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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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A Phenomenological Study Examining Job Embeddedness of Direct Support Professionals in
Community-Based Services Programs: Why Do They Stay?

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Athena M. Thomas

October 2023

Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated to my heavenly Father, who told me to continue my educational pursuit after I completed my master's degree. I'm grateful for the ability to hear God's voice and am humbled to have completed such a monumental and arduous task. I could not have finished in my own strength as I realize I cannot accomplish anything without your Spirit's leading and guiding. Thank you for the gift of writing and for restoring my life physically and emotionally so that I could believe in my abilities through you. This dissertation is the manifestation of Philippians 4:13, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (*New International Version*, 1978/2011).

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To my grandchildren, Preslie, Wesley, Steele, and Hunter, always remember that you can do anything you set your mind to do. Nothing is too hard as long as you seek God's wisdom, work consistently, and remain focused. My doctorate is dedicated to you to demonstrate the example of those things. I pray that you follow in my footsteps and rise to greater heights than I could ever imagine. May you always know that I am praying and rooting for you.

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Abstract

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) live in the community in apartments, group home settings, and host home environments. They need support in all aspects of adaptive living skills to live independently. Direct support professionals (DSPs) provide support in areas of grooming, oral hygiene, toileting, laundry, housekeeping, meal planning, meal preparation, medication administration, mobility, recreation, shopping, and grocery shopping. This qualitative phenomenological study examined why DSPs remain in the position despite experiencing low wages, inadequate benefits, lack of adequate training, and lack of opportunities for upward mobility. Using the theoretical framework of job embeddedness, this research was conducted to understand the lived experiences of DSPs working in home and community-based long-term care services. Purposive sampling of 10 DSPs allowed participants to engage in semistructured interview questions. The participants shared their experiences and responded to questions identified in the interview protocol. The procedures of initial coding and the Otter transcription service were utilized to transcribe the data. Four themes were identified, including love, joy, empathy, and service. The study provided unique perspectives on DSPs and their unwavering commitment to serve individuals with IDD. The study provides insights into how intrinsic values embed employees in their jobs and influence motivations to stay.

Keywords: Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), direct support professionals, community integration, home and community-based services, host home, job embeddedness, motivational perspective

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Most individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) need support to live independently. Direct support professionals (DSPs) work with individuals with IDD to help them function and succeed in all aspects of daily living, such as medication supervision, grooming, shopping, meal planning and preparation, money management, mobility, recreation, community inclusion, recreation, employment, and establishing meaningful relationships (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). Houseworth et al. (2020) affirmed that people born with disabilities might need help attaining skills to live independently with their families or in the community. DSPs are at the front line of ensuring that people with IDD are supported and have a quality of life essential to people with or without disabilities.

There is a high demand for DSPs to meet the increase of individuals with IDD desiring to live in the community in a noninstitutional setting (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). As a result of the high demand, direct support is one of the fastest-growing professions in the United States (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). However, the increased need for DSPs is outpacing the supply of available workers (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). According to Laws and Hewitt (2020), the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated in 2019 that by 2024,

There will be a 26% increase in the need for personal aids and a 38% increase in the need for home care aides, and a 48% increase in total demand (which includes DSPS as well as direct care workers who support the elderly and people with intellectual and physical disabilities. (Laws & Hewitt, 2020, p. 189)

The United States' President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities Report to the President (PCPID, 2017) affirmed that the direct support job is one of the highest needed two professions in the United States. The demand is caused by the increased life expectancy of

people with IDD, population growth, aging parents and primary caregivers, and the expansion of Medicaid waiver home and community-based services programs. Exacerbating the recruitment crisis is the frequent DSP turnover experienced by most individuals with IDD. Turnover is defined as an action that occurs after an employee has left a company or intends to leave a company in the near future (Daly & Dee, 2006; De Moura et al., 2009; Spath et al., 2013).

According to the National Core Indicators (NCI, 2019), 55% of DSPs leave their job in the first year, and 35% leave within the first 6 months of employment. Additionally, Bogenschutz et al. (2014) reported that the most recent rates for direct support professional turnover are 45% to 70% at some community-based organizations. The national average is approximately 40% (Bogenschutz et al., 2014). By contrast, the national average of other industries is 3.4% of total separations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). DSPs leave the field due to low wages, feelings of isolation from colleagues, lack of appropriate supervision, high incidents of injury, lack of sufficient training, and lack of upward mobility opportunities (NCI, 2019).

Training is an issue that needs to be addressed to increase retention amongst DSPs. According to Pettingell et al. (2022), training for DSPs is not provided systematically amongst IDD provider agencies. Training, career development, and national recognition of the DSP profession have been acknowledged as crucial issues related to retention, wages, and the profession in general.

The ongoing DSP crisis has detrimental effects on people with IDD (Hewitt et al., 2018). It lowers the quality-of-service delivery, places them at risk of harm, and adds to the significantly long waiting lists for community-based services (Friedman, 2018). People with IDD who experience significant turnover have more visits to the emergency room and more reports of

allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation (Friedman, 2020). In contrast, individuals who experience continuity of DSPs may have fewer injuries and emergency room visits. According to Friedman (2020), reducing DSP turnover not only is more likely to result in better care for people with IDD but also will prevent injuries and emergency room visits.

Additionally, abuse and neglect of people with IDD is a significant issue. People with IDD are more likely than nondisabled people and people with other disabilities to be victims of abuse, neglect, mistreatment, and exploitation (Baladerian et al., 2013). For example, Shapiro (2018) indicated people with IDD are seven times more likely to deal with sexual assault than nondisabled people. Additionally, people with IDD are at significant risk of harm due to a plethora of abuse and neglect possibilities, therefore, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Inspector General, Administration on Community Living, and Office for Civil Rights (2018) have determined that, incidences of abuse and neglect “are not isolated incidents but a systemic problem” (p. 3). Friedman (2018) indicated that the continuity of DSPs in long term services could help decrease occurrences of abuse and neglect.

Despite these challenges, 60% of the DSP workforce chooses to stay (Bogenschutz et al., 2014). People with IDD need well-trained DSPs to provide the necessary support to be engaged in all aspects of community living, including home, employment opportunities, family relationships, friendships, and exercising civic engagement (PCPID, 2017). Thus, determining why DSPs remain in the position is crucial to understanding how to eliminate the turnover crisis. Although extrinsic rewards influence employment decisions, some studies suggest intrinsic rewards such as motivation, hope, appreciation, self-efficacy, rewards, and value may increase job tenure (Dawson, 2007; Stone & Weiner, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

According to Bigby and Beadle (2018), improving staff is a prominent issue in the service industry for people with IDD. Furthermore, addressing this issue is necessary to evoke legislative changes in employee eligibility criteria and pay structures for direct support professionals (Hewitt & Larson, 2007). While there is abundant research on why high turnover for direct support professionals exists (Bogenschutz et al., 2015; Hewitt et al., 2018; Keesler & Troxel, 2020; Larson & Sedlezsky, 2015; Larson et al., 2016; Pettingell et al., 2019), there is a lack of research on why direct support professionals choose to remain in their jobs.

Johnson et al. (2021) found that there is limited knowledge about how direct support professionals feel about the current state of the workforce and what they need to remain in their jobs and be successful. Johnson et al. (2021) concluded that studies examining DSP perspectives and lived experiences of DSPs are rare. However, information is needed to develop strategies to help retain DSPs and stabilize the workforce for individuals with IDD.

Background and Need

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) need support to live independently. Direct support professionals (DSPs) work with individuals with IDD to help them function and succeed in all aspects of daily living, such as medication supervision, grooming, shopping, meal planning and preparation, money management, mobility, recreation, community inclusion, recreation, employment, and establishing meaningful relationships (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). Houseworth et al. (2020) affirmed that people born with disabilities might need help attaining skills to live independently with their families or in the community. DSPs are at the front line of ensuring that people with IDD are supported and have a quality of life essential to people with or without disabilities.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological study was to examine why DSPs remain in their job role as direct support professionals. The participants in the study were 10 direct support professionals who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in community-based group homes in Texas. The study's design using one-on-one interviews enabled me to uncover the motivations and reasons for participants' job embeddedness that may inform future retention efforts, job benefits, and recruitment efforts.

Significance to the Field

Direct support professionals leaving their jobs is problematic and detrimental to service delivery in the IDD industry. Families and provider agencies strive to retain DSPs so that individuals with IDD will have care providers to meet their needs. The future of service delivery depends upon hiring and retaining DSPs to work with people with IDD. The turnover rate is high in IDD services; however, a percentage of DSPs continue to work despite experiencing the same circumstances as the DSPs who leave (Bogenschutz et al., 2014).

Specifically, a percentage of DSPs remain in the position despite experiencing low wages, inadequate benefits, lack of training, and a lack of upward mobility (Bogenschutz et al., 2014). This study sought to understand DSP experiences and the dynamics that influence DSP retention. The study is significant because understanding the lived experiences of DSPs will help stakeholders increase retention amongst DSPs by developing best practices that can be implemented universally across provider organizations and with families of people with IDD. When a provider agency identifies why DSPs leave, policies, procedures, and strategies can be developed to influence DSP retention.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are DSPs' motivational perspectives for remaining in their job?

RQ2: What is the lived experience of DSPs relating to professional relationships at work in their job retention?

RQ3: What is the lived experience of DSPs relating to community connections on their intent to remain on the job?

RQ4: What is the lived experience of DSPs relating to intrinsic values on their intent to remain on the job?

Definition of Key Terms

Community-based settings. Non institutional settings that include three- or four-bed group homes, host homes, apartments, and family homes (Larson et al., 2016).

Community integration. Having access to and participating in activities and services available to everyone in the community, such as recreation, doctors, hospitals, restaurants, churches, and transportation (Larson et al., 2016).

Direct support professional (DSP). An employee whose primary job is training, supporting, and providing supervision to adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Hewitt et al., 2018).

Home and community-based waiver program (HCS). Texas Health and Human Services Commission provided the following definition:

HCS is a Medicaid waiver program that supplies services and supports to Texans with an intellectual disability (IDD) or a related condition so that they can live in the community.

HCS services are intended to supplement rather than replace services received from other programs, such as Texas Health Steps, or from natural supports, including families,

neighbors, or community organizations. HCS services consist of Residential services, Group homes, Host home/ companion care, Respite services, Day Habilitation, Employment services, Nursing services, Dental services, Behavioral support, Supported home living (transportation), Social work, Occupational therapy, Physical therapy, Speech therapy, Dietary services, Audiology services, Cognitive rehabilitation services (services for people with brain injury), Accessible minor home modifications, Adaptive aids, and Transition assistance services. (Texas Health and Human Services Commission, 2021, para. 3)

Host home. Texas Health and Human Services Commission provided the following definition: “Home program. However, because service is provided in the caregiver's own home, Host Homes often provide a more informal, caring atmosphere” (Texas Health and Human Services Commission, 2021, para. 2).

Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). A disorder originating during the developmental period that is characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning (i.e., general mental capacity such as learning, reasoning, and problem-solving, and adaptive behavior, i.e., conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013).

Job embeddedness. is defined as a "broad constellation of influences on job retention" (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 201).

Motivational perspective. refers to reasons for remaining in the role of a DSP linked to their intrinsic values associated with their perspective of organizational fit, commitment to assisting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the fulfillment of their work that positively affects their personal lives (Hensel et al., 2015; Mitchell & Lee, 2001).

Summary

In summary, the introduction of this chapter provided a discussion of the background of DSPs and the 30-year crisis of turnover in IDD services. Additionally, the introduction discussed the ways in which DSP turnover impacts people with IDD. This chapter addressed the problem statement, background, purpose statement, and the significance of the problem to IDD services. Definition of terms were established as they relate to research questions guided by the theoretical framework, job embeddedness.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review provides a comprehensive review of the subjects that influence DSP turnover in the IDD industry. The chapter also provides a description of the care needs of IDD individuals, IDD services, and the requirement for DSPs. To help explain the reason the DSP crisis has existed for more than 30 years, this chapter provides explanations about the changes in the service design from institutional care to community-based services for people with IDD. This chapter also addresses the inequities in wages, benefits, and opportunities for advancement and their effect on DSP turnover and retention efforts.

The literature review provides a theoretical framework to understand constructs that influence on-the-job and off-the-job connectedness between employees and employers. The literature review expands on key concepts related to the theoretical construct including fits, links, and sacrifice. The literature review covers (a) the IDD industry's need for DSPs, (b) the theoretical framework of job embeddedness, (c) the IDD service model, (d) DSP turnover topics, and (e) DSP retention influencing strategies.

Individuals With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) need support to live independently. Direct support professionals (DSP) support individuals with IDD to help them function and succeed in all aspects of daily living, such as medication supervision, grooming, shopping, meal planning and preparation, money management, mobility, recreation, community inclusion, recreation, employment, and establishing meaningful relationships (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). Houseworth et al. (2020) affirmed that people born with disabilities might need help attaining skills to live independently with their families or in the community. DSPs are at the front line of ensuring that people with IDD have a quality of life. There is a high demand for

DSPs to meet the increase of individuals with IDD desiring to live in the community in a noninstitutional setting (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). As a result of the high demand, direct support is one of the fastest-growing professions in the United States; more than 4.5 million people work as DSPs providing services to adults and children with IDD (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). However, the increased need for DSPs is outpacing the supply of available workers (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). According to Laws and Hewitt (2020), the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated in 2019 that by 2024,

There will be a 26% increase in the need for personal aids and a 38% increase in the need for home care aides, and a 48% increase in total demand (which includes DSPS as well as direct care workers who support the elderly and people with intellectual and physical disabilities. (Laws & Hewitt, 2020, p. 189)

People with IDD need well-trained DSPs to provide the necessary support to be engaged in all aspects of community living, including home, employment opportunities, family relationships, friendships, and exercising civic engagement (PCPID, 2017). Thus, determining why DSPs remain in the position is crucial to understanding how to eliminate the turnover crisis. Although extrinsic rewards influence employment decisions, some studies suggest intrinsic rewards such as motivation, hope, appreciation, self-efficacy, rewards, and value may increase job tenure (Dawson, 2007; Stone & Weiner, 2001).

People with IDD live in a myriad of settings of their choice based on the amount of help they need to function as independently as possible (Bogenschutz et al., 2014). Individuals can choose to live in their own apartment, family home, group home, or foster care arrangement. In the past, there were limited options for people with disabilities; they could live in institutional

care or remain in the family home if the family was capable of providing the care (Keith & Keith, 2020).

DSPs leave the field due to low wages, feelings of isolation from colleagues, lack of appropriate supervision, high incidents of injury, lack of sufficient training, and lack of upward mobility opportunities (NCI, 2019). The ongoing DSP crisis has detrimental effects on people with IDD (Hewitt et al., 2018). It lowers the quality-of-service delivery, places people with IDD at risk of harm, and adds to the significantly long waiting lists for community-based services (Friedman, 2018). Despite these challenges, 60% of the DSP workforce chooses to stay (Bogenschutz et al., 2014).

Job Embeddedness

The theoretical framework for this study is the job embeddedness theory created by Mitchell et al. in 2001 (as cited in Hom et al., 2017). Mitchell et al. (2001) developed the framework to understand what influences job retention. Mitchell and his colleagues noted that historically, studies focused on why employees leave jobs. The customary answer was that employees did not like their jobs and had other employment opportunities (Lee et al., 2004). The answer to why people stayed provided an opposing response; employees indicated they had job fulfillment, organizational commitment, and job immersion.

