

Fall 12-9-2021

EMPLOYEES' EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON ANTICIPATED VOLUNTARY EMPLOYEE TURNOVER AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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EMPLOYEES' EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS
AND THEIR EFFECTS ON ANTICIPATED VOLUNTARY EMPLOYEE
TURNOVER AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

by

Candace Janesha Johnson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Business and Economic Development
and the School of Leadership
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2021

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ABSTRACT

Employee retention and commitment have gained attention over the past years (Mutsuddi, 2016). Commitment is the link that connects an individual to their organization, thereby decreases the probability of turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Hague et al., 2019). According to Mutsuddi (2016), decreasing employee turnover remains a critical element for sustainment in any organization. However, most organizations invest in policies and practices to increase employee commitment; those same practices can lead to employee turnover (Mutsuddi, 2016). This study explores the effects of leadership development programs and their impact on organizational commitment and anticipated voluntary employee turnover. A qualitative research design was used for this study and allowed the participants to tell their stories through one-on-one interviews. Utilizing this method enabled the researcher to explain the participants' leadership program development expectations.

The results of this study were derived from the analysis of interview transcripts. The researcher conducted 15 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System (GCVHCS) employees. These employees completed at least one of the following programs within the past ten years: Each Leader Individually Trained to Excel (ELITE), Emerging VA Leaders (EVAL), and Leadership Development Institute (LDI). The researcher conducted a focus group as a method to achieve triangulation. For this study, the focus group participants consisted of six mid-level and upper-level supervisors employed at GCVHCS. Those supervisors approved at least one employee to participate in at least one of the abovementioned programs.

The analysis yielded ten themes, four expectations, five perspectives, and one impact on organizational commitment. The perspectives identified include organizational assimilation, personal development, supervisor support, participation, and benefits. The expectations identified include career advancement, leadership development, program follow-up, and ambivalence. The impact on organizational commitment includes enhanced organizational commitment for those that attend leadership courses. This study could improve leadership development programs by addressing employee expectations while developing a plan of action for a follow-up to ensure the skills gained during the programs are used to benefit the employee and the organization.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Obtaining this degree has been a long journey for me, one I struggled to complete due to life changes. However, one thing that remained constant was the support of my dissertation chair, Dr. H. Quincy Brown. His patience and understanding meant a lot to me and is very appreciated; I sincerely thank you for that, and I am forever grateful. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Heather Annulis, Dr. Jonathan Beedle, and Dr. Dale Lunsford, for their continued guidance throughout this process.

I am also very grateful for the support received from my place of employment. I want to give a special thanks to Ms. Kimberly Morgan, our Research Coordinator, and our Medical Center Director, Mr. Bryan C. Matthews, for their support and for allowing me to conduct research at the Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System. Your support during this time was very much appreciated. I would also like to thank Dr. Kelly Woods and Ms. Camille Weston for their encouraging words and support. To the research participants, thank you for providing me with your time and insight into your perceptions while also trusting me with your opinions and experiences. I am profoundly grateful, and I was able to complete this lifelong dream because of you. Again, I say thank you.

DEDICATION

I want to thank all of my friends and family members who supported me throughout this process. To my husband and my daughter, you two were the driving force behind completing this task. Thank you for your continuous support and love throughout this process; you and Layla encourage me to reach all of my goals, and I am so grateful to have you in my life. To my friends, thank you for your words of inspiration to get me through this process. To my mother, brother, grandmother, and aunts, I thank you for your support. Lastly, I have several great aunts and uncles who are no longer with us; I hope I made you proud, and I miss you dearly. I dedicate this accomplishment to each of you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ELITE</i>	Each Leader Individually Trained to Excel
<i>EVAL</i>	Emerging VA Leaders
<i>GCVHCS</i>	Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System
<i>IPA</i>	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
<i>LDI</i>	Leadership Development Institute

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

Organizations spend millions of dollars to enhance their employees' performance and skills (Iqbal et al., 2013). According to Iqbal et al. (2013), leadership development is a concept with a significant expense that has led to the formation of employers' and employees' expectations regarding the desired outcome of their organizational leadership development programs. According to Choi and Dickson (2010) and Khan (2018), searching for evidence to support the idea that employee training provides a return on investment (ROI) continues as an ongoing effort from human resource departments. The same question has remained for many years: does the time and expense invested in leadership development increase employee retention and satisfaction? (Choi & Dickson, 2010; Khan, 2018).

Most organizations understand the value of customer service and prioritizing their employees development (Cloutier et al., 2015). According to Cloutier et al. (2015), organizations understand the effort of those two actions ultimately determines the success or failure of their business. As a business priority, organizations typically address these actions by developing employee retention strategies (Cloutier et al., 2015). Retention is essential for an organization to achieve stability, growth, and revenue (Cloutier et al., 2015). Four strategies enhance employee retention: effectively communicating with employees, hiring a diverse workforce, hiring appropriately skilled people, and providing employee development and training program opportunities (Cloutier et al., 2015).

Due to ongoing transformations within organizations, the need for effective leadership is more evident than ever before. Those in leadership roles can influence the most important predictors of an organization's ability to perform in dynamic

environments (Peterson et al., 2009). Thus, when organizations invest in leadership development, they also invest in the overall success of their organization (Day et al., 2009).

Organizational commitment has a direct and positive influence on work performance (Eliyana et al., 2019). According to Shahab and Nisa (2014), that influence first affects the work satisfaction and organizational commitment relationship and the relationship between the organizational commitment and work performance.

Theoretically, work satisfaction directly relates to work performance (Eliyana et al., 2019). Individuals with a high level of organizational commitment will display positive behaviors towards the organization, put forth their best effort, sacrifice, and demonstrate a high level of loyalty (Eliyana et al., 2019). Lastly, those employees will want to remain employed with the organization. Individuals display high levels of organizational commitment through their work performance. Consequently, individuals that show low organizational commitment tend to demonstrate low work performance (Eliyana et al., 2019).

The employee-organization relationship is extremely critical and fragile (Kim et al., 2017). This relationship is an exchange where both parties present a skill and exchange it for something the other party wants or needs (Kim et al., 2017). Long-term relationships between the organization and employee can be influenced in many ways by factors such as organizational culture and interpersonal satisfaction, both of which could impact an employee's decision to leave or remain with the organization (Kim et al., 2017). Due to the detrimental effects of voluntary turnover on organizational

performance, identifying the causes of employee turnover is crucial to organizational success (Kwon & Rupp, 2013).

Hence, employee turnover directly affects an organization's productivity and financial performance (Choi & Dickson, 2010; Khan, 2018). Turnover costs have several categories: separation costs, replacement costs, training and development costs, decrease in productivity, and loss of knowledge (Choi & Dickson, 2010; Khan, 2018).

Organizations incur a significant expense if an employee resigns after completing leadership development programs (Brum, 2007; White, 2017). The misalignment of leadership development program expectations can lead to the same losses mentioned above (Iqbal et al., 2013).

This study describes the effects of leadership development program expectations on anticipated voluntary employee turnover and organizational commitment. Chapter I provides an introduction for the study and discusses the background, problem, purpose, research objectives, and significance of the study. Chapter I also provides insight regarding the delimitations, assumptions, and operational definitions associated with the study.

Background of the Study

Leadership development is essential when companies seek to gain a competitive advantage over competitors (Brum, 2007; Obiekwe, 2018). Leadership development presents a valuable opportunity for an organization to expand the knowledge of employees regarding the effect that training has on both organizational and employee goals (Brum, 2007; Obiekwe, 2018). Some researchers argue that leadership development leads to increased turnover, while others say that leadership development

programs can lead to higher employee retention rates (Brum, 2007; Obiekwe, 2018).

Lastly, no matter the side one takes on this ongoing debate, most professionals agree that leadership development programs significantly impact a company's success (Brum, 2007; Obiekwe, 2018).

The training and development industry experienced tremendous growth throughout the years (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021). Past statistics show that more companies seek training and development investments due to a realization of its importance (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021). According to the Association for Talent Development (ATD; 2013), \$164.2 billion reflects the amount of money organizations spent on learning and development in 2012. According to ATD (2020), organizations spent \$1,308 annually per employee on training in 2019. Considering the amount of funding required to provide training, it becomes essential for employers to effectively utilize training and recognize the impact of leadership development on their organization (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021).

Leadership development training programs should address the individual leader and the collaborative leader while working with individuals outside of their team (Roberts, 2015). According to Roberts (2015), leadership development expands an individual's ability to be effective while occupying a leadership role and evaluating processes. The developing leader should learn skills that facilitate setting direction, creating systematic approaches, and networking with colleagues who share common work-related goals (Roberts, 2015). Leadership development participants must be aware of their abilities and values to effectively embrace the opportunity and be open to

continuous learning while thinking and acting in an innovative yet strategic manner (Roberts, 2015).

Leadership development also consists of the organization's ability to expand the individual's necessary leadership skills needed for collective work (Roberts, 2015). Effective leadership development enhances individual effectiveness while also providing a foundation to build relationships and coordinate actions by extending the individual's social network (Roberts, 2015). Leadership development programs provide the participants with a clear vision of how management should function in its most ideal state (Roberts, 2015). As stated by Roberts, programs of this magnitude teach participants to be more conscious regarding the gap between what they have learned and what they encounter with management daily. Once an individual has participated in a leadership development program, participants may realize that their superiors have chosen to opt-out of the actual learning process and organizational standards (Roberts, 2015).

According to Vance (2017), leadership development is an organizational learning investment. The reasoning behind organizational learning investments can vary (Vance, 2017). In some instances, organizations view learning as health insurance, an added benefit, while others may argue that learning is comparable to a vacation, an earned reward (Vance, 2017). Organizations that invest in learning seek to attain a competitive advantage by attracting and keeping desirable employees (Vance, 2017). Some organizations may argue that learning investments are simply the right thing to do since employees are an organization's greatest asset (Vance, 2017). Therefore, many organizations utilize learning to positively impact employee engagement and loyalty (Vance, 2017). Vance also stated that no matter what reason an organization chooses to

defend its investment, “an organization should invest in learning to achieve its goals and improve its performance” (p. 80). For learning to be viewed as a valued strategic partner, it must accelerate its goals (Vance, 2017).

Leadership development is the core of any modern management practice (Bulut & Culha, 2010). Organizational training is an essential element of Human Resource (HR) Management functions and the other vital HR activities, such as recruitment, selection, and reward (Bulut & Culha, 2010). According to Bulut and Culha, future HR planning can only be successful through proper training, suggesting that leadership development training is an essential organizational strategy. Leadership development refers to the systematic approach of developing and expanding employees’ skills, knowledge, and behaviors according to the organization’s mission and vision (Bulut & Culha, 2010). Leadership development enables the employee to accomplish job-related duties and tasks while also conditioning the employee for future endeavors (Bulut & Culha, 2010).

Leadership development training can consume an immense part of an organization's budget due to several costs (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021). Organizations may incur two types of costs because of training: direct costs and indirect costs (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021). Direct costs are training-related costs that include instructor salary, training materials, and follow-up supervision efforts (Brum, 2007; Nemec, 2018). Indirect costs are related to employee output and missed productivity from the employee participating in the training (Brum, 2007; Nemec, 2018). When organizations invest in training and development, they develop new employee expectations (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021). Once the participant completes a leadership development training program, the organization expects to increase worker

productivity (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021). Increased worker productivity is a company benefit and is often a common justification for training (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021). Conversely, the worker expects to receive more career advancement opportunities, ultimately translating into higher wages (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021).

Direct and indirect costs are a constant factor in leadership development training when determining the cost-benefit analysis (Brum, 2007; Goswami & Saha, 2021). Employee turnover also affects the underlying training investment assumed by organizations (Brum, 2007; Nemec, 2018). Turnover is associated with organizational culture; therefore, if there is a probability of employee turnover, the organization will not likely invest in training (Brum, 2007; Kim et al., 2017). An organization suffers a significant loss when an employee terminates their relationship with the organization post-training (Brum, 2007; Kim et al., 2017). Due to the possible loss upon resignation, employers must carefully determine the level of training investments they are willing to make (Brum, 2007; Kim et al., 2017). Considerations such as training duration, payment, training location, and training materials are part of the decision to provide a leadership development training program (Brum, 2007; Nemec, 2018).

Companies use various human resource strategies to help achieve organizational goals (Brum, 2007; Roumpi et al., 2020). Commitment strategy develops a psychological connection between the company and the employee, satisfying the organization's goals (Brum, 2007; Roumpi et al., 2020). For example, a company may implement a training strategy that fosters commitment within the organization (Brum, 2007; Roumpi et al., 2020). According to Brum (2007), an example of this strategy would be an organization

reassuring the employee, while training, that the organization is committed to seeing the employee advance within the organization. According to Vance (2017), “learning programs are expected to increase employee engagement as well as directly contribute to higher income or lower expenses” (p. 92).

Vance (2017) stated that higher engagement results in increased voluntary efforts by employees and less turnover. The costs associated with replacing an employee are approximately equivalent to a year’s salary (Vance, 2017). Increased voluntary efforts may lead to an increase in production and innovation. When employees display this type of commitment, they will put forth more effort, work longer hours, and work more efficiently (Vance, 2017). According to Vance, these employees have “tied their own success and satisfaction to the success of the company, and they will go out of their way to help a company succeed” (p. 93).

Training that occurs within an organization should have reciprocal benefits (Bulut & Culha, 2010). Employees feel that training would benefit both themselves and their employers (Bulut & Culha, 2010). According to Bulut and Culha, employees want to feel as if the training and knowledge can be practiced within their organization and satisfy their career goals. In contrast, management expects the training to provide benefits such as increased employee productivity and performance and increased overall employee development (Bulut & Culha, 2010). When participating in any type of organizational training, the employees’ expectations can be either job-related, career-related, and personal-related (Bulut & Culha, 2010). Job-related benefits focus on the employees’ hope that the training will lead to promotions or developments in their current positions (Bulut & Culha, 2010). Career-related benefits focus on the employee’s

expectation that the training will assist in the development of skills for another job, preferably a promotion (Bulut & Culha, 2010). Personal benefits focus on the expectation of positive psychological, political, and social outcomes that do not involve the work setting (Bulut & Culha, 2010). As stated by Bulut and Culha, employees should feel an overall sense of satisfaction regarding the training. The training should provide the employees with a sense of fulfillment regarding their jobs, careers, and personal life (Bulut & Culha, 2010).

An employee that remains with the organization longer than the average employee displays a commitment to the organization (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). Training and development have a vital role in the socialization process for many employees within the same organization (Brum, 2007; Ranganathan, 2018). When an employee enters the employment relationship, that employee may have many expectations and desires (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). Employees are more likely to identify with the company when they feel their organizational desires and expectations are fulfilled (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). This satisfaction usually results in a committed employee (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007).

According to Turnley and Feldman (2000), the demise of the traditional employment relationship links to the competitive yet slow-growing economy. The pressure of attaining competitiveness has led to layoffs and reorganizations, ultimately resulting in a lack of trust and disappointment among employees (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Therefore, such feelings have led to less job security and less organizational commitment (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Due to the events mentioned above, the topic

of psychological contracts has a vital role in helping understand the ever-changing employment relationship (Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Conversely, when training programs fail to meet the employee's expectations, a negative attitude towards the organization may occur, leading to unfulfilled expectations (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). These unfulfilled expectations can lead to a significant decrease in organizational commitment, which leads to an increase in voluntary employee turnover (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). The decline in commitment can be directly related to the employee's inability to feel connected to the organization (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). In contrast, when training meets the needs of the employee's desires, the employee feels a greater connection to the organization and may have a strengthened desire to remain vested with the company (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). However, if the employee feels they have unmet obligations and expectations, the outcome may weaken trust, lower job satisfaction, reduce organizational commitment, and increase turnover (Roberts, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Organizations invest billions of dollars in training and development with the hopes of enhancing the overall performance of their organization (Iqbal et al., 2013). Organizations realize the benefits of training and development and, in return, have several expectations from their employees (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). Upon completing a leadership development program, employers expect to improve the employee's performance (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). Supervisors expect leadership development programs to improve performance (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). As a result of the same leadership development program, the employee has

developed expectations (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). Most employees are seeking career expansion opportunities (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). Therefore, leadership development programs can motivate organizational performance (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007).

If the leadership development program fulfills expectations, the employee will desire to continue their career with the current organization (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). Consequently, that same satisfaction presents hope for a chance for career expansion and a raise within their organization (Kim, 2010). Therefore, the relevancy of leadership development plays an essential role in establishing employee commitment (Kim, 2010). When participating in leadership development programs, employees develop training needs and training outcome expectations (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). Leadership development programs that fail to satisfy the expectations and needs of participants may lead to lower commitment, decreased employee morale, and increased turnover (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007).

Due to the cost associated with employer turnover on operational capabilities and operational budgets, turnover has drawn the attention of several researchers and human resource managers (Zhu et al., 2017). Employee turnover is severely disruptive to most organizational functions (Zhu et al., 2017). Government agencies and private firms spend billions of dollars managing this issue (Zhu et al., 2017). Although organizations invest resources to offset turnover by investing in their employees, they often lack niche skillsets and resources needed for business growth (Zhu et al., 2017). Therefore, the impact of leadership development program expectations leaves an unknown prediction of the employee's intent to remain with the organization (Zhu et al., 2017).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore employees' leadership development expectations and their effects on organizational commitment regarding anticipated voluntary employee turnover. Subsequently, to bridge the gap between leadership development program expectations and organizational commitment, one must understand how those expectations influence organizational commitment. The qualitative interviews conducted for this research provide insight into the employees' level of commitment, participation in leadership development programs, the expectation of the program, and the current status of anticipated turnover. This study will also explore the employees' perception of organizational commitment, training expectations, and intent to leave concerning those expectations. Utilizing this methodology will aid in improving the understanding of what employees expect from leadership development programs.

Research Questions and Objectives

The research question serves as the beginning of research studies for many qualitative researchers (Hunt et al., 2018). The research question provides shape and direction to the study to communicate the purpose of the study (Hunt et al., 2018). The study's central research question is: do leadership development program expectations influence organizational commitment and anticipated voluntary employee turnover? Four research objectives will guide the exploration of training expectations and employee turnover. The study addresses the following research objectives:

ROI – Describe the participants' demographics in terms of gender, age, leadership program participation, and years of employment.

RO2 – Explore employees’ perspectives about how leadership development program expectations affect organizational commitment in the workplace.

RO3 – Explore the relationship between employees’ leadership development program expectations and organizational commitment.

RO4 – Identify themes associated with how employees’ expectations about leadership development programs impact anticipated voluntary employee turnover.

Conceptual Framework

To create the framework for the current study, Becker’s Side Bet Theory (Becker, 1960) and the Unfolding Theory of Turnover (1991) serve as the formation of the conceptual framework. According to Becker (1960), side bets have a substantial influence on organizational commitment. Side bets are present among employees in various forms, such as cultural expectations, self-presentation concerns, impersonal bureaucratic arrangements, individual adjustments to social positions, and non-work concerns (Becker, 1960). According to Powell and Meyer (2004), reviewing the standard of these concepts may determine how long an employee should remain employed with an organization.

The Unfolding Theory of Turnover implies that employees pursue one of five cognitive pathways when deciding to terminate their employment status with an organization (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). These pathways describe how employees view their organization and how they choose to respond (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). According to Lee and Mitchell, the Unfolding Theory of Turnover is applicable to job satisfaction and also coincides with determining organizational commitment and unfulfilled expectations.

Therefore, the Unfolding Theory of Turnover assists in revealing the influence of the constructs on voluntary turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1991).

A conceptual framework is a tool used to provide a visual graphic that displays the alignment regarding the focus of the study (Roberts, 2010). This framework illustrates employees' leadership development program expectations and the theories that support the process (Roberts, 2010). The framework graphically depicts the impact of perspectives and expectations of leadership development programs that affect anticipated voluntary employee turnover for this study. The literature cites leadership development program expectations and perspectives as organizational commitment influencers.

Figure 1 illustrates how leadership development programs and expectations consequent from those programs can influence organizational commitment, ultimately influencing anticipated employee turnover.

