created by the organization's leader influences turnover, specifically when there are feelings of lack of teamwork, bureaucratic management, a lack of trust between departments, and inequitable application of policies or procedural justice (Yang et al., 2012). The lack of perceived human resource management (HRM) practices such as job design, training, and performance management, increases the propensity for employees to engage in workarounds, and increases the employee's intention to turnover (Wheeler, Halbesleben,

& Harris, 2012). Employees who disengage from their jobs to the point where they consider quitting are more likely to disregard established policies that they perceive are bureaucratic and to create workarounds that make their tasks easier to perform (Wheeler et al., 2012). Employees working in a hospital setting who feel their values are not in alignment with those of the organization may engage in workarounds and have a higher intention to leave (Wheeler et al., 2012). Festing and Schäfer (2014) proposed talent management practices and career development prospects align with the values of Generations X and Y, potentially influencing intention to stay.

Perceived disinterested support occurs when the organization acts in some way to benefit employees without indication of a hidden agenda behind the action (Mignonac & Richebe, 2013). Actions indicating to the employees that the organization is appreciative of their efforts strengthen the bond between the individual and the organization (Mignonac & Richebe, 2013). Perceived disinterested support decreases turnover through increased positive organizational support and organizational commitment (Mignonac & Richebe, 2013). Employee attribution of the motive behind organizational actions as *no strings attached* can increase retention and enhance the relationship between the employee and the organization (Mignonac & Richebe, 2013). Intention to leave is reduced when the individual trusts their employer; those employees who have the perception of high-performance HRM practices along with trust in the employer have the lowest intention to quit (Alfes, Shantz, & Truss, 2012).

**Relationships.** Allen and Shanock (2013) explored the influence of



organizational socialization and voluntary turnover. The model developed under this proposition links socialization tactics (content, social, and context) as the antecedents of affective commitment and turnover, mediated by perceived organizational support and job embeddedness. Socialization tactics are important as these activities convey the value the organization places in new employees, thereby creating a positive relationship between the individual and the organization (Allen & Shanock, 2013). Allen and Shanock's (2013) proposed model predicted a negative relationship between perceived organizational support and embeddedness to turnover. Perceived organizational support is important to newcomers as it can mitigate feelings of anxiety and stress newcomers might feel when entering the organization (Allen & Shanock, 2013). Organizational support mediates the relationship between socialization and commitment, as well as directly relating to increasing embeddedness and reducing turnover (Allen & Shanock, 2013). Constituent attachment, or social ties among employees, reduces turnover among service workers, particularly among younger workers as these relationships improve the working environment through co-worker support and group cohesion (Ellingson, Tews, & Dachner, 2015). The proper use of socialization tactics during the early employment period influences the relationship between the newcomer and the organization, increasing the likelihood of organizational commitment and decreasing the intention to leave (Allen & Shanock, 2013). Newly hired employees, who have a positive attitude toward the job, are more likely to remain with the organization when they perceive fulfillment of the psychological contract by the employer (Bal et al., 2013).

Socialization involves the acclimation of the newly hired employee to the work environment (Lu & Tjosvold, 2013). Newcomers who enter work environments characterized by independent and competitive goals were more likely to quit than those people who are working in environments emphasizing cooperative goals (Lu & Tjosvold, 2013). Proactive behaviors and outcomes have a strong relationship with successful socialization (Cooper-Thomas, Paterson, Stadler, & Saks, 2014). Proactive behavior in newcomers is associated with positive outcomes, including greater learning, social integration, role innovation, job satisfaction, and lower intention of leaving (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014). Newcomers, particularly, need continual support over time; decreasing support, in turn, leads to increasing withdrawal and disassociation from the organization (Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Song, 2013). When newcomers experience role conflict and role overload, their intention to quit increases (Vandenberghe, Panaccio, Bentein, Mignonac, & Roussel, 2011). Disparity between the newly hired employee's beliefs about the job prior to starting the job, and their experiences post-hire also increases their intention to leave the organization (Vandenberghe et al., 2011). According to a model proposed by Ellis et al. (2014), socialization outcomes are dependent on newcomer adjustment. Their proposed model stated the new employee's assessment of their ability to handle the demands of their new job influences their behavior (Ellis et al., 2014). Through proactive behaviors, new employees can accumulate resources that allow them to better adjust to the job, thus decreasing their intention to quit (Ellis et al., 2014). Intention to leave can be addressed

pre-hire through structured recruitment and selection practices that eliminate frustration and reduce the chances of new employee failure because their abilities and skills are not matched with the job's requirements (da Silva & Shinyashiki, 2014). Recruitment and selection processes that properly assess skills, knowledge, and aptitude required in performing the job, clear identification of job tasks, and assessment of the individual's capabilities and personality against the job requirements can reduce turnover (da Silva & Shinyashiki, 2014; Wheeler et al., 2012).

Beyond the individual level, work group dynamics influence turnover intention (Mauno, De Cuyper, Tolvanen, Kinnunen, & Mäkikangas, 2014). Employees may seek out new employment opportunities as a coping mechanism if job insecurity is prevalent within the work group (Mauno et al., 2014). Employees who work in close proximity with one another (i.e., the same department) respond to job insecurity as a collective stressor, resulting in reduced occupational well being and higher turnover intentions (Mauno et al., 2014). A contagion effect occurs as the group members experience the same phenomena, creating a shared reaction, namely intention to turnover (Mauno et al., 2014). Dissatisfied employees may look to their peers for confirmation regarding their job situation (Liu, Mitchell, Lee, Holtom, & Hinkin, 2012). Negative workgroup dynamics and turnover contagion can affect newly hired employees when assigned to work with those who are dissatisfied with their jobs (Liu et al., 2012). Satisfied employees, who work with others who are satisfied, are less likely to seek new employment opportunities (Liu et al., 2012). Mohr, Young, and Burgess (2012) argued a

positive group-oriented culture mitigates the effect of high turnover on organizational performance. Management focus on strategies that encourage a positive group-oriented culture such as reward systems encouraging teamwork, and standardization of work practices, can serve to reduce the effect of turnover (Mohr et al., 2012).

**Job embeddedness.** The concept of job embeddedness seeks to understand the reasons people remain in their current jobs (Kiazad, Holtom, Hom, & Newman, 2015). In an effort to understand the underpinning theoretical foundation of job embeddedness, Kiazad et al. (2015) proposed the principles of conservation of resources, that is, the protection and accumulation of resources, serve as reasons individuals remain in their place of current employment. Embeddedness is viewed as a multifoci construct, comprised of on-the-job and occupational embeddedness, and off-the-job embeddedness, such as family and community involvement and obligations (Kiazad et al., 2015). Both types of embeddedness negatively relate to turnover, with work-related embeddedness providing a stronger link to remaining with the organization than off-the-job embeddedness factors (Kiazad et al., 2015). A meta-analytic review of the relationship between job embeddedness and turnover by Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee and Mitchell (2012) resulted in a model linking on- and off-the job-embeddedness, job alternatives, affective commitment, and job satisfaction with turnover intention. The model links turnover intention and actual turnover through reduced job performance and job search behaviors (Jiang et al., 2012). Their recommendation was for leaders to foster job embeddedness in both on the job and outside the workplace (Jiang et al., 2012). Responding quickly to

indications of withdrawal or low job embeddedness could allow leaders to intervene to avoid key employees from leaving the organization (Jiang et al., 2012).

### **Organizational Commitment**

Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) explored the concept of organizational commitment comprised of two components, behavioral and attitudinal, measured by an “individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226). This attachment requires active involvement where individuals contribute more than what is ordinarily expected, in a desire to enhance the organization’s success (Mowday et al., 1979). Mowday et al. differentiated commitment from job satisfaction where commitment represents attachment to the organization, and satisfaction is the response to the job or certain characteristics of the job. Commitment is longitudinal and stable over time, unaffected for the most part by transitory events, unlike satisfaction that can shift based on specific events, and can change day-to-day or throughout the day (Chen, Ployhart, Thomas, Anderson, & Bliese, 2011; Mowday et al., 1979). Mowday et al.’s (1979) studies found evidence that lack of organizational commitment was a predictor of turnover.

Following this research, Meyer and Allen went a step further, and developed their model of commitment as a multidimensional construct with three components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Affective commitment (AC) was then defined by these researchers as the person’s “emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement in the organization” (Meyer &

Herscovitch, 2001, p. 304). Continuance commitment (CC) is the recognition of the cost or loss of benefits incurred by leaving the organization or the lack of available alternatives to the current employment situation (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer, Stanley, & Parfyonova, 2012). Finally, normative commitment (NC) is the sense of duty or obligation to remain as a member of the organization (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). All three types of commitment create a connection between the individual and the organization, decreasing the intention to turnover (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Individuals with pure affective commitment (high affective, low normative, and low continuance) theoretically demonstrate the greatest level of organizational citizenship behaviors along with a reduced intention to turnover (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Employees with a high level of continuance commitment, low affective, and low normative will not do more than required, exhibiting behavior that is no different than people who are not committed (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). This work set the foundation for research to test the validity of Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001) model performed by Gellatly, Meyer, and Luchak (2006).