According to Lee et al. (2014), these concepts have subjugated turnover research for many years. Mitchell and colleagues concentrated less on affect and affect-dominated concepts such as satisfaction, commitment, and involvement. By contrast, according to Lee et al. (2014), Mitchell and colleagues (2001) focused more on contextual effects that impact staying such as the extent that an employee feels stuck in the job based on connecting forces such as links, fits and sacrifices within the organization and the employee's local community.

Consequently, Mitchell et al. (2001 as cited in Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006) defined the job embeddedness theory as:

a key mediating construct between specific on-the-job and off-the-job factors and employee retention. It focuses on the affective and non-affective reasons underlying why a person would stay on the job. People can become embedded in many different ways; thus, the strength of attachment derived from the different sub-dimensions will vary. Moreover, how shocks might be deflected or dampened might vary across people. For these reasons, like Mitchell et al. (2001), we are most focused on the effect of the overall level of embeddedness rather than specific sub- dimensions of embeddedness. (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006, p. 455)

Creators of the theory were motivated to address job retention from a different perspective because research mainly focused on why people leave their jobs (Mitchell et al., 2001). According to Lee and Mitchell (1994), few studies have examined why people stay in their jobs. Lee et al. (2014) affirmed that studies need to examine factors influencing people's decision to stay at their jobs. Mitchell et al. (2001, p. 201) defined job embeddedness as "a broad constellation of influences on job retention." Therefore, the job embeddedness theory focuses on why people stay in their jobs rather than leave.

Two research-related ideas help explain job embeddedness theory: embedded figures and field theory (Lewin, 1951). According to Lewin (1951), embedded figures are part of a psychological test embedded in the backgrounds of the figure. Embedded figures are attached to their backgrounds because they are difficult to detach; thus, they become part of their surroundings (Lewin, 1951). Field theory denoted a similar vision and purported that all humans have a life space where their lives are represented and connected (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Life connections do not have a predetermined pattern; they can be close or loosely connected relationships (Mitchell et al., 2001). Job embeddedness theory pulls from these ideas and acts as a proverbial web where a person can become attached or committed to staying on the job (Mitchell et al., 2001). According to Ng and Feldman (2012), employees with colleagues or superiors who are embedded are less likely to be inclined to quit. Having a leader an employee trusts and enjoys is very embedding (Lee et al., 2014). Additionally, the decision to stay or remain in a job is influenced by whether an employee sees himself increasing or decreasing in embeddedness (Lee et al., 2014). Lee et al. (2004) indicated that certain jobs embed a person in the job, influencing them not to leave. Jobs that provide community links and organizational links affect job embeddedness at a high rate.

Mitchell et al. (2001) suggested that a person with a high level of job embeddedness has many undistinguishable links close together; however, the parts of the net or web can vary. Thus, a person can be embedded differently (Mitchell et al., 2001). There is a correlation between employees and coworkers who remain in the job and job embeddedness (Steindórsdóttir et al., 2020). Several studies have affirmed that job embeddedness is a critical factor in explaining voluntary turnover (Allen et al., 2016; Jiang et al., 2012; Sender et al., 2018), and presents a variance beyond job satisfaction and commitment (Mitchell et al., 2001). Additionally, Giosan et al. (2005) found that to enhance embeddedness; employers should focus on increasing perceived organizational and supervisor support. Additionally, Giosan et al. (2005) found that to enhance embeddedness; employers should focus on increasing perceived organizational and supervisor support. Employers should also encourage employees to participate in organizational benefits programs and provide training opportunities to increase job embeddedness (Giosan et al., 2005). According to Holtom and Inderrieden (2006), managers need to understand the extent that their

employees are embedded in the organization to design and execute effective job embeddedness strategies. Wheeler et al. (2010) found that while participants who perceive effective human resource management (HRM) practices and high-quality LMX relationships report the highest levels of on-the-job embeddedness (JE), the participants reporting lower-quality LMX relationships but high levels of HRM effectiveness experience the largest increase in on-the-JE.

Furthermore, Steindórsdóttir et al. (2020) suggested that employees who become more embedded are more likely to experience positive outcomes at work, have a better fit with the organization, have stronger links to other employees, and have more to sacrifice if leaving. The more strands' employees have to create the web, the more embedded they will be. Strands can be a person's work relationships, project commitments, or emotions connected to not wanting to disappoint people (Gibbs & Duke, 2021).

In summary, according to Holtom and Inderrieden (2006),

The critical aspects of job embeddedness are the extent to which the job is similar to or fits with the other aspects in their life space, the extent to which the person has links to other people or activities, and the ease with which links can be broken - what they would give up if them up. (p. 438)

The links, fit, and attachment constructs are interwoven and work together through the job embeddedness construct; they have distinctive theoretical methods that account for their outcomes (Holtom & Darabi, 2018). Understanding the terminology such as links, fit, and attachment of the job embeddedness theory is essential to comprehend the theory.

Links

According to Gibbs and Duke (2021), employees can become attached to their jobs and the community. The attachments are referred to as links (Gibbs & Duke, 2021). Links are

"formal or informal connections an individual has with other individuals or groups either on or off the job" (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 216). Links have a varied level of significance, contact frequencies, and network positions. (Lee et al., 2014). The job embeddedness theory asserts that numerous threads link an employee and their family socially, psychologically, and financially in a web that includes work and nonwork friends, alliances, the community, and the physical setting where they are located. The higher the number of links between the person and their web, the more likely they are to stay in a job (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Community links may also affect a person's decision to stay because relationships with family members and close friends influence decision-making (Lee et al., 2014). Certain people influence links; thus, who the link is impacts embeddedness (Lee et al., 2014). Furthermore, Lee et al. (2014) affirmed that off-the-job links such as an employee's friends, church affiliation, social clubs, or sports participation also impact embeddedness. Thus, the more links a person has to the organization and in the community, the more likely they are to remain even if they do not like the job for other reasons (Qing et al., 2018). For example, an employee who develops relationships with coworkers and is an active participant in society and community charities has multiple links to the organization and is more likely to stay in the job (Qing et al., 2018).

Fit

The compatibility with the job and the community is called fit, and the level at which the employee gives up things if they leave the job is sacrifice. Mitchell and Lee (2001) defined fit as "an individual's compatibility with their work and non-work setting and sacrifice as the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeiting leaving a job" (p. 218). Fit is a mental belief and not an emotional response. According to the job embeddedness theory (Mitchell et al., 2001), employees evaluate their values, career goals, and future plans to

determine if they fit the organization's culture and the requirements of their immediate profession. The employee's job knowledge, skills, and abilities play a role in determining fit.

Moreover, employees consider how well they fit the community and neighboring environment. According to Mitchell et al. (2001), fit at the community level is described as an employee's connection to where they live as identified through one or numerous items such as culture, location, or environment. Qing et al. (2018) indicated the better a person is fit with their job, the less likely they are to quit. Thus, increasing employee "fit" aids in employee retention and increases overall tenure amongst employees.

Companies can increase fit amongst employees starting with the onboarding process by hiring people who align with the organization's culture, missions, and goals (Qing et al., 2018). Holtom and Darabi (2018) indicated the importance of fit in determining why employees' stay should not be undervalued, especially amongst millennial workers. Studies indicated that millennials are not influenced by paychecks and benefits alone (Holtom & Darabi, 2018). Rather, they need to be connected to their work by participating in valuable work.

Giosan et al. (2005) further noted that an employee who perceives fewer job alternatives has a higher probability that they will exhibit high fit and recognize that leaving the organization requires a more significant sacrifice. However, an employee's values and norms must be aligned with the company to generate a significant organizational fit (Gibbs & Duke, 2021). Employers can use assessment methods such as realistic job descriptions and situational tests to help choose employees' propensity to fit in the organizational culture (Qing et al., 2018).

Managers can increase employees' perceived fit with the organization by providing decision-making opportunities. According to Qing et al. (2018), employees are more likely to remain with a company where they are involved in goals they help establish. Organizations can

also enhance fit amongst employees by assisting employees in meeting their long-term career goals through training and advancement opportunities that support individual and organizational outcomes (Simpson et al., 2015).

Sacrifice

Mitchell and Lee (2001) defined sacrifice as “the perceived cost of material or psychological benefit that may be forfeited leaving a job” (p. 218). Sacrifice occurs when an employee relinquishes their managerial or psychological support when they leave an organization (Qing et al., 2018). For example, as a result of leaving an organization, an employee may experience personal losses such as future opportunities for advancement, losing contact with friends, losing prestige as a tenured employee, and losing contact with valued customers. The more things an employee feels they will have to give up when leaving, the more difficult it will be for them to separate from the organization (Shaw et al., 1998).

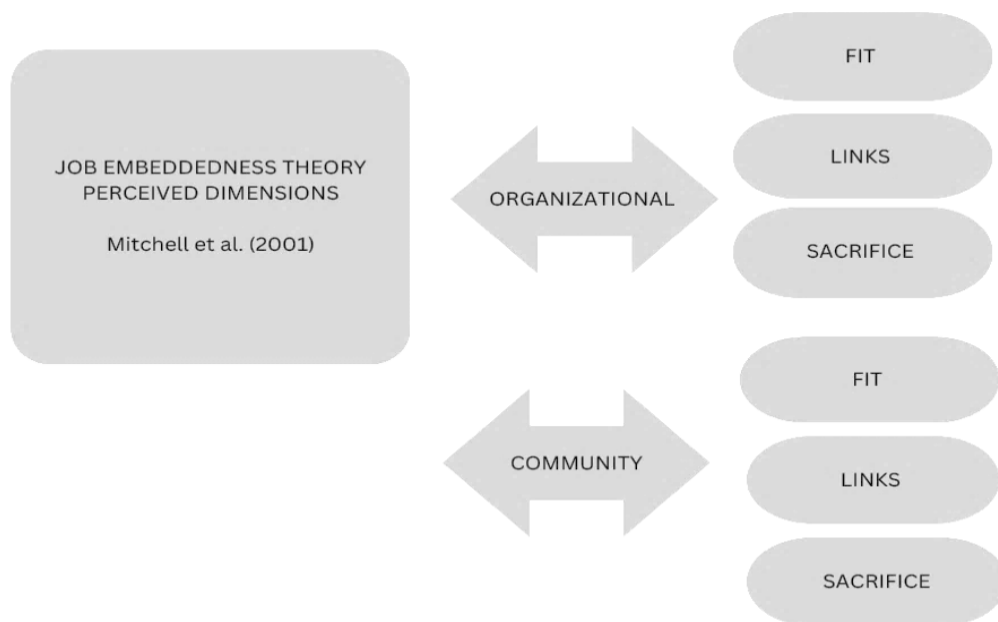
Examples of things an employee may have to give up include nontransferable benefits like stock options or agency-prescribed pensions (Shaw et al., 1998). If employees perceive they have high benefits in the organization, they may choose to stay even if they have other issues with the organization (Qing et al., 2018). For example, if employees feel they are sacrificing a competitive salary or bonuses and a lucrative benefits package, they will stay (Qing et al., 2018). According to Mitchell et al. (2001), an employee might find comparable salary and benefits; however, a sacrifice may still exist in the time and costs related to switching plans.

Similarly, employees may find it difficult to leave a community where they are highly involved in local organizations (Shaw et al., 1998). Employees may remain on a job because they enjoy where the employer is located, the local community, and its amenities (Holtom & Darabi, 2018). Employees may also maintain their employment with a certain job because their children

are in good schools (Holtom & Darabi, 2018). According to Qing et al. (2018), with the job embeddedness theory, organizations can boost retention by increasing the sacrifices an employee has to consider when leaving the job. Figure 1 illustrates the linkages associated with job embeddedness.

Figure 1

Job Embeddedness



On the Job Embeddedness

According to Ng and Feldman (2007), there are different types of embeddedness: on the job and organizational embeddedness. Based on the differences, it is plausible that an employee may be embedded in one area and not in another (Hom et al., 2017). An employee may be embedded in the organization because of fits to the mission and vision and links to different departments and levels of authority. Employees may also be embedded because of benefits including vacation, sick leave, and medical insurance.

However, simultaneously an employee may not be embedded because they dislike the work culture, have limited links to work relationships and would give up a few incentives such as having a private parking space (Hom et al., 2017). Ng and Feldman (2007) contended that employees who are favorably embedded in an organization might leave if the employer promotes them to a job they do not like or to a job they do not do as well.

Occupational Embeddedness

Occupational embeddedness is "the totality of forces embedding incumbents in their occupational field. This form of embeddedness differs from on-the-job embeddedness as incumbents embedded in their profession may leave a job or workplace to advance their professional competency" (Feldman & Ng, 2007, p. 125). Occupational embeddedness describes distinctive variations in performance, counterproductive work activities, and creativity exceeding organizational embeddedness. Feldman and Ng (2007, as cited in Hom et al., 2017) adopted Mitchell et al.'s (2001) original job embeddedness elements. They noted that people are embedded in jobs through "fit-satisfying occupational demands, links-involvement in professional societies, and sacrifice-forsaking human capital investments by leaving the occupational field" (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 125).

Leader Member Exchange Theory & Organizational Job Embeddedness

Leader member exchange (LMX) theory is developed based on a supposition that leaders form bonds of varying qualities with their subordinates (Harris et al., 2011), Research indicates there is a positive relationship between job embeddedness and LMX theory and one researcher indicated LMX is a predictor of organizational job embeddedness (Harris et al., 2011). LMX engagements provide resources to subordinates (Harris et al., 2011). As a result of receiving the

resources, the subordinates are embedded to the job and committed to organizational outcomes (Harris et al., 2011).

According to Harris et al. (2011), LMX is a work-related source of support that is crucial to creating job embeddedness. Supervisors exchange resources with subordinates providing mental, emotional, or monetary resources in exchange for subordinate performance (Harris et al., 2011). Additionally, leaders use their influence with subordinates to embed them in the job by promoting organizational goals. Leaders who are able to impact follower commitment boost what Mitchell (2001) referred to as person-firm fit. By establishing person-firm alliances, leaders help followers establish stronger job retention links. Feldman and Ng (2007) purported that this exchange is connected to job embeddedness that leads to an increase in job retention amongst leaders and subordinates. The LMX relationship expedites the development of fits and links that connects subordinates to the organization and the sacrifice the employee will experience if they leave their job (Feldman & Ng, 2007).

Direct Support Personnel

DSPs have many titles, including personal care aides, direct support aides, and caretakers (Hewitt & Larson, 2007). They provide essential services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to help them with activities of daily living. According to Bogenschutz et al. (2014), DSPs are the backbone of long-term care services and supports (LTSS) for people with IDD in the United States. DSP job duties include assisting with eating, grooming, housekeeping, laundry, medication administration, shopping, transportation, developing socially valued behaviors, community living, crisis intervention, managing finances, communication, recreation, and community integration (Bogenschutz et al., 2014; Hasan, 2013; Hewitt & Lakin, 2001; Hewitt & Larson, 2007; Hewitt et al., 2008; National Direct Service Workforce Resource

Center, 2013). DSPs are interdisciplinary professionals who "develop and implement strategies to teach people with IDD new skills, administer treatment, document care, communicate with medical professionals, assess needs, implement specific treatment plans, and document progress" (Laws & Hewitt, 2020, p. 189). DSPs work in a variety of community-based settings, including group homes, apartments, nursing homes and IDD family homes (Bogenschutz et al., 2014).

IDD Service Model

The service model for IDD services has changed drastically over the last 50 years. Between 1880 and 1967, it was common for infants born with IDD to be relegated to live in institutional care and be considered less than human (Keith & Keith, 2020). Having a disability was considered a defect, and the church and society viewed people with IDD as "feeble-minded or idiots" (Keith & Keith, 2020, p. 9). These labels caused people with IDD to be ostracized and kept away from their family and friends, limiting their engagement with people without disabilities. People with limited contact with individuals with IDD tended to perpetuate the stereotype of individuals with IDD being defective and having limitations they could not overcome (Keith & Keith, 2020).