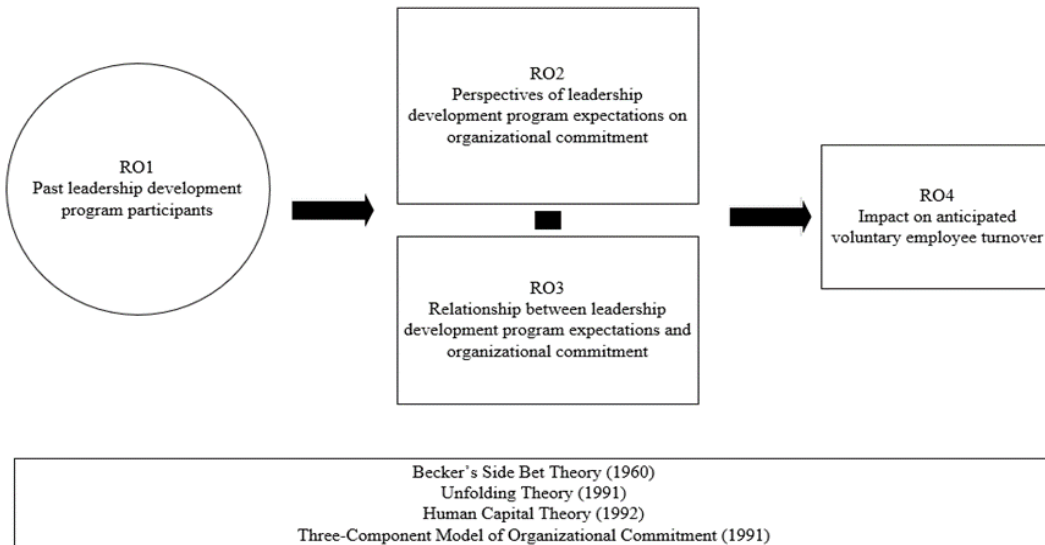


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Significance of the Study

The availability of leadership development resources is significantly influenced by organizational turnover (Brum, 2007; Nemec, 2018). If the employee decides to terminate their relationship with the employer, the organization will lose all training investments in that individual (Brum, 2007; Nemec, 2018). However, wasted time and unfulfilled expectations can also occur for the employee (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). The findings of this study could assist a variety of organizations in various industries, since employees have an essential role in the daily operations of any and all organizations (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). This study contributes to business practices by exploring strategies to address leadership development program expectations and their effects on anticipated voluntary employee turnover. This study will bring awareness to this phenomenon to ultimately encourage efforts of reducing thoughts of turnover within an organization specifically related to leadership development program expectations.

This study seeks to delineate from the frequently assumed leadership development outcomes and place a greater focus on the relationship between leadership development programs and employee commitment. Further, the study explores the relationship concerning anticipated employee turnover. Organizations seek to attract and cultivate those employees that they feel will be committed to the organization (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007). Organizations often pursue the concept of commitment to decrease the likelihood of the employee searching for employment outside of their current organization (Alkhateri et al., 2018; Brum, 2007).

Therefore, the results of this study provide organizational leaders and workforce development personnel with insights regarding the expectations of leadership development programs from the employee's perspective. This study also includes awareness regarding how these expectations can lead to an increase in anticipated turnover. With this information, organizations should have greater knowledge to address leadership development-related expectations that could go unnoticed due to their efforts and actions to invest in their employees. This study improves human capital by exploring employees' specific expectations and needs upon entering leadership development programs and describing the relationship between these programs and anticipated voluntary employee turnover. The results generate data to highlight any unfulfilled expectation(s).

The researcher will disseminate the findings to organizations interested in seeing how expectations can influence turnover to provide solutions for satisfying and addressing employee expectations while also securing the organization's training investment. The researcher interviewed employees by asking questions and actively listening to understand their feelings and perceptions regarding the unfulfilled expectations. This study contributes to the existing literature surrounding the concept of leadership development and employee turnover.

Delimitations

According to Simon and Goes (2013), delimitations are defined as characteristics which limit the scope of the study. Delimitations are conscious decisions to include and exclude certain factors during the formation of the study plan (Simon & Goes, 2013). These choices involve selecting objectives, questions, variables, methodology, selection

of participants, and framework (Simon & Goes, 2013). For this study, the first delimitation is examining and exploring employees currently in the workforce. This study does not involve those who are not active in the workforce (i.e., retirees). This study limits the examining population to current employees; the study does not show how expectations due to leadership development programs affected those retirees' organizational commitment, nor will their workforce experiences be captured. The second delimitation relates to the problem, research question, and research study objectives. According to Simon and Goes (2013), since other issues can be selected, the problem itself is also a delimitation. As a result, the researcher describes the effects of employees' leadership development program expectations on anticipated turnover and organizational commitment within an organization.

Assumptions

According to Simon (2011), assumptions are those factors that occur in research that the researcher has no control over. This study has two assumptions. The primary assumption is that the participants will be truthful and accurate in their responses provided during the interview. The researcher assumed the participants responded to the questions to the best of their ability while maintaining honesty. To encourage participation and openness, the researcher promised and guaranteed confidentiality for this study. The second assumption is that the participant understood and recognized if their perception and expectation influenced their commitment to their organization. To ensure comprehension, the researcher verbally read the purpose statement to the participant and uniformly described the interview to each participant; before proceeding, each participant provided an oral concurrence to ensure their understanding.

Definition of Terms

Terms are interpreted in various ways by readers. To provide clarity and consistency within this study, specific terms were used for this research study and are defined below:

1. *Human Resource Development* - “the field of study and practice responsible for the fostering of a long-term, work-related learning capacity at the individual, group and organizational level of organizations” (Watkins, 1991, p. 253).
2. *Job Satisfaction* - defined as the extent to which an employee is pleased with the rewards received from their place of employment, particularly in terms of fundamental motivation (Statt, 2004).
3. *Organizational Commitment* - “a psychological state that characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization and has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organization” (Allen & Meyer 1990, p. 67).
4. *Voluntary Turnover* - the desire of an individual to invoke termination between themselves and their current place of employment; this is a cognitive process (Mobley et al., 1979).
5. *Anticipated Turnover* – “an individual’s plans to leave his/her current job during a given period of time” (Hudgins, 2016).
6. *Leadership Development* - preparing individuals to engage in leading-following interactions in an effective manner. When applying this definition, there is a critical assumption that leaders and leadership

development are essential for successful organizational processes (DeRue & Myers, 2014).

Organization of Remaining Chapters

This study contains five chapters. The sections included within this study are as follows: literature review, methodology, and analysis plan. Chapter I consists of the introduction and background for the study and also presents the purpose and significance of the study. Chapter II includes a literature review that reviews past and current literature regarding this topic. This section provides literature to connect unfulfilled expectations to turnover and lack of organizational commitment. Chapter III includes methodology, analysis, and outlines the research methodology.

Summary

An increasing number of managers and employees worldwide seek and participate in leadership development programs to fulfill their aspirations of becoming organizational leaders (Ford & Harding, 2011). Past research explains the benefit of leadership development programs and explains the effects of voluntary turnover but does not address employees' expectations resulting from leadership development programs (Ford & Harding, 2011). Therefore, the research will describe the employees' expectations of leadership development programs and determine the influence on anticipated voluntary employee turnover. Understanding the impact of leadership development programs on voluntary employee turnover could produce effective strategies for decreasing anticipated voluntary employee turnover by analyzing leadership development opportunities within the workplace.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

Employees are obligated to perform the required duties of their organization and guard the organization's resources and organizational knowledge for the organization's benefit (Bulut & Culha, 2010). In return, the organization's obligations to its employees consist of providing adequate and fair compensation and other benefits that support development and progression (Bulut & Culha, 2010). According to Bulut and Culha, the employer and employee expectations drive the employment relationship between both parties. Both loyalty and commitment to the employer are fundamental expectations of the employer (Bulut & Culha, 2010). In contrast, self-development and training are positive motivators and expectations for any employee at any stage in their career as a receiving benefit (Bulut & Culha, 2010).

This chapter provides the relevant literature to explore the impact of leadership development programs and expectations regarding organizational commitment. The first section provides a detailed review of leadership development, employees' expectations, organizational commitment, and employee turnover. The second section focuses on Human Capital Theory, Becker's Side Bet Theory, and the Unfolding Theory of Turnover.

Leadership Development

According to Robinson (1985), the desire for employees to improve themselves and their job performance through training stems from employee motivation for training. According to Noe and Wilk (1993), motivation influences enthusiasm for pursuing a leadership training program. That same motivation pushes employees to learn and master the training content to apply the skills on the job (Noe & Wilk, 1993). Noe and Schmitt

(1986) stated that motivation also influences the use and practice of the newly attained knowledge when no reinforcement is available. Orpen (1999) argued that the most committed employees display more motivation towards the leadership training.

The history of knowledge building has evolved (Manuti et al., 2015). Within recent decades learning has been viewed and treated as a more strategic factor essential to global competitiveness (Manuti et al., 2015). Leadership development, which is a crucial factor in this process, is driven by demographic changes, skill demands, technologies, and relationships amongst people within institutions, organizations, and communities (Manuti et al., 2015). According to Cullen et al., (2002), our culture has experienced many global changes regarding learning. The once linear transition from school to work is no longer distinct (Cullen et al., 2002). Cullen et al. stated that learning has evolved and is not confined to structured formal activities within a classroom.

Since knowledge is no longer individualized, an organization can create and cultivate a way of learning that caters to its innovation and profitability (Cullen et al., 2002). The idea of attaining lifelong employability is replacing the concept of lifelong learning, whereas short-range employment is also replacing the attainment of lifetime employment within an organization (Cullen et al., 2002). According to Cullen et al., organizations should understand the knowledge changes in society and workplace learning trends. When being examined, leadership development is not a concept to investigate as a separate process; in other words, it is interpreted as a social and economic factor that can affect the meaning of work, knowledge, and learning (Cullen et al., 2002). If an organization fails to contextualize, employees will receive short-term skills versus long-term skills (Cullen et al., 2002).

Leadership development can link the development of the employee directly to the development of the organization by emphasizing continuous development and the learning processes that led to effective learning outcomes (Cullen et al., 2002). Since the concept of learning has evolved beyond the classroom setting, the term workplace consists of more than just a physical location (Jacobs & Park, 2009). According to Matthews (1999), the workplace is considered “to be a physical location and shared meanings, ideas, behaviors, and attitudes – all of which help determine the working environment and the network of formal and informal relationships that feature the latter” (p. 1).

The foundation of training and development dates back many centuries ago; the momentum of this great concept has been building and changing to accommodate the complex and challenging workplace (Walsh-Roberts, 2003). According to Walsh-Roberts (2003), training and development date back to the time 1100 AD. The contextual reference was different during that time, but the intended goal and concept were the same (Rowden, 1966). During that time, apprenticeships and leagues became prevalent (Rowden, 1966). Watkins (1995) provided a comprehensive explanation of workplace interventions beginning with the 1700s and forward. This summary involved the development of factory schools, later followed by apprenticeships for machinists in the 1800s and railway workers in the early 1900s (Walsh-Roberts, 2003).

Watkins (1995) referred to the first apprenticeship as an opportunity for the employee to act as the trainer. This program introduced a method to train those obligated to participate in the war effort (Watkins, 1995). This method ensured the defense system worked and resolved daily issues at many levels (Watkins, 1995). The terminology has

evolved, but this same methodology is actively present in today's workplace, especially those involving technical operations accompanied by routine skills and behaviors (Watkins, 1995). As mentioned by Watkins, the concept of training and development emerged in the 1960s.

Along with this emerging concept, teamwork and employing organizational development were introduced (Watkins, 1995). Several movements and events occurred in the 1970s that demanded significant changes to support employees and workplace reform; the rights of minorities, affirmative action legislation, standards for professions — all demanded changes regarding training focus (Watkins, 1995). During this time, organizations introduced awareness programs for employee assistance along with career planning seminars (Watkins, 1995). The 1980s and 1990s were significant when changing the face of training and development due to economic challenges and advances in technology (Walsh-Roberts, 2003). Chaykowski and Lewis (1994) suggested that the newly acquired competitive nature resulted from training efforts to improve employee performance. During the 1990s, globalization significantly influenced how training should be provided to employees (Watkins, 1995). During this time, permanent positions replaced temporary, contract, and part-time employees (Watkins, 1995). To keep up and effectively train everyone, new methods had to emerge to effectively communicate with the different types of employees (Watkins, 1995).

According to Walsh-Roberts (2003), managing knowledge within an organization became a daunting task for employers as they attempt to satisfy individual and organizational needs. Organizational knowledge is influenced by society and the economy, which affects the complexity of attaining this goal (Walsh-Roberts, 2003). The

term *training and development* refers to describing organized activities intended to expand the workforce's knowledge, skill, and behavior in specific occupations, positions, and roles within the workforce to accomplish desired tasks (Rothwell & Sredl, 2000). On the other hand, Tight (1996) decided to analyze the definition more, suggesting that training events address needs in a short-term manner. In contrast, the concept of development addresses long-term needs.

The training and development industry had evolved and managed to keep up with the ever-changing learning industry by adapting the usage of e-learning methodologies (Walsh-Roberts, 2003). Training and development had also transformed from broadening the focus from only addressing job requirements to focusing on succession planning for the individual (Walsh-Roberts, 2003). The emphasis on succession planning assists with employee retention and demonstrates support for employees' career development goals and interests (Walsh-Roberts, 2003). According to Herr and Cramer (1996), any organization's effort to support an individual's career needs should link with human resource development requirements. Further, any career development programs offered within the workplace are intended and designed to support increased retention and improved productivity within the organization.

Expectations

Rousseau (1989) defined psychological contracts as a collection of individuals' beliefs regarding the exchange agreement between themselves and their organization, including but not limited to terms and conditions. Any psychological contract centers around the notion that some promise occurred, and the proceeding is an open consideration (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Therefore, in the workplace, psychological

contracts have been established once an employee has believed their organization will reward them for the contributions they have made to the organization (Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Prior research has revealed that breached psychological contracts are conventional in the workplace and are associated with several adverse outcomes (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). According to Robinson (1996), those negative outcomes usually result in reduced job satisfaction, reduced organizational trust, decreased feelings of trust from the employee to the employer, refusal to participate in organizational citizenship behaviors, reduced work performance, and lastly, increased employee turnover. Previous researchers have analyzed and documented psychological contract violations and the possible effects on employee behaviors (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). However, the influence of psychological contract violations on employee behaviors has not received much empirical analysis (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Robinson (1996) analyzed trust and unfulfilled expectations as possible mediators of the relationships between psychological contract violations and employees' future intent to contribute to their organizations, as in being actively engaged employees. The study revealed that trust and unfulfilled expectations facilitate connections between psychological contract violations and the employee's future contributions to their organization (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Therefore, feelings of psychological contract violations lead to reduced trust in organizations, leading to a sense of unfulfilled expectations (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). As a result, those reactions lead to poor job attitudes and decreased job performance (Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Robinson's research analyzes the effects of psychological contract violations in three ways (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). First, the researchers used an enhanced measure of psychological contract violations. There has been some uncertainty in previous research concerning the meaning and measurement of this concept. According to Robinson and Rousseau (1994), "a psychological contract emerges when one party believes that a promise of future return has been made" (p. 246). Since then, Morrison and Robinson (1997) defined psychological contract breach as "the employee's cognition that the organization has failed to meet one or more of its obligations" (p. 230). Although, the term psychological contract violation is used to signify those cases when employees do not receive what they were promised and expected, there are cases where employees have received more than promised. Thus, psychological contracts can seem like a violation of the employee because essential obligations have been unfulfilled or over-fulfilled (Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Robinson's research included multiple items and assessed 16 specific aspects of the employer/employee relationship, while previous research studies only utilized single-item assessments of psychological contract violations (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). The response scale used in Robinson's study ranges from *Received much more than promised* to *Received much less than promised* (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). These measures allowed the researchers to examine instances of under-fulfillment and capture those instances of over-fulfillment (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Second, Robinson's research aimed to build on prior research regarding the mediating effects of unmet expectations, including job dissatisfaction as a mediating variable (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Before Robinson's study, very little research directly examined the reasoning behind

psychological contract violation effects (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). With this research, Robinson intended to propose that the psychological contract violation perception will trigger employee job dissatisfaction and unmet expectations, which produces adverse effects regarding job behaviors (as cited in Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Robinson tested the effects using hierarchical regression and structural equation modeling (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). According to Blau (1964), psychological contracts illustrate the exact definition of the social exchange relationship between employees and their employed organization. Adams (1965) stated that employees are interested in maintaining fairness when balancing the costs and benefits of their employer relationships. Therefore, once employees feel their psychological contract is dishonored, a decrease in organizational contributions occurs. Robinson's research (1996) focuses on three forms of employee contributions that act as a crucial determining factor for organization effectiveness. According to Katz (1964), the three behaviors are (a) choosing to remain employed with the organization; (b) dependably performing job duties; (c) engaging in work-related extracurricular activities that benefit the organization but are not required job duties.

Porter and Steers (1973) examined the concept of unmet expectations and described it as the inconsistency between what employees experience with their job versus what they expected to experience. According to Wanous et al. (1992), unmet expectations lead to organizational disagreements that produce decreased job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, reduced work performance, and increased organizational turnover. In her research, Robinson (1996) stated that various critics of the psychological contract literature disagree with the notion that feelings of unmet

expectations are the sole driver for employees' responses to this concept. Therefore, Robinson (1996) examined whether unmet expectations acted as a mediating factor with the linkage between psychological contract violations and employees' organizational commitment status to their organizations. Those results suggested that unmet expectations entirely mediate the influence of psychological contract violations on work performance and moderately mediate the relationship between psychological contract violations and the employees' intent to remain with the organization (Robinson, 1996). However, unmet expectations did not influence the relationship between psychological contract violations and organizational citizenship behaviors (Robinson, 1996).

Once an employee completes a relevant requirement, such as a leadership development program, a future reward is expected, such as career advancement; it is then understood the employer will provide the perceived promised benefits (Alcover et al., 2016; Birtch et al., 2016). In contrast, researchers who advocate for psychological contract research oppose the idea that psychological contract violations involve more than just unmet expectations. Thus, they argue that they have more profound and emotional factors (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Additionally, psychological contracts comprised of various components, such as trust, relationship, and the belief of a promise of obligated future benefits (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Therefore, psychological contract violations can lead to more organizational issues in addition to unmet expectations (Rousseau, 1989). Psychological contract violations directly affect the foundation of employee and employer relationship (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Previous research has not thoroughly examined or proven whether job dissatisfaction facilitates the relationship between psychological contract violations and employees' contributions to

their organizations (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Numerous studies have shown that job dissatisfaction can manifest in various ways. According to Withey and Cooper (1989), job dissatisfaction directly negatively links absenteeism and turnover.

According to Facticeau et al. (1995), organizational training should have reciprocal benefits. Therefore, to cultivate the desire to participate in future training and promote the best outcome, the employee must be confident regarding the positive benefits for the employer and the employee (Facticeau et al., 1995). Leadership development programs expect to increase employee development, which also aids in increased productivity and performance (Facticeau et al., 1995). From an employee's viewpoint, leadership development programs should be beneficial to their career goals and personal development (Bulut & Culha, 2010). According to Nordhaug (1989), three categories of leadership development expectations and benefits are: job-related, career-related, or personal. Job-related benefits pertain to the expectations regarding training, earning promotions, and improvements regarding their current positions (Nordhaug, 1989). Career-related benefits are those that assist with acquiring skills for a future job (Nordhaug, 1989). In contrast, personal interests produce psychological and social outcomes that can enhance motivation but may or may not be helpful in a work environment (Bulut & Culha, 2010).

Once an employee feels that unmet obligations have been acquired, the outcome may result in diminished trust, decreased job satisfaction, and increased employee turnover (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Leadership development programs promote some type of change; therefore, results may be detrimental once that desire has been breached (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Porter and Steers (1973) predicted that

providing clarity to address expectations and attainable rewards would increase the likelihood of employees remaining with the organization. However, when the gap between expectations and rewards grows too large, turnover and absenteeism among employees are likely to occur. Premack and Wanous (1985) determined that job survival rates would increase with the simple act of providing realistic job previews to clarify job expectations upfront. Additionally, difficulty examining expectations remains due to their changing and complex nature (Donnelly, 1996).