Gellatly et al. (2006) examined the relationship between affective, continuance, and normative commitment and intention to stay (focal behavior) and citizenship behavior (discretionary behavior). Their results supported Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001) model, and found intention to stay behavior strongest in those with pure affective commitment when looking at each component in isolation (Gellatly et al., 2006; Meyer et al., 2012). The combination of high affective and high normative (AC/NC-dominant)

strengthened this relationship (Gellatly et al., 2006, Meyer et al., 2012). The lowest levels of turnover intention were found in those who were fully committed (all three components dominant), AC/NC-dominant, or AC-dominant (Meyer et al., 2012). In the case of continuance commitment, those with a CC-dominant profile might stay with the organization because of the perceived cost of leaving, but will not do more than expected (Gellatly et al., 2006; Meyer et al., 2012). The three components of commitment have an additive effect on intention to stay with the organization (Gellatly et al., 2006; Meyer et al., 2012). Meyer et al. (2012) reiterated the role of context as a determinant of behavior for each commitment component. While Gellatly et al. (2006) proposed the three components of commitment as interactive, Meyer, Stanley, and Vandenberg (2013) went further to explore commitment through not only a variable-centered approach, as well as through a person-centered approach. In their view, combinations of commitment levels differ among individuals, while at the same time individuals experience commitment to multiple foci (Meyer et al., 2013).

The three-component model of commitment formed the theoretical foundation of several studies; however, Stanley, Vandenberghe, Vandenberg, and Bentein (2013) expanded continuance commitment into two factors, perceived sacrifice and few alternatives. The results of their study of Belgian university alumni found those with the affective commitment dominant profile had lower intentions to leave the organization than people with the continuance dominant and not committed profiles (Stanley et al., 2013). In this study population, the intention to turnover related to each commitment

profile does not act in the same manner as actual turnover (Stanley et al., 2013).

Commitment profiles are characterized by high or low salience of internal motivation to remain, and low salience combined with low desire and lack of alternatives (Stanley et al., 2013). This study supported previous findings whereby those with high levels of AC showed low intention to turnover (e.g. Gellatly et al., 2006). In the case of those with a continuance-dominant profile, the lack of alternatives, or perceived high cost of leaving, indicated a high intention to turnover, but low actual turnover (Stanley et al., 2013).

Turnover intention is reduced when staying with the organization is freely chosen and internally driven (Stanley et al., 2013). Organizational commitment acts as a mediating variable between job satisfaction and turnover, having a greater impact on turnover intentions than other factors such as pay and benefits (Lambert, Cluse-Tolar, Pasupuleti, Prior, & Allen, 2012; Lee, Huang, & Zhao, 2012).

De Gieter, Hofmans, and Pepermans (2011) added to the research exploring the relationship between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover, among nurses. Participants were classified into two groups based on their responses to the survey, satisfaction focused, and satisfaction and commitment focused (De Gieter et al., 2011). Nurses focused on both satisfaction and commitment were more likely to leave the organization than their peers in the satisfaction focused group, as they were less satisfied with their jobs and their employing organization (DeGieter et al., 2011).

Demographic statistical analysis found this group tended to be younger and have less tenure than those in the satisfaction-focused group (De Gieter et al., 2011). In addition to



turnover intention, the groups differed in work performance and attitude with the satisfaction focused group performing at a higher level (De Gieter et al., 2011).

### **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement involves the degree to which individuals commit their personal self physically, cognitively, and emotionally to the roles they perform (Kahn, 1990; Saks & Gruman, 2014). The theoretical foundation of work engagement by Kahn (1990) explored work engagement in the context of a summer camp and an architectural firm. Research exploring the role of job and organization engagement found engagement negatively related to intention to quit (Saks, 2006). Macey and Schneider (2008) subscribed to engagement having two facets, attitudinal and behavioral. Engagement in their view includes behaviors that extend beyond the normal and expected performance, and partially attributable to personality disposition (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Saks and Gruman (2014) summarized current theories of engagement, contending that research to date lacks a definition agreed upon by researchers and practitioners. In their view, the consequences of engagement vary based on the type of engagement (task, work, organization, or group/team). Shuck, Twyford, Reio, and Shuck (2014) expounded on the cognitive, emotional, and physical, facets of engagement related to human resource development practices and turnover. Cognitive engagement encompasses the individual's belief in their work as meaningful, safe, and evaluation of having sufficient resources to perform the job (Shuck et al., 2014). Individuals who experience positive cognitive engagement may become emotionally engaged, whereas the individual feels a

personal connection to the organization (Shuck et al., 2014). Behavioral engagement becomes the overt demonstration of cognitive and emotional engagement where the individual's work performance is influenced by their level of engagement (Shuck et al., 2014). It then follows that an individual who believes their work is meaningful, and who has a personal connection to the organization, results in their remaining with the organization, or reducing the intention to turnover (Shuck et al., 2014). The three facets of employee engagement mediate the relationship between perceived supportive human resource development (HRD) practices and lower turnover intention (Shuck et al., 2014). Investing in employees through training and leadership development can result in lower turnover (Shuck et al., 2014; Kampkötter & Marggaf, 2015). Employees may feel unsupported if they do not perceive the organization and its leaders promoting and encouraging HRD activities, which could lead to the employee deciding to leave the organization (Shuck et al., 2014). Investments in training can reduce turnover when the employee perceives the training is useful, as the training encourages a reciprocal relationship with the organization, with intra-firm trainings being most useful in retaining newly hired or lower tenured employees (Kampkötter & Marggaf, 2015).

Siddiqi (2013) expanded the focus of work engagement and turnover intention in the context of the Indian service sector, theorizing a linkage between the three facets of work engagement and esprit de corps (job attitude) and turnover intention (outcome variable). Work engagement had both an indirect and direct effect on turnover intention, indicating engaged workers do not consider leaving for other jobs, and invest themselves

in their work roles (Siddiqi, 2013). Greater levels of work engagement result in lower intention to leave (Siddiqi, 2013). Employee engagement has been positively associated with reduced turnover, facilitated by supervisory feedback and the perception of autonomy (Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013). Feedback improves motivation and engagement through the dialog and interaction between the supervisor and the employee (Menguc et al., 2013). Higher levels of engagement affect positive interactions between the employees and customers, particularly in a service environment (Menguc et al., 2013). Engaged healthcare workers are five times more likely to remain with their current organization, compared to disengaged workers (Lowe, 2012).

### **Leadership**

Leadership is the ability to engage, influence, and motivate others toward the achievement of a goal or purpose (Dickson, Castaño, Magomaeva & Den Hartog, 2012). Leaders who provide a positive role model or mentor and develop supportive relationships with team members cause the employee to experience organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014; Lu & Tjosvold, 2013). Supervisory support increases job embeddedness, which results in higher levels of service recovery behaviors and job performance, and reduced turnover intentions (Karatepe, 2014). Supervisory support is also viewed as an indication of organizational support, conveying to the individual the value the organization places in them, creating a link between the individual and the organization reducing the likelihood that the individual will choose to leave (Karatepe, 2014). Organizations with higher quality managers at all

levels (lower, middle, and higher) experience lower turnover, as these managers provide advancement opportunities, support, resources, and tools for their employees (Johansen, 2013; Suadicani et al., 2013).

Employees engage in exchanges with both their supervisor and the organization (Flint, Haley, & McNally, 2013; Kang, Gatling, & Kim, 2015). The quality of an employee's exchanges with their supervisor directly affects their intention to turnover (Flint et al., 2013; Islam et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2015). Employees' perception of fair treatment by leaders increases their commitment to that leader, reducing their intention to leave the organization (Flint et al., 2013; Tse, Huang, & Lam, 2013). Leadership style influences commitment, as employees of passive leaders experienced lower affective commitment to the organization than employees working for leaders deemed as more actively involved with their employees (Chênevert, Vandenberghe, Doucet, & Ben Ayed, 2013). When the leader demonstrates passive leadership, employees experience role stressors such as role conflict, overload, and ambiguity, diminishing organizational commitment (Chênevert et al., 2013).

Supervisor-subordinate relationships, teamwork, and wellbeing influence affective commitment and turnover intention (Brunetto et al., 2013). Turnover intention is higher for Generation X and Generation Y nurses than for Baby Boomers (Brunetto et al., 2013). Level of commitment varies based on age, as Baby Boomers reported the highest level of commitment among the generational peer groups (Brunetto et al., 2013). Generation X employees were somewhat committed, and Generation Y fell between

somewhat committed and somewhat not committed (Brunetto et al., 2013). Leader-member exchange significantly and positively relates to affective commitment, teamwork, and wellbeing and inversely relates to turnover intention (Brunetto et al., 2013). Leaders described as ethical are transparent in their communication, and are perceived as fair, honest, caring, and trustworthy (Elci, Sener, Aksoy, & Alpkan, 2012). Effective leaders provide guidance to the organization's members in achieving its goals (Elci et al., 2012). Testing of a theoretical model examining the relationship between ethical leadership, effective leadership, work-related stress and turnover intention found a negative relationship between the leadership variables and turnover intention (Elci et al., 2012). These results support the theory whereby ethical and effective leadership reduces both work-related stress and turnover intentions (Elci et al., 2012).

Depending on the context of the work environment, an employee may not believe their relationship with their supervisor is a motivating reason to leave their job (Mohsin et al., 2013). The relative importance of the relationship between the employee and supervisor as a strong antecedent of intention to quit can vary based on the cultural preferences of the individual (Mohsin et al., 2013). In non-Western cultures, the relationship maintenance is valued and employees will attempt to cultivate the relationship (Mohsin et al., 2013). The ability for employees to voice their concerns to their manager, with assurance that action can or will be taken, can influence turnover rates (McClellan, Burris, & Detert, 2013). Perception of employees' high level of voice coupled with the manager's access to resources, openness to change, and participation in

organizational decision-making, lowers exit rates (McClellan et al., 2013). The ability to express concerns through high voice positively influences not only the person speaking up, but also those who benefit from changes made because of the ability to articulate concerns and suggestions (McClellan et al., 2013). Leaders who communicate and regularly engage with employees regarding development opportunities and career growth are perceived as supportive, reducing the intention of employees to leave the organization (Shuck et al., 2014). Low quality leader-member exchanges, weak relationships between the supervisor and employee, and perceived poor supervisor and organizational support can lead to low levels of organizational commitment, increasing the likelihood of leaving the organization (Garg & Dhar, 2014; Kang et al., 2015). The individual experiencing supervisor undermining, negativity from supervisors and co-workers, and left to work independently, is more likely to quit (Kammeyer-Muller et al., 2013; Lu & Tjosvold, 2013). Harassment from supervisors and co-workers, particularly when experienced by ethnic or racial minorities, leads to burnout, followed by intention to leave (Deery et al., 2011).