The residential model has also changed as more people desire to move out of institutional settings. The number of people living in smaller residential models continued to decrease. By 2014, 662,691 (57%) of individuals with IDD lived in a family member's home and 251,699 (22%) lived in a host home or foster care arrangement (Qian et al., 2015). A smaller number of individuals, 127,837 (11%), lived in group homes with four to six people (Qian et al., 2015). The number of people living in facilities with seven or more people declined from 227,380 to 98,821 (Larson et al., 2016).

The present-day thought and services seek to help people with IDD have better lives by providing support that promotes full participation in the conventional aspects of their community (Keith & Keith, 2020). Supporting people with IDD in their communities requires the workforce to have a sufficient number of DSPs to ensure services are not at risk of being disrupted. However, IDD professionals ponder whether there will be enough DSPs in the future to meet the needs of the individuals with IDD because DSP turnover is a crisis that has existed for more than three decades (Friedman, 2018).

IDD Service Model Transition for Institutional Care to Community Based Services

Employee Turnover

The greatest valuable resource of employer organizations is committed and motivated employees. However, employee turnover has imposed on organizations irreparable expenses and adverse outcomes to companies (Aria et al., 2019). Employee turnover is problematic in healthcare as the need for services exceeds the number of available workers. The demand is outpacing the supply as the vacancy rates for full-time and part-time positions are 18% and 12%, respectively (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). Thus, the fundamental objective of many healthcare organizations is to reduce or eliminate turnover (McCole et al., 2012). Employee turnover occurs when an employee terminates their employment with a company or intends to leave in the very near future (Hillman & Foster, 2011; McCole et al., 2012).

Employee turnover occurs when an employee leaves a position. Employee turnover is costly; hiring and training new employees and employees choosing to leave place more stress on the remaining employees to complete job duties (Wright, 2021). DSP employee turnover is more frequent than in other industries, as 55% of DSPs leave their job within the first year, and 35% leave within the first six months (NCI, 2019). DSPs leave their jobs for many reasons, including

the problems associated with the job, personal reasons, and other causal factors (Laws & Hewitt, 2020).

Lack of Managerial Support. Studies indicate that a lack of support from managers influences turnover more than any other factor (Hussein, 2017). In a qualitative study of child welfare workers in the United States, poor support from managers and leaders was a more influential factor in determining DSP decisions to leave than any other reason (Griffiths & Royse, 2017). In other related industries, such as nursing, employees who planned to leave reported less support from people in managerial positions (Hewko et al., 2015). The lack of managerial support is among the leading factors for DSPs not remaining in the profession. Other causes of DSPs not staying on the job include low wages, lack of adequate training, and insufficient benefits (Friedman, 2018).

Wages. DSP wages are close to the minimum wage in most of the country. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), DSP wages seldom exceed \$7.25 per hour minimum wage. Wages are regularly identified as one of the most critical influences on staff retention (Hussein, 2017; Moriarty et al., 2018). Low wages are also one of the primary reasons for the high DSP turnover rate of 30% to 70% and national and international recruitment challenges (Bogenschutz et al., 2014; Firmin et al., 2019; Hasan, 2013; Hewitt & Lakin, 2001; Hewitt & Larson, 2007; Hewitt et al., 2008; Micke, 2015; Taylor, 2008; Wolf-Branigin et al., 2007).

States cannot ensure a quality level of support for individuals with IDD by continuing to provide near-poverty-level salaries for DSPs (Friedman, 2018). Due to low wages and a lack of adequate benefits, DSPs often are recipients of government assistance for housing, food, and healthcare (Bogenschutz et al., 2014; Hewitt et al., 2008). Hewitt et al. (2018) affirmed that more than half of DSPs depend on government assistance because they cannot afford basic living

expenses. Firmin et al. (2019) indicated salary and insurance benefits had the most impact on DSPs' job satisfaction and longevity. Qing et al. (2018) noted organizations could increase sacrifice in job embeddedness by ensuring wages exceed industry averages. However, according to Houseworth et al. (2020), although increasing wages is necessary, addressing additional factors affecting why DSPs stay and why they leave could help identify areas of improvement for this vital issue.

Lack of Benefits and Upward Mobility. Most provider agencies struggle to provide medical insurance and retirement benefits to DSPs. According to Pettingell et al. (2022), because of the cost of the premiums, health insurance is a benefit that long term care providers are challenged with providing to DSPs. The number of employers that provide retirement benefits vary significantly amongst provider agencies depending on the state. For instance, 16% provider agencies offered retirement benefits to DSPs in Florida (Pettingell et al., 2022). However, in South Dakota, retirement benefits were offered by 100% of the provider agencies (Pettingell et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the lack of professional recognition and limited education requirements of DSPs adversely affects advancement opportunities. Most DSPs only need a high school diploma, a driver's license and be able to pass a background check to work in the position (Larson et al., 2016). Pettingell et al. (2022) affirmed the DSP profession is undervalued and the lack of access to progressive opportunities is a clear indicator of the underappreciation of the DSP workforce.

Lack of Training. A lack of staff training plays a significant role in retaining DSPs to meet the needs of individuals with IDD. There is a lack of staff training for employees responsible for supporting individuals with IDD (Friedman, 2021; Wark et al., 2014). Some states have specific standards for training; however, only a few states have consistent training

guidelines (Hasan, 2013). Thus, there is a lack of consistency, and long-term care providers are often required to determine DSP training needs and develop corresponding training tools (Hasan, 2013, Hewitt & Lakin, 2001).

Wilkinson et al. (2005) affirmed that training for direct care staff is a significant element for people with IDD to age in the communities where they live successfully. Fahey-McCarthy et al. (2009) noted that DSPs were generally untrained in aging, dementia support, and palliative care. Furthermore, Wark et al. (2014) acknowledged that training for DSPs is insufficient in health management, equipment usage, quality of life, and mental health.

The lack of DSP training adversely affects individuals with IDD. Their health and safety are jeopardized, and community inclusion opportunities are diminished (Friedman, 2018). For example, according to Britton Laws et al. (2014), one of the primary reasons people with IDD remain at home with their parents is trepidation that staff are not prepared to handle risks. A study in Ireland revealed that DSPs indicated a lack of training and subsequent knowledge related to managing complex issues for individuals with IDD resulted in adverse outcomes such as being moved from community-based services to hospitalization or institutional care (McCarron et al., 2005). Toogood et al. (2016) reported that staff attitudes, management habits, and staff training affect levels of community engagement of people with IDD.

Furthermore, when staff are not appropriately trained, Baladerian et al. (2013) indicated individuals with IDD are more at risk of abuse and neglect. Additional risk factors caused by lack of training are more injuries of people with IDD, including falls, medication errors, lack of monitoring of seizure activity, and lack of monitoring of maladaptive behaviors (Hsieh et al., 2012). The risk factors are attributed to societal stigmas towards people with IDD, exposure to numerous caregivers, and communication challenges (Fisher et al., 2016).

Wark et al. (2014) affirmed that community-based training courses are a way for DSPs to gain a greater understanding of the health issues of people with IDD, such as dementia and diabetes. However, it appears this approach is not currently happening with service providers. Conversely, Ryan and Deci (2000) noted that employees who are encouraged to build competence and develop themselves will be more intrinsically motivated and experience more well-being at work. Additionally, employees reported higher job satisfaction when they had valuable on the job training and reoccurring continuing education opportunities (Britton Laws et al., 2014). In a 2021 DSP survey report, 41% of DSPs stated they would be more inclined to stay with their organization if they had career development opportunities, including continuous, in-service, or on-the-job training (Galindo et al., 2021).

Providing DSPs with ongoing training will equip organizations to provide better care to persons served and create a more stable and satisfied DSP workforce (Galindo et al., 2021). Several studies (Britton Laws et al., 2014; Firmin et al., 2019; Hasan, 2013) noted the importance of extended training and the correlation between increased self-efficacy and confidence of DSPs, both of which promote reduced DSP turnover. In contrast, Bergiel et al. (2009) purported that "job embeddedness fully mediated the relationship among compensation, supervisory support, growth opportunity and employee's intention to quit, but training did not embed employees in their jobs" (p. 208). Overall, training helps improve employee performance and retention because employees that have the resources need to become more satisfied and are less likely to seek or want to leave for other employment opportunities (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013). The benefits of employee training also help increase knowledge skills and abilities and develop a sense of security which helps to reduce turnover and absenteeism (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017).

Effects of DSP Turnover on Individuals With IDD. High turnover rates of DSP can present disadvantages to individuals with IDD. People with IDD report feeling sad and having difficulty bonding and trusting people with DSPs entering their life continuously (Houseworth et al., 2020). Turnover causes disruption to people with IDD because not having a stable caregiver can negatively affect day-to-day goals and expectations such as safety, choice, and community integration (Pettingell et al., 2022). In a study of 1,342 individuals with IDD who participated in a Personal Measures Outcome Survey (Friedman, 2018), DSP turnover affected 17 of 21 outcome areas. The most significant areas included the following:

1. People's sense of safety,
2. Health,
3. Interactions with others in the community,
4. Participation in community life,
5. Friendship and intimate relationships,
6. Being treated with fairness and respect,
7. Developing natural supports,
8. Choice of where and with whom to live, and
9. Choice in services among other areas. (Friedman, 2018, p. 244)

Fifty-six percent of individuals with IDD have experienced DSP turnover in the last 2 years, according to Houseworth et al. (2020).

Employment Trends-Why Employees Stay in Difficult Jobs

DSP opportunities are progressing faster than any other labor force segment due to the deinstitutionalization of people with IDD, the expansion of community living for people with IDD, and baby boomers' aging (Bogenschutz et al., 2014; Robbins et al., 2013). There is an

increased desire from individuals with IDD and families to have more living options in community-based settings (Houseworth et al., 2020). As of 2020, direct support is estimated to be the largest employment industry in the United States, with approximately five million positions having working employees or vacancies that need to be filled (Houseworth et al., 2020). As a result, more DSPs are required in order to support people with IDD. However, employment trends have not kept up with the need for services (Houseworth et al., 2020).

According to the National Core Indicators (NCI, 2019), the DSP vacancy rate is 12% for full-time and 18% for part-time positions. DSP vacancy rates are filled by DSPs who remain in the place and work significant amounts of overtime to meet the needs of individuals with IDD. Despite unfavorable conditions and significant turnover, few studies identify the motivations for DSPs who continue to work in the position (Hensel et al., 2015).

Influences on Employee Retention

Job Satisfaction. A topic related to DSP burnout and intention to stay is job satisfaction; job satisfaction is related to employees' reactions to specific parts of their job and overall experience as an employee (Van den Pol-Grevelink et al., 2012). Unfortunately, job satisfaction in DSP work has not been studied comprehensively, as few studies have sought to understand what factors DSPs would identify to report satisfying work (Crane & Havercamp, 2020). According to Bangwal et al. (2017), two factors influence job satisfaction amongst DSPs, including employees' personal qualities and organizational characteristics. The company's characteristics were evidenced through employment policies, pay, employee independence, employee development, co-worker and supervisor support, appreciation, and participation in decision-making (Bangwal et al., 2017).

Although studies indicate DSP turnover is problematic in many organizations, staff relationships were identified as a factor contributing to job satisfaction, according to Firmin et al. (2019). Additional factors identified as significant contributors to job satisfaction were structure, organizational environment, job duties, the potential for growth, leadership style, and personal fulfillment (Firmin et al., 2019).

Coaching/Mentoring. Mentoring employees is a valuable resource for employers to aid retention efforts. Mentoring can be implemented in formal and informal methods utilizing tenured employees to help new employees become familiar with work policies, the environment, and the work culture (Fabre, 2008). DSP peer mentoring programs help improve the onboarding process and improve retention. According to Gordon and Melrose (2011), mentoring helps reduce the job strain employees feel when they are overworked or experience stress related to staffing issues. Mentoring also reduces social tension, increases job fulfillment, and provides employees with a sense of professionalism (Gordon & Melrose, 2011).

Why DSPs Stay

There is abundant data to identify why DSPs leave the job (Bogenschutz et al., 2014; Firmin et al., 2019; Griffiths & Royse, 2017; Laws & Hewitt, 2020; Pettingell et al., 2022); however, more research is needed to determine why they stay (Hensel et al., 2015). Stevens et al. (2019) affirmed that "there is a need for more research to identify factors related to staff retention in IDD services to improve employment policies and practices" (p. 1). Hensel et al. (2015) also indicated that future research should investigate why DSPs stay in particular settings, such as residential homes where turnover is exceptionally high. There is sparse literature on intrinsic values and how they correlate to job satisfaction; however, some studies indicate they positively affect staff retention (Flynn et al., 2020). Thus, the plausibility of DSPs remaining on

the job due to embedded emotions such as hope, motivation, self-efficacy, and appreciation should be investigated.

Hope. Hope is a multifaceted concept involving four elements: (a) the importance of experiencing difficult situations and finding a sense of spirituality; (b) a balanced thought process and identifying goals, resources, and emotions related to control and comprehension of time; (c) job satisfaction; and (d) an employee's "affective desire" to remain with their employer (Reichard et al., 2013, p. 294). Hopeful workers are more likely to have positive emotions about their employer and, therefore, a heightened desire to continue working for the organization. Stevens et al. (2019) affirmed a correlation between hope, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment related to improving the quality of life of people with IDD and helping them develop skills and independence.

Motivation. Motivation is an intrinsic factor that inspires people to stay committed during hardships. Personal motivation, according to Reiss and Havercamp (1996), is "each person's unique profile of needs or desires, which lead individuals to pursue activities and roles that fulfill those needs (for power, achievement, or sex)" (p. 630). The motivational perspective of participants in this study refers to reasons for their remaining in the role of a DSP linked to their intrinsic values associated with their perspective of organizational fit, commitment to assisting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the fulfillment of their work that positively affects their personal lives (Hensel et al., 2015; Mitchell & Lee, 2001).

Motivation is evident amongst some DSPs, as 30% to 60% remain in the position despite the high level of turnover for others (Lee et al., 2014). Some DSPs remain enthusiastic about their work and are successful in it. According to Hensel et al. (2015), DSPs reported they remained in the position because they were making a difference in the lives of people with IDD.

Other DSPs were motivated to stay in the position because their work positively affected their personal lives (Hensel et al., 2015). However, few studies have shown what makes DSPs resilient to the same stimuli that cause other DSPs to leave (Crane & Havercamp, 2020). Motivation and well-being are associated links to remain embedded.

Self-Efficacy. Another intrinsic value that correlates with job satisfaction is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is "a person's belief in their ability to effectively exert control over challenging situations and achieve desired goals, which often results from experiencing task mastery and receiving positive feedback from others for completing task requirements" (Flynn et al., 2020, p. 3). According to Flynn et al. (2020), employees with a high level of self-efficacy are more confident in their skill level and demonstrate more job satisfaction. Self-efficacy is related to DSPs in IDD services because a high level of self-efficacy helps employees feel less stressed and less inundated in situations they cannot handle (Flynn et al., 2020).

Self-efficacy helps DSPs attain goals and have feelings of gratification related to their lives and careers. Promoting perspective-taking and enhancing DSP self-efficacy may increase job satisfaction (Flynn et al., 2020). Furthermore, the psychosocial methods for improving job satisfaction may also improve individuals with IDD, ultimately resolving the workforce and national public health crisis (Flynn et al., 2020).