Irving and Meyer (1994) cautioned that when calculating the different scores when measuring the level of met expectations, the study would produce better results if the pre- and post-expectations were measured independently. In contrast, Vandenberg and Self (1993) examined characteristic statistical changes of expectations and discovered that some problems associated with research only existed with the entry-level employees. In other words, they concluded that tenure within an organization could influence an individual's frame of reference used in interpreting questionnaire items (Vandenberg & Self, 1993). Despite these limitations, researchers have stated that if an organization can master the ability to manage an individual's expectations, they can significantly influence job attitudes and outcomes in a positive manner (Donnelly, 1996).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has presented a direct link between turnover intentions and actual voluntary turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Organizational commitment has become a vital concept when examining workplace attitudes and behaviors (Meyer & Allen, 1991). According to Mowday et al. (1982), the nature of

organizational commitment consists of attitudinal and behavioral perspectives.

According to Mowday et al. (1982),

Attitudinal commitment focuses on the process by which people come to think about their relationship with the organization. In many ways, it can be thought of as a mindset in which individuals consider the extent to which their own values and goals are congruent with those of the organization. Behavioral commitment, on the other hand, relates to the process by which individuals become locked into a certain organization and how they deal with this problem. (p. 26)

Meyer and Allen (1984) defined organizational commitment as the psychological connection between an employee and their organization. According to Meyer and Allen (1984), this linkage reduces the probability that an employee will voluntarily terminate their relationship with their employer. After years of various conflicting views of organizational development, it is commonly recognized as a multifaceted organizational attitude (Meyer & Allen, 1984). According to Robinson and Morrison (1995), employees feel obliged to remain with their organization when they feel they receive support from their organization. There are also different directions of support received by employees (Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Organizational support can be either horizontal or vertical (Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Horizontal support is received from peers, such as problem-solving and mitigating work processes (Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Vertical support transpires from senior-level employees or tenured co-workers (Robinson & Morrison, 1995).

Meyer and Allen (1991) produced a three-component model as a result of conceptual and measurement work. Meyer and Allen chose to incorporate the attitudinal

and behavioral approaches to commitment when developing the three-component model, as previously mentioned by Mowday et al. (1982). Meyer and Allen (1991) determined that all existing organizational commitment definitions of their time reflected three general themes: affective attachment to the organization, costs of leaving the organization, and the perceived obligation to stay with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The three-component model suggests that the psychological employee/organizational linkage can exist in three distinct types of commitment: affective, continuance, and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Affective commitment refers to the identification, involvement, and emotional attachment an employee has towards their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Therefore, this type of commitment is based solely upon the employee's choice to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). According to Mowday et al. (1982), the qualifications for affective commitment consist of four categories: personal characteristics, structural characteristics, job-related characteristics, and work experiences. Therefore, this type of commitment is motivated by the idea that employees must feel comfortable in their organization; this includes both physically and psychologically, ultimately determining an employee's feelings of continuing a relationship with their organization (Mowday et al., 1982). Organizational commitment, mostly affective commitment, is described by many as a cognitive bond that develops between an employee and their respective organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). This state of commitment provides a sense of encouragement for employees to pursue courses of action in the organization's best interest (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Therefore, the

behavioral consequence of this type of commitment is continued employment with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Continuance commitment refers to the different costs associated with the employee terminating their relationship with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Therefore, those employees that possess this type of commitment will continue their employment with the organization because they are obligated to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Continuance commitment is directly related to Becker's Side Bet Theory (1960). According to Becker (1960), an individual commits to a course of action once a side bet is made. However, with continuance commitment, an employee may choose to stay if their salary or benefits won't improve with another organization (Becker, 1960). For example, the loss of benefits, loss of seniority-based privileges, or having to uproot one's family are all potential costs associated with leaving an organization (Becker, 1960). Therefore, continuance commitment develops due to side bet accrual or lack of alternative employment opportunities (Becker, 1960).

Lastly, normative commitment refers to a commitment motivated by a sense of obligation to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees that possess this type of commitment continue their relationship with their employer because they feel they ought to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Normative commitment can derive from familial or cultural socialization obligations to pursue employment with an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Organizations that provide employees with incentives upon employment or use a considerable amount of funds towards the employee's training could also create an inequity in the employee/organization relationship that leads to normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

All three components of commitment provide up-front inferences for either staying or leaving the organization, although each is conceptually different (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Two of the commitment models above were introduced in published research by Meyer and Allen (1984) and the third model by Allen and Meyer (1990). As a result, the measures referred to in several studies as the Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment Scales (Gardner et al., 2011). As a consequence of decreased organizational commitment, voluntary turnover remains a complex and relevant topic for organizational scholar-practitioners (Gardner et al., 2011). Most studies examine this concept as an investigatory study centered on why employees voluntarily leave organizations (Gardner et al., 2011). In contrast, some researchers approach voluntary turnover as a united phenomenon versus an individual trend (Maertz & Campion, 2004). According to Ahuja et al. (2007), organizational commitment is the strongest indicator of anticipated voluntary employee turnover intention.

Employee Turnover

Employee turnover is a constant challenge for human resource managers (Iqbal, 2010). Many employers provide various resources to their employees but are still uncertain why their employees choose to leave or remain with the organization (Iqbal, 2010). Those employees that decide to leave the organization cause disturbances in operations, team-oriented environments, and team performance (Iqbal, 2010). However, to offset turnover within the workplace, organizations must communicate their expectations regarding offered resources and rewards, working environment, and productivity standards (Iqbal, 2010). When an employee decides to leave an organization, any significant investment in training and development leaves with that

employee (Mello, 2011). An organization's ability to successfully manage turnover is necessary to ensure success (Iqbal, 2010). Highly motivated individuals are the driving force behind organizational productivity; therefore, there is a crucial need to thoroughly understand the employee's perspective of causes while also developing strategies to minimize the issue (Iqbal, 2010).

Price (1977) considered organizational turnover to be the ratio of employees who have terminated their relationship with the organization during an average period in the organization. Meanwhile, Adams and Beehr (1998) defined organizational turnover as "leaving any job of any duration" and is usually thought of as being followed by continued regular employment" (p. 645). According to Bludedorn (1978), voluntary turnover occurs once the employee puts forth action to initiate the process of terminating the employee-organization relationship. However, others consider turnover to occur each time a position opens, whether it occurs voluntarily or involuntarily, consisting of each time a new employee must be onboarded and trained (Woods, 1992). Lastly, Gustafson (2002) defined turnover as measuring employee relations within an organization, regardless of their intent to leave.

Heneman and Judge (2009) often discussed four types of employee turnover but grouped them into two categories. According to the researchers, turnover is either involuntary or voluntary (Heneman & Judge, 2009). Involuntary turnover is subdivided into discharge turnover and downsizing turnover (Heneman & Judge, 2009). Discharge turnover is strictly aimed towards the individual and depends on discipline and job performance issues (Heneman & Judge, 2009). Downsizing turnover only occurs due to organizational reform or some cost-reduction program to improve organizational

effectiveness (Heneman & Judge, 2009). Voluntary turnover is divided into two categories, avoidable turnover and unavoidable turnover (Heneman & Judge, 2009). Avoidable turnover occurs due to matters that could have been addressed by the organization, such as granting an employee a pay raise or a new job assignment (Heneman & Judge, 2009). Lastly, unavoidable turnover occurs due to an unavoidable circumstance such as an employee's death or relocation of a spouse (Heneman & Judge, 2009).

Between voluntary and involuntary turnover, voluntary turnover is usually the most avoidable, costly, and disruptive to an organization (Price, 1977). Voluntary turnover is the most commonly studied type of turnover regarding employee-initiated termination (Price & Mueller, 1981). Price (1977) mentions three reasons why voluntary turnover is examined more than involuntary turnover. First, voluntary turnover makes up most turnover experienced in an organization (Price, 1977). Second, a single theory could not adequately address the backgrounds and possible causes of voluntary and involuntary turnover (Price, 1977). Lastly, voluntary turnover is easily controlled by management versus involuntary turnover (Price, 1977). Lack of personal and professional development is one reason employees choose to leave organizations (Iqbal, 2010). When employees observe limited professional and personal advancement opportunities, they become interested in other companies (Iqbal, 2010). Employee turnover can lead to financial and non-financial consequences (Iqbal, 2010).

Organizations are continually pushing to attain organizational growth and success; therefore, the high employee turnover rate is a nuisance when trying to achieve this goal (Pattnaik & Sahoo, 2018). Recruitment and training are costly activities but can

also seem unquantifiable due to the lack and nature of the opportunity costs (Pattnaik & Sahoo, 2018). Nonetheless, it is vital to effectively manage employee turnover within an organization (Pattnaik & Sahoo, 2018). Several reasons can influence an employee's turnover intention once hired; it is the organization's responsibility to reveal the root cause of that problem to prevent reoccurrence (Pattnaik & Sahoo, 2018).

Past research has examined the link between employee turnover and potential causes such as the length of employment within a company, employee demographics, intelligence, job interests, personality, educational background, etc. (Cascio, 1976). Furthermore, those employees with a more extensive educational background seem to have job-hopping tendencies (Pattnaik & Sahoo, 2018). Other studies centered around employee turnover usually examine the relationships between employee turnover and other variables such as tenure, satisfaction, and productivity from pre-selection and post-selection (Pattnaik & Sahoo, 2018). Organizational turnover has a way of disrupting the social interactions that occur within an organization (Mitchell et al., 2000). For an organization, experiencing high turnover can be a nightmare when it comes to preserving its public image (Mitchell et al., 2000). High turnover can also lead to a large amount of relatively new staff, which can reduce the quality of services provided by the organization due to lack of experience (Mitchell et al., 2000).

Human Capital Theory

Ben Mansour et al. (2017) defines *training and development* as “the employee's acquisition and systematic development of the skills-behavior required to adequately perform tasks and improve work performance” (p. 1). According to Ben Mansour et al. (2017), to satisfy the employee's desire to acquire equal gain from the training initiative,

the employer should ensure the training is of direct assistance in enhancing their skills, career development, and employability. This type of human capital directly enhances an organization's longevity (Ben Mansour et al., 2017). As stated by Ben Mansour et al. (2017), "human capital is an asset, a stock of knowledge and experience accumulated by its holder throughout his/her life" (p. 3). Schultz (1961) stated that knowledge and skills acquired by an employee are "forms of capital" and that human capital is a "set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that are inherent and used by the individual" (p. 3). Therefore, for an organization to become and remain successful, organizations need to invest in improving their employees' knowledge, skills, and attitude (Becker, 1966).

Ben Mansour et al. (2017) stated that most employees are willing to learn and want to take advantage of leadership development opportunities within their workplace to increase their employability and market value. Therefore, human capital theory supports the need for organizations to invest in training and development for employees; this theory proposes that economic benefits result from investments in people (Ben Mansour et al., 2017). According to Schultz (1971), education constantly emerges as the most popular human capital investment for empirical analysis. Schultz (1971) believed that education could be measured quantitatively by evaluating costs and tenure.

According to Sweetland (1996), the literature reflecting human capital theory differentiates several types of education offered and several different means of obtaining such education. Formalized education is more structured and occurs at primary, secondary, and higher levels (Sweetland, 1996). In contrast, informal education can occur either at home or in the workplace, including on-the-job training (Sweetland, 1996). Schultz (1971) stated that education could cultivate individual economic abilities.

Since diversity is so prevalent in education, it also produces different results and contributions (Schultz, 1971). According to Becker (1994), education tends to influence population growth and the overall quality of life in an increasing manner. Education also encourages individuals to pursue and exercise their ideas, such as equality and freedom at both personal and social levels (Becker, 1994). Education produces so many benefits that it seems impossible to quantify due to the nature of the benefits (Sweetland, 1996).

According to Sweetland (1996), education is an investment and benefit for economic growth, explaining why economists conceptualize human capital. Human capital research has progressed from the original specialized areas such as labor economics, public sector economics, welfare economics, growth theory, and development economics (Sweetland, 1996). Soon enough, human capital literature expanded enough to justify a branch of economics that was explicitly devoted to education (Psacharopoulos & Hinchliffe, 1973). Psacharopoulos and Hinchliffe (1973) reinforced this view by voicing the existence of "a new field in economics known as the economics of human capital, or more narrowly, the economics of education" (p. 1). Therefore, it is challenging, but not impossible, to distinct the human capital theory literature from a body of the economics of education literature (Sweetland, 1996).

Sweetland (1996) stated that the field of human capital theory provides a valuable framework that measures the aforementioned economic relationships. Educators, policymakers, and employers can decide their own human capital study evaluations to attain a complete understanding of the discipline (Sweetland, 1996). With a comprehensive understanding of the foundations of human capital theory, such as economics, sociology, psychology, human development, and business, they can

adequately tend to the needs of those receiving the education while also having an awareness of economic trends and cycles (Sweetland, 1996). Lastly, organizations should participate in educational programs that enhance economic growth while maintaining the educative purpose (Sweetland, 1996).

The ability to transfer learned content from leadership development programs to the workplace is a critical issue (Abrell et al., 2011). According to past research, the transfer of those gained skills depends on the trainee's characteristics, work environment variables, learning goals, content relevance, and practice with feedback (Abrell et al., 2011). Bass (1990) initially suggested individual feedback processes in the form of personal coaching as a method of providing individual feedback. According to Bass (1990), personal coaching would encourage the transfer of leadership development program contents and skills to the daily work effort.

Becker's Side-Bet Theory

According to Becker (1960), "commitments come into being when a person, by making a side bet links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity" (p. 32). Therefore, an individual making a side bet would increase the cost of failing to occur in the course of action (Becker, 1960). Regarding organizational commitment, this is displayed as continued employment with the organization (Becker, 1960). Side bets appear in various forms and fall into several wide-ranging categories such as generalized cultural expectations regarding responsible behavior, self-presentation concerns, impersonal bureaucratic arrangements, individual adjustments to social positions, and non-work concerns (Becker, 1960).

Generalized cultural expectations are the expectations of vital reference groups in regard to the definition of responsible behavior; for example, this may include a standard of how long an employee should remain employed with an organization (Powell & Meyer, 2004). Violating these expectations could lead to possible negative consequences (Becker, 1960). Self-presentation occurs when an individual attempts to present a consistent public image; failure to satisfy this expectation could tarnish the desired image (Powell & Meyer, 2004). Impersonal bureaucratic arrangements are rules/policies created by an organization that acts as an incentive to reward and encourage long-term employment (Powell & Meyer, 2004).

Individual adjustments to social positions refer to the effort an individual puts forth to adapt to an environment and situation that could make them less fit for other situations (Powell & Meyer, 2004). An example of individual adjustments to social positions would be participating in organizational-specific training opportunities (Powell & Meyer, 2004). Non-work concerns are those side bets that form outside the workplace, such as terminating their current community involvement if forced to seek employment opportunities in another geographic area (Powell & Meyer, 2004). Becker (1960) argued that side bets could increase the costs of an employee terminating their employment; therefore, side bets could increase commitment.

Ritzer and Trice (1969) conducted the initial empirical test of Becker's Side-Bet Theory. Their goal was to measure commitment; therefore, they developed a set of questions for individuals regarding the likelihood of leaving their organization (Ritzer & Trice, 1969). Meyer and Allen (1984) proposed that incentives could eliminate the loss of return on investment when employees leave an organization. Thus, those individuals

who scored high (who would stay despite strong incentives to leave) may possess a strong affective commitment to their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Wallace (1997) was very critical of the earlier attempts of measuring side-bet commitment. However, she ultimately supported Becker's Side-Bet Theory (Wallace, 1997). Wallace concluded that all side-bet categories were directly related to her construct of continuance commitment and turnover intention (Powell & Meyer, 2004).

The Unfolding Theory of Turnover

Lee and Mitchell (1991) introduced the Unfolding Theory as a derivation using the Image Theory (Agor, 1992) as a model for creation. The Image Theory, a decision-making model, insinuates possible alternatives that may influence existing images of an individual's values, goals, and plans (Agor, 1992). The Image Theory was not created to address turnover directly; however, it can address any organizational situation (Agor, 1992). Furthermore, the Unfolding Theory of Turnover suggests that employees pursue one of five cognitive pathways when deciding to terminate their employment status with an organization (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). A cognitive pathway discusses to how employees perceive their organizational environment, identify choices, and how they choose to respond (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). The five cognitive pathways are outlined below in Table 1.

Table 1 *The Unfolding Theory Pathways*

Pathway	Shock	History of Dissatisfaction	Script	Image Violation	Alternative Job Opportunity	Example:
1	✓ Personal, positive, and expected		✓			The employee's spouse gets a job in Washington, DC; the employee has always wanted to live there, so he quits
2	✓ Negative organizational event			✓		The employee is bypassed for promotion and sees little opportunity for career advancement; she decides that she can no longer work for the company and quits
3	✓ Unexpected job offer			✓	✓	The employee gets an unexpected job offer from a local competitor; after comparing the new opportunity with his current situation, he decides to quit and pursue the new opportunity
4a		✓		✓		The employee realizes that she is unhappy and quits without looking for a new job
4b		✓		✓	✓	The employee realizes that he is unhappy; he initiates a job search and quits when he finds a more desirable alternative

Note. For permission see Appendix C. Adapted from "Shocks and final straws: Using exit interview data to examine the unfolding model's decision paths," by

C. T. Kulik, G. Treuren, and P. Bordia, 2012, *Human Resource Management*, 51, p. 27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20466>

As displayed on the chart, the first three pathways involve some type of shock event. According to Lee and Mitchell (1994), shock is “a very distinguishable event that jars the employee toward deliberate judgments about their jobs, perhaps, to voluntarily quit their job” (p. 60). Pathway 1 involves a shock event that is personal, positive in nature, and anticipated (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). An example of this pathway is the opportunity to move to a new city. This type of event has a pre-determined script, making this decision very much automatic (Holtem et al., 2005). Pathway 2 involves an adverse shock event (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). This type of shock occurs if perceived unfair treatment occurs, such as an unwanted performance appraisal or not achieving the desired promotion. When this type of shock event has occurred, an image violation may develop as a result (Lee & Mitchell, 1991).

Image violation occurs when individuals reassess their attachment and loyalty to their organization (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). Image violation involves three mechanisms: value image, trajectory image, and strategic image (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). Value images consist of personal philosophies and values that an individual may possess about any situation in life (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). Trajectory images refer to an employee’s personal career goals. Lastly, a strategic image is a plan that outlines the achievement of their individual career goals (Lee & Mitchell, 1991).

Employees may experience a value image violation if they feel they experienced disrespect by their superiors (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). For example, suppose an employee wanted to become a director or executive leader of some sort and discussed this goal with their manager. In that case, they may experience a trajectory violation if they were never able to achieve that goal (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). Although an employee may not

identify with either of the image violations above, the feeling of uncertainty may still encourage him/her to seek the best possible job options in which they feel most valued (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). Pathway 2 is where the employee feels compelled or pushed to evaluate their current job and decide if they are a good fit for that organization (Lee & Mitchell, 1991).

Pathway 3 consists of a shock event that can be positive, neutral, or negative (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). For example, a shock event of this nature would be an unexpected job offer (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). For this pathway, the employee must determine if an image violation did happen and decide if he/she would be a better fit for the prospective organization (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). According to Lee and Mitchell (1994), a decision such as this one is a “pull decision” (p. 66), being that the employee must evaluate the pros and cons of their current organization and the new organization.