Intention to turnover increases when the individual works in an environment where leadership allows for dysfunctional behaviors such as mobbing (Ertureten, Cemalcilar, & Aycan, 2013). Certain leadership styles influence intention to leave as evidenced by authoritarian leadership's positive relationship with mobbing behaviors, which increases turnover intention (Ertureten et al., 2013). Individuals who experienced mobbing have lower job satisfaction, lower affective commitment, higher continuance

commitment, and higher intention to leave the organization (Ertureten et al., 2013). The cultivation of healthy working relationships between management and employees, demonstration of respect for employees, and employee involvement in decision-making reduces intention to turnover (Zhang et al. 2014). The perception of conflict among members of the workgroup positively relates to turnover intention (Chi & Yang, 2015). Workgroup conflict interferes with the employee's job performance effectiveness, creating dissatisfaction and increasing the likelihood of leaving (Chi & Yang, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

A review of the literature related to employee turnover indicates various models link antecedents of turnover with intention to turnover, as well as the act of leaving the organization. Factors influencing intention to leave or intention to stay are not opposing factors but instead occur along a continuum (Griffeth, Lee, Mitchell, & Hom, 2012; Zeitlin, Augsberger, Auerbach, & McGowan, 2014). Organizational commitment lowers the intention to leave the organization; leaders must identify and leverage the drivers of organizational commitment to reduce the propensity to turnover among employees (Faisal & Al-Esmael, 2014; Maertz & Boyar, 2012). Understanding the psychological and behavioral stages that precede the decision to leave the organization can assist leaders in reducing turnover and increasing retention of valued employees (Katsikea, Theodosiou, & Morgan, 2015).

### **Transition**

Employee retention is critical to organizational success. Strategies developed and

implemented by leaders to reduce turnover can lead to improved operating performance and profitability. The literature examined as part of this study reveals the importance of identifying and addressing the antecedents of turnover: employee engagement, organizational commitment, organizational culture, and leadership. Section 2 of this study provides a more detailed view of the rationale for this proposed study of leader strategies in addressing turnover among hospital frontline support staff. Section 3 provides the results of the study with recommendations for other leaders seeking to implement strategies in reducing staff turnover.



## Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this exploratory multiple case study was to identify strategies developed and implemented by leaders of an acute care hospital to reduce turnover among frontline support employees. The information in Section 2 covers in further detail the purpose statement, and research method and design. Section 2 also provides information regarding my strategies for data collection, organization, and analysis, as well as covering the role of the researcher, population and sampling, and a description of the ethical considerations of this study. The final portion of this section describe techniques for ensuring the reliability and validity of the study. Section 3 includes a presentation of the findings in relation to the conceptual framework described in Section 1.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that community hospital leaders use to reduce frontline support employee turnover. The study population included leaders of acute care hospitals in southeast Louisiana. I used open-ended questions using the semistructured interview technique to interview senior leaders, the directors of the housekeeping and dietary departments, and the director of human resources. The results of this study may be useful in helping community hospital leaders understand ways to reduce frontline support employee turnover. The social change aspect of this study addresses the benefit to society through continued, steady employment of individuals in support positions.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The goal of qualitative methods is to explain and understand a phenomenon, focused on meaning, with the researcher taking a personal role in gathering the data (Stake, 2010). My experience as a talent development and performance improvement professional led me to this topic in providing strategies that reduce turnover. Retaining talent is a critical success factor to any organization. As primary researcher, I personally conducted the interviews and transcribed the findings. In order to triangulate data, I included information from supporting internal documents such as exit interviews and employee satisfaction surveys. Triangulation allows for the development of a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon at the center of the study (Torrance, 2012).

The nature of the personal role in conducting qualitative research has the potential to lead to bias or substantiation of a preconceived position (Yin, 2013). Researcher bracketing is needed to identify any preconceptions (Fischer, 2009). I followed Fischer's (2009) advice and used bracketing to ensure that I do not impose meanings on the information provided by the participants. Bracketing requires the researcher to maintain ongoing self-awareness regarding biases and preconceptions (Tufford & Newman, 2012). I am currently a mid-level manager within the organization used for the study, and have been employed with the company for 20 years. I did not have a supervisory relationship with any of the participants in this study. The department directors are at the same level of the organization, reporting to a different senior leader. According to Park and Shaw (2013), voluntary turnover is disruptive to the organization, particularly in service

industries. Voluntary turnover has been a focus of the organization's leaders because of the impact of voluntary turnover on productivity and operating expenses (Park & Shaw, 2013).

I was responsible for abiding by the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice and it was my responsibility to ensure that all participants were provided the opportunity for informed consent prior to participating in the research study (Belmont Report, 1979; Malone, 2003). The responsibility of the researcher also includes ensuring participants understand their rights as outlined in the informed consent document, which contains the elements listed above. Yin (2014) described the importance of protecting participants from harm or deception, and protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the study participants. In conducting this research, I remained aware of the challenge in conducting research in one's own *backyard* as described by Malone (2003), where participants may be skeptical of the promise of confidentiality and anonymity. Changing as many details that identify participants as possible, while at the same time ensuring the context of the research remains in tact, can help address the identification of participants (Malone, 2003). I followed this advice by de-identifying the participants by using the generic term "leader" when referring to each participant in the findings of the study. If a participant chose to withdraw from the study, I destroyed all records pertaining to that participant immediately either through secured shredding of paper documents, or destruction of electronic records. The demarcation between my role as a member of the organization and researcher was clearly defined at all times during this research. I stated

in the invitation letters and as part of the interview script that my role in this research was separate from my role as a leader within the organization. Member checking provides a means for researchers to mitigate personal bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I provided each participant an opportunity to review the information obtained from their interview to ensure I correctly interpreted their response. My role was to be empathetic and supportive, creating an environment where the participants were comfortable in sharing their perceptions honestly, which was in line with the recommendations of Ashton (2014) regarding the researcher's demeanor during the study process.

### **Participants**

The participants in the study included the leaders of a mid-sized acute care hospital in southeast Louisiana. The senior leaders for the organization included the chief executive officer, the chief operating officer, the chief nursing officer, and the chief financial officer. Participants also included the director and supervisors of the targeted departments: housekeeping and dietary, as well as the director of human resources. The departments were selected because of the rate of turnover in each department between 2013 and 2015. Turnover in the housekeeping department for full-time and part-time frontline support employees averaged 60% annually for this timeframe; turnover in the dietary department for full-time and part-time frontline support employees averaged 10% annually for the same period. Analysis of the employee turnover rates led to an exploration of possible strategies that resulted in the differences in turnover rates between these departments.

The participants were selected based on their first-hand experience as current leaders within the organization. The selected participants provided insight as to the strategies that leaders have developed and implemented to address frontline support employee turnover. The interviews took place in either the leader's office or a private conference room within the facility (Jacob & Furgeson, 2012). Participants did receive compensation for taking part in this study, as the participants and I adhered to the Ethics Code governing employees considered public servants of the state of Louisiana. After interviews were conducted and transcribed, I gave participants the opportunity to review transcripts through member checking. Member checking provides research participants a means to ensure their responses are recorded and interpreted to accurately convey their intended meaning (Morse, 2015). Malone (2003) emphasized the importance of maintaining participant confidentiality and anonymity. Because the research involved leaders and their direct reports within the same organization, it was incumbent on me to ensure that I maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of the selected participants at all times.

### **Research Method and Design**

I conducted this study as a qualitative multiple case study. The nature of the study as an exploratory study into the perceptions of participants within the context of the organization supports the selection of a case study design. A multiple case study design allowed for comparison and contrast of the participants' responses and insights into solutions to reduce frontline support employee turnover within a community hospital.

## **Research Method**

Stake (2010) described qualitative methods as listening to participant's insights to derive meaning and watching what is occurring to gain better understanding of how things work. The goal of qualitative methods is to explain and understand, with the researcher taking a personal role in gathering the data (Stake, 2010). Inductive reasoning is used to bring together themes based on the information collected to allow the reader to draw their own conclusions as to the meaning of the observations (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Stake, 2010).

The qualitative method is based on interpretivism and constructivism, where the truth is the individual's view of reality (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). In contrast, quantitative methods are used to explain the connection between statistics and data elements, which was not the purpose of this study. Quantitative methods rely on the positivist worldview, and are based in empirical research that leads to indicators representing the truth as determined by statistical evidence (Sale et al., 2002). Sale et al. argued that a positivist view cannot be blended with an interpretivist or constructivist view; therefore, a mixed methods approach is not appropriate for exploring the experiences and perceptions of individuals (Sale et al., 2002).

## **Research Design**

The case study design allows researchers to explore connections between events that extend beyond the capability of survey or experiment (Yin, 2014). Case studies allow for the study of commonalities and differences among the cases within the study

(Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). This multiple case study explored employee turnover within two specific departments. Yin (2014) stated that multiple case studies provide findings that can supplement or fill a gap that might occur if a single case study method is used. The case study method is also appropriate for this study based on Yin's (2014) description of case studies where boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear. The context of this research was at the organization and unit level, and involved the phenomenon of turnover within the two selected departments.