Appreciation/Value. Recognition of DSPs has been an ongoing problem in IDD services (Pettingell et al., 2022). Accordingly, Pettingell et al. (2022) noted that lack of recognition of the direct support workforce demonstrated by low wages and lack of professional status are apparent indicators of the underappreciation of the human capital of the direct support professional workforce. Showing appreciation for DSPs affects how DSPs feel about their workplace and could potentially impact retention. DSPs who were pleased with how their organizations

demonstrated support were happier with their organizations overall (Galindo et al., 2021). Most respondents in a DSP survey (Galindo et al., 2021) indicated they would be “much more likely” to remain at their organizations if greater appreciation for their work was shown.

The DSP survey report (Galindo et al., 2021) confirmed that receiving direct recognition from a supervisor was the most cherished form of appreciation for DSPs, followed by having access to professional career opportunities and innovative leadership/career opportunities (Galindo et al., 2021). Furthermore, according to the DSP survey report (Galindo et al., 2021), 52.8% said it was “very” or “extremely important” to receive feedback from co-workers; 31.5% said this was “moderately important. As reported by 59% of DSPs, it was very or extremely important to hear appreciation from the organization's leaders, including the CEO, director, or board of directors, and 23.6% said it was moderately important (Galindo et al., 2021). Receiving appreciation from employees they support was ranked very or extremely important by 59.4% of DSPs (Galindo et al., 2021).

Mindfulness. Mindfulness is a psychological process that pays attention to the current moment and accepts one's current experiences without passing judgment or criticism (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The mindful approach to stressful situations handles difficult situations by not avoiding them but instead faces negative thoughts and situations with an open mind so that an appropriate response can be made (Nevill & Havercamp, 2019). Mindfulness is used as a coping strategy to help reduce DSPs burnout which leads to turnover. Studies found that mindfulness, specifically recounting one's experiences nonjudgmentally, arose as a shielding factor for protecting DSPs against burnout (Nevill & Havercamp, 2019).

Mindfulness plays such a critical role in reducing burnout that leads to turnover that mindful observation was noted as the only significant predictor of DSP retention by Noone and

Hastings (2011). Nevill and Havercamp (2019) indicated there is support for using mindfulness as a coping mechanism against burnout for DSPs. Considering the high rate of turnover in the IDD industry and the negative effects turnover has on people with IDD, Nevill and Havercamp (2019) indicated there is a need to increase the availability of mindfulness coping strategies to DSPs.

Resilience. Resilience is defined as a way of adapting to and enduring opposing experiences by vigorously balancing hazardous and protective features (Agnes, 2005; Luthar et al., 2000; Smith et al., 2005). Luthans (2002) defined resilience as a “positive psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress, and increased responsibility” (p. 702). According to Masten (2001), resilience is not simply an ordinary skill; a person can develop new or stronger resilience skills over time. Resilience is critical to understanding how employees adjust to the work environment in the face of hardship. Luthans (2002) indicated employees with high resilience skills can manage difficulties associated with stressors in the workplace. Furthermore, according to Eslamlou et al. (2021), resilient employees can use their positive emotions to handle stressful situations and prevent burnout and turnover. Factors that can enhance resilience include social sustenance, well-being, self-control, cognitive tractability, and hopefulness (Eslamlou et al., 2021).

Moreover, resilient employees are likely to display higher job embeddedness, which is a retention strategy (Eslamlou et al., 2021). A DSP who is resilient tolerates workplace challenges and is more apt to have good performance and less occupational stress leading to burnout and turnover (Crane & Havercamp, 2020). Thus, resilience can help lessen the effects of stress or burnout in DSPs and may forecast burnout (Crane & Havercamp, 2020).

Summary

The literature review provided a synthesis of research on the DSP turnover crisis and the factors that relate to the reasons DSPs continue to stay in their jobs despite experiencing disparaging conditions such as low wages, lack of benefits, lack of training, and lack of opportunities for upward mobility. The literature review also provided a synthesis of the theoretical framework, job embeddedness. The review revealed there are a plethora of reasons why organizations experience turnover, including the lack of competitive wages and a lack of training. Both of these experiences have a negative impact on employees desiring to remain in their jobs.

The literature review also revealed that there are numerous reasons employees become embedded in a job. Job satisfaction, appreciation and value, mindfulness, and resiliency positively impacted employee retention. However, the literature view did not conclusively indicate the job embeddedness factors that influence DSP retention, as employees may be embedded in one area of the organization or the community and not in another area. The literature review supports the phenomenological method for this study, as phenomenology seeks to understand the lived experiences of participants.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological study was to examine why DSPs remain in their job role as direct support professionals. The participants in the study were 10 direct support professionals who work with individuals with IDD in community-based group homes in Texas. The study's design using one-on-one interviews enabled me to uncover the motivations and reasons for participants' job embeddedness that may inform future efforts, legislative and funding changes, job benefits, and recruitment efforts.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are DSPs' motivational perspectives for remaining in their job?

RQ2: What are the lived experiences of DSPs relating to professional relationships at work in their job retention?

RQ3: What are the lived experiences of DSPs relating to community connections on their intent to remain on the job?

RQ4: What are the lived experiences of DSPs relating to intrinsic values on their intent to remain on the job?

Methodological Approach and Rationale

This research study used a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach to explore direct support professionals' experiences. Qualitative research is an inquiry of people in their natural settings so researchers can understand or interpret phenomena related to the meaning people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research examines social situations to allow the researcher to become immersed in the world of other people to understand the phenomenon or experience holistically (Aspers & Corte, 2019;

Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Quantitative research relies on interpretations based on numerical data (Gay et al., 2016); however, as an interpretive approach to understanding the meaning of phenomena conveyed through interviews, observations, and other forms of data, qualitative research was an appropriate choice of study.

Features of phenomenology are consistent with those of qualitative research and appropriate for the study as an in-depth inquiry into the study's problem. A foundational tenet of phenomenological research is that understanding and making meaning of lived experiences result from identifying human behavior that study participants describe (Husserl, 2001). According to Husserl's (2001) descriptive phenomenology, phenomena are described based on past experiences that are in one's consciousness. As such, a phenomenological approach provides opportunities to collect rich, comprehensive data about the lived experiences of others (Valentine et al., 2018). At its core, phenomenology is the study of the participant's lived experience rather than the explanation of the lived experience (Smith, 2018). The approach was appropriate for inquiring about residential support services that consist of assistance with grooming, transportation, safety supervision, meal preparation, laundry, medication supervision, recreation, and community integration.

Further, the approach was appropriate for inquiring of employees who have experienced the work of direct support professionals to make meaning as to why they remain in the position despite experiencing low pay, inadequate benefits, lack of adequate training, and limited opportunities for upward mobility. The research study endeavored to further understand the lived experiences of the direct support professional to the direct support professional's job by utilizing first-person interview questions and responses to the study's research questions.

Qualitative research procedures applicable to this study are identified in this section. The phenomenological approach and the sampling frame are explained. Methods for establishing trustworthiness, including credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability, are outlined, as well as the process for obtaining consent and maintaining confidentiality. Additionally, the section concludes with procedures for data collection and analysis.

Population and Sampling

The population of this study was direct support professionals in Texas who work in home- and community-based group homes providing residential support services to adults and children with IDD. Purposive sampling was used to identify 10 potential participants from the population based on the study's criteria of current employment, a minimum of 2 years of experience, at least a high school diploma, and a minimum age of 20 years. The sample was selected based on responses to questions on the data collection screening tool that contains demographic information to inquire about the participant's age, gender, educational level, and experience as a DSP. Participants were screened in their reply to the letter inviting their participation (Appendix D) and the accompanying demographic questions (Appendix B). Purposive sample characteristics are defined for a purpose specific to the study; the results can be generalized to the subpopulation from which the sample is drawn (Andrade, 2021). Purposive sampling is a non-probability technique for identifying participants who can provide the most appropriate answers to the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

After obtaining consent from the directors, a formal letter was sent to each DSP to explain the study's purpose and invite them to participate in the semistructured interview process. Data were collected using one-on-one, semistructured interviews to analyze direct support experiences through the job embeddedness theoretical framework lens (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Suter (2012) acknowledged that semistructured interviews allow researchers to identify the phenomenon's significance through the voice of research participants. Semistructured interviews were appropriate for this study because they allowed for developing interview questions related to the research questions (Peoples, 2021). Additionally, semistructured interviews ensured essential aspects of the research questions were covered, allowing the participants to relay additional information that may apply to the study (Peoples, 2021).

Data were collected through one-on-one, in-person, semistructured interviews with 10 DSPs from two different home and community-based services provider agencies at an established convenient time and place with the participant. The semistructured interviews were completed and tape-recorded using pseudonyms to protect identity and maintain confidentiality (Seidman, 2016). Member checking addressed gaps in the data, such as missing or unclear information (Peoples, 2021).

Instrumentation

As recommended in qualitative interviewing, I served as the main instrument for data collection through an interview protocol (Seidman, 2019; van Manen, 2016). The protocol, also referred to as a guide, is frequently cited as a tool in phenomenology to acquire data through structured and semistructured interview questions and participants' stories (Bevan, 2014; Gill, 2020; Reissman, 2008). A number of studies in healthcare have employed interview guides to collect participant stories based on Husserl (2001) and other phenomenological approaches (Blair et al., 2022; Heinonen, 2015; Kim et al., 2020). Consistent with the job embeddedness theory (Mitchell et al., 2001) and following Husserl's approach (Blair et al., 2022), contextual questions acquired information based on participants' personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, and perceptions of the meaning and impact of the experiences.

The researcher-created interview protocol (Appendix B) included a demographic section (Appendix A) used to establish the eligibility of participants, an explanation of the study, the interview and audio-taping procedures, and a review of the consent form. The demographic and introductory phases focused on establishing rapport with the participants. Demographic questions referred to gender, age, level of training, and years of employment. The interview protocol (Appendix B) contained questions reflecting broad areas of interest relating to the research topic as recommended for phenomenological interviews, according to Reissman (2008). The protocol contained 10 major or primary questions with additional sub-questions to prompt further responses.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012) and Saldaña and Omasta (2017), the interview should proceed in a conversational, nonthreatening mode with easy questions first and then progress to major questions. Primary questions were followed with probes to ensure complete and understandable responses of the experiences of direct support professionals. The prompts for questions included “Tell me about” or “How do you describe?” and examples of probes included “Can you give me an example?” or “What happened after?” Procedures recommended to encourage participants to tell their stories without interrupting them, such as using smiles or utterances of “hmm” as nonverbal language were followed (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

Data Analysis

Data condensation was used in analyzing the data. Data condensation is a part of the analysis that allows the researcher to select, focus, simplify, abstract, and transform data that appear in field notes, transcripts, or other empirical datasets (Miles et al., 2020). The semistructured interview recordings were reviewed, the data were transcribed, and identification codes were assigned to each interview (Miles et al., 2020). This research study followed the six-

phase guide recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) for analyzing the data through (a) becoming familiar with the data by reading and rereading the transcripts, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing the themes, (e) defining the themes, and (f) writing up the information. First, in the analysis, an inductive, thematic analysis process was used to further analyze the data by reading the data repeatedly to get a feel for what the respondents were saying. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), thematic analysis identifies patterns or themes within qualitative data. Included in the iterative process of data analysis is coding. The interviews were reviewed to determine common language among participants.

Second, data were coded to answer the research questions and address the study's job embeddedness theoretical framework. Coding is a system of classification in which the researcher notes what is of interest or significance, identifies different sets of data, and labels to organize the information in the data (Saldana, 2021). The coding process allows the researcher to compile and reduce large amounts of data (Leavy, 2017). Data were coded by hand, and a codebook was created to determine how the codes should be grouped based on the similarities mentioned in the interview. Memo writing was included to document the codes and categories.

Third, memorandums helped to formulate an understanding of concepts and ideas emanating from the data as an understanding of the research and search for themes increased. Emerging themes were identified and reviewed in the fourth through fifth steps, and member checking confirmed the accuracy of the themes. In the sixth step, responses from the research were shared and described in a narrative and well-organized manner. As much detail as possible was shared so the reader could envision the interview. Samples of the semistructured interviews and direct quotations from the respondents were also shared. Reports of qualitative interviews

usually include direct quotations; direct quotations provide the details and support the story the researcher is telling (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness reflects the rigor of the methodology and data analysis so readers feel that the findings can be trusted (Leavy, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) determined that trustworthiness is established through procedures that demonstrate credibility, conformability, dependability, and transferability. This research study used member checks, triangulation, and well-established research methodology to create credibility, the extent to which the study's findings accurately describe reality according to participants' reality and perceptions.

Conformability refers to the neutrality of findings indicative of being based on participants' data. Procedures for ensuring conformability included reflective journaling or memoing of personal biases to set them aside during analyzing data and reporting results and member checking to ensure the accuracy of the data. To ensure that the findings were consistent and repeatable, methods for dependability of the study included a detailed description of the study's procedures and using a peer to review the data collection and analysis processes to determine accuracy of results and interpretations, and consistency of results with the data. Finally, transferability occurred through use of three datasets: in-depth interviews, analysis of agency reports, and thick, rich descriptions of participant data based on age and different geographical locations.

Researcher's Role

My qualifications, including 30 years of experience in disability services, supported my credibility as a researcher. According to Shenton (2004), the researcher's credibility is significant

as the researcher is the most prominent tool in data collection and analysis. The transferability of my study to the subpopulation from which the sample was drawn (Andrade, 2021) was established by having a sufficient sample size. I ensured dependability by providing a data collection plan and data analysis plan outline. Shenton (2004) acknowledged that procedures should be reported in detail to ensure future researchers can repeat results.

Epoche

This epoche addresses my personal biases related to the research of direct support professionals working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in long-term care facilities. My research was influenced by my 30-year career in the disability services industry. Direct support professionals provide crucial services to help people with IDD live as independently and barrier-free as possible. I have learned to work within the limitations of the direct support professional turnover challenge to implement services congruent with the desires of individuals with IDD, their families, advocates, and other stakeholders.

Personal Experiences

My first job working with individuals with IDD started in 1986 when I applied for a direct support professional position providing for the basic care needs of adults and children with severe disabilities. I was responsible for diaper changes, bathing, grooming, and feeding adults and children born with profound limitations. The job was emotionally rewarding; however, few other benefits existed. The pay was low, and most people had to work two jobs to have a livable wage.

Additionally, we were often short-staffed because of the significant turnover that exists in most disability services jobs. There were no opportunities for upward mobility unless you were willing to pursue and advance your education to qualify for higher management positions.

Although I desired to continue to work in the disability community, I learned quickly that I would not be able to support myself if I did not develop new skills that would make me more marketable.

Thus, I started working on my bachelor's degree and began to apply for other jobs. I continued to work as a direct support professional until I could qualify for jobs that provided better wages and benefits. I worked as a case manager, program director, and provider consultant and ultimately became the chief executive officer of a home and community-based services agency in 2002. However, no matter how much I advanced up the corporate ladder, I was faced with the same conundrum that existed when I applied for my first job. My management positions continued to deal with the ongoing direct support professional crisis. Program providers did not and do not have sufficient staff because direct support professional wages have remained consistently low based on the pay structure allocated by state legislators.

Program providers are not able to pay above the reimbursement fee structure; therefore, there are preset limits on wages for direct support professionals despite how hard they work. The lack of adequate pay is exacerbated by a lack of adequate benefits and opportunities for advancement. As a result of dealing with the direct support profession personally and in supervisory capacities, my experiences have influenced my perception of the direct support profession and what actions influence turnover and retention. However, I am open to hearing and understanding how the lived experiences of direct support professionals contribute to implementing meaningful changes for the disability community in the future.