The last two pathways do not begin with a shock; however, a consistent feeling of job dissatisfaction is present during this stage (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Due to current job dissatisfaction, the perception of image violation will arise (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Once the individual feels that an image violation has occurred, those individuals in Pathway 4a will decide to leave their current job, even though a new employment opportunity is not available to them at the moment (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). On the other hand, those individuals in Pathway 4b will experience the same feeling and make the same decision; however, another employment opportunity will be in place (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

Several researchers have examined this theory to determine if the Unfolding Theory accurately depicts the different pathways an employee may choose that leads to turnover (Tellez, 2014). Lee et al. (1996) conducted the first study; they tested the theory

with a sample of 44 nurses. The nurses participated in semi-structured exit interviews and follow-up surveys (Lee et al., 1996). All interviews were provided to the participants after they discontinued their relationship with the organization (Lee et al., 1996). The researchers determined the participants' pathway based on the interview responses and supplemented survey responses (Lee et al., 1996). The study results supported the theory, with each participant classified into one of the five pathways (Lee et al., 1996). Pathway 3 had a 32% classification rate, and Pathway 4b had a 23% classification rate, making these two pathways the most prevalent. Moreover, Pathways 1 and 2 were the least prevalent, with classification rates of 14% (Lee et al., 1996).

The Lee et al. (1996) study was successful in demonstrating support for the Unfolding Theory of Turnover by successfully capturing the process of employee turnover. However, only four of the five components (shock, script, image violation, and job alternative) were measured (Lee et al., 1996). Due to the researcher's delimitation, participants were not interviewed nor questioned regarding the job satisfaction aspect (Lee et al., 1996). The researchers felt the absence of a shock could categorize employees into Pathway 4a and 4b (Lee et al., 1996). Also, since the employees participated after they left the organization, there was a possibility of memory loss and failure to capture an active turnover process, which is the Unfolding Theory's intention (Lee et al., 1996). Ultimately Mitchell and Lee (2001) concluded that although the theory is consistent, different occupations may leave through different pathways. They also stated that it would be beneficial for organizations to be aware of those occupational variations when developing effective retention strategies (Lee et al., 1996).

Summary

Trying to retain employees is a significant challenge for organizations (Iqbal, 2010). Many employers offer personal growth and development opportunities as a strategy to offset employee turnover (Iqbal, 2010). Furthermore, the way to reduce turnover is to increase satisfaction levels (Iqbal, 2010). Managing the retention of employees is such a great challenge due to employees having different motivating factors (Iqbal, 2010). According to Donnelly (1996), since organizational commitment is directly related to decreased turnover, it is essential to evaluate the importance and expectation of specific factors for prospective employees. Simply understanding this concept could be a game-changer for organizations' recruiting and selection process (Donnelly, 1996). As a prerequisite, organizations would have to match and analyze the employees' expectations with what they can offer; this could result in selecting employees that would display and develop an affirmative commitment to the organization; this would be a useful organizational development strategy (Donnelly, 1996).

Wanous (1977) decided to examine organizational entry from a prospective employee's viewpoint. He concluded that those who do not currently work for the company have high expectations of most organizations that are unrealistic and more than likely not attainable (Wanous, 1977). He stated that before employment begins with an organization, the prospective employee does not know the organization's cultural norms, working relationships, or the organizational structure that will be apparent in their everyday life (Wanous, 1977). Therefore, over time the employee will develop a more

realistic and probably unfavorable view of how the organization works (Wanous, 1977).

The next chapter outlines and explains the methodology practices to guide the study.

CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY

The concept of training is linked to having a positive influence on self-esteem, reduction in voluntary turnover, improved product and service uniformity, increased customer satisfaction, reduction of business costs, increased technology usage, increased ability to address the target market's needs, improved attitude regarding teamwork, increased job satisfaction, and increased organizational commitment (Wesley & Skip, 1999). Therefore, in the workplace, leadership development is viewed as providing a pathway to quality customer service, consistent job performance, and job satisfaction, along with increased organizational commitment (Wesley & Skip, 1999). Leadership development is a critical component of maintaining internal service quality (Burke, 1995). According to Chiang et al. (2005), perceptions are described as decisions that have been made about an organization's performance and expectations are defined as desired performance levels that are perceived to be relevant to the individual. And Parasuraman et al. (1988) described the quality of a concept as the discrepancy that exists between perceptions and expectations.

The research methodology used to examine the effects of leadership development program expectations on voluntary turnover is discussed and described in Chapter III. This chapter describes the context of the study, participants, instruments, and the chosen methods for collecting the data. The objective of this research study was to describe the participants' perceptions of their leadership development program expectations regarding their intent to leave or remain with their organization.

Research Questions and Objectives

This study was guided by four research objectives. Those objectives guided the examination of employees' expectations of leadership development programs and their influence on employee turnover and organizational commitment. The study's central research question is: do leadership development program expectations contribute to anticipated voluntary employee turnover in an organization? The research objectives are as follows,

RO1 – Describe the participants' demographics in terms of gender, age, leadership program participation, and years of employment.

RO2 – Explore employees' perspectives about how leadership development program expectations affect organizational commitment in the workplace.

RO3 – Explore the relationship between employees' leadership development program expectations and organizational commitment.

RO4 – Identify themes associated with how employees' expectations about leadership development programs impact anticipated voluntary employee turnover.

Research Design

A qualitative design was chosen for this study to investigate current employees of Gulf Coast Veterans Healthcare System (GCVHCS) who have participated in a leadership development program within the past ten years to document their expectations of leadership development programs. Those expectations were then explored to determine if they influenced organizational commitment and anticipated voluntary turnover. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), “qualitative research is a situated

study activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 3). Using this study method makes the world visible by using interpretive and material practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). For this study, the researcher wanted to capture the participants’ perceptions and views of the leadership development programs; in other words, the researcher wanted to view leadership development programs through the participants’ lens. These research practices illustrate a participant’s perceptions through field notes, interviews, narratives, recordings, and photographs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). When researchers utilize this method, they study the participant in their natural environment to understand how they interpret the phenomena to reveal the associated meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). For this study, the interviews were conducted at the workplace using a familiar method of communication, Zoom, a teleconferencing application. Due to Covid-19, this method has been adopted by GCVHCS, due to the social distancing requirements. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative research consists of data collection in its natural setting, which is most beneficial for gathering accurate data from the participants.

The phenomenological research method was used to investigate the expectations of leadership development programs to determine if those expectations have encouraged or influenced thoughts or feelings of voluntary turnover. Phenomenology examines the participants' views (Creswell et al., 2007). According to Creswell et al. (2007), when conducting a study of this nature, the responsibility of the researcher is to describe what the participants are experiencing as a phenomenon (i.e., grief, anger, exclusion). Therefore, phenomenologists work directly from the participants’ statements (Creswell et al., 2007). Phenomenology translates the experiences of the participants to a

description of the “universal essence” or a “grasp of the very nature of the thing” (van Manen, 1990, p. 177).

Developed by Edmund Husserl, phenomenology is intended to explain individuals and their perception of the social phenomena apparent in their daily lives (Reeves et al., 2008). Therefore, the purpose of phenomenology is to explore those perceptions directly from the individual’s point of view (Reeves et al., 2008). Phenomenology examines how individuals make sense of the world, as in their interpretation, which could conclude how they chose to respond (Reeves et al., 2008). Phenomenology provides insight into an individual’s lived experience(s) and aims to investigate individuals in a specific setting (Reeves et al., 2008). Therefore, this study explored the perceptions of healthcare employees regarding leadership development programs by examining what those employees expected from the program, how they perceived the outcome(s) of the program, and if those outcomes lead to thoughts of terminating their relationship with the employer. To satisfy phenomenology requirements, all participants were interviewed in their natural workplace setting.

For this study, the researcher gathered data by conducting one-on-one interviews via Zoom for Government and utilizing Zoom's recording capabilities. GCVHCS has an active Zoom Gov subscription for general meeting usage. Zoom Gov was no cost to the researcher and participants. This application allows users to host/join meetings virtually. The research study reports the direct experiences of current GCVHCS employees who have participated in specific workplace training programs within the past ten years. The researcher also gathered information to identify if the participants have ever experienced

a desire or cognitive thought of termination with their organization due to leadership development program expectations.

Population and Sample

Despite the growth and innovation prevalent in the healthcare industry, many hospitals and other healthcare organizations are in a state of crisis over providing access to care (Avgar et al., 2011). Healthcare organizations struggle with the inflating costs of providing healthcare services and costs to maintain a competitive advantage (Avgar et al., 2011). The need to remain competitive has public and academic attention (Avgar et al., 2011). Healthcare organizations rely on clinical and administrative support to execute daily operations successfully (Avgar et al., 2011). With that said, turnover among hospital staff can hinder a facility's ability to deliver quality care and provide appropriate health services (Wilson, 2016).

The population for this study consists of currently employed GCVHCS employees who have participated in a leadership development program within the past ten years. The main facility is located in Biloxi, MS, along with four community-based outpatient clinics located in Mobile, AL, Eglin, FL, Pensacola, FL, and Panama City, FL. Approximately 123 potential participants exist from the desired timeframe. For this research, participants who attended at least one of three leadership development programs offered by GCVHCS were invited to participate in this study. Each developmental leadership program has different qualifications and targets specific General Schedule (GS) pay scales.

According to the Office of Personnel Management (n.d.), the General Schedule consists of 15 grades and ranks from lowest, GS-1, to highest, GS-15. Each federal

agency is responsible for classifying the grade of each job based on the level of difficulty, responsibility, and required qualifications and skillset (Office of Personnel Management, n.d.). To satisfy the study requirement, the participant must have participated in at least one of the following programs: Each Leader Individually Trained to Excel (ELITE), Emerging VA Leaders (EVAL), and Leadership Development Institute (LDI).

ELITE is a local leadership development program that assists entry-level employees who have an interest in personal development (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). This program consists of five 8-hour classroom sessions that occur over two months (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). Each ELITE participant will engage in a broad spectrum of developmental experiences to support the organization's network strategic plan while developing employees (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). The purpose of this program is to enhance the participant's job skills and knowledge that will increase productivity and the opportunity for career development (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). At the end of the program, participants can identify and develop positive leadership behaviors, improve their interpersonal skills, development and manage their career goals, and gain a deeper understanding of the organization's mission and organizational structure (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). To qualify for this program, the employee must be a fulltime, permanent, entry-level employee, i.e., grades GS-5 and below, WG-3 and below, and Nurse I, level 1 (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.).

EVAL is a comprehensive program that recognizes and cultivates employees who are interested in career development and have demonstrated leadership potential in the workplace (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). This program consists of five

two-day modules over six months (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). The program participants will be paired with a mentor and are expected to develop a personal development plan to manage career direction and goals (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). During this program, the participant becomes familiar with VA's mission and organizational infrastructure, network with peers from sister facilities, develop leadership skills, and enhance current job skills and knowledge to increase productivity and career development (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). To participate in this program, the applicant: must be a full-time employee with a minimum of one-year permanent status and must meet the pay grade requirements (i.e., GS 5-8, VN Nurse 1 and 2, WG 5-8, WL 4-8, WS 1-6, and Physician Assistant at Associate Grade) (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.).

LDI prepares interested and qualified participants for leadership roles within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This program utilizes OPM leadership competencies with the intent of strengthening individual skills (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). This program identifies ways to improve leadership competencies, apply a system thinking approach when problem-solving, understand the current strengths and target areas for improvement in the healthcare system, etc. (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). LDI occurs over five months, but it only involves three weeks of training (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). Qualified applicants must have maintained full-time VA employment with a minimum two years of service and must also meet the pay grade requirement (i.e., GS 9-12; WG 9-11; WL 9-11; WS 7-10; VN Nurse I, Level 3 - Nurse III; or PA's Full-Senior) (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.).

Purposive criterion sampling ensures the collected data is strictly from GCVHCS employees who have previously participated in one of the abovementioned leadership development programs within the past ten years. According to Patton (2002), criterion sampling consists of studying “all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (p. 238). Phenomenologists that utilize this method understand that all studies must meet a pre-determined criterion; in this case, that consists of current employment with the organization mentioned above and participation in at least one or more leadership development programs (Suri, 2011). Most researchers who utilize this method state explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria (Suri, 2011).

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were the method of choice to collect data from 15 individuals based on saturation. Qualitative researchers utilize research methods that consist of more open-ended questions and often follow developing pragmatic and theoretical findings that arise in unexpected ways (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Therefore, how much data needs to be collected may not be apparent in advance and is unclear regarding exactly how much data should be collected (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Therefore, the best resolution is to simply continue gathering data until empirical saturation is met (Baker & Edwards, 2012). According to Hennink et al. (2017), saturation refers to “the point in data collection when no additional issues or insights emerge from data and all relevant conceptual categories have been identified, explored, and exhausted” (p. 592).

Qualitative sample sizes should be extensive enough to capture all the perceptions; however, if the sample size is too large, the data may appear repetitive and redundant (Mason, 2010). According to Mason (2010), the concept of saturation should

be honored if the researcher adheres to the principles of qualitative research. The concept of saturation is usually used as a guiding principle during the data collection process, even though other factors may influence sample size (Mason, 2010).

Compared to quantitative studies, qualitative samples are usually much smaller (Mason, 2010). Ritchie et al. (2003) justified the smaller qualitative sample sizes by stating that qualitative samples usually have a point of diminishing return, in other words, more data does not necessarily provide more relevant information. Therefore, one occurrence of a code or piece of data is all that is needed to be included in the analysis framework (Ritchie et al., 2003). In qualitative research, occurrences are seldom important (Crouch & Mckenzie, 2006). One frequency is just as significant as many frequencies in qualitative research since qualitative research is more focused on meaning and general hypothesis statements (Crouch & Mckenzie, 2006). Saturation can be met once the act of collecting new data does not shed any new light on the topic of the research study (Crouch & Mckenzie, 2006). For example, Guest et al. (2006) conducted a qualitative study that included 60 women regarding reproductive health care in Africa. They examined the codes from 60 interviews to reach saturation; 36 codes were developed for their study. Based on their findings, saturation occurred very early (Guest et al., 2006). For example, 34 of the 36 codes were developed from their first six interviews (Guest et al., 2006).

According to Creswell (1998), the recommended sample size for a phenomenological study is “five to 25” (p. 64). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), a fixed number of participants is not required for phenomenological studies. However, this determination should be guided by research, information gathered, the

progress of the analysis, and available resources to support the investigation. Whereas Lincoln and Guba (1985) advise sampling should continue until redundancy occurs, or saturation, is reached. Saturation is the point at which proceeding to interview does not provide any new information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As stated, for this study, the researcher conducted 15 interviews. The researcher utilized the recommendation and enlisted the assistance and expertise of her dissertation committee chair to help define and clarify the point of saturation for the data.

Once the one-on-one interviews were completed and the data was analyzed by the researcher, additional interviews commenced to collect additional data. The additional interviews were a method to achieve triangulation. In qualitative research, triangulation is achieved by utilizing numerous methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 1999). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), focus groups derive from the topic of discussion and the participants as a result of purposeful sampling. By using purposeful sampling, the researcher selected participants that are familiar with the matter at hand (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For this study, the focus group participants entailed six mid-level and upper-level supervisors employed at GCVHCS who have approved at least one employee to participate in at least one of the abovementioned programs. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the recommended number of focus group participants should total between six and ten individuals. As stated, six participants were recruited to participate in the focus group. The focus group was conducted using Zoom; the researcher recorded the session and personally transcribed the recordings.

Validity of the Research Design

Qualitative researchers assume that reality is a social factor and is whatever the participant perceives it to be (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Therefore, it is essential to ensure the participants' perceptions were accurately captured in the final result (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Validity is the degree of how well the researcher manages to accurately present the collected information (Polit & Beck, 2012). Validation procedures are research strategies used to establish credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

To establish validity, eight common validation strategies are used by qualitative researchers; they are as follows: clarifying researcher bias, external audits, member checking, negative case analysis, peer review, prolonged engagement and observation, rich and thick description, and triangulation (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers should utilize at least two validation strategies to ensure credibility and accuracy. For this study, the researcher used clarifying researcher bias and member checking validation strategies.

To clarify researcher bias, the reader must understand and know any biases the researcher may have regarding the studied topic. According to Creswell (2013), "the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study" (p. 251). To satisfy this validation strategy, the researcher decided to use reflexivity to avoid researcher bias. The purpose of reflexivity is to enhance the quality of research by presenting self-awareness to demonstrate ethical research practices while ensuring ethical decision-making practices (Murray & Holmes, 2013). The researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout the research process. The purpose of the journal was to document the

researcher's beliefs, values, and experiences that could influence the research. Creswell (2013) discusses the importance of reflective comment placement in a study. According to Creswell (2013), "the comments can be placed in the opening passage of the study, they may reside in a methods discussion in which the writer talks about his or her role in the study, they may be threaded throughout the study, or they may be at the end of the study in an epilogue" (p. 216).

Member checking is the second validation strategy used for this research study. For this validation strategy, the researcher conducted a follow-up with the participants to review their interview responses for accuracy. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). According to Stake (1995), the participants should "play a major role in directing as well as acting in case study research" (p. 115). The researcher should not provide the participants with raw data or transcripts; member checking should provide the participant with a preliminary description and themes (Creswell, 2013).

Instrumentation

Data collection for phenomenological studies should be conducted mainly through in-depth, descriptive interviews (Creswell, 2013). In order to obtain a first-hand description of the experiences, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews to gather insight regarding leadership development program expectations of current GCVHCS employees. The researcher developed and used an interview protocol to gain insight into the employees' perceptions of leadership development programs and their influence on organizational commitment and thoughts of anticipated voluntary turnover. Also, the data contains demographic information, including gender, age, years of employment at

GCVHCS, and which leadership development program(s) were utilized by the participant. The interview questions were designed by the researcher and reflect the research objectives outlined for the current study. As a first-time qualitative interviewer, the researcher used the interview protocol as a structural guide to ensure continuity of data collection from each participant. The researcher pilot-tested the interview protocol with two colleagues who satisfied the participant criteria prior to the interview the interview process. This process assisted the researcher in assuring the questions are meaningful and understandable to the participant.

According to Phillips et al. (2013), “to be an effective data collection instrument, the survey should provide consistent results over time (reliability) and measure what it is intended to measure (validity)” (p. 123). As mentioned, the researcher developed original interview questions and created a survey map to ensure alignment with the four research objectives of the study; this will ensure content validity. Mapping entails ensuring the pairing of each measure with a research objective (Phillips et al., 2013). Table 2 provides an illustration of the alignment of the interview questions and the research objectives for the current study.

Table 2 *Mapping Instrument to Research Objectives*

Research Objective	Instrument Questions
<i>RO1</i> - Describe the participants’ demographics in terms of gender, age, leadership program participation, and years of employment.	Screening Questionnaire Q1-Q6
<i>RO2</i> – Explore employees’ perspectives about how leadership development program expectations affect organizational commitment in the workplace.	Interview Protocol Q2, Q3, Q7, Q8, Q11, Q12

Mapping Instrument of Research Objectives continued

<i>RO3</i> – Explore the relationship between employees’ leadership development program expectations and organizational commitment.	Interview Protocol Q1, Q5, Q6, Q13
<i>RO4</i> – Identify themes associated with how employees’ expectations about leadership development programs impact anticipated voluntary employee turnover.	Interview Protocol Q4, Q9, Q10

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative studies is very different from the role of the researcher in quantitative studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), the research itself is considered a data collection instrument. Therefore, the individual conducting the study, the researcher, is a human data collection instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Consequently, the reader must know some information about the human instrument; this includes background information about the researcher, any biases, assumptions, and expectations that would deem the researcher capable of conducting this research (Greenbank, 2003). Providing this type of information would shed light on any fundamental influences on the work (Greenbank, 2003).

The researcher is a current employee of GCVHCS and began employment with the organization on April 7, 2013. The researcher has a passion for human capital development focusing on the concepts of employee engagement and organizational commitment. The researcher has over 15 years of experience working in customer service-based roles with various organizations. The researcher’s experiences with multiple organizations and the desire to advance within her current organization serve as

the foundation for the present study. The researcher has participated in two leadership development programs and has experienced the effects of leadership development program expectations on commitment towards her organization.