I gathered data through open-ended questions using the semistructured interview technique. The use of a semistructured interview technique allows for further exploration when a participant's response to open-ended questions, and to provide the opportunity for greater insight on the topic of interest (Jacob & Furgeson, 2012). In this study, the interview questions focused on the strategies developed and implemented by hospital leaders to reduce frontline support employee turnover. I conducted interviews with the senior leaders of the organization, namely the chief executive officer, chief operating officer, chief nursing officer, and chief financial officer. Other participants interviewed included the director and supervisors of the targeted departments: housekeeping and dietary, as well as the director of human resources. Bowen (2008) described data saturation as the point when no new information is acquired, and the inclusion of new participants reaches the point of diminishing returns. I conducted interviews until data saturation occurred, which resulted in my conducting interviews with eight leaders.

### **Population and Sampling**

The sample population for this study was drawn from leaders and frontline employees of a community hospital in southeast Louisiana. As of August 2015, there were 113 acute care hospitals in Louisiana; six acute care hospitals were located in the same parish as the selected hospital (American Hospital Directory, 2013). The hospital was selected because it provides critical services to the community, and because the organization's governance structure is a stand-alone, community, not-for-profit hospital. The governance structure allows for access of public records as the hospital is a political subdivision of the state of Louisiana, operating as a service district hospital. The two departments were selected for the case study based on recognition by senior leadership of the negative impact of turnover in the housekeeping department. The second department, dietary services, was selected as a comparative department as the job requirements, qualifications, and pay scales are similar to those of the housekeeping department.

The qualitative nature of this study used sampling that provides rich information with consideration for the nature of the topic and resource availability as described by O'Reilly & Parker (2012). I used census sampling to include all of the hospital's senior management team members, the directors and supervisors of the selected departments, and the director of human resources. These individuals are the leaders who are responsible for developing and implementing strategies for reducing frontline support employee turnover. The total number of leader interviews was eight.

According to Trotter (2012), when conducting research, participants should be



selected based on the individuals who have information and expertise or experience in the phenomenon. Participant selection should be based on the ability to fully describe the phenomenon with sufficient depth to extend knowledge (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). The size of the sample when conducting research is dependent not on the number of participants, but on the depth of information provided (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). These guidelines led me to the selection of my participants who were leaders with experience in developing and implementing strategies to reduce frontline support employee turnover. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar and Fontenot (2013) recommended that researchers use 15 to 30 interviews for single case studies; they argued that any improvements in the quality of the study would not justify the time and effort required to perform additional interviews. The number of interviews required to achieve saturation is dependent on the point where no new information, new themes, new coding, and the ability to replicate is achieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

### **Ethical Research**

Ethical research requires a study to be conducted in a manner that avoids harm to participants, and adheres to the guiding principles of autonomy, confidentiality, respect, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012; Greaney et al., 2012). I used these guiding principles through informed consent. The informed consent process provided for participant privacy. I also used procedures that ensured no participant information was released and that the information was gathered in a way that would not bring harm or allow for injustice to those agreeing to participate in the study.

The informed consent was conducted in alignment with the recommendations of the Belmont Report (1979). Approval for the project was obtained from Walden University's Internal Review Board (IRB) prior to commencing the project (Walden University IRB approval number 06-28-16-0466973). Each participant signed a statement of informed consent, which clearly outlined the purpose of the study. The informed consent document clearly stated that my role in gathering data is that of researcher, separate from my role as a department director within the organization. The informed consent described the interview process and how the documentation of information was stored for later transcription and analysis. I assured participants that their agreement to participate in the study was strictly voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time without penalty by notifying me by contacting me by telephone, email, or U.S. mail.

Organization leaders who participated in this study did not receive any incentive for their participation, as this would conflict with the Louisiana Code of Governmental Ethics (LSA-R.S. 42:1101, et seq.). All employees of service district hospitals are classified as public servants of the state of Louisiana. Information provided by the participants, as well as information gathered from organizational documents, will remain confidential and stored in a locked security box for a minimum of 5 years.

After the 5-year retention period, I will shred all paper documents using a secured shredding vendor. Files stored on any computers are password protected. I will ensure electronic documents are erased from the computer's hard drive, and any secondary

storage media such as jump drives will be physically destroyed.

The organization used in this study was not identified by name, referred to generically as an acute care hospital in southeast Louisiana. Participant names or other identifying data will not be disclosed; participants were identified as Leader A, B, C, etc. Names and other identifying information will be stored separately from the data. I personally performed all interview transcription and data analysis. No third parties were involved in the transcription or data analysis process.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument when using a qualitative method (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). I collected data using open-ended questions through a semistructured technique. The semistructured technique allows flexibility within a guided framework where the researcher has the opportunity to probe further into participant responses to increase richness of data (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Face-to-face interviews are interactive, and give the interviewer the ability to perceive the interviewee's body language and voice tone (Opdenakker, 2006). Disadvantages of face-to-face interviews are scheduling concerns, the time dedicated to the interview, and transcription time (Opdenakker, 2006). Research interview questions should be tailored to solicit information that may lead to discovery and understanding (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Prior to conducting the interviews, I conducted mock interviews with individuals who are not participants in the study to test the questions. Wahyuni (2012) provided guidance to researchers in using mock interviews to ensure the wording aligns with the

research question, and the discussion flow is clear. Additional data collection took place through review of organization documents such as exit interviews and employee comments submitted through the internal employee feedback process. Data and comments from the prior two years' employee engagement survey from the two departments that are the focus of this study were part of the data collection.

Triangulation allows the researcher to capture a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives (Jick, 1979). The use of organization information will allowed for triangulation of the data collected to improve the accuracy of the findings of the study. Reliability and validity was accomplished through member checking as described by Marshall and Rossman (2016). I followed the recommendations of Marshall and Rossman (2016) and provided summaries of interviews to participants to ensure the content and context of the information gathered was correct, or if additions, corrections, or clarifications were needed.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The primary form of data collection for this study was semistructured interviews using open-ended questions. Once the questions were finalized based on results of the mock interviews, I contacted participants by email or telephone to obtain agreement for participation in the study. The email or phone call clearly explained the goal of the study and the participant's role in collecting data as part of the study. Part of the introductory communication was to identify a convenient time and location for the interview. A follow-up email confirmed the individual's participation and the date, time, and location

of the interview. At the time of the interview, I introduced myself as the researcher, and clearly explained that participation in this research was voluntary and that I was not operating in my role as a director within the organization. Each participant was asked to review the informed consent document. I explained the purpose of the study, and confirmed that the participant understood that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. If the individual agreed to continue, I asked them to sign the informed consent document. I gave each participant a unique identifier that was used to ensure confidentiality and to organize all information related to that participant to create a clear audit trail using a process as recommended by Seers (2012).

The interviews were recorded on my personal laptop computer, using Audacity. I also took notes of the participant's answers and observed any para-language cues such as hesitation, body language, and facial expressions. Wayhuni (2012) recommended the use of both recording and notetaking as part of the interview process. McIntosh and Morse (2015) recommended researchers ask each participant the questions in the same order in each group. As I conducted each interview, I followed the same script, asking each participant the interview questions in the same order. Each interview lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. The interview questions can be found in Appendix C. The closing portion of the interview included a debriefing, where I thanked the participant, and asked them if they had any further questions or comments regarding the topic that were not covered in the interview. Debriefing and allowing participants an opportunity to add information outside of the scripted questions was suggested by Wayhuni (2012). The

process for member checking was provided to each participant with an explanation that they would have the opportunity to review and validate the transcription of the interview.

Researchers use interviews to gain further insight regarding personal experiences or opinions of individuals who have similar experiences (Rowley, 2012). Using interviews is beneficial when the participant might be more receptive to an interview than other data collection techniques such as surveys (Rowley, 2012). The researcher's use of open-ended questions allows the participant to provide additional information that might uncover insights not discovered using closed-ended questions (Jacob & Furgeson, 2012). Disadvantages of interviewing include participant willingness to discuss a particular topic, perceived inconvenience by the participant, or reluctance to discuss topics the participant might find embarrassing, invasive, or distressing (Rowley, 2012). The researcher must be careful when interviewing participants not to influence the participant's answers in any way (Elo et al., 2014). The pilot study consisted of mock interviews with individuals who were not part of the participant group for the study. My use of mock interviews allowed for refinement of the questions and practice transcribing, ensuring the questions address the central research question, and that the questions were asked in a way that the participant could clearly understand and fully answer.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Organizing the data requires taking the data apart and putting it back together in order to synthesize the data into information for the reader's understanding of the focus of the study (Stake, 2010). The use of audio recording of the participant interviews

allows the researcher to recheck the responses to ensure accuracy and confirm interpretation in developing emerging themes (Noble & Smith, 2015); my use of audio recording allowed me to review the transcripts for accuracy. I transcribed the interviews in their entirety, supported by notes taken during the interview of non-verbal communication cues. The use of semi-structured interviews gives the researcher the ability to establish a coding system prior to the interviews as the researcher has some prior knowledge of the topic (Morse, 2015). Qualitative data is open-ended, rich, and nuanced (Graebner, Martin, & Roundy, 2012), requiring researcher flexibility in creating coding so that the essence of the participant's viewpoint is retained. I will store the coding scheme and all interview files, notes, password-protected electronic and hard copy materials, in a secure, locked location for no less than 5 years.