Consent and Confidentiality

After agency directors responded to a request to conduct the research (Appendix C), an invitational letter (Appendix D) to participate in the study was provided to potential participants.

The purpose of the study was explained. The invitation for voluntary participation contained an explanation of their rights, including to withdraw after consenting without penalty. Participants were also provided a consent form (Appendix D). Contents of the consent form outlined procedures for ensuring confidentiality, such as using false names, storing raw data, and destroying the data, as well as identifying potential risks and how they were minimized. Additional contents of the form requested permission to record the interview, provided information regarding how the interview would be conducted and the time required for participation and explained that participants would not receive compensation.

Ethical Considerations

Procedures for this study adhered to professional and ethical guidelines stipulated through the Abilene University's Institution Review Board and those established for research involving human subjects, according to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1979). Data collection began after acquiring permission to conduct the study and receiving the consent of participants. The Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979) stipulates basic ethical principles guiding the protection of humans engaged in research. The principle of respect of persons, applied in this study, referred to acknowledging autonomy. Therefore, participation in this study was based on individuals' decisions. Participants were informed of their rights to voluntarily engage in the study and to withdraw after consenting without any negative consequences.

The principle of beneficence ensures that the ethical treatment of participants includes protecting them from harm and securing their well-being. Procedures for assuring their privacy and confidentiality, and any potential risk associated with participating, such as a breach of confidentiality or experiencing anxiety, including using pseudonyms in reporting the data and

results, securing information in a locked file cabinet and on a password-protected computer. Participants were requested not to disclose their participation in the study.

Procedures for minimizing risks of anxiety included developing rapport and trust that information in the study would not link to their personal identities and advising participants that they may refuse to answer questions that made them uncomfortable. The principle of justice refers to fairness in distributing any benefits from the study among participants or undue burden placed on them. Communications to participants conveyed that there were no direct benefits provided to any participants, that the study may benefit the profession in general through bringing awareness to leaders of practices that may encourage job embeddedness, and that each participant would be treated with respect.

Assumptions

The research incorporated philosophical assumptions regarding the nature of reality, knowledge, and values associated with DSPs continuing to serve in their positions. Assumed was that there were complex factors associated with job retention for DSPs in which job satisfaction represented one factor. Therefore, such factors were analyzed based on the perspective of DSP participant voices who provided evidence of multiple realities. Similarly, the assumption was that determining why DSPs continue their employment was best found in individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. This study sought answers from a purposive sample of DSPs who had such knowledge.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of a study refer to the conditions an investigator cannot control (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The limitations of this study were related to the nature of the study and the participant's responses. This qualitative study relied on self-reported data and a purposive

sample. This research study was limited to participants having had experiences appropriate for collecting information based on the problem investigated. Also, the results were limited to participants providing truthful and complete responses.

The researcher may not be able to confirm the credibility of the participants or their responses in qualitative research. Strategies for the possible reduction or elimination of these limitations included establishing criteria for participation and screening potential participants employing the criteria. Additional strategies included developing rapport with participants and establishing a nonthreatening environment; sharing procedures whereby their personal identities could not be associated with the data; and disclosing all procedures to protect their confidentiality.

Delimitations of the study are those that the researcher can control. This study was delimited to only DSPs who met the inclusionary participant criteria. DSPs currently employed at an agency, had a minimum of 2 years' experience in that role, held at least a high school diploma, and were at minimum 20 years of age were eligible to participate. The study was further delimited to an inquiry focused on reasons why DSPs remain in their employment, the use of qualitative research and the phenomenology approach, the researcher as the major data collection instrument, and methods identified in the collection and analysis of data. These delimitations were appropriate for an inquiry of the lived experiences of participants and for yielding rich and thick descriptions of the participants and data.

Summary

This qualitative research study explored the job embeddedness theory and why direct support professionals remain in the position. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to collect rich and consequential data from participants. The participants in the study represented a

sample of DSPs who work in group homes in long-term care community-based programs. Semistructured, one-to-one interviews were used, and the data were analyzed for themes. This interview protocol encouraged a semistructured inquiry and provided opportunities for the participants to elaborate on their responses. Ethical considerations adhered to Abilene Christian University's Institution Review Board guidelines. The results are reported in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative phenomenological study examined why direct support professionals (DSPs) remain in their job role as direct support professionals. The participants in the study were 10 direct support professionals who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in community-based group homes in Texas. The job embeddedness theory informed the research and interview questions based on the theory's concepts of links, fit, and sacrifice (Gibbs & Duke, 2021). Exploring these concepts using one-to-one interviews through the Zoom platform enabled me to inquire about participants' lived experiences that uncovered motivations and reasons for participants' job embeddedness. A semistructured interview protocol was used to interview direct support professionals who work in long-term care facilities with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The interviews were recorded utilizing the Otter transcription service. However, an unforeseen personal emergency resulted in a 3-week gap between the interviews of the first three and last five respondents.

This chapter is a report of findings based on the analysis of data. Data from semistructured interviews were analyzed using a six-phase guide for inductive thematic analysis recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). The results of the study are organized by themes supported with interview responses from direct support professionals. The results of the inquiry are intended to inform future efforts, including legislative and funding changes, job benefits, and recruitment processes in support of supporting and promoting DSP jobs that are crucial to the lives of individuals with IDD. Discussions begin with the demographics of participants.

To examine reasons direct support professionals remain in the position, the following research questions were presented:

RQ1: What are DSP's motivational perspectives for remaining in their job?

RQ2: What is the lived experience of DSPs relating to professional relationships at work in their job retention?

RQ3: What is the lived experience of DSPs relating to community connections on their intent to remain on the job?

RQ4: What is the lived experience of DSPs relating to intrinsic values on their intent to remain on the job?

Demographics

The participants in the study were recruited from two home and community-based service provider organizations in Texas. Five participants at one organization responded to the invitation to participate in the study. All five respondents met the criteria for participation and were interviewed. There were eight respondents from one provider agency; however, three of the respondents did not respond to attempts to schedule a time for the interviews. The five individuals who responded to scheduling a specific date and time for the interview met the study's criteria and were interviewed. The study's criteria were being currently employed at a provider agency, having at least a high school diploma, being at least 20 years old, and having a minimum of 2 years' experience in the role.

Most of the participants seemed eager to participate in the study to share their lived experiences as direct support professionals. One participant was shy and reluctant to respond because she was concerned about responding incorrectly. Data were collected using purposeful sampling. Table 1 provides the demographic information of the participants by pseudonyms.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender	Education level	Years employed
DSP Jones	Female	High School	17
DSP Smith-1	Female	High School	12
DSP Byrd	Female	GED	16
DSP Alexander	Female	High School	50
DSP Johnson	Female	High School	10
DSP Bush	Male	Associate's Degree	10
DSP Stanz	Female	High School	15
DSP Williams	Female	Some College	11
DSP Doe	Male	Some College	8
DSP Arrington	Female	Bachelor's Degree	50+

Presentation of Findings

Participants responded to open ended questions included in an interview protocol that guided the interview procedures. The content of questions included inquiries about job responsibilities, professional relationships, community connections, and motivations for remaining in the role of a DSP. Responses to interview questions were analyzed using codes in the form of color, alphabets, and numbers to identify data according to corresponding interview and research question, frequency of similar words and expressions, embeddedness factors, intrinsic motivation, other motivation. and job roles. For example, expressions denoting love were coded as red; IQ#1 denoted interview question 1; IM identified instances of intrinsic motivation, and IMB denoted factors related to the theoretical framework. Methods of coding

determine the grouping of information based on the similarities mentioned in the interview. Therefore, themes emerged from the data based on the frequency of similar words and expressions used throughout each interview.

Themes

The inquiry resulted in four emerging themes from participants' responses that illustrated meanings common among all participants. These themes are joy, love, empathy, and service. The themes are discussed with sample comments supporting their meaning. Outliers in the data are also discussed and represent unexpected or minority views. Each theme illustrated the lived experiences of participants aligned with the study's purpose.

Theme 1: Joy

This theme emerged in response to Interview Questions 1, 2, and 4, which asked participants to describe their job responsibilities, the impact of those responsibilities on remaining in their job, and motivations that had the most impact on decision to remain on the job. The term joy with happy as an associated meaning appeared 28 times in participants' conversations illustrating that the responsibilities and duties related to being a direct support professional served as a motivating factor to remain on the job. The meaning of joy illustrated through responses was happiness of carrying out responsibilities for others. This joy was reciprocal in nature; the clients experienced joy for receiving and the DSP experienced joy for giving. Respondents described similar responsibilities in their roles as direct support professionals. Respondents described duties including supervision, safety, grooming, housekeeping, dispensing medication, teaching social skills, documenting services, behavior management, money management, toileting, meal planning, and meal preparation.

The joy of carrying out responsibilities for others was expressed in various ways. Participants recognized that their clients were limited in their ability to manage some tasks. In response to the most motivating factor for remaining on the job, DSP Stanz explained her happiness in "cooking the food, or even washing and folding the clothes that give them some type of happy way of living." The sense of joy also provided confirmation of the importance and effectiveness of the DSP's job responsibilities. According to DSP Stanz,

What makes me happy is to see other people happy, so even [to] just put a smile on their face, that's the grace to me. So, if I see them smile, it makes me happy. So that lets me know that I'm doing something right.

Joy and happiness in carrying out responsibilities as a most motivating factor resonated for DSP Doe because "I'd be happy to see them; they'd be happy to see me." DSP Bush shared the following experience in response to how responsibilities served as the most impactful motivator to remain on the job:

My daily responsibilities have impacted me to stay here; very clear that it's, I just believe that it's my duty. I get joy out of doing for my clients; it gives me joy to serve them. It gives me joy and peace to make them feel better. When I cook for them, it makes me feel good that I can serve them. And they can have something good to eat. I think it makes me feel good when I can assist them with bathing, cleaning them up. So that has had a profound impact on me staying in my duties and it has impacted me to remain in my position.

The reciprocal nature of this theme is especially vivid in some responses. DSP Byrd put it simply, "If they're happy, I'm happy." DSP Alexander explained that motivating was "not the pay. it's the actual joy that you can see on somebody's face." DSP Alexander also expressed that

working as a direct support professional has made her a better person. She said, “Because I can help them has influenced my decision to remain on the job.” The ability to teach individuals new skills played a role in influencing DSPs to remain on the job. DSP Alexander stated that her clients want to learn, and she enjoys taking them into the community to test the skills she has taught them. She said, “All of the patients I have especially taught me to deal with certain situations in life, including accepting difficult situations and learning to deal with them the way they are because many times life is easy and sometimes life is hard, but working with my patients helps me.”

The joy associated with the work of a DSP is expressly described in the following account given by DSP Bush which captures the overall perspective of 90% of the participants:

The motivator is joy, me bringing joy to perspective my clients. The joy that I have you can't put a price on it that motivates me every day. That I know I can put a smile on someone else's face, I'm saying I get motivated because it's no other job that I've had, no other second job that I've had that brings me joy. I deliver packages that don't give me joy; it's just a box. But when I'm interacting and knowing that I can make my client feel good about himself when I'm combing his hair, motivates me to come every day. The motivation of me being able to care for my clients, being able to assist them when I know they can't assist themselves, me having to help, I feel they need me they need my help.

These accounts support that the participants found joy in carrying out their responsibilities to clients who were limited in carrying for themselves. Joy was used interchangeably with the word happiness. The theme of joy was closely associated with the emotional motivator, love.

Theme 2: Love

The word "Love" was present in several interview responses but emerged as a theme from Interview Question 2, which asked participants to describe how their responsibilities impacted their decision to remain in the position, and Interview Question 4, which asked participants which motivations have had the most impact on their decision to remain on their job. This word was stated 37 times throughout all interview responses with respect to how participants felt about their patients, their supervisors, or about performing their responsibilities. The word "Like" was also used eight times associated with feelings of love, and the expression like family or home was used 21 times in participants' discussions of the love they felt for their role as a DSP.

This theme referred to different situations to include family, home, the conditions of a person, and actions of individuals that also referenced being committed. The essence of its meaning for the participants was love for individuals and individuals' love for DSPs, positive feelings experienced from others' perceptions that involved acceptance, comfort, and warmth. These feelings were most often illustrated through such actions as smiling faces, respect, compassion, and appreciative gestures for the family-like environment and food that clients enjoyed. These positive feelings motivated DSPs to conduct the responsibilities associated with the profession.

Participants expressed how they developed a love of the job of a DSP in various ways. DSP Arrington said,

There really wasn't a question about it, regarding me being in the position that I'm in, because this has been a lifelong passion of mine. Having cared for elder people in my

family, with love, I didn't give it a second thought. So, I remain in this position, because this is what I love doing.

When asked about the impact of the complexities of the responsibilities on remaining in the position, DSP Arrington responded:

The complexities of the responsibilities are not a second thought for me, because I'm coming from the standpoint, if circumstances were different, I would be that person in this particular situation. And because I look at it from this standpoint, I give the ultimate care I don't think about what it encompasses. I just provide the care. From a personal standpoint, I have a number of people in my family that are in the position of some of the people that I care for. So, it's heartfelt and sincere. And again, because I know what has been done for them, I have no problem giving of myself to individuals who cannot give of themselves.

Although cooking was among key job responsibilities, DSP Alexander shared the experience of feeding the homeless as contributing to the love of cooking for her clients. She said, "I've always volunteered and worked at the places where they serve meals. I feed the homeless. Sometimes, I just cook on my own." However, the love for serving in the role of a DSP for DSP Doe resulted as a matter of convenience and need. DSP Doe shared the experience of entering the field because it offered additional financial support. DSP Doe shared the following experience:

It's like, it was convenient for me at the time when I needed it because I needed an overnight job. So, I was working here with them and like I've known them for a long time, like a lot of clients. Like, I'd be happy to see them they'd be happy to see me so they're like, they're like family. I like working with them. I work with like, all of them

pretty much. So, they all know me by name. Like, when I go to the center. It's like, I'm like it was vindicating, you know, the fact that they know you, you have the fact that they love me like family.

Overall, participants' commitment to remain in the job was due to the love experienced between employer and employee, but to a larger extent between the DSP and clients. The sentiment DSP Doe expressed summarizes this point. In reference to money no longer a factor in maintaining the job, DSP Doe said, if employment did not exist, "I [would] still find a way to coach them; like they are still at the day center. Even if I didn't work with them and stuff. I will still love them." Other participants shared different lived experiences supporting the meaning of love, how it was illustrated and its impact. For example, DSP Alexander stated, "My patients have had the most impact on me remaining in the position. They love me and I love them; they are my people and I call them my children." DSP Alexander affirmed the love for her clients is a motivating factor for remaining on the job. DSP Smith stated that she loved her job and does not have a problem with any of the job duties.

Initially, DSP Smith was very quiet and had to be prompted to speak louder. However, she seemed to come out of her shell when she spoke about talking to the individuals she serves. She smiled and laughed when she spoke about the individuals wanting her services. She stated, "I talk to them and listen; that's why they love me so much." DSP Smith shared the following experiences:

Even the ones that can hear but can't respond back, I still talk to them. They always want to talk and ask me questions, and that plays a role and impacts me. I like to keep busy and they want me. It's constant, and I tell them that I am here to stay and I am not going

anywhere. I'm glad they like me and want me because if they didn't, I would remove myself because I don't want to be around no one that don't want me.