The researcher's experiences with leadership development programs benefit this study by empathizing with the study's research participants. Since the researcher is a current employee of the sampled population, utilizing the proper validation strategies will ensure the study remains objective. This study will assist GCVHCS and possibly other organizations by providing them with an insight into employee perceptions regarding leadership development programs with the hopes of addressing voluntary turnover related to this matter. The results of this study will add valuable information to the existing literature for the advancement of leadership development influencing voluntary turnover and organizational commitment.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process began with obtaining the organization's permission to access the desired population for this study. An application to conduct a Quality Improvement Project was submitted to the research coordinator of GCVHCS to obtain consent to conduct the research study; approval was granted on October 13, 2020 (Appendix A). The researcher completed all pre-requisite training required by the organization to begin data collection. Next, the researcher obtained approval from the selected dissertation committee (Appendix B) and The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

To review and monitor research practices involving human subjects, the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) adheres to the Institutional Review Board

(IRB) guidelines and has an established committee specifically for this process. This committee functions to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects. This committee has the authority to approve or disapprove research based on the nature of risks for human research subjects. Therefore, this study did not have any risks, and all collected data will remain confidential to satisfy IRB requirements. This approval was initially obtained on August 28, 2020 (Appendix D). The researcher initially intended to hire a transcriptionist to transcribe the individual and focus group interviews. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs required the researcher to transcribe the interviews to ensure the safe keeping of the data. Therefore, the researcher applied for an IRB modification; the IRB modification was approved on November 9, 2020 (Appendix E).

According to Creswell (2013), the researcher should use pilot testing as a method to refine the interview questions and procedures. The interview protocol for this current study was pilot tested with two current GCVHCS employees who satisfied the screening criteria, participated in one of the previously mentioned leadership development programs within the past ten years. The pilot test measured the validity and reliability of the instrument (Creswell, 2013). The pilot tests were conducted prior to participant recruitment. The pilot test interviews were beneficial for testing the audio quality when gathering the interviews to ensure the quality of the recordings for later transcription by the researcher. The pilot test acted as a learning tool for the researcher to (a) increase confidence in interviewing for research purposes, (b) hear and evaluate the flow of the interview questions, (c) document any necessary deviations for the instrument, and (d) get a more precise time length for the interview timeframe. The first pilot test lasted 46 minutes and the second pilot test lasted 39 minutes; therefore, the researcher decided to

establish a not to exceed time of 60 minutes for each interview. There were no changes made to the instrument.

The researcher drafted a recruitment/research study announcement email (see Appendix F) to seek interested research study participants. Each leadership development program class has an alumni email group; the recruitment email was sent to employees using those email groups. Those interested in participating in the study completed a six-question screening survey (see Appendix G) created using Qualtrics, followed by a reminder email distributed in the forthcoming weeks (see Appendix H). The screening survey ensured that only participants who completed one of the previously mentioned leadership development programs were interviewed within the past ten years. The survey link was provided in the recruitment email. Once the screening questions were received and the participants were selected, a follow-up email was sent to each qualifying participant requesting their preferred date/time (see Appendix I). Since GCVHCS is a federal institution, monetary incentives are prohibited.

The researcher thoroughly read and reviewed the consent form to the participant before beginning the interview; each participant provided verbal consent (see Appendix J). Each interview was recorded using Zoom; each participant was aware of the recording and provided their consent. The researcher utilized an original research instrument (see Appendix K). This research instrument consisted of 15 open-ended questions and sub-questions for one-on-one interview data collection.

After each interview, the audio file was saved to the researchers computer on GCVHCS's network. The researcher was not allowed to hire a transcriptionist and was required to manually transcribe the recording herself. Each recording was transcribed as

the interviews occurred. After data collection completion, the researcher emailed the participants to thank them for their participation (see Appendix L). Due to natural disasters and COVID-19, the data collection process took longer than expected. Table 3 illustrates the data collection plan.

Table 3 *Data Collection Plan*

Week	Task
Pre-study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained approval from the Department of Veterans Affairs research committee. • Received approval from the university’s Institutional Review Board. • Performed two pilot tests prior to participant recruitment.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent recruitment for participation email and email follow-up reminders. • Scheduled participant interviews. • Began reflexivity journal entries.
2-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted one-one interviews. Data were transcribed by the researcher after each interview. • Reviewed each transcript upon completion. • Member check after each transcript was reviewed and received/Contacted each participant via email to review the transcript. • Began analysis of interview transcripts, themes, and coding • The reflexivity journal entry was made after each interview. • Emailed invitation to focus group participants.
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted the focus group session.
13-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzed focus group data. • Compared the focus group and individual interview data.
15-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported key findings and themes. • Emailed thank you letter to all participants.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis occurred for this study concurrently with the data collection process. According to Creswell (2013), for the researcher to analyze qualitative research data, the data must be coded to identify themes to illustrate the data visually or verbally. For this research, most of the data analysis was performed manually by the researcher. This method allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the data. According to Smith and Osborn (2007), “the aim of interpretative phenomenological analysis is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA (interpretative phenomenological analysis) study is the meanings particular experiences, events, states hold for participants” (p. 53). According to Smith and Osborn (2007), the researcher should participate in the research process actively and thoroughly examine the data firsthand.

The IPA guidelines allow the researcher to migrate through the data analysis process (Smith & Osborn, 2007). When beginning the analysis process, the researcher reviewed the transcript several times and listened to the audio recording several times also. Both practices ensured the researcher gained a fundamental understanding of the data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Next, the researcher took notes on each transcript and documented those reactions that appeared noteworthy to the research (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Then, the researcher translated those notes into themes (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). At this point, the researcher only worked with their notes instead of the transcript. Then, the researcher focused on identifying the connections between the identified themes and grouped them based on conceptual similarities, at which each group obtains a descriptive label (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). According to Miles et al.

(2014), this will include “sorting and sifting through these coded materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, categories, distinguishing differences between subgroups, and common sequences” (p. 10). Lastly, the researcher composed a list of all the identified themes and explained each of them with supported excerpts from the transcribed interviews (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Miles et al. (2014) stated that after the last step, the researcher should note any reflections in their journal and should “gradually elaborate a small set of generalizations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database” (p. 10). The researcher made one final entry into her reflexivity journal. Finally, those generalizations previously mentioned were compared to the three guiding theories for this study, Human Capital Theory, Becker’s Side-Bet Theory, and the Unfolding Theory of Turnover.

Once the point of saturation was identified, and all interview data were analyzed, the researcher assembled a focus group. The purpose of this focus group is to validate the responses from the one-on-one interviews while addressing the research objectives for the study. An invitation letter was sent to focus group participants via email (Appendix M). When the researcher conducted the focus group, the assigned pseudonym for the focus group was ‘FG.’ The focus group questions were developed based on the themes identified from the individual interviews (Appendix N). Once the researcher transcribed the focus group recording, the researcher read the transcript several times to gain a deeper understanding of the interview. During this process, the researcher documented her thoughts and comments. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), the documentation of thoughts and comments allows the researcher to relive the experience and become submerged in the data.

Table 4 provides an illustration for the data analysis plan for this study. Research objective one describes the participant demographics. Demographic variables categorize all participants based on several variables, including age range, gender, years of employment, and the leadership development program(s) the participant completed. The variables were analyzed and reported using occurrence distributions to illustrate the demographic variances between the research participants.

Table 4 *Data Analysis Plan*

Objective	Data Collected	Data Category	Data Analysis
RO1	Gender, age, leadership program participation, and years of employment	Nominal	Descriptive statistics
RO2	Employees' perspectives of leadership program expectations/effects on organizational commitment	Text	Content analysis/recurring themes
RO3	Relationship between leadership development program expectations and organizational commitment	Text	Content analysis/recurring themes
RO4	Effects of leadership development program expectations on anticipated voluntary employee turnover	Text	Content analysis/recurring themes

Data yielded from the one-on-one interviews were transcribed and then analyzed to identify emergent themes. Those themes will produce results to satisfy RO2, RO3, and RO4. The researcher utilized IPA guidelines to explore the world of each participant to gather an understanding of the employees' leadership development program perceptions. IPA provides clarity and thoroughly explains the phenomenon with the focus of expounding on the participants' experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2008). IPA is committed to grasping the texture and unique quality of lived experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2008). The person's experience of the phenomenon and their perception of the phenomenon is the primary interest of IPA (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

Summary

The researcher conducted a qualitative, phenomenological research study to explore the leadership development program expectations of GCVHCS employees and their relationship to anticipated employee turnover. Chapter three consists of a thorough review of the chosen methodology and research design used to conduct this study. This chapter discussed the validity and reliability of the research instrument, the researcher's explained role, thoroughly explained the research population and the sampling strategies that were combined in the recruitment process and explained the data collection and analysis processes in great detail. The upcoming chapters will describe the analysis process and disclose the research study results, followed by conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to seek an understanding of employees' expectations of leadership development programs and their influence on organizational commitment and anticipated voluntary employee turnover. The qualitative research design was used to provide insight into what the employees expected before applying and participating in a leadership development program and if/how that influenced their view of their organization. This chapter reports the results, guided by the research objectives, of the study based on analysis of the qualitative data collected from GCVHCS employees who participated in at least one of the mentioned programs: ELITE, EVAL, and LDI.

Chapter IV presents the study results and describes the qualitative data analysis process; this includes theme development used to report the research study's findings. The validity and reliability of the data are addressed by reviewing the validation strategies utilized by the researcher. The four research objectives are reviewed and paired with equivalent results that address each theme. The participant demographics data reports which leadership development program was completed by each employee. Each participant discussed their perceptions of leadership development programs, specifically, how those perceptions and expectations influenced their organizational commitment and anticipated turnover.

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted 15 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with GCVHCS employees who completed at least one of the following programs within the past ten years: ELITE, EVAL, and LDI. Due to the Department of Veterans Affairs' research requirements, the researcher was required to complete the analysis manually.

By utilizing a manual analysis method, the researcher became familiar with the data. This analysis method forced an intimate examination of the data through rereading and handwriting notes. The data analysis for the study was completed using the guidelines outlined for the IPA Process. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), IPA researchers are interested in how individuals make sense of their experiences, their interpretation. The experiences include the individuals' substantial, detailed, and first-person accounts of their experiences and phenomena being investigated (Pietkiewicz & Smith (2014).

Using the IPA framework to analyze data can be inspiring yet complex and intensively time-consuming (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) state, "it is recommended that researchers totally immerse themselves in the data or, in other words, try to step into the participants' shoes as far as possible" (p. 11). The purpose of IPA is to provide evidence of the participants' interpretation of the phenomena being investigated while also documenting the researcher's understanding. The researcher closely examines the emic perspectives, how people think, and etic perspectives, what the researcher considers essential (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), "the researcher is expected to review the data through a psychological lens" (p. 11). The researcher will interpret the data by applying psychological concepts and theories that align with the research problem (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), "IPA provides a set of flexible guidelines which can be adapted by individual researchers according to their research objectives" (p. 11). These guidelines present one possible way of many

when analyzing qualitative data. The researcher should remain flexible and creative when utilizing IPA guidelines (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

The researcher followed IPA guidelines and reviewed and analyzed each case individually several times (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). For the first step, the researcher thoroughly examined the data by reading each text transcript multiple times and listening to each recording numerous times. As stated earlier, this helps the researcher become intimate with the data and provide deeper insight into data familiarity (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). All interview recordings and transcripts were reviewed concurrently to ensure data correspondence with one another. While listening to each interview recording, the researcher wrote down comments/thoughts to assist with the data analysis process. During the first phase of analysis, each transcript was reviewed multiple times and formatted with three-inch margins on the right side of the transcript to leave adequate space for comments.

The second phase of the IPA analysis process identifies emergent themes (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The researcher started with the first interview transcript to examine and identify emergent themes within the text to begin this phase. It is recommended for researchers to compose a list of significant statements within the transcript to understand the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The researcher thoroughly examined the transcripts and notes for suggestive sentences and phrases. The researcher utilized the descriptive coding method for this phase of the data analysis process. During the initial data review, the researcher assigned three codes- perspectives, expectations, and impact on organizational commitment. Each assigned code aligns with the research objectives. To identify which keywords and phrases aligned with the

research objective, the researcher used a different colored highlighter for each of the objectives. The keywords and phrases aligned with perspectives (RO2) were highlighted in yellow. Perspectives signified effects the research participants experienced once they began one of the three leadership development programs. All keywords and phrases representative of expectations (RO3) were highlighted in pink. Expectations signified effects the research participants expected before applying to the leadership development program. Lastly, the keywords and phrases representative of impact on organizational commitment (RO4) were highlighted in blue and signified how the research participants felt the leadership development programs impacted their organizational commitment.

Next, the researcher created an Excel spreadsheet to assist with grouping the keywords and phrases. The participants' interview text highlighted in yellow, signifying RO2, was typed under a column labeled 'perspectives.' The text representing RO3, highlighted in pink, was written under a column labeled 'expectations.' Lastly, all text signifying RO4, highlighted in blue, was written under a column labeled 'impact on organizational commitment.' Once the focus group recording was transcribed, all IPA guidelines were utilized, and all focus group keywords and phrases were added to the same Excel spreadsheet but were labeled 'FG.' The researcher documented keywords and phrases from each category in the Excel spreadsheet and began summarizing findings.

Validity and Reliability of Findings

The researcher chose to employ reflexivity and triangulation to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher documented in a reflective journal to display transparency in the research process. The

first journal entry notes the researcher's feelings of apprehension and expectations before beginning the data collection process. A journal entry was made after each interview. Journaling allowed the researcher to document thoughts related to the effectiveness of the questions and the participants' responses. Since the researcher has an interest in the topic, and has participated in the aforementioned programs, the journal was a reminder to erase all preconceived notions before each interview and focus group.

Conducting a focus group served as a method of triangulation for this study. According to Carter et al. (2014), "triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena" (p. 545). Triangulation is a qualitative research strategy used to test validity by joining different sources (Carter et al., 2014). In addition to one-on-one interviews, data were also collected from six GCVHCS Service Chiefs who have approved at least one employee to participate in at least one of the programs analyzed in this study. Triangulation also consists of locating similar themes among the different data sources; if apparent, the themes are deemed valid (Creswell, 2013).

Participant Demographics

ROI– Describe the participants' demographics in terms of gender, age, leadership program participation, and years of employment.

The researcher collected data via one-on-one interviews from 15 research participants and an additional six additional research participants via a focus group. The demographic information gathered ranges for participants' age, gender, leadership program participation, and years of employment. The researcher received 17 responses from the screening questionnaire; however, only 15 participants responded after the

initial invitation and successfully scheduled an interview. After interviewing 10 participants, several responses expressed the same concerns. However, the researcher decided to interview the other five participants to ensure no additional information was revealed. The participants include 15 GCVHCS employees who have participated in at least one leadership development program within the past ten years. Table 5 illustrates the demographic information for the individual participants.

Table 5 *Individual Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender	Age	Years of Employment w/ GCVHCS	Leadership Development Program
1	Female	36-45 years old	11-15 years	EVAL
2	Female	26-35 years old	6-10 years	EVAL
3	Female	26-35 years old	6-10 years	EVAL
4	Female	46-55 years old	16-20 years	EVAL
5	Male	36-45 years old	6-10 years	EVAL
6	Female	36-45 years old	6-10 years	EVAL, ELITE
7	Female	36-45 years old	11-15 years	LDI
8	Female	36-45 years old	11-15 years	EVAL
9	Female	26-35 years old	6-10 years	EVAL
10	Female	36-45 years old	1-5 years	LDI
11	Male	36-45 years old	11-15 years	LDI
12	Female	46-55 years old	6-10 years	EVAL
13	Female	46-55 years old	11-15 years	ELITE
14	Female	36-45 years old	16-20 years	LDI
15	Female	Over 55 years old	21 years or more	LDI

As mentioned, for triangulation, six Service Chiefs who have approved at least one employee to participate in one of the aforementioned leadership development programs were interviewed. The researcher used purposeful sampling to recruit focus group participants. Table 6 illustrates the demographic information for the focus group participants.

Table 6 *Focus Group Demographics*

Participant	Years of Employment w/ GCVHCS	Provided approval for at least one employee?
1	6-10 years	Yes
2	1-5 years	Yes
3	21 years or more	Yes
4	6-10 years	Yes
5	16-20 years	Yes
6	16-20 years	Yes

Themes

The analysis yielded ten themes, four expectations, five perspectives, and one impact on organizational commitment, illustrated in Figure 2. The expectations identified include career advancement, leadership development, program follow-up, and ambivalence. The perspectives identified include organizational assimilation, personal development, supervisor support, participation, and benefits. The organizational commitment factor identified includes enhanced organizational commitment.

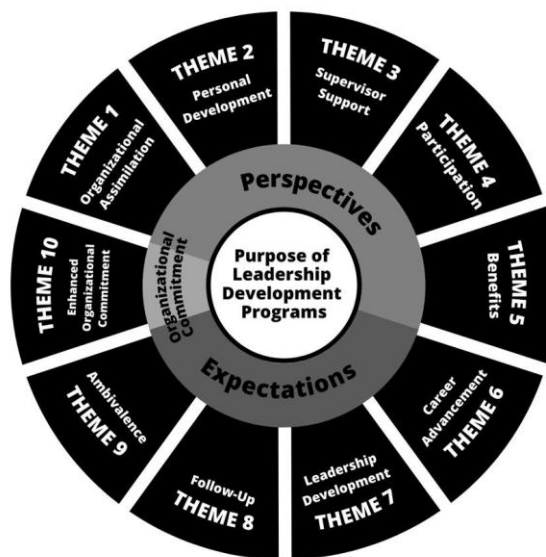


Figure 2. *Themes of employees' expectations of leadership development programs*

Themes Associated with Perspectives

RO2 – Explore employees' perspectives about how leadership development program expectations affect organizational commitment in the workplace.

The research participants were asked open-ended questions to gather their perspectives of leadership development programs and their effects on organizational commitment. Five themes were identified as perspectives of leadership development programs. The use of open-ended questions assisted with guiding the participants to express their perspectives of leadership development programs. The perspectives identified for this study include organizational assimilation, personal development, supervisor support, participation, and benefits.

Theme 1. Organizational Assimilation. From both the one-on-one interviews and the focus group, all participants expressed the benefit of gaining more knowledge about GCVHCS and the Department of Veterans Affairs as a whole. Participants stated that learning more about the organization made them want to remain employed with the organization longer. Fourteen out of 15 individual participants agreed that the leadership development programs provided them with a greater understanding of how things work with their organization (See Figure 3).

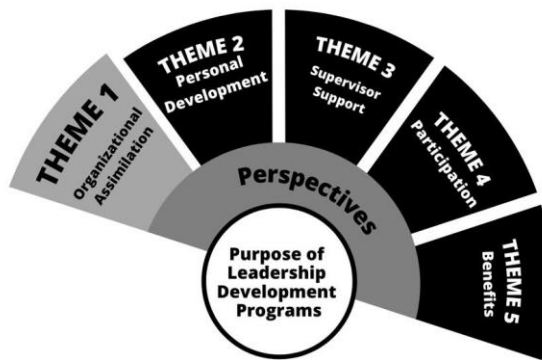


Figure 3. Perspectives of organizational assimilation on leadership development programs.

When asked what she gained while in the leadership development program, one participant stated:

I just really felt that I was able to lead better and more effectively and know how the organization's big picture was run. When people ask me questions, I'm able to answer them truthfully and with some merit behind how I answer and how I help direct them in their own growth; a lot of the employees that we have hired just as a full-service across the Gulf Coast were former students and being a Mobile clinic in close proximity to USA (University of South Alabama), we had several students from that, and I had always served as a preceptor for students.

Another participant stated:

You know, leadership development teaches you a lot about how the organization is comprised. You know how the organizational chart is set up. So, I learned how the Pentad is and then from there who falls under them and just all of that, so I mean, and that's just one example. I learned a lot about the organization itself. And then, of course, you know I went on to get my Health Care Administration

Master's degree and all of that just kind of came together nicely. But yeah, it definitely helped me have a better understanding of the organization.

One participant stated that learning more about their organization would offset obtaining another degree.