### **Data Analysis**

Triangulation involves two or more approaches in addressing the research question (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Denzin (1978) described four types of triangulation: method, investigator, theory, and data triangulation (Torrance, 2012). Methodological triangulation best fits the case study method by using a secondary source of data to seek convergence of the evidence of a single study (Yin, 2014). This qualitative multiple case study was conducted using methodological triangulation by comparing the information gathered through interviews with hospital leaders with secondary data sources.

Investigator triangulation relies on two or more researchers (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014), and is not appropriate for this study as this study

involved only one researcher. Theory triangulation is intended to support, interpret, or develop theory (Carter et al., 2014; Torrance 2012), which was not appropriate for this study as the intent is to explore a phenomenon within a particular context. Data triangulation uses more than one source of data, accessed over time (Patton, 2015; Torrance, 2012) and was not appropriate for this study as my study had one source, interviews with hospital leaders, collected at a single point in time. Triangulation may result in convergence of information leading to the same conclusion, supporting or complementary results, or divergent or contradictory results (Heale & Forbes, 2013). As Patton (2015) noted, the purpose of triangulation is to address the central problem statement from various directions to test for consistency.

The researcher's analysis of case study data focuses on identifying themes and patterns that emerge from the data (Yin 2014). I developed a preliminary set of codes while performing the interviews, then refined these codes as I reviewed and analyzed the information provided by the participants, as well as information related to strategies for reducing employee turnover from supporting documents such as employee satisfaction surveys and turnover reports. I used NVivo as a tool to organize information. Yin (2014) noted that the key to using tools such as NVivo is to assist the researcher but not perform the analysis. As anticipated, the analysis required a line-by-line review of the transcripts to ensure the essence of the participant's responses was captured in my analysis and in refining the coding scheme. Coding refinement is a vital component of ensuring the accuracy of research findings (de Casterlé, Gastmans, Bryon, & Denier, 2012). A well-



defined coding scheme is necessary to reconstruct the story as told by the participants, and to retain the integrity of the response to fully address the research question (de Casterlé et al., 2012). I will ensure all raw data is maintained in a locked container for a minimum of 5 years.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Rigor in qualitative studies determines the worth and contribution of the research to the body of knowledge on the selected topic (Morse, 2015). The challenge of qualitative rigor occurs because of the interpretive nature of the researcher's analysis of the data, and the subjectivity of the data collected from the participants (Morse, 2015). A criterion used to judge qualitative research is trustworthiness (Elo et al., 2014), that is, the results of the research are worthy of the attention of other researchers in the same field. According to Tracy (2010), worthy topics are relevant, timely, significant, and interesting. The exploration of human experiences inherently creates subjectivity in the research which must be addressed through strategies to ensure reliability and validity (Cope, 2014). The criteria for achieving internal and external validity in qualitative research are credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Cope, 2014).

#### **Reliability**

Reliability or dependability in qualitative studies is the ability to replicate the study leading to the same results (Morse, 2015). Yin (2014) stated a tactic to test reliability in case studies is to use the four component case study protocol. Rigor requires the researcher to provide a clear and transparent audit trail including explanations of the

rationale for decisions made during the research process (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013; Noble & Smith, 2015). The audit trails include my personal notes as a researcher to ensure reflexivity. Methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978) using both interviews and organizational documents provided a link between information gathered from participants directly, and information provided by other sources relative to the topic. Member checking (Koelsch, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016) allowed each participant to review the transcript to confirm that I have accurately captured the essence of the information they provided.

### **Validity**

Validity represents the degree to which the findings accurately reflect the research data (Noble & Smith, 2015). Valid qualitative study requires the researcher to make certain the study is credible, transferable, and confirmable (Cope, 2014). Qualitative validity is based on the premise that the research is dependable and expresses a true reality from the viewpoint of the participants in the study (Tracy, 2010). Truth value recognizes that there is no precise truth; but instead that multiple realities exist as defined by the participants (Noble & Smith, 2015). By using member checking, I verified that my interpretation and understanding of the leaders' strategies to reduce turnover accurately represented the experiences of the study participants. The use of thick description can increase a qualitative study's validity, particularly when used in reporting the findings of semistructured interviews (Morse, 2015).

Methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978) enhances the credibility of the

research study where the data sources work together to confirm the data (Houghton, et al., 2013). This case study involved the triangulation of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with the organization's leaders, and a review of organizational documents such as exit interviews and employee satisfaction survey results. Transferability is the ability to apply the results of the findings of this particular study to other settings, allowing the reader to identify with the findings based on their own experiences (Cope, 2014). Tracy (2010) used the term *resonance* when describing transferability. Confirmability, the requirement that the results reflect the participant's views, was achieved through Marshall and Rossmann's (2016) description of member checking to reduce the possibility of personal biases from overshadowing the viewpoints provided by the study participants. One of the methods to ensure reliability and validity is to rely on data saturation, meaning interviews with leaders will continue and document review until no new data is obtained (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I found that interviewing eight different individuals was sufficient to achieve data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

The qualitative exploratory case study is intended to add to the body of knowledge focusing on strategies to reduce turnover in frontline support employees. The specific business problem as stated in section one identified the target industry and study population as the housekeeping and dietary departments of an acute care hospital. I collected data using semistructured interviews conducted with the organization's senior leaders, directors and supervisors of the housekeeping and dietary departments, and the

director of human resources. Once I conducted the interviews, and the information was transcribed, I asked each participant to review the synthesized information to ensure that their responses were recorded accurately and were reflective of their viewpoint regarding strategies to reduce turnover. Section 3 contains the findings of the study, the emergent themes and subthemes, as well as application to business practice in response to the overarching research question, what strategies to community hospital leaders use to reduce frontline employee turnover.

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

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies community hospital leaders use to reduce frontline support employee turnover. In order to answer the research question, I conducted semistructured interviews with eight hospital leaders of an acute care community hospital in southeast Louisiana. The leaders were selected based on their successful experiences and knowledge to answer the research question: What strategies do community hospital leaders use to reduce frontline support employee turnover?

The interviews were conducted in a setting that allowed for privacy. I took notes during each interview to identify themes as they emerged, and audio recorded the interviews using Audacity on my personal laptop. The interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word in a password protected document. Once the transcription was complete, I allowed each leader to review their interview transcript for accuracy, and to provide an opportunity to clarify in order to add to the information provided on the topic regarding the participant's perceptions and views regarding strategies to reduce frontline support employee turnover. The corrected and revised transcripts of the interviews were then analyzed and coded into themes and subthemes using NVivo 11 for Mac. I used methodological triangulation by reviewing documents from exit interviews and the results of the employee engagement survey as a means to confirm or contrast the data gathered through the interview process.

## **Presentation of the Findings**

Four major themes and nine subthemes emerged from my analysis of the data. The themes that emerged related to frontline support employee turnover were: (a) leadership, (b) hiring and onboarding strategies, (c) pay and compensation, and (d) organization-related factors. The subthemes that emerged related to leadership were: (a) relationships, (b) communication and visibility, and (c) coaching and mentoring. The second theme, hiring and onboarding, provided two subthemes, socialization, and person-job fit. Two subthemes emerged under the theme of pay and compensation, other job opportunities, and pay and compensation strategies. Finally, the fourth emergent theme resulted in two subthemes related to organizational factors: organizational culture, and work-life balance.

### **Emerging Theme 1: Leadership**

The eight participants in this study identified leadership as an important strategy in reducing turnover in frontline support staff. The subthemes under the emerging theme of leadership were categorized as: (a) relationships, (b) communication and visibility, and (c) coaching and mentoring. Fallatah and Laschinger (2016) acknowledged the importance of developing leadership skills as a strategy to address employee retention. Employee engagement is fostered when leaders are perceived as empowering, motivating and supportive (Sharoni, Shkoler, & Tziner, 2015). Wang and Hsieh (2013) stated that consistency between a leader's words and actions builds employee trust, which influences engagement.

Table 1

*Frequency of Leadership Responses*

Subtheme	<i>N</i>	Number of interviews addressing subtheme
Relationships	16	5
Communication and visibility	22	5
Coaching and mentoring	4	4

*Note:* *N* = Frequency of responses

**Relationships.** The quality of the relationship between the leader and the employee most consistently predicts turnover (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Nienaber, Hofeditz, and Romeike (2015) posited that leaders who demonstrate vulnerability are better able to build stronger relationships with their followers. According to Leader B “One of the best ways you can lead and work with people is to make yourself vulnerable.” Leader G noted that people leave the organization when supervisors fail to treat people with dignity and respect, and when promises are made but are not fulfilled. Leader H observed that people in these positions are more likely to quit because of their manager. In order to retain staff, according to Leader G, the leader should be available to the team, willing to learn, and take action when necessary. Leader D described the importance of the leader having “the human touch” to create a personal connection with each employee as a means to reduce turnover. As noted by Leader E, employees leave the organization when they feel a lack of support from their supervisor. These findings

aligned with previous research, whereby a leader's demonstration of behaviors associated with transformational leadership could lead to greater levels of employee engagement (Sharoni et al., 2015).

**Communication and Visibility.** The relationship between the supervisor and the employee can be enhanced through a positive perception of organizational support in meetings, which then translates to a lower intention to quit (Mroz & Allen, 2015).

Leader F described the importance of daily meetings with the team to create a continuous connection between the leader and the team members. The organization encourages leaders to conduct daily huddles, where department leaders share information with staff. These huddles are held twice daily in the dietary department, and are led by the department director or operating manager. Leaders A and H shared the importance of providing information with frontline employees so they feel connected to the organization.