DSP Smith shared experiences that illustrated the value placed on being embedded in a position based on love, an emotional attachment. She stated there was a time when she left the job and quit working as a DSP. She stated that she came back because the clients wanted her back. She stated that the clients were asking for her services, so her supervisor asked her to come back to work. DSP Smith-1 stated that the clients were very happy when she returned, and they were happy to see her. She affirmed that she loves her clients as much as they love her and her love for them is a motivating factor for remaining on the job. DSP Smith stated that she loved her job and does not have a problem with any of the job duties. She seemed proud to talk about her duties and responsibilities. She stated that she completed all assignments as requested. She said,

I do whatever they need me to do. If they want me to shave them, I shave them. I clean all the rooms and give them their medicine. I have one client who needs colostomy care and I make sure I keep her colostomy clean.

The decision to remain in the position because of love also resonated with DSP Johnson. She garnered a very big smile when she talked about the influencing factors for working as a DSP for more than 10 years. She stated emphatically, "I love working with people, I just love working with people." DSP Johnson stated,

I love to see these people smile when I come in here. They always ask about me because I help them. If I can do it and help you, we are going to get it done. If I can't do it, we are going to find somebody to help us get it done. I have grown attached to these people. I am here every morning at 6am and sometimes I work 24 to 36 hours, but I don't mind

because these people bring me joy. A few of my clients will call me and ask me if I'm coming to work and that motivates me to keep coming. When my clients call, that makes me anxious to get to work. As long as they are here with me, I'm going to make it easy, and we are going to have fun and I'm going to let them do what satisfies them.

The essence of the meaning of Love as a theme referred to the lived experiences that illustrated the emotion of love that DSPs held for individuals they served and the love the individuals showed to the DSPs. Although overwhelmingly the love of DSPs was targeted to their clients, it also extended to their supervisors. Associated with DSPs' love was their commitment to making life better for their clients through understanding their needs and providing them with the best care. As an intrinsic motivation, this love often resulted from Christian values, family values, and associating their feelings with those who had some form of disability. These associative feelings often reflected empathy, another theme that emerged from the data.

Theme 3: Empathy

This theme emerged from responses to Interview Questions 1-4 with emphases on Interview Question 1. Interview Question 1 asked participants to describe their job responsibilities and how they carry them out. IQ 2 inquired of how the responsibilities impacted their decision to remain as a DSP. IQ3 and 4 asked participants to describe motivations that influenced the decision to remain and to identify the motivations that had the most impact on the decision to remain on the job. Responses included the use of such words and expressions as help or helping, cited 28 times, and assists, cited 12 times, totaling 40 similar words or expressions denoting the meaning of empathy. Participants expressed empathy for others through imagining others' experiences. Their imagination enabled them to describe their understanding of what it

felt like to live with a disability and need support to live their best possible life. Therefore, the meaning of empathy for participants was relating to others through imagining walking in their shoes. This imagination motivated participants to act in different ways. DSP Stanz referred to "providing [them; clients] a safety net," while similarly, DSP Jones acted to "just to be a support to them whenever they need someone to talk to or speak with."

Participants stated that they were motivated to continue working as DSPs because they wanted to provide good care to people. Some participants emphasized with their clients because they would want to receive good care if they were disabled and needed assistance to care for themselves. DSP Alexander stated, "Being a direct support professional makes me feel good because I realize that one of the clients with disabilities could be me or my family, either my sons or grandsons and I wouldn't want anyone to mistreat them." DSP Johnson shared similar sentiments regarding helping her clients. DSP Johnson stated that she helped her grandmother before she passed away. She stated that she respected her grandparents, and she respects her clients the same way. DSP Byrd related to the condition of his clients, acknowledging that, "Here's what God wants me to do. He wants me to take care of his children who can't take care of themselves. He placed me in their lives."

DSP Stanz gave an example of how she empathized with her clients. Her illustration revealed the idea of sameness or seeing herself from another point of view. She said,

When it comes to their way of life or how they are, which is out of their control, but, you know, they don't see it that way. But I see them you know, as one of us, you know. We all are the same, right. We are all God's people, right?

Similar to the experiences of both DSPs Alexander and Stanz, sameness from an empathetic view was also expressed in DSP Arrington's comments: "I'm coming from the standpoint, if circumstances were different, I would be that person in this particular situation."

Theme 4: Service

The theme emerged from Interview Questions 4 and 10, which asked participants to describe the motivational perspectives for remaining on the job and additional examples of their lived experiences relating to intrinsic values on their intent to remain on the job. The theme was associated with such terms as passion, need, care, good deed, duty, respect, smile, feeling better/good, and restoring dignity. A total of 40 such expressions were used in conjunction with the meaning of serve. The meaning was different from helping and assisting as these terms were more representative of physical actions associated with job responsibilities. Serve or serving represented an intrinsic value and motivation based on a perceived calling to restore living from the perspective of human dignity and the human spirit.

Some respondents spoke about the desire to serve others and the commitment to service being a part of who they were as people. DSP Johnson stated that she was raised to help people because her family always helped children off the street. DSP Johnson reiterated that her aunt always had kids around because she loved kids, and she would provide care for children in her home. Her aunt would allow them to stay with her because they did not have anywhere else to go. She stated that she is like her aunt because she has been helping people all of her life. DSP Johnson emphasized that she has been helping people since she was 10 years old. DSP Anderson also discussed a history of serving. She shared that her decision to stay in the field was driven by an intrinsic need to serve and share her abilities. DSP Anderson said,

Having worked with different state agencies that had to do with those people that needed assistance, I decided to remain. I just can't sit down on the abilities that I have. I just cannot sit, wondering; I just can't do it.

The decision to remain as a DSP for some participants was related to recognizing, appreciating, having compassion for others, and following the path of a servant. DSP Jones shared the following experiences of human needs that contributed to remain a server of people with disabilities.

Especially in this particular case diagnosed with mental illness, a lot of things come with that and dignity is one thing that I've seen a lot of people lose. [They lose] faith. But because it was in my family, and I know the extent of being institutionalized is different from being at home. The care dynamic is just so much better when you have that moral support that you need.

Service for DSP Bush was an intrinsic value instilled over the years. He said,

I was talking about the greatest among us is a servant. And so, I feel myself as a servant. Not to be great, but I get so much joy out of serving the people who I work with every day.

Also illustrating intrinsic motivation, DSP Jones recounted,

Actually, it is just a blessing to be able to, as I said before, help and to be a support, especially in this type of environment. It is just a passion of mine and I'm really enjoying it. And what passion is, it is really useful for me because that's the main thing that's lost, especially when in this particular case when diagnosed with mental illness. A lot of things come with that.

DSP Stanz also spoke of the passion to serve. She said, "And doing what I do on a daily basis is truly isn't about the money; it's about me going in, again, with the passion. And knowing that I'm helping someone." The majority view of serving was that it was a natural part of their being. The experience that DSP Stanz shared captured this perspective:

I'm a caring person; I like to help people. In any type of direction in life, if you see a person is going, I try to help them. It could be simply in the grocery store; it could be simply, you know, at the convenience store; it could be simply at the light. Giving the homeless something to eat. I just like to help. So, my heart goes out to people that pretty much need help. So, yeah, this is how I am and I always have been.

In terms of the benefits of serving and the most impact motivation to remain in the position, DSP Stanz concluded, "So I think making them feel good, you know, as a human being. Treating them as if they did not have a disability. I treat them all the same." Rendering service "consistently for clients as a good deed" was the most impactful motivation for DSP Doe. Some DSPs followed the path of service as a result of their parents' teaching, Christian beliefs for caring for the needy, purpose, or duty in life. Serving brought joy to the DSP and to the clients. DSP Bush summarized the benefits of serving in saying, "just having the ability to serve someone else, they give me joy in serving them. and being able to do something good for someone else." In response to the most impactful motivation to remain on the job, DSP Bush said, "the motivation of me being able to care for my clients; I feel they need me."

Outlier Theme: Supervision

Twenty percent of respondents indicated that having a supervisor who listened and provided guidance to learn new tasks served as a motivating factor to remain in the position. DSP Alexander stated,

My supervisor takes the time to listen and she teaches me when I have a problem.

Sometimes supervisors are mean and when you make one mistake and they want to fire you, but having a supervisor who is willing to train you and willing to help you learn has helped me want to continue working.

DSP Johnson affirmed that her relationship with her supervisor influenced her desire to remain on the job. She stated, “You know we talk and they help me with my problems; they encourage me to pray on things. Being able to talk to my supervisor is important to me and influences my decision to remain on the job.”

Having a supervisor who is respectful and willing to provide directives in a professional and non-condescending manner played a vital role to influence 40% of the participants to remain in the position. DSP Johnson emphasized,

My supervisor doesn't raise her voice or scream and holler and that is important. If we do something that needs to be corrected, she explains things in a calm manner and I enjoy that. Every time she says I did something wrong and she corrects me, I learn from that and it helps me be a better manager. I demonstrate what I am asked to do so that others will see how to do it correctly.

Summary of Themes

Four themes emerged from the lived experiences of 10 DSPs represented in this study. The themes joy love, empathy, and service resulted from frequently used words and expressions. These themes carried specific meanings for participants that were supported with select comments. Table 2 is an illustration of frequently used words resulting in themes and their meaning.

Table 2*Summary of Themes*

Theme	Frequent words	Meaning of theme
1 Joy	Happy, family, home, joy	Happiness carrying out responsibilities for others
2 Love	Commitment, like, love	Love for individuals and individuals' love for DSPs
3 Empathy	Assist, help, helping	Relating via imagining walking in others' shoes
4 Service	Care, feeling, passion, serve, smile	Calling to restore dignity and human spirit

The themes are further summarized through linking them to the research questions and tenets of the study's theoretical framework. The major focus of the theory of embeddedness is reflected in the themes identified in this study. Chapter 5 contains this discussion and implications from the findings of the research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This qualitative phenomenological study acknowledged that there is a high turnover of direct support professionals, and that improving staff is a prominent issue in the service industry for people with IDD. While research is abundantly clear on this situation (Hewitt et al., 2018; Keesler & Troxel, 2020; Pettingell et al., 2019) for DSPs who remain in this service industry, there is less clarity with regard to reasons they choose to remain. Therefore, this study responded to this unknown through capturing the lived experiences of DSPs to determine their reasons for remaining in their job role. The participants in the study were 10 direct support professionals who work with individuals with IDD in community-based group homes in Texas.

Characteristic of the qualitative phenomenological design, the study used one-on-one interviews. Interviews were conducted over Zoom in a setting and time convenient for the participants. This form of data collection enabled me to uncover the motivations and reasons for participants' job embeddedness that may inform future efforts, legislative and funding changes, job benefits, and recruitment efforts.

This chapter contains a discussion of the findings for the four research questions. The findings are discussed in relation to those in previous studies. The chapter also includes a discussion of limitations on the findings and recommendations for application and future research based on the findings. The chapter ends with a conclusion of the study.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature

This section of the chapter is a report of the findings organized by research questions. The findings reflect responses to specific interview questions designed to elicit information most appropriate for answering the research questions. Participants' words and expressions, body

language, and voice tone provided a rich, thick description of their lived experiences that answered the questions.

Research Questions

Specific comments of participants provided direct responses for answering the research questions. Typically, specific interview questions provided answers to one of the four research questions. However, Interview Questions 1, 2, and 10 supported all research questions. The following results provide an overall meaning of job embeddedness per research question.

Research Question 1: What Are DSPs' Motivational Perspectives for Remaining in Their Job? Responses from Interview Questions 1 and 2 provided the major data for this question. Interview Questions 3, 4, and 10 also supported the answer to RQ1. Interview Question 1 asked respondents to describe their responsibilities and how they carry them out. Interview Question 2 asked respondents to describe how their responsibilities impacted their decision to remain in the position. Interview Questions 3 and 4, respectively, inquired of the influential and the most impactful motivations on the decision to remain on the job.

Participants consistently shared experiences where they listened to their clients and loved responding to their needs. They prided themselves in being needed and being available to respond. They were motivated by responses from clients, especially the response of smiling faces, which indicated their clients were pleased and happy, and in turn, the DSP experienced happiness. The job was the equivalent of home and family. Home chores, including cooking, cleaning, dispensing medications, and preparing clients for bed, were all completed with a nurturing and caring disposition as some DSPs considered their clients as their children and all likened them to a family member or someone in need. Reports in the literature illustrate that home chores participants identified for individuals with disabilities included grooming, meal

planning and preparation, recreation, community inclusion, recreation, establishing meaningful relationships, and others (Laws & Hewitt, 2020). Just as participants were committed to helping others in need, Houseworth et al. (2020) affirmed that people born with disabilities might need help attaining skills to live independently with their families or in the community.

A minority motivational perspective shared by one participant was that the job has the responsibility to help clients and in turn, was a motivating factor for remaining on the job. DSP Stanz saw this responsibility as influencing her feeling of helping others. She described the influence of her feelings as a deciding factor for remaining in the job through stating that

Truthfully, it's just knowing that again, when I walked through that door, I noticed they're happy to see me. And that's what even with, without [seeing]them on a daily basis, just me going through life period. What makes me happy is to see other people happy, so even just putting a smile on their face. That's the grace to me. So, if I see them smile, it makes me happy. So that lets me know that I'm doing something right.

Some DSPs' motivational perspective for remaining in the position stemmed from their upbringing or Christian beliefs. Considered their duty to serve and care for the needy resulted from the perspectives of "to do unto others as you would have others do unto you" as DSP Bush expressed. Others shared the perspective that persons with disabilities are often underserved and sometimes because of a lack of knowledge about how to serve them. Therefore, participants remained because they enjoyed the opportunity to learn and apply that knowledge in serving. DSP Jones summarized this perspective in the statement, "just learning more about disability itself and understanding and how to just take care of the clients." Consistent with participants' perspective on the need for serving persons with disabilities and training to implement best practice in serving them, researchers acknowledge that people with IDD are more likely than

nondisabled people and people with other disabilities to be victims of abuse, neglect, mistreatment, and exploitation (Baladerian et al., 2013; Shapiro, 2018). Further, the need for training has been emphasized for DSP for persons with IDD (Friedman, 2020; Pettingell et al., 2022). These researchers suggested that training would decrease instances of neglect in serving persons with IDD.

Responses to RQ1 supported suppositions in the literature that DSPs may remain embedded in their job role through such motivating perspectives as hope, appreciation, self-efficacy, and value (Dawson, 2007; Stone & Weiner, 2001). Participants most often stressed the perspective that they developed meaningful relationships with clients and sometimes with supervisors through activities aimed at developing social skills, engaging with the community, and in essence, according to DSP Stanz, "providing, again, like a safety net." Participants valued the care they provided. DSP Byrd emphasized being "sure they're being loved the right way[and] taking care of His [God's] children who can't take care of themselves." These perspectives are in concert with the research on job embeddedness. For example, their perspectives can be seen as an emotional strand in the web of links to the job. Steindórsdóttir et al. (2020) suggested that the more strands employees have to create the web, the more embedded they will be. Strands can be a person's work relationships, project commitments, or emotions connected to not wanting to disappoint people (Gibbs & Duke, 2021). Participants concluded they had no intention of leaving the profession; the emotional strand of caring and loving was a strong link suggesting that they would sacrifice more if they left the profession. In sum, the most frequently used expressions for the meaning of love (like, family/home, commitment; N = 66); serving (i.e., smile, dignity, passion, respect; N = 40); and helping (i.e., assists, empathy; N = 40) provided a simple answer to RQ1.