I gained knowledge and skills to better serve the Veterans and serve my area of Acute Care, and I also looked at it as a way to be able to advance without actually having to wait for the process of going back to school and obtaining another degree, you know because I felt like Nursing here had become, so degree demanding that if you did not have, you know, the highest degree of Bachelor's, Master's, or above then you were not considered for any leadership positions.

One research participant expressed a different viewpoint regarding organizational assimilation.

It made me see things very differently. You would think those programs would provide you with the standard of what great leadership looks like, and it does, but once you finish your classes, you realize that it's nothing like that. Then you start to wonder if your superiors actually know they are not being a leader the VA way.

Other participants expressed their organizational understanding as follows:

- "I saw why leadership makes the decisions that they make, and that really helped me and my perspective of the VA.
- "I learned a lot about the VA system. I learned about how Fiscal worked."
- "I learned different things about the VA."
- "Yes, absolutely, it definitely helped me have a better understanding of the organization."

- "So, I was kind of hoping to learn more about the VA system as a whole, and I will say I was not disappointed. It definitely helped expose me to a lot of the other aspects of the VA."

All of the focus group participants agreed that organizational assimilation was perceived in the leadership development programs. When asked about visible organizational understanding displayed in the employees that were approved to participate in leadership development programs, a service chief in the focus group responded:

The groundwork was laid with that program, with what we were trying to build in them, so we didn't have to start from step one and go all the way back to 20. So, they seemed to be already halfway there, and they were easier to build.

Theme 2. Personal Development. Nine participants stated they experienced personal development while participating in their leadership development program. Additionally, all focus group participants expressed the importance of personal development and recognized such development in the employees they have allowed to participate in those programs (See Figure 4).



Figure 4. Perspectives of personal development on leadership development programs

One participant described how the leadership development program enhanced her personal growth.

I think it caused me to learn more things about myself. After that program, I realized that I needed to be more self-reliant. To elaborate more, I realized that I couldn't rely on that program to teach me everything I needed to know about leadership because taking the programs gives you the perfect picture of what leadership should look like, you know, how things should go. But in reality, it's very different outside of that classroom. It made me see things very differently.

Another participant also explained how the leadership development program enhanced her personal development.

It helped me grow as a person. I feel that I became a better asset for the organization. I didn't want to be just the employee that comes to work every day for the check and go home. After that program, I was actually able to participate in different discussions, different programs.

Other participants stated,

- "I felt so much more confident and empowered to be able to be in a leadership position."
- "There were a lot of personal development aspects to it like the 360-degree eval, the Myers-Briggs, there was, you know, several different things that allowed me personal development that I had not expected."
- "I think it shows management that we have a desire to learn and make things better, and we don't mind working on ourselves to do it."

The focus group also agreed that personal development was evident in employees once they completed the leadership development programs. One focus group participant stated:

I will say that the program enhances those employees who want to accept the enhancement. Some of those who will accept the opportunity that is placed in front of them learn from those things that are presented to them and utilize those to make things better and to take advantage and grow with that. They can take it and expound on it, and the personal development becomes evident; you see it. I've seen some very, very successful people take it and just take leaps and bounds go through the VA.

Theme 3. Supervisor Support. Twelve research participants stated they received their supervisor's support to participate in the leadership development program from their supervisor, which greatly influenced their experience in the program (See Figure 5). Some participants discussed how much support they received from their supervisor when applying for the leadership development program.



Figure 5. Perspectives of supervisor support on leadership development programs

One participant explained how her display of responsibility contributed to gaining her supervisor's approval.

I really think because maybe they trusted that I would be able to handle that along with my other, you know, my job because obviously those duties don't stop and you have to be able to juggle all of it, and I just felt like they knew I was ready and was dedicated to it, and they wanted to support me through that. And I was able to continue on with my job. I didn't let anything fall through the cracks. So, I think it was just a trust. I think they knew I could do it and trusted that I can handle it.

Another participant expressed how leadership is supportive of leadership development programs:

I think leadership is very supportive of these programs. My current boss sends me information about training sessions all the time via email. I believe he wants me to grow.

Another participant stated:

My direct supervisor is completely supportive of anyone that wants to better themselves and to learn to a better employee or team player and possibly a leader one day. My supervisor was and still is actually 100% supportive of any type of training or program that I have been interested in. You know, I really believe he wants me to grow as an employee and as a person in general. My supervisor actually takes the time to ask me about why I'm interested in training programs and even offers advice and encouragement and shares some of his VA experiences also.

Three research participants discussed how they were initially denied when requesting to participate in the leadership development program; they re-applied at a later date and were approved. One participant discussed her reason for her participation denial.

Actually, missing work seemed to be the issue; at the time, I worked for another service. My supervisor at the time did not want me taking it due to the fact I would miss work for two days out of the month. That was really disheartening; although I totally understand that maintaining coverage is essential, that's what we're here to do. However, at the same time, one would like to believe that their supervisor wants to see them grown no matter what.

Other participants' experiences include:

- "Leadership pushes us to get in these programs, but supervisors not so much. Supervisors support them because they have to."
- "He has known quite often that I was looking for career growth. And so, when I presented the opportunity, he supported that."
- "My supervisor was extremely supportive of anything that I wanted to do to advance my career."

Five out of six focus group participants agreed that leadership development programs are supported and should never be denied to an employee. One focus group participant stated:

I encouraged and promoted it when people send me stuff. You know that is part of the VA mission is we're here to train, and we're here to develop people because we won't always be here, so need successors, and we want to build, you know, some depth, and we got to do what we should do. We are coaches and trainers,

and educators, so we are fully supportive of any advancement, and we like to use the words grow and go.

One of the focus group participants expressed a reason why an employee may be denied the opportunity to participate in a leadership development program.

So, if usually, when staff feel they're not being allowed to participate, there's usually a little something else there that they may not fully understand. I have had some conversations with staff where I gave them the "I would like to see you do this" talk, but right now but let's work on this first. All they heard was "you can't go," but they didn't understand because they heard what they want to "she won't let me go." In fact, what I mean is, let me help you be the best you can be when you get there. It is what, you know, you try to get them to understand. I know you're not ready yet, but I think you will be ready in about six to eight months. So, let me get you where you need to be before I send you out there and the wolves get to you. I want to have you ready, so you can take on the world and be successful and just a driving force.

Theme 4. Participation. Participation in this study refers to the participant's willingness to participate and addresses if they would encourage future participation in this program (See Figure 6). Eleven out of 15 participants would encourage other employees to participate in one of the leadership development programs.

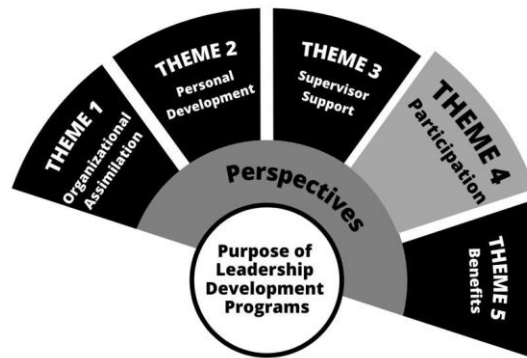


Figure 6. Perspectives of participation on leadership development programs

Participant Four stated:

I would tell other employees; actually, I have told other employees that it is something that they want to look into, and it's something that would help invest in them personally and also career-wise.

Participant Five discussed her reason and willingness to participate. According to participant five,

I had gotten to a place in my position at the time that it had become kind of stagnant, and I was looking for opportunities to grow and advance in the VA system. I was debating on pursuing, well, going back to school at the time, but I wasn't sure it was the right time in my life. And when the EVAL program was presented to me. It sounded like the perfect opportunity. So that's why I applied for it.

The remaining four participants stated they would not encourage participation to other employees. Participant Eight provided a different view of leadership development program participation. According to Participant Eight,

Honestly, I would tell them that these courses are a waste of time. So umm, I'm not sure how I would sell that to someone else. I mean, I would hate to say anything negative, but I do feel they were a waste of time. All people will see is what leadership should look like. And not to mention, I invested a lot of time and effort into graduating from that course, and I'm not even certain that it's accounted for anything.

Other participants shared their experiences on participation in leadership development programs:

- "Yes, I will definitely participate in another one in the future."
- "Yes, I would because I know you can never stop learning."
- When asked about future participation: "No, I actually would not. Well, I don't think there is any type of stable mentoring programs in place here at the VA. Working here with the different personalities can be draining, and you sometimes wonder if you can trust who will mentor you."
- "I would not say that it is a course that everyone needs to participate in, and I think the program could be better developed and much more of the leadership aspect brought to the forefront of the program."
- "I will not participate in another one because I felt like that program just consisted of field trips and not meaningful training that is needed for management positions."

All focus group participants agreed that they would continue to encourage future participation. A focus group participant stated:

For me, it's mostly these types of programs that affords them the opportunity that I didn't have and, like everyone else said, to challenge, come back and challenge me. I wish I would have had the opportunity to have these different programs that are out there now that would actually work towards the betterment of an employee. I didn't; I was thrown in and had to learn everything myself because I didn't have proper training. I don't regret it. I mean, it made me who I am today, but I encourage participation so we can have staff eager to learn and eager to strive and want to help the mission,

Theme 5. Benefits. Fourteen out of 15 research participants agreed the leadership development program was beneficial to them (See Figure 7). The researcher defines benefits for this study as the resources and experiences gained that were deemed valuable. Most participants felt they gained valuable skills that enhanced their experience.



Figure 7. Perspectives of benefits on leadership development programs

One participant shared one of her experiences during the program. "So, one thing I thought was really beneficial, and I found it to be very enlightening to see what was going on at other VAs. We got to share and compare, kind of you know, look at what

differences are and what improvements can be made." Other participants shared their experiences on the benefits they received from the program:

- "The biggest benefit was building relationships with people."
- "I received a mentor that helped guide me and helped developed my resume professionally, and I think ultimately it assisted in, well graduating within a year, I was able to achieve another position, you know promotion."
- "I mean, I just think the experience itself. I mean obviously networking and you know, we had to do a lot of presentations. Those are things that you know are just invaluable."
- "Well, the best thing I got out of it was tools, lots of tools on communication, networking, how to work as a team, how to be a member of a strong team, and also how to take the lead in areas of strengths and how to support."

All focus group participants agreed that networking was a benefit that was noticed after an employee completed a leadership development program. A focus group participant stated:

I've noticed the networking, the professional networking piece. Not only does it enhance my service. I think it enhances the agency as well.

Themes Associated with Expectations

RO3 – Explore the relationship between employees' leadership development program expectations and organizational commitment.

Participants were asked to identify any expectations they noticed before they participated in the leadership development program. Based on the data analysis, this

code produced four themes. The expectations identified include career advancement, leadership development, follow-up, and ambivalence.

Theme 6. Career Advancement. Fourteen out of 15 individual participants stated they had expectations of career advancement, but only seven of 15 expected career advancement concurred their expectations were met (see Figure 8). Participants shared specific information regarding their career advancement expectations which also included Human Resource efforts.



Figure 8. Expectations of career advancement in leadership development programs

According to Participant Eleven,

But also when the hiring process is happening for somebody else. I'm not convinced that, like, how do I say it, that they see that as a benefit when they see it on somebody's resume, and I feel like they really should.

Participant Ten recalled her experience of expecting career advancement before she pursued her leadership development program.

I wanted to be able to get some experience in that so that I could be qualified for jobs with more responsibility, and that kind of helped me develop into a leader in our organization and advance my career.

Other participants' experiences include:

- "I had to further my education and just thought that the leadership development program within the VA would help accent that and would be able to see different career path avenues through the VA."
- "I thought it would help me get promoted quicker."
- "I expected the program to prepare me for future growth. I thought it would really help me advance in my career, you know, I thought people would say oh yeah, she was an EVAL graduate, so I know she's capable of doing the job she's applying for."
- "I invested a lot of time and effort into graduating from that course, and I'm not even certain that it's accounted for when I apply for jobs. Ultimately every one that takes a leadership development programs wants career advancement-but if it doesn't help towards that, then what's the point. It should count for something when rating applications, I think."
- "I expected it to help me advance. No, it didn't. Yes, I completed the program, but no one really knew or cared that I completed it when it comes to hiring purposes."
- "I'd also heard that you know, it helped once you graduated kind of open up some doors for some other opportunities and for me personally, that's exactly what it did."
- "I did get promoted for one and I do believe that had a lot to do with the program because we also did mock interviews."

All focus group participants agreed they expected career advancement for their employees that participated in the leadership development programs. “I expected it to assist with growing future chiefs, which is all that we have to supersede after we're gone.”

Theme 7. Leadership Development. All individual participants expressed that attaining leadership skills through the programs was expected (See Figure 9). Several participants specifically described their leadership development expectations. According to Participant 12, “I expected to participate in a lot of role-playing scenarios. I felt like that would have given me and other participants solutions to situations, be it simple or complex.”



Figure 9. Expectations of leadership development

Other participants expressed their expectations of enhancing their leadership development once they completed the program:

- "I considered getting into the program because I wanted to develop leadership within the organization, and I felt like if I started taking different leadership classes, I can know more about the organization."

- "What I expected to get out of the program was to learn other tools that can help me be a great leader not just for myself, but for others."
- "I've always seen bad leadership. So that's one reason why I was interested and wanted to become a part of a leadership program."
- "If you want to evolve, I think that that the EVAL and the ELITE will help you to evolve to become a better person and get a better idea on, you know, on both sides on what an employer goes through."
- "After that program and not receiving from it what I thought I would, I was forced to really take my career into my own hands and learn more skills. I started to try to figure out what direction I wanted to go in. It was more of a reaction, like, ok, that program isn't what I expected, so I was forced to figure something out."
- "I was under the impression the purpose of the program was to enhance leadership skills, develop new leadership skills, and to be able to arbitrate supervisor/employee situations."
- "I just wanted to really strengthen my skill set."

All focus group participants agreed they expected to see evidence of leadership development once the participants completed their program. According to the focus group,

I hoped they would pick that interest, and they come back and really challenged me in that they want to grow, and they want to participate. You know, they came back, and they wanted to volunteer for certain assignments to continue sparking growth. Also, just the book way to do something isn't always the easiest and fastest and best way to do something.

Theme 8. Follow-up. In this study, follow-up is defined as the participants being utilized after the program by the leadership development program instructor and/or mentor reaching out to the participant to track their success and offer support (See Figure 10). Twelve out of 15 participants stated that they would have appreciated follow-up after the program; in fact, they expected it.



Figure 10. Expectations of follow-up from leadership development programs

Participant seven shared their disappointment regarding the follow-up efforts for the program:

I have been a little disappointed that there hasn't been a lot of follow-up with that. I would like to be more involved, you know, as a leadership graduate, be more involved in different things that come up. I'd like to be thought of or just involved in so I can help with different leadership things. That piece of it I don't think has been handled very well like you pretty much do it, and then yes, it looks great on your resume, and you have all of that experience moving forward, but there is no real let's keep connected, and you know, stay involved kind of process.

Participant Nine also agreed the leadership development programs can use more improvement with follow-up actions:

I do believe that the participants of the leadership programs are respected throughout the facility; however, I feel that there can be much more done with the follow-up of these programs to make them more engaging and educational for potential leaders of our organization. I'm not sure what that is or what that looks like, but the programs need to be revamped to really help those that want to become leaders.

Other participants expressed their frustration with the follow-up efforts, or a lack thereof:

- "Okay, so what happens after the class? Besides, you just let them go and let them go in the world, or is somebody there saying, hey, what are y'all doing or somebody following you."
- "I feel like I was left hanging; I put in all of that work, just for it to take up space on my resume because it wasn't valued."
- "You complete the course, and then that's the end of it, so everything you learned is either idly waiting to be utilized, or it is forgotten unless you are actively in a leadership role."
- "Well, he did say there will be a follow-up, but I never nobody ever followed up with me about after I took the course and when I took the course."
- "I don't think there's been a whole lot of impact career-wise because it's like once you complete the program and you get your certificate and all, it's over pretty much there. There was no real follow-up. No feedback."

All focus group participants agreed they expected the participants to experience follow-up after the employees completed their leadership development program. The

focus group also agreed with the idea that as service chiefs, they should have been a part of the follow-up process.

You know, they came back, and they wanted to volunteer for certain assignments to continue sparking growth. I think the failure part was that me as a chief, you know, I didn't latch onto that. You know, I didn't say, oh, you know, this is what they talk to y'all about in EVAL. So now I need to take that and then build onto it and keep going. So, I think that it did make them better. I think that if you don't strike their interest when they're fresh out of it, then you're going to lose some of that momentum, and then they can easily revert right back to where they were before.

Another focus group participant stated:

When they applied for the program, I hoped they would pick that interest, and they come back and really challenged me in that they want to grow, and they want to participate. And then that their program will stay in touch with them and keep them engaged and even challenged me as a supervisor to keep them involved and keep them, you know, pushing forward.

Theme 9. Ambivalence. The researcher defined ambivalence as the uncertainty of expectations before the participants started the program (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Ambivalence from leadership development programs

Six participants stated they received what they expected from the program. All focus group participants said they felt their employees knew what to expect from the program upon applying. Nine out of 15 participants stated they didn't know what to expect to gain from the program.

- "I really went into it with no expectations."
- "Well, when I, when I went in, I really didn't know what to expect."
- "I wasn't really sure what benefits it was going to be."
- "I did not have any well-defined expectations. I really didn't know what to expect."
- "I had thought about participating in leadership programs for a while before I finally dove in and submitted my application. But you know, I think I knew what I wanted, but I was very I was unsure of where to begin. So, I decided to run with this option and see where it would lead to."
- "I feel like it's not very publicized. Most people aren't really thinking about them unless somebody who's been through one of those programs suggested them; so, I didn't know what to expect."

Themes Associated with Impact on Organizational Commitment

RO4 – Identify themes associated with how employees’ expectations about leadership development programs impact anticipated organizational turnover.

Theme 10. Enhanced Organizational Commitment. The researcher defined enhanced organizational commitment as the leadership development program’s positive influence on organizational commitment (See Figure 12).

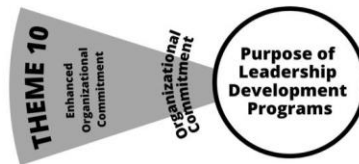


Figure 12. Enhanced organizational commitment in leadership development programs

Twelve out of 15 participants agreed they felt more committed to their organization after they completed the leadership development program. Participant 14 stated:

I felt way more connected. LDI gave me a platform, a reason to talk to other people within our organization that were in leadership roles, that I would have never ever reached out to or gotten to know but because I had this LDI program that I was in. It gave me a reason to reach out to them and to build relationships with them, and then they, in turn, were able to point me to resources and help me develop things that I would have never ever done on my own.

Other participants expressed how the leadership development program enhanced their organizational commitment.

- "Having that basic knowledge gives me confidence for career growth within the system. So, it definitely shaped and impacted me to grow and commit to the system."
- "It made me want to stay with the VA as I was considering leaving right before I got into EVAL."
- "It made me want to participate more in other things that had something to do with helping our veterans."
- "I feel more committed after the program; I realized how much more potential there is out there in the VA system, other than what I was just looking at inside my own department, and I felt really encouraged to move forward and meeting other people."
- "I would say that it made me feel more committed to the organization for sure. And I really do think that these programs are absolutely essential to developing younger employees into roles of having more responsibility and leadership."
- "I just think it makes you a better employee when I say better; I don't mean, you know, you're more compliant. I just mean that you're actually more dedicated and you're more vested, you're more engaged and that in turn will always benefit our mission which is to serve our veterans."
- "Yes, I will definitely participate in another one in the future."
- "I think it expanded; I'll put it that way. My outlook expanded because I was able to see the organization on a different level."

The focus group participants concurred with the leadership development program's positive impact on organizational commitment.

So, I thought by sending people to programs and letting them become more familiar that they would, you know, be eager to learn the VA mission and apply it.