Daily huddles provide a forum for sharing department and hospital information, as well as giving the staff an opportunity to discuss other issues, such as current events. Li, Kim, and Zhao (2017) asserted that leaders should communicate individually with employees by initiating conversations to increase the employee's perception of inclusion within the organization. Leader F described the necessity of an open door policy by leaders so that employees can share concerns with them. Leader G stated, "When you provide tools to address their issues, it gives them a feeling of worth and satisfaction that someone listened to them." Leader F concurred on this point, "Respect on that level in



the workplace goes a very long way. They don't want to be spoken to like children.”

Leaders G and H both stated that employees in frontline support positions choose to leave because they feel they are not being treated with dignity and respect by their supervisor.

**Coaching and Feedback.** The degree to which managers demonstrate appreciation and provide career growth coaching to front-line staff can impact work effort (Li et al., 2017). Leader consistency in demonstrating transformational leadership on a day-to-day basis is linked to a positive influence in employee engagement (Breevart et al., 2014). According to Leader C, leaders must be skilled in conducting crucial conversations, and have strong conflict resolution skills. Leader C described the leader's role in reducing turnover through coaching and mentoring employees, and providing regular feedback to encourage personal growth:

I try to reemphasize frequently the concept of care-fronting. It's a simple idea – care enough to confront someone. Even if it's hard to do, even at the risk that the person may be really angry and not talk to you, but care enough about that person to tell them.

This leader also described the importance of providing “a supportive environment with high expectations and accountability.” Madden, Mathias, and Madden (2015) posited an employee's perception of organizational support and positive co-worker relationships negatively relate to intention to leave the organization. In the words of Leader H, the leader must put themselves at the employee's level, speaking to the employee as a peer. As also noted by Leader H,

You don't get up in the morning and say 'I wish I made 50 cents more.' You get up and say 'I don't know how much longer I can work there.' Either it's too hard, or people are mean to me, or the job is just dirty, or the company is bad.

This sentiment was echoed by other leaders interviewed, who related their view that while pay is a determining factor, the way employees are treated can be the overarching impetus in the decision to leave.

The theme of leadership was supported in documentation of exit interviews conducted by the human resources department, where departing employees in both departments directly cited the reason for leaving was departmental-level leadership, particularly lack of visibility and the availability of the department director. Employees also described the leadership styles and negative interactions with frontline supervisors as a reason for leaving. In contrast, current employees completing the employee engagement survey cited satisfaction with their respective leader in open-ended comments.

## **Emerging Theme 2: Hiring and Onboarding Strategies**

All eight leaders interviewed stressed the importance of hiring the right person for a position. Subthemes that emerged during the interviews that addressed the theme of hiring and onboarding were: socialization and person-job fit. Leader E stated "The number one strategy is to make sure we hire the right person up front." Leader F stated, "I hire for attitude...I can train for skill." According to Leader A, their department receives hundreds of applicants for a single job opening; selecting the right candidate is

difficult. Leader E stated “We make hasty decisions when probably the right thing to do was start over and get somebody in who wants to be here.”

This aligns with current literature; Choudhary (2016) posited that, when the organization is faced with a large hiring pool, the process is difficult and time consuming. Leaders A, B, and E all noted the challenge in hiring the right person is the ability to determine person-job fit through the current process. Leader B shared their experience with pre-hire testing, which did not produce the intended results in increasing employee retention. This finding differed from research by Lanyon and Goodstein (2016) who found employees who did not score high on pre-employment impression testing, did not subsequently perform well on the job. Leader F emphasized the importance of “setting expectations and being clear about what is necessary in order to work here” during pre-hire interviewing.

Table 2

*Frequency of Hiring and Onboarding Strategies Responses*

Subtheme	<i>N</i>	Number of interviews addressing subtheme
Socialization	14	3
Person-job fit	4	6

*Note:* N = Frequency of responses

**Socialization.** The process by which new employees are enculturated, can impact their success and future intention to remain with the organization (Cable, Gino, & Staats,

2013; Hall-Ellis, 2014; Krasman, 2015). Krasman (2015) further argued that the onboarding processes should be strategic, comprehensive, consistent, and measured in order to reduce employee turnover. Leader H described the organization's attempt to implement a *buddy system* where new employees were partnered with experienced staff. The program had some success; however, the program did not gain momentum and was not sustainable. One of the departments continues to use a modified form of the buddy system to train new employees, according to Leaders A and F. The use of a buddy system is consistent with research by Choy, Billett, and Kelly (2013) who found that employees appreciate direct training from a peer, where they can learn from an experienced co-worker's expertise. Low, Bordia, and Bordia (2016) found new employees seek guidance, mentoring, and opportunity to develop their workplace identity. Effective mentoring programs have been found to reduce an employee's intention to leave the organization and seek other employment (Park, Newman, Zhang, Wu, & Hooke, 2016).

**Person-job fit.** Schiemann (2014) emphasized that successful hiring and onboarding is reliant on the new employee connecting with co-workers and supervisors. Leaders B, C, and E shared the importance of setting expectations prior to hire with the new employee. According to Leader B, "The person taking the job doesn't necessarily know what the job is until they get here." Leaders C, D, and F expressed concern that some new hires in the housekeeping and dietary areas may not have had prior jobs that required the level of accountability and professionalism required by the organization.

This finding relates to previous research by Schiemann (2014) who found employees who do not become engaged or fail to align with the values or culture of the organization, are considered a hiring failure.

### **Emerging Theme 3: Pay and Compensation**

Employees who have higher levels of wage satisfaction are more likely to stay with the organization (Steinmetz, de Vries, & Tijdens, 2014). In comparison, Bryant and Allen (2013) found that pay level and pay satisfaction were weak indicators of turnover, however, pay dispersion does have an impact on job satisfaction and employee morale. Leadership and co-worker relationships have a greater impact on turnover than pay satisfaction (Chang, Wang, & Huang, 2013). Johnco, Salloum, Olson, and Edwards (2014) found that job stress and burnout, followed by salary and benefits, were the primary reasons for employees leaving their jobs.

Table 3

#### *Frequency of Pay and Compensation Responses*

Subtheme	<i>N</i>	Number of interviews addressing subtheme
Other job opportunities	17	5
Pay and compensation strategies	12	7

*Note:* N = Frequency of responses

The findings of this study were mixed regarding the perception that pay and compensation are directly related to turnover. The leaders interviewed held two different

views regarding the primary drivers of voluntary turnover. Leadership is more important than pay, but at the same time, pay levels and the ability to earn more by changing jobs drives the employee to leave the organization. This finding was consistent with comments from employees on the BPA, where pay and benefits were cited as one of the top three things the employees would like to see improved in the organization.

**Pay and compensation strategy.** According to Treuren and Frankish (2014), dissatisfaction with pay was directly linked to an employee's intention to leave. Employees who perceive the organization's pay structure as unfair are more likely to seek other employment, therefore, employers should ensure the company's pay structure is fair, and clearly communicated to employees (Jung & Yoon, 2015). Duhautois, Gilles, and Petit (2016) posited increases in lower-paid employee compensation could reduce employee turnover. In Milman and Dickson's (2013) study of theme park workers, satisfaction with pay was a predictor of retention. The organization in this study strives to pay competitively at market rates, according to Leaders B, G, E, and H. However, employees have left the organization because other companies hiring employees requiring a similar skill level pay a higher hourly wage. According to Leader F, the employees might enjoy their work but are compelled to leave as the higher income allows them to better provide for their families. In the words of Leader B, "Just throwing money at it doesn't work. People have bigger aspirations." The organization does not always have the ability to provide pay raises, according to Leaders E and G. Leader F described a strategy to increase individual pay by discontinuing the use of contract labor and

providing front line employees the opportunity to work additional hours at overtime rates. Tenured employees often have a second job in order to provide for themselves and their families.

An unexpected finding of this study was employees who voluntarily leave because their pay allows them to receive government subsidies. When overtime pay, or their regular annual income, approaches the threshold to continue to receive benefits, the employees choose to resign their employment. Leader F described the strategy they have used to attempt to retain these employees by providing financial counseling to help the employees better understand the dynamics of managing their income; however, this strategy has not been particularly successful. The feeling of this leader was sometimes turnover is beyond the leader's control when the employee has a different mindset regarding continued employment.

**Other job opportunities.** Mohsin, Lengler, and Aguzzoli (2015) stated opportunities in other growing sectors can increase turnover. The growth in the retail industry is accompanied by higher wages paid by large establishments (Soyars, 2014). Milman and Dickson (2013) advised leaders to adopt creative strategies aimed at employee retention as the labor pool becomes smaller. Leaders participating in this study acknowledged the economic growth in the area created a supply and demand environment for employees at this level. Leaders D, F, E, and G described competing employers in addition to other healthcare providers, such as fast-food restaurants, retailers such as Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's, hotels, and casinos. The

opportunities other employers can provide can cause the employee to choose to leave, even if they are satisfied in their current job. This finding contrasts with by research by Anitha and Begum (2016) who posited employees who are committed to the organization, and are satisfied with their jobs, are less likely to explore alternative employment.

#### **Emerging Theme 4: Organization-Related Factors**

Leaders interviewed for this study also identified various factors related to the organization that impact turnover, and the strategies used to retain employees. The sub-themes that emerged through the interviews and triangulation achieved through review of employee exit interview documents and results of the employee satisfaction surveys were: (a) organizational culture, (b) organizational support, and (c) policies, procedures and work processes.