Research Question 2: What Is the Lived Experience of DSPs Relating to

Professional Relationships at Work in Their Job Retention? The interview questions for Research Question 2 asked respondents to describe the professional relationships developed while working as a DSP (IQ7), how the relationships affected their work (IQ8), and how the relationships affected their decision to remain on the job (IQ9). The lived experiences of most participants did not focus on developing professional relationships while working as a DSP. The few participants who developed professional relationships identified relationships with their current or past associates or supervisors. One participant, DSP Alexander, described a relationship with coworkers when working in another facility where they would relieve each other when necessary and would "communicate on what each person has done in the daytime." Those identifying supervisors credited them with training them on some job responsibilities and how to communicate with clients who presented challenges because of their mental disabilities. Others identified associates or nurses who trained them on dispensing medication and other areas of patient care.

In response to how professional relationships affect work, DSP Alexander referenced her compassion for the treatment of clients and the employee-employer relationship and explained,

Because as I have this thing in my mind, that could be me. You know. That could be my son or I have two grandsons. It can be one of them, you know, and I wouldn't want nobody to mistreat them. So that pushes me more in the company itself, you know; the people employed me, they're great.

DSP Alexander further explained the influence of the professional relationship with the employer as a motivator to remain on the job in comparison with affiliations with other

employers. DSP Alexander shared the following experiences in reference to the current and former supervisor:

I've never seen her upset. But there's some things that I'm trying to learn more. She takes the time and she teaches me when I have a problem, I'll call [her]. She listens. And then she tells me how to go about to solve the problem. Okay, well, I worked with another company some years ago. They told me to figure it out, you know, and I told them, you find somebody else to take care of your patients. I just quit. Right? And I had nobody there. Right? So, if she couldn't tell me how to do something the right way, I didn't need to work there. Right. But this company is different.

Other reports of lived experiences regarding professional relationships and how they affected their decision to remain on the job focused on the ability to be able to talk to their supervisors, learn from other associates, including nurses, and to be inspired to learn how to approach and care for clients. The results of these relationships led to better relationships with clients, who for the 90% of respondents, served as the reason for DSPs to remain on the job. DSP Johnson shared the experience of being inspired to learn about medications for her clients. She said,

She's the nurse she influenced me. When the nurse comes over here, and she does medicines, I'm right here because I enjoy learning. So, I sit there and see who takes what, and believe it or not, I have studied all of these medications. I know what they offer. So, I know what everybody takes and I enjoyed doing [this]that's helping the clients with a medication so they can feel better. And I like doing it right. So, when I mess up and [the nurse] she looks good on me, I listen. Because every time she looks good on me, she said I learned something new.

DSP Stanz agreed with the importance of knowing about the medications for clients. Unlike engaging in self-training that DSP Johnson described, DSP Stanz had formal pharmaceutical training providing her with some medical history. She noted the importance of this knowledge in commenting, "Again, it helps me understand and know how important it is as far as you know, administering the medicine giving it the right way, the right time, you know, the right route, you know, those types of things."

The research on the work of DSPs also is limited in terms of professional relationships developed that influence the decisions for these persons to remain on the job. Considerations of the eligibility requirements of having a minimum educational level may offer insight into this limitation.

Most DSPs only need a high school diploma, a driver's license and be able to pass a background check to work in the position (Larson et al., 2016). Additionally, there is a lack of professional status of DSPs observable in fragmented training guidelines among states and low wages paid to these professionals (Hasan, 2013; Pettingell et al., 2022). Pettingell et al. (2022) affirmed the DSP profession is undervalued and the lack of access to progressive opportunities is a clear indicator of the underappreciation of the DSP workforce who include personal care aides, direct support aides, and caretakers. These progressive opportunities are represented in formal training, conferences, and other gatherings where DSPs would likely develop professional relationships other than with their supervisors and associates in the workplace.

The results of this study regarding training for participants are similar to that found in the literature. Researchers have reported that due to fragmented training guidelines for training DSPs, long-term care providers are often required to determine training needs and develop corresponding training tools (Hasan, 2013; Hewitt & Lakin, 2001). Participants reported training

offered through their agency in the form of orientating them to the procedures of the facility and identifying their responsibilities. Some agencies offered weekly training that involved different topics to include information on patients, communication strategies to include how to speak on the phone, medications, and nutrition matters. However, training most often involved a supervisor informing the DSP on such matters as how to manage care of patients and the facility on a frequent basis.

Key in the training was the appreciation and comfort participants experienced in learning from supervisors they admired. DSP Jones summarized the position of the majority as follows:

I've developed a lot of personal relationships with you know, directors of nursing, administration, things like that good relationships, 10–12-year relationships, who've become really good friends of mine who tend to keep me motivated and up to date on things that I need to look for and watch for, and especially how to take care of myself. But a lot of good relationships professional.

Key also was that participants had opportunities to receive some form of training frequently in relationships with supervisors and other personnel. In a 2021 DSP survey report, 41% of DSPs stated they would be more inclined to stay with their organization if they had career development opportunities, including continuous in-service or on-the-job training (Galindo et al., 2021). The results also showed that DSPs who were pleased with how their organizations demonstrated support were happier with their organizations overall, with the majority indicating that they would be much more likely to remain at their organizations if greater appreciation for their work was shown (Galindo et al., 2021). Participants in this study felt their work was valued, and the overall relationship with employers and staff offered a good work environment. However, contrary to the research, professional relationships were not a

decisive factor for remaining in the position; rather, the relationship with patients was the deciding factor.

Research Question 3: What Is the Lived Experience of DSPs Relating to Community Connections on Their Intent to Remain on the Job? This question asked participants to verbalize their lived experiences relating to community connections on their intent to remain on the job. The interview questions for RQ3 asked respondents to describe the community connections developed or retained as a result of working as a DSP (IQ5), and the community connections that influenced their decision to continue working as a DSP (IQ6). Four of 10 participants did not identify specific community connections. The majority of participants (90%) referred to community connections as their work, clients, the community in which they worked, and the church. Their lived experiences included “this job has taught me how to communicate better” (DSP Alexander); enjoying “the supervisors and the people, the actual staff that work in the home with me” (DSP Williams); “just the work” (DSP Jones); “I just like working with them” (DSP Doe); “my church connected me with this community” (DSP Bush); and “being in the church” (DSP Stanz).

Work experiences contributed to participants receiving training from supervisors, being able to talk with them, feeling connected to the homeless, developing friendships, and feeling a sense of helpfulness to the community, showing love and support. The meanings associated with the community work connection was valuable but differed among DSPs. For DSP Alexander the work experiences meant that “They show me how to not take shortcuts, but to go to it.” While DSP Williams explained the work experience as a community connection for her. She shared, “I enjoy it. While I enjoy working with all of them, I’ve made, you know, friends with all of them as well, too.”

Two participants described their lived experiences relating to the research question as connections with the church that transcended to connections with the work of a DSP. DSP Stanz shared the experience from the following perspective:

I've always had that connection with the church. So, when I got into that field, it wasn't hard. It wasn't hard at all. That connection, along with the type of person that I am, it wasn't hard at all. Being in the church, so one of the 10 commandments is love thy neighbor. So going in with that, again, I treat them all the same. And that's basically it. I just treat them all the same. And the heart that I have, the heart that I've grown going to church all my life, so that's why I've gotten my strength, God, and my knowledge of caring and loving people.

The experience that DSP Bush shared had some similarities with DSP Stanz's perspective. According to DSP Bush, "it [the community connection] has to be my church, because the principles that it teaches to do for others who can't do for themselves." DSP Bush explained,

Before I was employed as a DSP, I volunteered. So, the church allowed me to volunteer and on Sundays I would volunteer and help out in the special needs wing before I was actually a hired employee. And so, my church connected me with this community.

In response to how the community connections contributed to DSPs remaining on the job, some participants differed in their response. Some participants indicated that there were no influences from these connections. For example, in reference to connections from so, the community in which they work, DSP Williams identified facilities that differed from the community where she lived but said they did not contribute too much to her remaining on her job, although "The community does have you know, things on their side of town that we don't

have on our side." She did indicate that the connection with employees was a contributing factor. Regarding the influence of connections with previous employees, DSP Alexander said, "They really have not, I'm able to separate the two; so, it's a friendship." However, DSP Bush said of the influence of connection with the church, "Those foundation principles that that my church teaches and preaches, I just carried it over into my job. And so that's allowed me to stay connected." Participants concluded that the connection with their clients or patients contributed to their decision to remain on the job.

Experience stories of satisfaction with working with client's support findings from the literature regarding what motivates individuals to remain in the caregiving profession. Participants represented employees in residential facilities where the turnover rate is exceptionally high (Hensel et al., 2015). However, researchers suggest that intrinsic values positively affect staff retention such as embedded emotions to include self-efficacy and appreciation (Flynn et al., 2020). The connection between participants remaining and researchers' position on why they stay was clearly evident in participants' descriptions of the joy and happiness they felt for serving persons who needed them, and the appreciation they experienced from the smiles of their clients indicating a job well done. The responses for this research question revealed that participants' decisions to remain were influenced by the community connection they developed with their clients and supervisors in the workplace. They developed an affinity to them, an expression of DSP Bush that resounded among most DSPs in this study as a family kinship.

Research Question 4. What Is the Lived Experience of DSPs Relating to Intrinsic Values on Their Intent to Remain on the Job? Research Question 4 examined the lived experiences of DSPs related to intrinsic values on their intent to remain on the job. The interview

questions for Research Question 4 asked respondents to describe the motivations that influenced their decision to remain on the job (IQ3) and which motivations have had the most impact on their decision to remain on the job (IQ4). Intrinsic values for participants in this study were linked to their feelings about their clients, their needs, and how they should be treated. Intrinsic values were illustrated through experience stories that showed compassion in reference to participants' own backgrounds, how participants perceived fairness, Christian, family values, and humanity, and their self-efficacy. These stories revealed what motivated participants to remain on the job.

Some participants identified the condition of their clients with their own present of possibly future condition. DSP Johnson referred to her grandmother's disability and the respect she has for persons with IDD. DSP Alexander gave the following account of personal commitment regarding motivations influencing the decision to remain in the profession.

I have a number of people in my family that are in the position of some of the people that I care for. So, it's, it's heartfelt and sincere. And again, because I know what has been done for them, I have no problem giving of myself to individual who cannot give of themselves.

DSP Jones also referred to family situations as a motivating decision to remain. DSP Jones shared,

It really stems from family. We never in my family put our relatives, whether they have mental disabilities or physical geriatric disabilities, we always kept the family at home. Just restoring the dignity and the independence of the individuals and when you have someone that you can just count on or motivate you to deal with being more independent,

being more secure within who they are is such a big game for me. Yeah, that motivates me. For them to feel better about themselves. That's a motivating factor.

Another participant, DSP Alexander explained,

Because as I have this thing in my mind, that could be me. That could be my son or one of my two grandsons. I wouldn't want nobody to mistreat them. So that pushes me more in the company itself.

Other participants were influenced by such Christian values associated with human needs. DSP Stanz provided the following perspective:

So, I think making them feel good, you know, as a human being and walking around, and treating them just as if they don't have an ability or disability, I think, you know, that gives them some type of happy way of living, happy way of life. Because I hear a lot of like you know, [how they are] kind of down sometimes when it comes to their way of life, or how they are, which is out of their control. But, you know, they don't see it that way, right. But I see them, you know, as one of us. We all are the same, we are all God's people.

Also reflective of Christian and family values, along with implications of self-efficacy, DSP Byrd said,

The clients, they motivate me. They make me want to stay. And my boss see makes me stay through inspiration and encouragement in talking with them about church. So, they encouraged me to let me know more of how God is working in this place. With them with me, it was a job. Because they love me, because they love you, I will say thank you. [I see] The same values that my mom taught me when I was a little girl to be respectful. They respect me. And that will make me love the way and stay here because they care.

My boss has encouraged me. When I go through some physical time, she's there to give encouraging words. And she cares about the people, the clients. And she's just a motivator. I believe, I know, she's one of God. So that is what motivates me.

Participants also provided experiences that revealed they were motivated solely by self-efficacy that was enhanced by their work with clients. In response to what motivates staying in the profession, DSP Smith -1 stated, "So your ability to communicate with them motivates you to keep doing the job. The fact that you can always come at me want to talk and ask questions." DSP Williams responded, "They look so forward to me, you know, being there. I just love my job." Finally, DSP Doe recounted the lived experience in the statement, "So I was working here with them and like I've known them for a long time. Like I'd be happy to see them, they'd be happy to see me. So, they're like family. I like working with them." Revealing that money was not a factor, DSP Bush gave the following account of the self-satisfaction received from working as a DSP:

Really, I think is it's not about the money because I have another job; it's my guys, the guys that I work with, me coming in and me just having the ability to serve someone else. And particularly to serve the guys that I've worked with, and I work with the previous employer. Same thing. The people, they give me joy in serving them, and being able to do something good for someone else. I just feel this because I could have gone [sic] somewhere else and worked somewhere else. But me being able to put a smile on someone else's face, put a smile on my client's face that has allowed me to remain in this position and in this field.

In essence, although experiences varied, common among expressions for the motivation that most impacted the decision to remain in the work of a DSP were the love for the clients and

the work and clients' joy and happiness. These motives were engrained in the DSP also feeling loved. These motives were illustrated in the clients' needs to learn, to talk and be listened to, to be treated like family, and to have their needs addressed. DSP Smith-1 referred to talking and listening to clients as the most motivating factor in the statement,

This makes me feel good wanting me to be there. If they have a problem, I try to do my best talks. When they talk about nursing, diagnoses, or medication then I sit and listen.

And do you think that the fact that you're talking and listening is having an impact on you staying in the job? Yeah.

The love for clients and satisfying the needs of both clients and the DSP were explained in multiple ways. DSP Johnson explained, "Well, they need me and I come. Even on my off days, I ride a bus just to see what they're doing. I love my work." DSP Stanz shared, "What makes me happy is to see other people happy; so even to just put a smile on their face, that's the grace to me." DSP Stanz concluded " So if I see them smile, it makes me happy. So that lets me know that I'm doing something right." In referring to a life-long practice of caring for people, DSP Williams said,

I think I've been taking care of people all my life. Yeah, it's just in me. So just love taking care of people helping people being able to help somebody. You know, they[patients] just feel like family to me, no matter the color, the race; I mean, I love all of them.

Love for clients, joy of serving, Christian values, and knowledge constituted a mixture of participants' responses. This is visible in experiences that DSP Bush shared.

The motivator is joy, me bringing joy to my clients. The joy that I have. It's, you can't put a price on it that motivates me every day. That I know I can put a smile on someone else's face. Okay, I'm saying I get motivated because it's no other job that I've had, no other

second job that I've had that brings me joy. I deliver packages that don't give me joy; it's just a box. But when I'm interacting and knowing that I can make my client feel good about himself when I'm combing his hair, motivates me to come every day. The motivation is me being able to care for my clients, being able to assist them when I know they can't assist themselves, having to help [when I] feel they need my help.

Further illustrations of this point and the theme of empathy are shared in DSP Arrington's comments: "The one motivating factor is because if it weren't for the grace of God, I would be in the position that these people are in. So that's the motivating factor along with the personal side, compassion, the love." A definition of empathy in the literature is "the ability to imagine the other's experiences" (cognitive) and "the ability to directly perceive the other's experiences" (perceptive; Worthington, 2021, p. 11). Accordingly, Worthington (2021) indicated that cognitive empathy is discerning the other person's experience and interpretation from their point of view. Empathy for participants in the study meant that enhanced knowledge of persons with IDD and their needs would lead to better treatment of these individuals. In that respect, DSP Jones and Doe connected the need for knowledge of clients' disabilities and the need for consistency in their lives with the most motivating factors contributing to remaining in the profession. DSP Jones shared that his patients was the most motivating factor and explained the importance of "learning more and more in understanding mental illness and disabilities, especially in our communities as a whole. Especially this day and time it can happen to anyone." DSP Jones continued to conclude that "Just that's what motivates me more; just learning more about disability itself and understanding and how to just take care of my patients." This point was supported in DSP Doe's remarks that the "Motivating factor is just consistency for your routine and consistency for them; the consistency of being in individuals' lives."