Turnover

Turnover and organizational commitment were the main factors of impact for this study. However, after data collection and analysis, the researcher determined that voluntary turnover is not considered a theme. All participants were asked if their leadership development program led them to consider terminating their employment with GCVHCS. Three out of 15 participants stated they have considered termination but not due to the outcomes of the leadership development program. Twelve participants said they have not considered terminating their employment with GCVHCS. When asked if they have considered turnover due to the program, the participants stated:

- "Yes, I have considered termination, but not because of the program. It's like I'm almost left to do work by myself, with no assistance, and it goes on like that for a while until it makes you feel burned out."
- "No, I have not considered any termination."
- "No, I haven't considered termination; that makes me want to stay even longer because that makes me feel like they do want you to be promoted and learn things, you know, because every job I had, we never had these types of programs."
- "No, never; I plan to stay here for the long haul."

- Participant ten stated she has had thoughts of termination, "they have absolutely nothing to do with the program. It would be for other reasons."
- "I have definitely haven't thought about it since I got out of that program a year and a half ago."
- "Yes, I have considered termination, but my thoughts of termination have nothing to do with the leadership development program but are centered around other issues of this organization."
- "Yes, it wasn't related to the program. It was related to management itself."

Since the researcher determined turnover was not a theme in this research study, the focus group was not asked about anticipated voluntary turnover.

Research Objectives and Theme Correlation

The interviews collected from 15 participants resulted in ten themes of leadership development program expectations and their influence on organizational commitment. The study identified themes that correlate with each research objective for this study (Table 7). Participant demographic information aligns with RO1, while RO2 explores the employees' perspectives regarding leadership development program expectations and their effects on organizational commitment. The researcher identified five themes: organizational assimilation, personal development, supervisor support, participation, and benefits. RO3 explores the relationship between employees' leadership development program expectations and organizational commitment. RO3 contains four themes identified by participants as career advancement, leadership development, follow-up, and ambivalence. RO4 identifies themes associated with leadership development program

expectations and their impact on anticipated organizational turnover. RO4 contains one theme identified by participants, enhanced organizational commitment.

Table 7 *Research Objectives and Corresponding Themes*

Research Objectives	Themes
RO1	Demographics (gender, age, leadership development program participation, years of employment)
RO2	Organizational Assimilation Personal Development Supervisor Support Participation Benefits
RO3	Career Advancement Leadership Development Follow-up Ambivalence
RO4	Enhanced Organizational Commitment

Summary

Participants shared their expectations and experiences as employees who participated in at least one leadership development program at GCVHCS. Emergent themes were developed by using one-on-one interviews, via Zoom, by analyzing the participants' expectations, level of organizational commitment, and perceptions of the programs. Participants shared that despite the lack of follow-up after the program completion, the leadership development programs were positive and assisted them with career advancement. All participants expected career advancement and personal development; for some, that expectation was not met, but they persisted for upward

mobility within the organization. Chapter V provides research findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSIONS

This study captured employees' expectations of leadership development programs and their influence on organizational commitment and anticipated employee turnover. Chapters I through IV discuss the background for the study, significance of the study, supporting literature, research methodology, and the data collection results. This chapter summarizes the research study and provides a synopsis of the results, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. This chapter also includes the implication for study limitations and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of leadership development program expectations on organizational commitment and anticipated voluntary employee turnover. A phenomenological qualitative research design using one-on-one semi-structured interviews and a focus group were used to collect data. The interviews explored the perceptions of GCVHCS employees regarding their leadership development program experience and its effect on organizational commitment. Purposive criterion sampling was used to recruit participants for this study by sending a recruitment email to employees using the leadership development program alumni email groups. The groups collectively have 123 members that have participated in one of the leadership development programs within the past ten years. The sample consisted of 15 individual participants and six focus group participants.

Chapter IV provides the results of the recruitment questionnaire that provided participant demographics, fulfilling RO1. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, which prompted discussions to identify the effects of their program

expectations on organizational commitment. Once collected, the data was analyzed using the IPA process guidelines. The perceptions captured in the interview transcripts fulfilled RO2, RO3, and RO4. The data analysis process resulted in five themes categorized as perspectives, including organizational assimilation, personal development, supervisor support, participation, and benefits. Furthermore, four themes emerged as expectations, including career advancement, leadership development, follow-up, and ambivalence. Lastly, one theme emerged as an impact on organizational commitment, enhanced organizational commitment.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The findings discussed in this section capture the perceptions of employees' leadership development program expectations and their effect on organizational commitment. The results align with existing literature and account for the participants' expectations of their leadership development program. The findings are also reflective of the suggestions provided by research participants during the data collection process and the researcher's interpretation of the results. The data analysis of this study led to three findings.

Finding 1. Follow-up with participants after leadership development programs is vital to GCVHCS employees who have participated.

According to participants, they would like to be asked to participate in mentoring, process improvement workgroups, events, etc. The employees assumed they would be utilized based on their leadership program alumni status once the program ended. In other words, they wanted an opportunity to put their new leadership skills to use. The focus group agreed with the expectation of follow-up once the program ended. However,

some focus group participants group participants expressed their lack of participation with assisting their employees as part of the follow-up process. Many of the research participants expressed their frustration with the lack of follow-up that occurred after the program.

Conclusion for Finding 1. As the organizational environment is rapidly changing, leaders are experiencing unexpected challenges (Abrell et al., 2011). To support leaders with managing these challenges, the need to develop influential leaders is critical (Abrell et al., 2011). According to Abrell et al. (2011), the lack of empirical evidence on leadership development program effectiveness has increased over the past few years (Abrell et al., 2011). Leadership development is considered a long-term process and is seldom evaluated empirically (Abrell et al., 2011). Therefore, it is unclear how long the effects of leadership development programs last due to the lack of follow-up (Abrell et al., 2011). For transformational leadership to occur, the impact of leadership development programs should last up to one year or longer (Abrell et al., 2011). However, without proper follow-up, the variation in time of the leadership development program effects is unclear (Abrell et al., 2011).

Recommendation for Finding 1. Develop a follow-up plan that encourages supervisor participation once the program has concluded. The leadership development program coordinators should be required to follow up with the leadership development students. Supervisors should also be required to continue the leadership development process by assisting and creating a professional development plan and provide opportunities for the employee to utilize their new skills. Also, all leadership development programs do not include mentorship. By offering the mentorship

component for all programs, this may assist with satisfying the desire for program follow-up. For example, several participants felt they were taught skills during their leadership development program that were not utilized in their work setting. It is recommended that ongoing mentorship is available to the program participants a minimum of two years post-completion. Supervisors should be required to participate in some type of leadership development program to provide a continuity of training and leadership.

Finding 2. Career advancement is a leadership development program expectation for employees.

Participants acknowledged the expectations they experienced upward mobility with their organization. Most of the individual participants were aspiring leaders at the time of their program participation. Therefore, they expected the program to assist with their career progression. The focus group participants also agreed they expected career advancement for their employees who participated. Although participants were fully aware the programs do not guarantee promotion, they still expected the program to meet their career goals.

While participants expressed the desire for career advancement due to leadership development program participation, participants also expressed ambivalence with their leadership development program experience. Many participants did not have any defined expectations but still pursued the program searching for career progression. Participants also stated the expectations for outcomes related to program participation existed due to it being their first time participating in a leadership development program.

Conclusion for Finding 2. Career advancement was viewed as a leadership development program expectation. A career advancement is not promised when

participating in a leadership development program; nevertheless, a psychological contract may develop. Rousseau (1989) defined psychological contracts as a collection of individuals' beliefs regarding the exchange agreement between themselves and their organization, including but not limited to terms and conditions. Psychological contracts shape the relationship between the employee and the employer (Alcover et al., 2016). Psychological contracts establish expectations between the employee and their organization that shape behavior; in this case, that behavior is participating in the leadership development program (Alcover et al., 2016). Psychological contracts are employee beliefs, expectations, and perceptions regarding the shared obligations between an employee and employer (Birtch et al., 2016). This mutual agreement is related to job satisfaction, organization commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Birtch et al., 2016). Study participants attribute career advancement as the desired expectation. Offering more internship programs that lead to career placement/advancement may remedy this issue. Although all participants did not experience career advancement due to the program, they still believe the programs can ensure success.

Recommendation for Finding 2. Transforming the organizational culture of what leadership looks like would provide a clear view of what leadership development programs should achieve. Several study participants expressed their disappointment with leadership development programs and outcomes related to their participation. Most participants assumed they would get a “preference” or “points” for completing a leadership development program. Leadership development programs are extensive and require extreme dedication. For example, the EVAL program lasts for six months and

consists of two eight-hour classes every month. This class also has travel requirements. Therefore, considering the invested time and skills gained during the classes, leadership development programs should be considered when past participants apply for new jobs. Also, offering more internship programs that lead to career placement would address this finding.

Finding 3. The programs do not affect anticipated voluntary employee turnover and employees are pleased with the leadership development programs.

Most perceived the leadership development program as positive. The participants reflected on several factors that provided them with a positive experience during data collection, such as networking, traveling, learning organizational structure, and interview skills. The organizational assimilation was beneficial for most of the participants. For example, learning more about the organization positively influenced the overall satisfaction with the programs. The research participants also discussed the positive effects on personal development they experienced during the programs. The focus group also concurred that they also noticed personal development in their employees after participating in their respective leadership development programs.

This satisfaction referred to in this finding also includes the notion that participants felt their immediate supervisors and service chiefs were supportive of their participation in the leadership development program. Supporting program participation helped to enhance the trust relationship between the employee and supervisor. The focus group participants expressed discussed their supportive approach to leadership development programs and discussed the benefits of promoting growth and development for employees. According to the individual and focus group participants, the leadership

development programs provide employees with beneficial information and skills. Skills such as networking, making formal presentations, and team building were a few aspects that were deemed helpful by the individual and focus group participants. All participants concurred they had not considered turnover due to the leadership development program. The programs enhanced their organizational commitment due to the opportunity to learn more about the organization.

Conclusion for Finding 3. Meyer and Allen (1984) defined organizational commitment as the psychological link between an employee and his/her organization. Study participants feel they are more connected to the organization since they have a better understanding of the organization. Organizational commitment indicates the employee's relationship with their organization and their degree of loyalty (Meyer & Allen, 1984). With that being said, it is possible the leadership development program's impact on organizational commitment determined the effect on anticipated voluntary turnover.

Recommendation for Finding 3. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the resources and skills they gained while participating in their leadership development program. Each class should include more HR-related information; since career advancement is an expectation for leadership development programs, more information should be provided to assist with the job application process. Program coordinators should also follow up with past leadership development program participants to gather feedback for future improvement. For example, past participants can provide valuable insight regarding what skills are helpful or lacking with the program.

Limitations of the Study

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), limitations of a study may significantly affect the interpretation of the findings in which the researcher cannot control. Three limitations occurred within this study.

The sample for this study consisted of GCVHCS employees that have completed one of the mentioned leadership development programs, ELITE, EVAL, or LDI, within the past ten years. The researcher used the purposive sampling technique during the recruitment process. Out of 123 possible participants, the researcher demographic questionnaire responses from 17 employees, of which 15 replied to schedule an interview. After conducting 11 interviews, saturation was reached. The generalization of results is at risk when limiting the research participants. Therefore, the results of this study may not reflect the views of larger organizations. Extending the invitation to participate in other surrounding VA Medical Centers may have offered a more diverse perspective.

Second, the researcher's lack of experience with qualitative data collection is a limitation. The researcher conducted two pilot tests prior to commencing data collection. The researcher received feedback from the pilot-test recipients and decided to proceed with the research instrument in its original format. However, the researcher became more comfortable with the interview questions and asking probing questions by the third interview. During the first two interviews, the researcher was uncomfortable asking probing questions due to the awareness of researcher bias. However, the researcher's confidence improved as data collection proceeded.

Lastly, the third limitation involved COVID-19 restrictions. Due to IRB limitations, the researcher was not allowed to practice any data collection in person. The pilot-test interviews helped refine the data collection process via Zoom. For example, after the pilot tests were conducted, the participants and researchers determined the interview was easier to follow if the participants could visually see the questions. Therefore, the researcher prepared a PowerPoint presentation to display the questions for individual interviews and focus group sessions. The researcher also experienced scheduling issues with the participants. Due required leave from work due to COVID-19 symptoms and/or exposure to the virus directly impacted the scheduled interview dates. For example, Participant six was rescheduled approximately three times due to COVID-19 issues. To prepare for any unforeseen issues, the researcher allotted extra time for the interview scheduling timeframe.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current research study only collected the expectations of leadership development programs and their effects on organizational commitment. GCVHCS is a government health care organization; therefore, research regarding leadership development program expectations in other industries, such as hospitality, banking, etc., could be conducted.

As noted in the participant demographics section, two out of 15 individual research participants were males. Researching the correlation between leadership development programs and gender also presents an additional opportunity for research. This leads to the possibility that different genders may have different views and/or attitudes regarding leadership development programs. Furthermore, analyzing veteran

status also presents more opportunities for research. The Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to hiring Veterans; therefore, veteran employment status is very prevalent within this organization. Therefore, researching leadership development program expectations for veteran vs. non-veteran status provides further opportunity for research.

Also, a study aimed at supervisor's expectations of leadership development programs could provide an alternative perspective on the subject. Understanding the employees' and supervisors' expectations of leadership development programs could help an organization possibly adopt a leadership style or model. For example, the focus group provided valuable input regarding the perception of leadership at GCVHCS. The focus group stated:

Leadership could consist of a leader, somebody that compels everybody else and leads them to the mission objective and completion of the objective, but I think, in reality, we have a lot of leaders, but their mission sometimes is different from other missions. So, you have a conflict. So, I think that we have a lot of great leaders. But if you're, if we're not on the same sheet of music or we're not moving towards that common goal, it can be a little discombobulated.

Discussion

Participants shared their experiences and perceptions of leadership development programs at GCVHCS and their influence on organization commitment. The recruitment process extracted responses from current GCVHCS employees. The researcher interviewed all participants who successfully scheduled their interviews to ensure diversity in participants and responses. Overall, the participants were pleased with their leadership development program experience. All participants willingly shared their

perceptions and expectations of the programs. Therefore, this study is a step in the right direction to improve leadership development programs by addressing employee expectations while developing a plan of action for a follow-up to ensure the skills gained during the program were used.

Both the individual participants and focus group participants were grateful for the opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions. As a current GCVHCS employee and past leadership development program student, the researcher related with many participants and was very optimistic and receptive to the different experiences. Despite personal experiences with this subject, the researcher remained objective throughout the data collection process. Moreover, when organizations offer leadership development programs, they must become more aware of these expectations to provide more avenues to cultivate their employees. This study proved that employees want to be leaders and want to learn to serve the organization better; however, the execution of these programs must match their demand to protect the organization's commitment level.

Organizations need to become more cognizant of expectations of employees once they complete the leadership development programs. These programs should be offered to sincerely develop employees who are aspiring to become leaders within the organization. If organizations intend to fully receive the benefits of human capital development, they must be strategic in maintaining the leadership development process. Leadership development programs should not be viewed as complete once the programs end but should be viewed as a continuous effort that is constantly evolving. The offered leadership development programs are simply the beginning of the transformation process and not the end of the process. It is the responsibility of the organization to not only

provide leadership development opportunities to their employees, but to also maintain an environment to cultivate those newly acquired skills. Therefore, a culture change must occur in order to implement a sustainable follow-up process.

Summary

This chapter provides a summary of the study along with interpretations of the results. The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of leadership development program expectations on organizational commitment and anticipated employee turnover. The research focused on perspectives and expectations of leadership development programs and their effects on organizational commitment. IPA guidelines were used to analyze data and reveal emergent themes. The participants cited organizational assimilation, personal development, supervisor support, participation, and benefits as perspectives. Participants also cited career advancement, leadership development, follow-up, and ambivalence as expectations. Lastly, an enhanced organizational commitment was noted as an impact on organizational commitment. After data collection and analysis, the researcher determined that voluntary turnover is not considered a theme. Verbatim narratives were reported from both the individual participants and focus group participants.

The researcher hopes this study's results, findings, and implications will be utilized in other industries. The researcher also hopes more developmental programs will come into fruition for employees that desire career advancement. This will allow organizations to be proactive and transform their employees into leaders while maintaining their mission. Furthermore, the reformation of leadership development programs could increase employee morale and retention.

APPENDIX A – VA Quality Improvement (QI) Project Approval

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: October 13, 2020

From: Chair, SLVHCS Institutional Review Board

Subj: Request for Preliminary Review of New Project
Title: *“Employees’ Unfulfilled Expectations of Leadership Development Programs and Their Effects on Voluntary Employee Turnover and Organizational Commitment”*

To: Kelly Woods, PhD, Chief, Quality & Performance Management, Project Supervisor, GCVHCS
Candace Johnson, Project Leader, GCVHCS

1. The request for a Preliminary Review of your above-referenced New Project was submitted to the SLVCHS IRB Chair and Associate Chief of Staff for review.
2. After careful review, it was determined that this project is not research. The activities described in your summary do not constitute research as defined in 38CFR16.102(d):

“Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.”
3. No further action is needed at this time, however, please note that if any changes are made to this project, these changes should be resubmitted to the SLVHCS IRB for review.
4. Any publications produced as a result of this project must be forwarded to the SLVHCS Public Relations Office for review prior to submission.
5. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administration Office, at (504) 507-2000, ext. 67275.

Ralph M. Schapira, MD electronic signature 10/15/2020

Ralph M. Schapira MD
IRB Chair

APPENDIX B – Dissertation Defense Approval

Thesis, Project, Dissertation, or Doctoral Project Proposal Approval Form

The University of Southern Mississippi
Graduate School
118 College Drive #5024 Hattiesburg, MS 39406

*This PDF form is fillable. Handwritten copies will not be accepted.
Completed forms should be submitted via email.*

Date: 8/6/20

Academic Level: Doctoral

School: Interdisciplinary Studies and Professional Development

Student Name (First, Middle, Last): Candace Johnson

Student ID: 647200

Student's Degree: Human Capital Development

Student's Emphasis: _____

All human subjects research conducted by Southern Miss faculty, students and staff requires *prior* approval by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is responsible for ensuring that proposed research meets the relevant federal and institutional standards and guidelines. All investigations and experiments involving human subjects in any way, regardless of funding source, must be reviewed and sanctioned by the IRB *before* beginning the research. Data collected before formal IRB approval is received may not be used under any circumstances. Upon approval, the IRB manager will send the principal investigator an approval letter from the IRB Chair electronically. Expect 3 – 4 weeks for approval from the time the form is submitted to the IRB by the school director.