Table 4

#### *Frequency of Organizational and Other Factors Responses*

Subtheme	<i>N</i>	Number of interviews addressing subtheme
Organizational culture	30	8
Work-life balance	23	6

*Note:* N = Frequency of responses

This theme and the associated sub-themes related to existing literature where employees are more likely to stay with an organization when they perceive support from leaders and



form positive relationships with co-workers (Madden et al., 2015). In addition, the department-level leader plays a pivotal role in signaling organization-level support to employees (Li et al., 2017).

**Organizational culture.** Employees must have a positive view of the organization and their leader in order to maximize the potential to reduce turnover through engagement (Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013). Those employees who feel valued by the organization and its leaders exhibit greater commitment, leading to a lower likelihood of quitting (Anitha & Begum, 2016). A healthy organizational culture leads to employee commitment, which then increases intention (Anitha & Begum, 2016). The organization used in this study emphasizes the importance of employee satisfaction, measured by the Business Practice Assessment (BPA). The BPA tool measures employee satisfaction in three areas, together termed the trifecta. The three components of the trifecta focused on senior management, department-level management, and organizational practices. Using the feedback from the survey is important, as noted by Leader B, as an indicator that “Management is providing a good place for good people to work.” Review of the data from the BPA for the dietary department and the housekeeping department were compared in order to triangulate findings of the interviews with leaders to feedback from employees.

Tzafrir, Gur, and Blumen (2015) described the importance of the work-related social environment in reducing the employee’s intention to leave. Both departments celebrate various holidays, birthdays, and other special events to build camaraderie and

involvement. Leader H described the importance of departmental and organization activities in building culture so that employees build friendships with co-workers, which improves the quality of their work life.

**Work-Life Balance and Work-Family Conflicts.** Nohe and Sonntag (2014) posited work and family conflict occurs when job requirements interfere with the roles of the individual outside of the workplace. Millennials view work differently than preceding generations, where work is secondary to their personal lives (Gursoy, Chi, & Karadag, 2013). The findings of this study aligned with the published research as leaders shared their experience with employees voluntarily leaving the organization due to conflicts with personal and family responsibilities. Hom et al. (2012) described employees who leave the organization due to family pressures as coerced leavers who are reluctant to leave but feel no other option. Department Leader A described their experience with hiring students who have school activities that conflict with work schedules, resulting in turnover when the employee cannot fulfill their job obligations. Sterling (2015) advised leaders to utilize flexible scheduling with students as work experience provides younger workers with an opportunity to learn skills they may need in future jobs. This finding is unique to this department, as other departments within the organization do not hire high school students; additionally, this level of turnover is expected as the students are hired on a *per diem* basis.

The physical location of the hospital, coupled with the lack of public transportation, and the lack of personal transportation creates difficulty for employees to

maintain regular attendance and adherence to their work schedules. However, absenteeism is sometimes an attitudinal indicator more than a lack of economic resources. This finding relates to research by Berry, Lelchook, and Clark (2012) who stated that interventions addressing absenteeism could affect turnover, as absenteeism is an early warning sign to leaders of employee withdrawal. According to four of the leaders (A, C, D, and F), coaching is often aimed at addressing attendance issues. Leaders A and D disclosed coaching or counseling is often followed by a reduction in the level of observed employee commitment, which then leads to turnover. Leader C stated that through coaching, the leader could learn of underlying issues such as scheduling conflicts that might be addressed that could reduce the employee's intention to leave the organization.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Employee engagement involves individuals committing themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally to the roles they perform (Kahn, 1990; Saks & Gruman, 2014). Engagement occurs when the employee has a positive perception of organization and supervisor support, rewards and recognition systems, and characteristics of the job (Saks, 2006). Saks described increased job satisfaction and reduced intention to quit as consequences of employee engagement. Anitha (2014) and Gujral and Jain (2013) posited the working environment, team and co-worker relationships, training and career development, leadership, and rewards and recognition are positively related to employee engagement. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research regarding

the antecedents of engagement that leaders should leverage in order to reduce employee turnover. Engagement is increased when leaders build trust within their employees (Lee & Ok, 2016). High quality leader-member exchange experience relates to job satisfaction and engagement (Lee & Ok, 2016). Selective hiring practices to ensure customer-oriented employees can increase employee engagement in service industries that require high customer contact (Karatepe & Aga, 2016). Developmental human resources practices, particularly training and development result in higher engagement (Bal, Kooij, & De Jong, 2013). Engagement is vital to organization success, as previous studies have found disengaged employees cost organizations up to \$550 billion annually in lost productivity (Karatepe & Aga, 2016). Organizations face the challenge of developing and implementing strategies that allow them to retain engaged employees who wholeheartedly work toward the fulfillment of the organization's mission and goals.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for positive social change related to reducing employee turnover include the improvement in the quality of life for individuals who are steadily employed. Consistent employment allows the individual to provide for themselves and their families. When an individual feels rewarded by the job they perform, and feel appreciated, their view of their self-worth improves. Good working relationships allow individuals to enjoy their work and feel connected to their co-workers. Higher levels of employment contribute to the community through improved economic conditions and reduced reliance of individuals on governmental supplemental programs. In a patient-

care environment, reducing employee turnover allows the organization to provide consistent processes to the patients. Housekeepers and dietary employees play an important role in the patient care process, and in providing a healing environment for patients. In the case of the organization used as the focus of this study, turnover affects the hospital's profitability and ability to provide effective and efficient continuity of care. Without housekeepers and dietary staff members, the hospital cannot meet fulfill its mission in providing essential services to the community.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies community hospital leaders use to reduce frontline support employee turnover. Turnover affects an organization's ability to deliver its products and services efficiently and effectively, in terms of productivity, financial performance, quality, and customer service (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013; Hancock, Allen, & Soelberg, 2016; Holtom & Burch, 2016). Leaders in service industries should pay particular attention to managing turnover rates (Park & Shaw, 2013). Hospital leaders are challenged to find ways to deliver quality care in an economic environment of uncertain revenue and reimbursement (Dong, 2015). A hospital's mission is to provide a healing environment. Employees who are believe in the mission of the organization, and who are engaged to support the organization's success are less likely to voluntarily leave to seek other employment (Collini, Guidroz, & Perez, 2015). The findings of this study are aimed at helping hospital leaders reduce turnover through strategies that build employee

engagement. Interviews conducted with hospital leaders in an acute care community hospital in southeast Louisiana resulted in four emerging themes of strategies to reduce turnover among frontline support staff: (a) leadership; (b) hiring and onboarding; (c) pay and compensation; and (d) organization-related factors.

The quality of the leader's relationship with their employees is linked to employee turnover (Furunes, Mykletun, Einarsen, & Glasø; 2015; Nei, Snyder, & Litwiller, 2015). In order to build relationships, leaders must be accessible and visible. Leaders participating in this study identified specific strategies such as regular department meetings and daily huddles to improve communication and interaction with employees. Strumwasser and Virkstis (2015) recommended leaders not only solicit input from employees, but also ensure that they follow through on any ideas or suggestions submitted by staff members. When staff members experience positive daily interactions with leaders builds trust so that employees are comfortable bringing problems or concerns to the leader's attention.

Hiring and onboarding also influence engagement and retention. Person-organization or person-job fit is an essential element in building engagement and reducing turnover. As leaders in this study noted, job candidates need a realistic preview of the job prior to hire to ensure expectations and job requirements are clear. Employees often leave because the job is not what they anticipated (Choudhary, 2016). Job previews can affect employee success on hired, but can also serve as a mechanism to narrow the candidate pool to those best suited to perform the job (Bilal & Bashir, 2016). Clear job

descriptions outlining the duties and requirements of the job provide employees with measurable, objective standards of what is expected of them in their role. Once hired, the new employee's experience begins with orientation. The orientation experience should be meaningful in providing an understanding of the organization's mission, provide new hire expectations, and serve as a first step toward socialization (Kim, Chai, Kim, & Park, 2015). Leaders can support newcomer success through feedback, support, and creation of a safe learning environment (Tang, Liu, Oh, & Weitz, 2014).

The findings of this study revealed pay and compensation represent an important factor in frontline support employee's decision to leave the organization. Compensation offered by other employers can create an attraction where an employee feels compelled to change jobs in order to better provide for themselves and their families, even though they may be satisfied with other aspects of the job. In addition to salary or wages, organizations should consider a means of providing other financial rewards such as bonuses or incentive pay contingent on goal achievement (Choudhary, 2016). Gill, Dugger, and Norton (2014) found compensation, organizational alignment, and development opportunities were positively related to employee engagement. It is not only the actual level of pay, but the employee's perception of fairness of pay that determines engagement, where satisfaction can increase engagement (Jung & Yoon, 2015). Increasing the employees' perception of fairness can result in greater work performance efforts (Wu, Sturman, & Wang, 2013).

The leaders interviewed in this study indicated the importance of work-life balance to frontline support employees. As noted by the leaders participating in this study, employees in these positions are caught between work and family responsibilities, particularly if they are the primary caregiver for children or aging parents. Flexible work arrangements, such as flexible time, or on-site child care, are examples of methods employers can use to reduce the strain of work-family conflict (Timms et al., 2014). Transformational leadership who demonstrate supportive behaviors can reduce the strain of work-life pressures felt by employees (Syrek, Apostel, & Antoni, 2013).

Supportive organizational cultures can reduce employee intention to quit (Timms et al., 2014). By improving the climate of the workplace, leaders can increase employee engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2014). Hospital leaders in this study shared the importance of a work culture where people enjoy coming to work and have positive relationships with co-workers. As noted by the leaders interviewed in this study, engagement increases when employees feel free to share their concerns, and are able to approach leaders with issues that distract from their job performance and affect group cohesion.