Contrary to such factors as wages, insufficient training, and benefits factoring in reasons DSPs do not stay in the position (Friedman, 2018), the results of this study did not find mention of them as contributing factors for staying in the position or income being a factor. Rather, some participants mentioned that money and the opportunity to work evenings as a second job was an initial factor for entering the profession, but no longer contributed to remaining in the position. However, the responses for RQ4 find support in the literature regarding the role of intrinsic values on DSPs' decision to remain in the profession. Intrinsic motivation as a factor for DSPs to remain in the position is discussed in terms of their perspective of organizational fit, commitment to assisting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the fulfillment of their work that positively affects their personal lives (Hensel et al., 2015; Mitchell & Lee, 2001).

Similarities in prior studies and the current study regarding intrinsic motivation as a factor for DSPs remaining in the position included values associated with helping to make clients with IDD feel good and better about their lives. Survey results of DSPs revealed they remained in the position because they were making a difference in the lives of people with IDD (Hensel et al., 2015). The survey also showed that DSPs remained because work positively affected their personal lives (Hensel et al., 2015). Crane and Havercamp (2020) suggested that some motivations for staying in the position are also reasons for leaving the profession. Participants in the current study reported experiences in which the motivation for staying were linked to values instilled from early childhood, compassion for persons with IDD, and the fit between the organization's values of serving and respecting persons with IDD and those of DSPs employed. In terms of turnover rates, the results of RQ4 suggest that these participants would add to prior findings that 30% to 60% of DSPs remained in the position because of intrinsic motivation despite the high level of turnover for others (Lee et al., 2014).

Findings for the research questions coincide with themes that emerged from participants' reports of their lived experiences. This discussion concludes with a snapshot review of findings through identifying the most meaningful words and expressions as a summary of findings. Table 3 is a cross-reference of themes, research questions, and appropriate tenets of the theoretical framework.

Table 3

Cross-Reference of Results Connected to Theoretical Framework

Research question	Theme	Theoretical framework test
1: Motivational perspective	Love, joy	Hope; intrinsic motivation
2: Professional relationships	Love	Web links; support; training
3: Community connections	Love	Web links; self-efficacy
4: Intrinsic values	Service; empathy, love	Appreciation; value; self-efficacy

The cross-referencing in Table 3 shows an overlapping of themes and tenets of the job embeddedness theory with research questions. According to the theory of job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001), employees are more likely to become embedded when there are multiple strands created in a web of links to the job (Lee et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2001). The strands evident in the current study were related to work relationships with clients and to some degree, supervisors, emotions for wanting to serve clients, and commitment to completing job responsibilities. Therefore, the theme of love, which referred to a reciprocal feeling between clients and DSPs, was threaded throughout the research questions. This thread suggests that love was a leading, motivating factor for participants' remaining in their field.

Limitations

Limitations of a study refer to the conditions an investigator cannot control (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The limitations for this study are related to the nature of the study and the participant's responses. This qualitative study relied on self-reported data and a purposive sample. Some participants' experiences may have been limited based on the questions posed. For example, questions regarding the nature of community relationships developed while serving as a DSP were often misunderstood as meaning what was available in the community such as eating or housing facilities. Therefore, some participants were not clear on having had experiences appropriate for collecting information based on this aspect of the problem investigated.

The results are limited to participants providing truthful and complete responses for which credibility could not be confirmed. However, strategies for the possible reduction or elimination of these limitations included establishing criteria for participation and screening potential participants employing the criteria. Additional strategies included developing rapport with participants, establishing a nonthreatening environment, using pseudonyms, and disclosing all procedures for protecting participants' confidentiality. Rephrasing questions to elicit appropriate responses also helped to reduce the possibility of inaccuracies in the data collected.

Finally, a disruption in the data collection period for participants in the two agencies may have limited the study's results. A difference of three weeks for some participants to engage in interviews may have permitted some participants to disclose their participation and discuss their responses. However, comparing the results to those in prior studies suggested participants' views were in concert with previous findings and suppositions made in the literature.

Conclusions

The results revealed that DSPs often remain in their position because of intrinsic motivation. Four themes that emerged from participants' lived experiences illustrated their most impactful motivation for remaining in their job. The themes of love, joy, empathy, and service emerged from responses to inquiries about job responsibilities, professional relationships, community connections, and motivations for remaining in the role of a DSP. Additionally, interview responses provided answers to the four research questions, revealing direct linkages to the themes.

Concluded from the lived experiences shared were that participants had no intention of leaving the profession; the emotional strand of caring and loving was a strong link suggesting that they would sacrifice more if they left the profession. In sum, the most frequently used expressions caring the meaning of love (i.e., like, family/home, commitment; N = 66); serving (i.e., smile, dignity, passion, respect; N = 40); and helping (i.e., assists, empathy; N = 40) provided simple explanations of intrinsic values related to the clients being the main motivation for remaining in the job and the supervisors and work environment following as a second reason. The connection to supervisors was influential as their behaviors were linked to the intrinsic values of Christian views, respect, and compassion for the need to serve. Participants in this study felt their work was valued, and the overall relationship with employers and staff offered a good work environment. However, contrary to previous research, professional relationships were not a decisive factor for remaining in the position; the relationship with patients was the deciding factor.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although studies (Bogenschutz et al., 2015; Hewitt et al., 2018; NCI, 2019; Pettingell et al., 2022) indicated DSP turnover is influenced by extrinsic factors such as low pay, lack of adequate benefits, lack of opportunities for upward mobility, and lack of sufficient training, the findings of this study support the theoretical framework tenets of job embeddedness including fit and sacrifice (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). Accordingly, Mitchell and Lee (2001) defined fit as “an individual’s compatibility with their work and non-work setting and sacrifice as the perceived cost of material or psychological benefit they may be forfeiting leaving a job” (p. 218). DSPs unanimously indicated their motivation to remain in the position was derived from intrinsic values. DSPs reported being attached to their clients and having an innate desire to serve. According to Wiener et al. (2009), DSPs often develop attachments to individuals living in long-term care facilities, and the associated attachment influences them to continue working in their job. Many (40%) of the DSPs indicated they cared for family members before they were in paid positions to provide care to individuals with IDD. Their personal experiences impacted their feelings and decisions about their career goals. Many (90%) of the DSPs reported being unable to conceptualize working in any other field or industry; hence, they measured job satisfaction differently.

DSPs in this study also unanimously reported a commitment to the job despite receiving below-average wages. These findings are consistent with Hensel et al. (2015) who indicated DSPs stay because of personal motivations such as having a sense of pride in making a difference in the lives of individuals with IDD and feeling good about their personal life because of the accomplishments in their job. However, the findings of this study contrast with other studies (Bishop et al., 2008; Morgan et al., 2013) that indicate the intent to remain in a job is

primarily related to extrinsic rewards such as higher pay and a competitive benefits package that include retirement and affordable health insurance. Thus, future studies should aim to reconcile the conflict of whether intrinsic or extrinsic rewards embed an employee in their work. Future research should examine intrinsic and extrinsic values to help employers develop holistic human resource strategies that support employees' emotional and material needs.

Recommendations for Practice

Conclusions drawn from the study's findings have implications for practice and future research. Among implications for the profession, DSP agencies should evaluate measures to recruit employees with experience providing services to family members or friends. These employees are more likely to have extensive training and may have more of a commitment to remain in the field despite experiencing hardships related to pay and benefits. Additionally, several DSPs in this study indicated they desired to start a business or open a home for people with disabilities. They stated they wanted to bring positive change to the industry and provide individualized care based on their experiences and expertise. To support these DSP aspirations, state agencies such as the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) should consider providing opportunities for mentorship and shadowing for DSPs who desire to become business owners. Although providing care is one aspect of operating a provider agency, there are other facets, such as understanding how to comply with state and federal guidelines, budgets, cost analysis, payroll, and managing employees, that DSPs would have to learn to be successful.

Additionally, although burnout was not vividly illustrated in the lived experiences, DSPs did experience personal challenges that required adjustments in scheduled work assignments that required them to be relieved and engage in counseling from supervisors. Thus, provider agencies

should encourage self-care and provide opportunities for DSPs to check in with their supervisors on a regular basis to attempt to prevent burnout and disruptions in schedules.

Concluding Perspective

Conducting this study provided greater insight into DSP's lives and personal experiences. My first job in the field of disability services was as a DSP; thus, I have personal knowledge and compassion for the hard work and essential services DSPs provide. However, some of the experiences of the DSPs in this study took me by surprise. I did not expect to learn that DSPs are motivated by the need to be needed by the individuals they serve. I also did not expect to learn that their commitment to the field was influenced by their love for someone with disabilities in their family. This study positively impacted me and reinforces my dedication to disability services. I am more committed to work harder to ensure that all members of the service industry including, individuals with IDD and DSPs are appreciated and treated with the dignity, care and respect they deserve.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date: _____ Participant: _____ Place/Location:

Introduction

Establish rapport with participant (greeting, appreciation, sharing relevant information about self and interest in the topic). Briefly describe study/consent form (ensure participant is aware of rights, including not responding to any question that makes that elicits uncomfortable feelings).

Instructions to Participant

First, I will ask questions about you that are demographic in nature. Next, I will ask your opinion on 10 questions associated with your experiences and responsibilities as a DSP, including what motivates you to remain in your job, your professional relationships, and your community connections to your job as a DSP.

Your answers are your opinions based on your experiences; there are no perceived correct or incorrect answers. As you have permitted, I will tape-record this conversation and take notes where I am reminded to ask for examples so I clearly understand the meaning of your comments. Remember, you can skip any question you don't want to answer. Do you have questions before we start the recorded interview?

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your DSP job- describe your responsibilities and how you carry them out? All RQs
2. How have your responsibilities impacted your decision to remain in the position? All RQs

3. Please describe the motivations you feel have influenced your decision to remain on the job? RQ1 RQ4
4. Which motivations have had the most impact on your decision to remain on the job? RQ1 RQ4
5. Please describe the community connections that you have developed or retained as a result of your job working as a DSP. RQ3
6. Please describe the community connections that have influenced your decision to continue working as a DSP. RQ3
7. Please describe the professional relationships you have developed working as a DSP. RQ2
8. Tell me about how the professional relationships have affected your work as a DSP. RQ2
9. Tell me how the professional relationships have affected your decision to remain on the job. RQ2
10. Do you have any other information you would like to share concerning your reasons for remaining in the position? RQs 1-4

Appendix B: Permission Letter to Conduct Research

Home and Community-based Services Providers

December 5, 2022

Ref: Request for permission to carry out research in your organization.

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am a doctoral candidate at Abilene Christian University studying Organizational Leadership with a concentration in Conflict Resolution. In partial fulfillment of the requirements, all students must complete research projects. Therefore, I kindly seek permission to conduct research in your organization on direct support professionals working in long-term care facilities. My research is in the form of a one-on-one interview with consenting volunteers and particularly references reasons why direct support professionals remain in the position. Professional and ethical guidelines will be followed in the conduct of the research. The names of agencies or participants will not be used, and the time for data collection will not interfere with the employee's work schedule. Further, the information gathered will be used for academic purposes only.

If you grant permission, please provide email contact information so that I can contact the participants. Your most immediate reply to this request is appreciated.

Respectfully,

Athena Thomas

Appendix C: Invitation Letter

Dear Direct Support Professional:

I am a doctoral candidate at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas. This letter is written to invite you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine why Direct Support Professionals who experience low pay, lack of adequate benefits, lack of adequate training and a lack of upward mobility remain in the position. If you decide to participate, you will have an individual interview through Zoom to answer a series of open-ended questions about your reason and motivations for continuing to work in long term care programs with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The interview will be scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time and will take no longer than one hour.

Participation is voluntary and there is no compensation for participating. This research, as any other research poses a potential breach of confidentiality. The risk is minimal and measures to reduce such risks include using false names, storing raw data in the researcher's password protected computer and a locked file cabinet, and destroying data after the required period for maintaining data has expired.

If you are available and interested in participating in this research, please contact me via email @ xxxxxxxx@acu.edu or by phone at xxx xxx-xxxx to ask any questions you may have about the study. A consent form and the questions that will ensure you eligibility to participate in the study are attached to this email. After you have received responses to any questions you may have and agree to participate, please answer the questions on the data collection screening tool form, sign the consent form and return them within 7 days. I will then contact you to schedule the interview.

Respectfully,

Athena M. Thomas

Appendix D: Informed Consent

Introduction: A Phenomenological Study examining Job Embeddedness of Direct Support Professionals in Community Based Services Programs: Why do they Stay?

This study is being conducted to examine the lived experiences of direct support professionals to understand the reasons direct support professionals remain in the position despite experiencing low wages, inadequate benefits, lack of training and lack of opportunities for upward mobility. Determining the reasons direct support professionals remain in the position is crucial to understanding how to eliminate the turnover crisis in long term care, community-based services. You may be able to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask the researcher any questions that you may have about the study.

You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your family doctor or a family member. Participant Criteria: To participate in the study, you must be employed at a provider agency, have at least 2 years' experience, a high school diploma and be at least 20 years old. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this research is to understand the lived experiences of direct support professionals working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in long term services programs. The study seeks to understand the reasons direct support professionals remain in the position. This study is significant because understanding the lived experiences of direct support

professionals will help stakeholders increase retention by developing best practices that can be implemented universally across provider organizations and with families of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. If selected for participation, you will be asked to attend one visit with the study staff over the course of one day. Each visit is expected to take 30 minutes to one hour. During the course of this visit, you will be asked to respond to questions posed by the researcher in one-to-one interviews. The interview will be recording using an audio tape recorder. Your identity will be protected using pseudonyms (false names). Your name will not be identified in the audio recordings or transcript of the audio recordings.

RISKS & BENEFITS:

There are risks to taking part in this research study. Below is a list of the foreseeable risks, including the seriousness of those risks and how likely they are to occur: Breach of confidentiality is a not a serious risk and it not likely to occur. There are potential benefits to participating in this study. Such benefits may include changes in intellectual disability services to reduce the direct support professional turnover crisis. However, the researcher cannot guarantee that you will experience any personal benefits from participating in this study.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board and members of the researcher's dissertation committee. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be protected by using false names, storing raw data in a locked cabinet and destroying data.

COLLECTION OF IDENTIFIABLE PRIVATE INFORMATION OR BIOSPECIMENS:

After identifying information is removed, your data will **not** be used for any other research purposes other than those described herein.

Additional Information

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Athena Thomas, Doctoral Candidate and may be contacted at xxx xxx-xxxx or by email xxxxxxx@acu.edu. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Dr. Julie Lane, Ed.D. @ xxxxxx@acu.edu. If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Executive Director of Research, Qi Hang, at xxxxxx@acu.edu. Ten direct support professionals will be enrolled in the study. Your participation may be ended early by the researchers for certain reasons. For example, we may end your participation if you no longer meet study requirements, the researchers believe it is no longer in your best interest to continue participating, you do not follow the instructions provided by the researchers, or the study is ended. You will be contacted by the researchers and given further instructions in the event that you are removed from the study.

Consent Signature Section

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature

Date