Animals used in the University's research and educational activities must be treated humanely and in accord with widely accepted best practices and principles. Federal law requires prior review and approval of all activities involving live vertebrates by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

Will your research involve human subjects? Yes

Will your research involve animal subjects? No

Committee Member Names

Committee Member Signatures

Committee Chair: H. Quincy Brown

Signature: _____

Committee: Heather M. Annulis

Signature: _____

Committee: Dale L. Lunsford

Signature: _____

Committee: John J. Kmiec

Signature: _____

Committee: _____

Signature: _____

Committee: _____

Signature: _____

Graduate Director/Coordinator: H. Quincy Brown

Signature: _____

Date: 8/10/2020

Student's Signature: _____

Date: 8/11/2020

Updated August 2019

APPENDIX C – License Agreement



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Article Title	Shocks and final straws: Using exit-interview data to examine the unfolding model's decision paths	Publication Type	Journal
Author/Editor	UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN.	Start Page	25
Date	12/31/1971	End Page	46
Language	English	Issue	1
Country	United States of America	Volume	51

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Portion Type	Page	Rights Requested	Main product
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NEW WORK DETAILS

Title	Employees' Expectations of Leadership Development Programs and Their Effects on Anticipated Voluntary Employee Turnover and Organizational Commitment	Institution name	University of Southern Mississippi
Instructor name	Dr. H. Quincy Brown	Expected presentation date	2021-09-15

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

The requesting person / organization to appear on the license Candace Johnson

REUSE CONTENT DETAILS

Title, description or numeric reference of the portion(s)	Table 1 Prototypes Associated with the Unfolding Model's Decision Paths	Title of the article/chapter the portion is from	Shocks and final straws: Using exit-interview data to examine the unfolding model's decision paths
Editor of portion(s)	Kulik, Carol T.; Treuren, Gerry; Bordia, Prashant	Author of portion(s)	Kulik, Carol T.; Treuren, Gerry; Bordia, Prashant
Volume of serial or monograph	51	Publication date of portion	2012-01-25
Page or page range of portion	25-46		

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APPENDIX D – IRB Approval Letter

From: irb@usm.edu <irb@usm.edu>
Sent: Friday, August 28, 2020 1:34 PM
To: Candace Johnson <Candace.Green@usm.edu>; Hamett Brown <Hamett.Brown@usm.edu>; Sue Fayard <Sue.Fayard@usm.edu>; Michael Howell <Michael.Howell@usm.edu>; Jonathan Snyder <Jonathan.Snyder@usm.edu>
Subject: IRB-20-366 - Initial: Sacco Committee Letter- Expedited and Full

**Office of
Research Integrity**



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NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.
- Face-to-Face data collection may not commence without prior approval from the Vice President for Research's office.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-20-366

PROJECT TITLE: Employees' Unfulfilled Expectations of Workplace Learning Programs and Their Effects on Voluntary Employee Turnover and Organizational Commitment

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Human Capital Development

RESEARCHER(S): Candace Johnson, Hamett Brown

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Expedited

APPENDIX E – IRB Modification Approval Letter

From: Irbb@usm.edu <Irbb@usm.edu>
Sent: Monday, November 9, 2020 4:29:51 PM
To: Candace Johnson <Candace.Green@usm.edu>; Hamett Brown <Hamett.Brown@usm.edu>
Subject: IRB-20-366 - Modification: Modification - Expedited and Full

Office of
Research Integrity



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Modification Institutional Review Board Approval

The University of Southern Mississippi's Office of Research Integrity has received the notice of your modification for your submission Employees' Unfulfilled Expectations of Workplace Learning Programs and Their Effects on Voluntary Employee Turnover and Organizational Commitment (IRB #: IRB-20-366).

Your modification has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-20-366
PROJECT TITLE: Employees' Unfulfilled Expectations of Workplace Learning Programs and Their Effects on Voluntary Employee Turnover and Organizational Commitment
SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Human Capital Development
RESEARCHER(S): Candace Johnson, Hamett Brown

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: November 9, 2020

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald Sacco".

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

4

APPENDIX F – Recruitment Email

Title of Email- Quality Improvement Project Opportunity

Hi, my name is Candace Johnson, a PhD candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi in the Human Capital Development program. I am also a current employee of Gulf Coast Veterans Healthcare System (GCVHCS) in Biloxi, MS. I am researching employees' expectations of leadership development programs and their effects on organizational commitment and anticipated employee turnover. I am interested in hearing about your opinion of leadership development programs offered with this organization to help identify the factors that may or may not influence thoughts of organizational commitment and voluntary turnover.

I am extending an invitation to you for your participation to share your leadership development program experience(s) obtained while employed with GCVHCS. Your insights and experiences are valuable and could result in a positive change regarding the on the leadership development opportunities offered within this organization. I am asking you to share your leadership development program expectations and perceptions in a one-on-one interview setting using Zoom. This interview should take approximately 60 minutes. All responses and narratives will remain confidential.

If you are unfamiliar with using Zoom, contact the researcher (information provided below) for assistance.

Qualifications:

- A current employee of GCVHCS *and*
- Must have participated in **at least** one of the leadership development programs listed below:
 - Each Leader Individually Trained to Excel (ELITE)
 - Emerging VA Leaders (EVAL)
 - Leadership Development Institute (LDI)

After the interview has been conducted, as the researcher, I will contact you to briefly review the interview to ensure your perceptions were captured appropriately to reflect your intent. If you would like to be included in this research study, please click on the link below to answer a few screening questions; if selected, you will be contacted via email. **Again, all screening responses and interview responses will remain confidential.**


This research project has been reviewed by a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Executive Committee and was approved on August 28, 2020. The IRB number assigned to this project is IRB-20-366.

Please e-mail me at candace.green@usm.edu if you have any questions pertaining to the research study. Also, if you are interested, please complete the screening survey by [date]. I am deeply grateful for your time and consideration are both much appreciated.

Sincerely,
Candace Johnson
Ph.D. Candidate
Cell (228)223-6836
Candace.green@usm.edu

[Research Study- Leadership Development Perceptions](#)

APPENDIX G – Screening Survey



**THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI**

Q1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Q2. What is your age group?

- 18-25 years old
- 26-35 years old
- 36-45 years old
- 46-55 years old
- Over 55 years old

Q3. How many years have you been employed with Gulf Coast Veterans Healthcare System (GCVHCS)?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 years or more

Q4. Have you participated in either of the following programs?
Each Leader Individually Trained to Excel (ELITE)
Emerging VA Leaders (EVAL)
Leadership Development Institute (LDI)

- Yes
- No

Q5. If you answered yes to the previous question, did you participate in either of the aforementioned programs between the time frame of January 1, 2010 to January 31, 2020?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q6. For contact purposes, please provide your name, phone number and email address.



Survey Powered By [Qualtrics](#)

APPENDIX H – Reminder: Request for Participation/Announcement of Study

REMINDER:

Good Morning/Afternoon-

I hope you have previously received an e-mail invite requesting your participation in this research study. Please accept my gratitude, and delete this e-mail, as no further involvement is required at this time, if you have returned the completed questionnaire. If you have not completed the questionnaire and would like to participate, please consider and click on the survey link below.

The screening survey should take no longer than five minutes to complete. Your valuable participation will contribute towards describing leadership development program expectations and the possible effects on turnover and organizational commitment. I would greatly appreciate your consideration in helping with this vital research.

This questionnaire and interview responses are strictly confidential. The deadline to complete the questionnaire is [date].

This research project has been reviewed by a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Executive Committee and was approved on August 28, 2020. The IRB number assigned to this project is IRB-20-366.

Please review the original email below and click on the survey link below to begin the questionnaire. Again, thank you for your consideration and time to assist with this research study.

Sincerely,
Candace Johnson
Ph.D. Candidate
Cell (228)223-6836
Candace.green@usm.edu

[Research Study- Leadership Development Perceptions](#)

[Original Email]

Title of Email- Quality Improvement Project Opportunity

Hi, my name is Candace Johnson, a PhD candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi in the Human Capital Development program. I am also a current employee of Gulf Coast Veterans Healthcare System (GCVHCS) in Biloxi, MS. I am researching employees' expectations of leadership development programs and their effects on organizational commitment and anticipated employee turnover. I am interested in

hearing about your opinion of leadership development programs offered with this organization to help identify the factors that may or may not influence thoughts of organizational commitment and voluntary turnover.

I am extending an invitation to you for your participation to share your leadership development program experience(s) obtained while employed with GCVHCS. Your insights and experiences are valuable and could result in a positive change regarding the leadership development opportunities offered within this organization. I am asking you to share your leadership development program expectations and perceptions in a one-on-one interview setting using Zoom. This interview should take approximately 60 minutes. All responses and narratives will remain confidential.

If you are unfamiliar with using Zoom, contact the researcher (information provided below) for assistance.

Qualifications:

- A current employee of GCVHCS *and*
- Must have participated in **at least** one of the leadership development programs listed below:
 - Each Leader Individually Trained to Excel (ELITE)
 - Emerging VA Leaders (EVAL)
 - Leadership Development Institute (LDI)

After the interview has been conducted, as the researcher, I will contact you to briefly review the interview to ensure your perceptions were captured appropriately to reflect your intent. If you would like to be included in this research study, please click on the link below to answer a few screening questions; if selected, you will be contacted via email. **Again, all screening responses and interview responses will remain confidential.**

This research project has been reviewed by a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Executive Committee and was approved on August 28, 2020. The IRB number assigned to this project is IRB-20-366.

Please e-mail me at candace.green@usm.edu if you have any questions pertaining to the research study. Also, if you are interested, please complete the screening survey by [date]. I am deeply grateful for your time and consideration are both much appreciated.

Sincerely,
Candace Johnson
Ph.D. Candidate
Cell (228)223-6836
Candace.green@usm.edu

Research Study- Leadership Development Perceptions

APPENDIX I – Follow-up Email

[Recipient's name],

I appreciate your interest in participating in the research study about leadership development program expectations regarding organizational commitment and thoughts of voluntary turnover. The interviews for this study will be conducted using Zoom. If you would like to complete this interview during working hours, please make sure your supervisor approves the time utilized during your workday. The time needed for this interview should not exceed 60 minutes. Also, all responses, perceptions, and data gathered during this interview will be recorded and will remain confidential between the interviewee and the researcher.

The data collection method is flexible and can be conducted anytime on either weekdays or weekends.

Please reply to this email by [date] to indicate a convenient date/time to conduct the interview.

This research project has been reviewed by a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Executive Committee and was approved on August 28, 2020. The IRB number assigned to this project is IRB-20-366.

Again, I appreciate your interest in participating in this research study.

Sincerely,

Candace Johnson
Ph.D. Candidate
Cell (228)223-6836
Candace.green@usm.edu

APPENDIX J – Verbal Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT VERBAL SCRIPT

Today's date:
PROJECT INFORMATION
Project Title: Employees' Expectations of Leadership Development Programs and Their Effects on Anticipated Voluntary Employee Turnover and Organizational Commitment
Project Manager: Candace Johnson
Phone: (228)223-6836
Email: candace.green@usm.edu
School and Program: University of Southern Mississippi/School of Interdisciplinary Studies and Professional Development

I will explain various components of this research study. After each explanation, I will ask for your concurrence and understanding. Please provide a clear verbal response to each.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the perception of leadership development opportunities and how it affects your views of the organization.

Description of Study:

The interviews conducted for this study will aid in improving the understanding of what the employees expect from training/leadership development programs. During the interview, the employee will be asked if their desired training outcomes have any influence on their views about the organization.

The interview should not take more than 60 minutes.

Do you understand and agree with the the purpose and description of this study, and agree to the time dedicated to this study? Yes or No (Circle)

Benefits:

The participant will have an opportunity to share their perceptions (in a confidential manner) about the organization and training opportunities. Their stories may influence future policies concerning training and management opportunities.

Risks:

There are no known risks associated with this research study.

Do you understand and agree with the risks and benefits associated with this study? Yes or No (Circle)

Confidentiality:

All responses, narratives, and any identifiable information will remain confidential. Information obtained during this research project that could identify you as a participant in the study will not be divulged, published, or otherwise made known to organizational members or other unauthorized persons.

Alternative Procedures:

There are no alternative procedures associated with the current study.

Do you understand and agree with the confidentiality and alternative procedures associated with this study? Yes or No (Circle)

Participant's Assurance:

Results from investigational studies rely solely upon the participant; therefore, such results are not predictable. However, the researcher will utilize the best scientific practices and will adhere to every precaution. Participation in this project is voluntary, and the participant can withdraw at any moment without any repercussions.

This research project and consent form have been reviewed by a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Executive Committee and was approved on August 28, 2020. The IRB number assigned to this project is IRB-20-366. IRB ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5116, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601)266-5997.

Do you understand and agree that participation is voluntary, and the researcher will act in your best interest? Yes or No (Circle)

Do you have any questions?

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

As the participant, I hereby consent to participate in this research project. All research procedures and their purpose were explained to me, and I had the opportunity to ask questions about the procedures and their purpose. The researcher provided information about all expected benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts, and I was given the opportunity to ask questions about them. I understand my participation in the project is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty,

prejudice, or loss of benefits. I fully understand the extent to which my personal information will be kept confidential. I understand consent to allow any narratives and responses provided by me to be audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher. I also consent to the use of my direct quotations. As the research proceeds, I understand that any new information that emerges and that might be relevant to my willingness to continue participation will be provided to me.

Do you understand and agree with the consent statement and would like to continue with participation in this study? Yes or No (Circle)

Documentation of Verbal Consent to Participate in Research Study

<hr/> Name of Participant

Assigned Pseudonym: _____

The above-mentioned research participant has provided consent that all of their questions have been answered, and they are in agreeance to participate in this research study entitled *Employees' Expectations of Leadership Development Programs and Their Effects on Anticipated Voluntary Employee Turnover and Organizational Commitment*.

The participant has agreed to confidentially share their interview responses for research purposes only.

<hr/> Person Obtaining Consent	<hr/> Signature of Person Obtaining Consent <hr/> Date
-----------------------------------	---

APPENDIX K – Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date:

Interviewer: Candace Johnson

Interviewee: _____

Assigned Pseudonym: _____

Start time:

End time:

Interview Method: Zoom

Introduction: Hello, my name is Candace Johnson. You are participating in an interview to explore the perceptions of leadership development program expectations. As a participant, I encourage you to give in-depth responses and reflect on your participation in the workplace learning programs you have participated in at this facility and regarding your expectations of these programs. Also, reflect on if those expectations were met or not and whether or not that expectation has influenced your perception of your organization in any way. Please feel free to tell stories, give examples, and express whatever feelings come to mind; this interview is solely based on your perceptions. Therefore, in this interview – there is no such thing as a wrong answer.

If you began to feel uncomfortable, develop a lack of interest, or simply wish to no longer participate, you may discontinue the interview at any time. This interview will be recorded and later transcribed for data analysis purposes only. As a method to ensure validity, I will contact you once I have completed the transcript and provide you with a brief description to ensure your experiences/perceptions were captured accurately and in the manner in which you wanted the information to be obtained. All identifiers will be removed; therefore, anyone who reads the transcribed data will not be able to identify you as a participant.

Do you have any questions?

Do you understand the purpose of this interview?

Introductory Questions

- What made you consider participating in a leadership development program?
- Were you always interested in participating in a leadership development program?
- Which program(s) did you participate in?

1. Tell me about your employment experience working with Gulf Coast Veterans Healthcare System?
 - a. Experience with leadership development programs?

2. How do you feel about leadership and your supervisor within your organization regarding leadership development programs?
 - a. Are they supportive of these programs? How/or How not?

3. What were your perceptions and expectations of leadership development programs before participating, and what did you expect to get out of it?
 - a. What motivated you to participate?

4. What did you believe is/was the benefit of participating in a leadership development program?
 - a. Based on your current perception, would you participate in another one in the future? Why or why not?

5. Why do you think your supervisor allowed you to participate in the program?

6. How do you think participating in a leadership development program at this facility shaped or impacted your current level of organizational commitment?
 - a. Please provide examples.

7. Since you participated in the leadership development program(s), have you considered terminating your employment with this organization?

- a. If yes, were those thoughts of turnover directly related to the program?
Please explain.
8. What would you say to other employees about the leadership development programs?
9. Reflecting on your time spent in the leadership development program, please explain how you would rate your overall experience (positive or negative) and explain why you chose that rating.
10. What did you expect to get from the program? Did it happen?
11. What did you learn from your leadership development program(s); what skills did you gain?
 - a. If any, reflecting on those skills learned, did any of them have an on your commitment towards the organization?
 - b. Why or why not?
12. How has the program impacted your career?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share about your leadership development experience at GCVHCS?

That concludes the interview. Thank you so much for your time and participation.

APPENDIX L – Thank you Email/Member-Checking

Subject Line: Time Sensitive: Interview Transcript for Review

Dear Participant,

Thank you for allowing me to interview you on [date] to share your opinions on leadership development program expectations regarding organizational commitment and voluntary turnover. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your participation in this research study. Your honesty and willingness were critical in assisting with this research. Your input was valued and appreciated and could impact further development for opportunities within this organization. Sharing your perceptions and experiences may have helped to identify ways to improve leadership development programs for employees in the future.

During the interview introduction, I mentioned that you have an opportunity to review the final transcript to guarantee and to ensure your opinions are captured adequately and satisfy your intent. Please understand that no personal information, such as name, email, date of birth was recorded or transcribed., and therefore will not be disclosed.

Please review the attached interview transcript; if you would like to make any changes, please annotate those changes and return to me no later than [date]. If no response is received by the requested date, I will proceed and as if you are satisfied with the transcript.

Again, I appreciate your participation.

Respectfully,

Candace Johnson
Ph.D. Candidate
Cell (228)223-6836
Candace.green@usm.edu

APPENDIX M – Focus Group Email

Hi, my name is Candace Johnson. I am a PhD candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi in the Human Capital Development program. I am also a current employee of Gulf Coast Veterans Healthcare System (GCVHCS) in Biloxi, MS. I am researching the perceptions of leadership development program expectations and the possible correlation to organizational commitment and voluntary turnover. As a current supervisor, I am interested in hearing about your opinion of leadership development programs offered with this organization and why you may or may not have allowed your employees to participate in those programs. The referenced programs are as follows:

- Emerging VA Leaders (EVAL)
- Each Leader Individually Trained to Excel (ELITE)
- Leadership Development Institute (LDI)

I am currently conducting a research study and I would be honored to include your viewpoints in a focus group session to explore and discuss your perceptions of encouraging employees to utilize these programs. The focus group session will last no more than 60 minutes. If you are willing to participate, please reply to this email to confirm your attendance and provide responses to the following questions (copy and paste and add your response).

1. Gender:
2. Years of employment with GCVHCS:
3. Job title:
4. Have you approved at least one employee to at least one of the above-mentioned programs:

The focus group session will occur on [Day, Date, Time] via Zoom.

This research project has been reviewed by a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Executive Committee and was approved on August 28, 2020. The IRB number assigned to this project is IRB-20-366.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Candace Johnson
Ph.D. Candidate
Cell (228)223-6836
Candace.green@usm.edu

APPENDIX N – Focus Group Protocol

Date:

Interviewer: Candace Johnson

Start time:

End time:

Interview Method: Zoom

Hello everyone, I am Candace Johnson, a Ph.D. candidate. The title of my research study is *Employees' Expectations of Leadership Development Programs and Their Effects on Anticipated Voluntary Employee Turnover and Organizational Commitment*

The goal of this study is to explore and identify the perceptions of leadership development programs and their possible effects on organizational commitment and anticipated employee turnover. The focus group data will serve as a part of the validation strategy for the current research being collected.

The questions presented to you will concentrate on your personal experiences and perspectives as a supervisor who has allowed or encouraged at least one of their employees to participate in at least one of the leadership development programs offered by the organization. The findings from this study will be used to assist organizations in understanding the expectations and perceptions of leadership development programs that influence thoughts of employee turnover. The referenced programs are as follows:

- Emerging VA Leaders (EVAL)
- Each Leader Individually Trained to Excel (ELITE)
- Leadership Development Institute (LDI)

This focus group session should not exceed 60 minutes. With group permission, I will record our discussion to ensure everyone's perceptions are accurately captured. Also, I will be taking notes throughout the interview. The recordings are only used for transcription and analysis purposes only. The researcher will be the only individual with access to your responses and identifying factors. Therefore, everything discussed today is confidential. You will be acknowledged in the research study at the "focus group."

Please remember, your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

This research project has been reviewed by a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Executive Committee and was approved on August 28, 2020. The IRB number assigned to this project is IRB-20-366.

Before we begin, I will read the consent form and ask that each of you verbally agree one at a time.

Does anyone have any questions?

Focus Group Questions:

1. How long have you been in your current leadership role?
2. How would you define leadership at GCVHCS? What does it look like? Ideal vs. reality?
3. What did you expect to achieve by sending your employee(s) to participate in a leadership development program?
4. Do you think leadership development programs help/enhance employees? Why or why not? Also, have you noticed additional skills from your employees once they complete leadership programs?
5. Please share your thoughts on leadership program participation and being short-staffed? Opinions? Views? Past responses?
6. Have you participated in a leadership development program? If yes, when? And why or why not? And do you think supervisors/leadership should be required to participate in leadership development programs?
7. Have you ever noticed a change in organizational commitment once an employee has completed a leadership development program?
8. What approach do you suggest would be most effective for developing leaders at GCVHCS?

9. Based on what you know about the leadership development programs offered here, what would you most like to add or improve about these programs? And how can we evaluate the success of these programs?
10. Once an employee has completed a leadership development program, do you have higher expectations? Why or why not? Also, have you witnessed career advancement within your service due to leadership development programs?

Again, thank you for your time; your input is much appreciated.

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