Addressing turnover among frontline hospital staff requires multi-faceted strategies, including leadership, pay and compensation perceived as fair, effective hiring and onboarding processes, and a culture that values each member of the team. The results of this study are aimed hospital leaders at any level of the organization, from the senior level, to frontline supervisors, so that they can develop and implement strategies to reduce turnover in frontline employees. In addition to hospital leaders, the findings of



this study may be useful to any organization experiencing frontline support employee turnover, where the organization's operations are dependent on low-skill, service-oriented employees. The results of this study will be shared with the hospital's leadership, including the governing board. I plan to submit the findings of this study to the local chapter of the Society of Human Resources Management and the Association for Talent Development as a proposed topic. I will disseminate the findings of the study as opportunities arise, so that hospital leaders might be able to use these strategies to reduce turnover, and fulfill the organization's mission of healing.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this study was to identify strategies community hospital leaders use to reduce frontline support employee turnover. The findings of the study are limited to the population included in the study, namely senior leaders, directors of the housekeeping and dietary departments, and the director of human resources. A recommendation for further research would be to expand the population to include frontline employees within these departments to determine the efficacy of the specific strategies used in building engagement and reducing turnover. A second recommendation would be to perform a cross-industry study of housekeepers and dietary (food service) workers in the same community to determine if the results are consistent in similar organizations. A further research option would be to explore strategies for reducing frontline support employee turnover focused on frontline support employees, including housekeeping, dietary, and nursing assistants, leaving the organization within

the first 90 days of employment. Finally, an opportunity exists to further research the antecedents of voluntary and involuntary turnover among frontline support employees in hospital housekeeping and dietary departments.

### **Reflections**

As I started on my journey within the DBA Doctoral Study process, I was enlightened as to the importance of leaders sharing solutions that other leaders can employ to solve a business problem. My first iteration was to approach this as a study of employees' perception of turnover. I gained a clearer understanding that only leaders can solve these problems, and my focus shifted to leader-driven solutions. As I completed my literature review, I became aware of the differences between job satisfaction and employee engagement. Building an engaged workforce can be a critical competitive success factor for an organization. One of the challenges in completing this study was working as a leader within the organization that is the focus of the study. I had to step back from the knowledge and preconceived ideas I had about the causes of turnover within the organization, and look at the information collected through the participant interviews objectively. One of the values that I espouse and teach others is in any organization the most important asset is human capital. This is particularly true in healthcare. Most hospitals have the same technology and offer many of the same services, but what sets the organization apart is the heart and soul of the people who are dedicated and engaged to providing superior care to the patient. My hope is that the findings of this study will be used to create an organizational culture that respects and

values employees at every level so that they want to remain with the organization.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

My goal in providing the information in this study is to share strategies throughout the organization and with other similar organizations facing the same challenges of reducing frontline support employee turnover. The economics of today's healthcare operating environment compel leaders to create and implement solutions to reducing non-value added expenses. Turnover is disruptive to the operations of the organization. The conceptual framework for this study, employee engagement, provides a connection between the strategies leaders have developed and implemented to the goal of reducing frontline support employee turnover. The leaders in this study provided four areas of focus in addressing employee turnover: (a) leadership, (b) hiring and onboarding strategies, (c) pay and compensation, and (d) organization-related factors. Engaged employees are more likely to remain with the organization, and demonstrate enthusiasm for the work they perform. Creating an engaged workforce can benefit the organization, as well as the community the hospital serves.

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## Appendix A: Participant Invitation Letter

June 29, 2016

(Participant Name and Address)

Dear (Participant),

I am conducting interviews as part of a research study to increase understanding of strategies hospital leaders use to reduce front-line employee turnover. As a leader within the organization, you are in an ideal position to give valuable information from your own perspective. Please note participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and my role as researcher is separate and apart from my role as Director of Training and Development. I am performing this study as a requirement to earn my Doctorate of Business Administration from Walden University.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes, and will take place in a location mutually agreeable to both of us. Your responses to the questions will not be identified by your name. Each person participating in the study will be assigned a letter code (Leader A, B, C, etc.) to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of the findings. The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy and completeness. After the interviews are completed, I will meet with you to review your portion of the transcript for corrections or additions. This review meeting will take approximately 30 minutes.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to the research and findings that could lead to greater understanding of strategies to reduce front-line employee turnover.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me by email at (email address) or on my cell phone at (number). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Wilson



## Appendix B: Data Use Agreement

**DATA USE AGREEMENT**

This Data Use Agreement (“Agreement”), effective as of May 20, 2016 (“Effective Date”), is entered into by and between Jeanne L. Wilson (“Data Recipient”) and (name of organization) (“Data Provider”). The purpose of this Agreement is to provide Data Recipient with access to a Limited Data Set (“LDS”) for use in scholarship/research **in accord with laws and regulations of the governing bodies associated with the Data Provider, Data Recipient, and Data Recipient’s educational program.** In the case of a discrepancy among laws, the agreement shall follow whichever law is more strict.

1. **Definitions.** Due to the project’s affiliation with Laureate, a USA-based company, unless otherwise specified in this Agreement, all capitalized terms used in this Agreement not otherwise defined have the meaning established for purposes of the USA “HIPAA Regulations” and/or “FERPA Regulations” codified in the United States Code of Federal Regulations, as amended from time to time.
2. **Preparation of the LDS.** Data Provider shall prepare and furnish to Data Recipient a LDS in accord with any applicable laws and regulations of the governing bodies associated with the Data Provider, Data Recipient, and Data Recipient’s educational program.
3. **Data Fields in the LDS.** **No direct identifiers such as names may be included in the Limited Data Set (LDS).** In preparing the LDS, Data Provider shall include the **data fields specified as follows**, which are the minimum necessary to accomplish the project: Business Practice Assessment results; Employee exit interview data.
4. **Responsibilities of Data Recipient.** Data Recipient agrees to:
  - a. Use or disclose the LDS only as permitted by this Agreement or as required by law;
  - b. Use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the LDS other than as permitted by this Agreement or required by law;
  - c. Report to Data Provider any use or disclosure of the LDS of which it becomes aware that is not permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

- d. Require any of its subcontractors or agents that receive or have access to the LDS to agree to the same restrictions and conditions on the use and/or disclosure of the LDS that apply to Data Recipient under this Agreement; and
  - e. Not use the information in the LDS to identify or contact the individuals who are data subjects.
5. Permitted Uses and Disclosures of the LDS. Data Recipient may use and/or disclose the LDS **for the present project's activities only.**
6. Term and Termination.
- a. Term. The term of this Agreement shall commence as of the Effective Date and shall continue for so long as Data Recipient retains the LDS, unless sooner terminated as set forth in this Agreement.
  - b. Termination by Data Recipient. Data Recipient may terminate this agreement at any time by notifying the Data Provider and returning or destroying the LDS.
  - c. Termination by Data Provider. Data Provider may terminate this agreement at any time by providing thirty (30) days prior written notice to Data Recipient.
  - d. For Breach. Data Provider shall provide written notice to Data Recipient within ten (10) days of any determination that Data Recipient has breached a material term of this Agreement. Data Provider shall afford Data Recipient an opportunity to cure said alleged material breach upon mutually agreeable terms. Failure to agree on mutually agreeable terms for cure within thirty (30) days shall be grounds for the immediate termination of this Agreement by Data Provider.
  - e. Effect of Termination. Sections 1, 4, 5, 6(e) and 7 of this Agreement shall survive any termination of this Agreement under subsections c or d.
7. Miscellaneous.
- a. Change in Law. The parties agree to negotiate in good faith to amend this Agreement to comport with changes in federal law that materially alter either or both parties' obligations under this Agreement. Provided however, that if the parties are unable to agree to mutually acceptable amendment(s) by the compliance date of the change in applicable law or

regulations, either Party may terminate this Agreement as provided in section 6.

- b. Construction of Terms. The terms of this Agreement shall be construed to give effect to applicable federal interpretative guidance regarding the HIPAA Regulations.
- c. No Third Party Beneficiaries. Nothing in this Agreement shall confer upon any person other than the parties and their respective successors or assigns, any rights, remedies, obligations, or liabilities whatsoever.
- d. Counterparts. This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.
- e. Headings. The headings and other captions in this Agreement are for convenience and reference only and shall not be used in interpreting, construing or enforcing any of the provisions of this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each of the undersigned has caused this Agreement to be duly executed in its name and on its behalf.

**DATA PROVIDER**

**DATA RECIPIENT**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Title: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

### Employee Turnover in Front-Line Hospital Staff

#### **Interview Questions**

1. What are some of the forces that influence frontline support employee turnover?
2. What strategies do you use that are most effective in reducing frontline support turnover?
3. What strategies were the least effective in reducing frontline support employee turnover?
4. What are some of the barriers to implementing strategies that reduce frontline support employee turnover?
5. What other information would you like to provide regarding this topic?

## Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

Organization/Address

May 20, 2016

Dear Jeanne Wilson,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Employee Turnover in Front-line Hospital Staff within (name of organization). As part of this study, I authorize you to interview senior leaders, department directors, and supervisors, review Business Practice Assessment results, and exit interview data. I also authorize you to meet with participants to perform member checking to validate the interpretation of interviews is consistent with the participant's intended meaning of the information provided. The results of this study will be disseminated to the senior leadership team and director of human resources at a face-to-face meeting. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: ensuring participant availability for interviews not to exceed one hour, a conference room that affords privacy for participants during interviews, copies of the results of the Business Practice Assessment conducted in 2014 and 2015, and exit interview data from employees terminating in 2014 and 2015. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Organization CEO