

# Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Darline Wilkenson

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Review Committee

Dr. Levita Bassett, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Patsy Kasen, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2023

Abstract

Effective Strategies to Reduce Employee Turnover at U.S. Higher Education Institutions

by

Darline Wilkenson

MS, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2018

BS, DeVry University, 2016

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2023

## Abstract

Employee intent to leave the organization has the potential for adverse business outcomes. Business owners are concerned with employee intent to leave, as it is the number one predictor of actual employee turnover. Grounded in transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies higher education institution (HEI) leaders use to minimize employees' intent to leave. The participants were six leaders of two HEI sector organizations who minimized employee intent to leave. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and a review of organization employee handbooks. Through thematic analysis, three themes were identified: (a) positive workplace culture characterized by transparent and efficient communication, (b) implementation of a salary and benefits strategy that incorporates rewards and recognition, and (c) promotion of employee empowerment through training and opportunities for personal growth. A key recommendation is for HEI leaders to implement a positive workplace culture through effective communication and monthly employee recognition activities. The implications for positive social change include the potential to retain valued employees, foster good social development, and support the local community workforce.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my esteemed and cherished husband, Louis T. Wilkenson, whose consistent and unshakable support has served as a catalyst for my enduring motivation and inspiration throughout the course of my scholarly journey. I also dedicate this scholarly endeavor to my lovely children, namely Emilie Wilkenson and Louis T. Wilkenson III, who, in their wisdom, comprehended the necessity of tranquility within my psyche to successfully achieve this intellectual odyssey. Their conduct, characterized by actions that bestowed upon me the desired serenity to pursue this dream, merits sincere acknowledgment. I want to thank my late mother, Marie Rose I. Colagène, for everything she did to help me become the person I am today, and I dedicate my doctoral studies to her. I humbly extend my profound dedication to the esteemed realm of academia, acknowledging and revering their selfless sacrifices and pivotal contributions in the arduous task of nurturing and shaping individuals into exemplary leaders through the transformative power of education. They bestow a surplus that shall forever exceed any compensation rendered. To my sisters, Raymonde Luma and Carole Joseph, thank you for your relentless belief in me and your constant support that push me to continually strive for more and to become more.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to diverse individuals who provided me with invaluable support and encouragement throughout the course of my doctoral pursuit. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. LeVita Y. Bassett, Dr. Patsy Kasen, Dr. Al Endres, and Dr. Cheryl Lentz for their outstanding assistance. Your direction and leadership were essential to the achievement of my goals. In addition, I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Inez Black, Dr. Charlie Chao, and Dr. Beverly Muhammad for their contribution to the Doctor of Determination (DoD) network group established by Mr. Marvin Foster.

To the man who started DoD, Mr. Marvin Foster, I want to thank you for your willingness to help others and ensuring that everyone survived this experience. It succeeded! Your vision allowed so many of us to thrive and be strong along the journey. Without the support of this DoD family that you have fathered, I would not have been able to make it to the finish line so quickly. DoD has grown into a larger and more powerful family, which has contributed to various achievements for its members.

I also would like to express heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed friends and cherished family members whose unshakable belief in my abilities and steadfast support have provided an invaluable environment for personal and intellectual development. Their constant presence and willingness to lend an attentive ear have been instrumental in fostering my growth and progress.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The primary aim of all commercial endeavors businesses is profitability. Over the long run, an organization's stability and growth depend on how well its leaders retain their employees (Qin et al., 2022). A high personnel turnover rate directly impacts a company's income and profitability. For businesses in the education and skill development sectors of the 21st century, the capacity to attract, nurture, engage, manage performance, and retain talent continues to be a significant strategic problem (Jibril & Yeşiltaş, 2022). COVID-19 has been an agonizing wake-up call for everyone involved in the higher education sector, including students, instructors, policymakers, and society (Bhagat & Kim, 2020). Higher education institution (HEI) leaders need to understand that the 2019 pandemic changed the nature of work, and the labor market demands that they continue addressing such changes (J. Jung et al., 2021).

Following the pandemic, several academics and staff left their jobs at HEIs because of dissatisfaction with (a) pay, (b) their current institution's policies regarding remote, (c) flexible work schedules, and (d) increased workloads, forcing employers of all stripes to compete for their workforces (Leidner et al., 2021). Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental impact on social interactions due to regulations requiring social distance, which resulted in companies closing and residents being forbidden from congregating in large groups (Vaccaro et al., 2020). High staff turnover negatively influences the productivity and performance of organizations since it disrupts the workflow and creates costs for recruiting, hiring, and training (Gan & Voon, 2021). Like many other companies, HEIs are looking for strategies to keep their personnel during this

season of turmoil. This study explored effective strategies that some U.S. HEI leaders use to reduce high employee turnover.

### **Background of the Problem**

People are happiest in relationships when they find themselves in situations that bring mutual benefits, and employment is no different. Employee retention is critical to a company's ability to accomplish tactical goals while being solvent. Chiat and Panatik (2019) asserted that businesses in a competitive climate have difficulty retaining talented employees. In the United States, employee turnover is a severe issue for HEIs. Whether voluntary or involuntary, employee turnover can negatively affect employee morale and organizational performance, resulting in lower productivity (Liu et al., 2012). Leaders at U.S. HEIs fail to maintain a healthy and effective workforce, which harms students' academic progress and learning opportunities (Qin et al., 2022). Furthermore, Qin et al. (2022) assessed that colleges should meet the new requirements of economic and social change for higher education, develop new ways to train talent, and raise students' moral and ethical standards to serve society. Organizations strive to retain top performers because the cost to recruit, select, and train new employees increases when organizational knowledge is lost (Alam & Asim, 2019).

Employers implementing features to enhance organizational attractiveness better retain their valuable employees (Alshamrani et al., 2023). Leaders should try to use comprehensive succession planning programs, automate knowledge-centric organizational procedures, and focus on markets based on human capital readiness (Serenko, 2022). Employees with extensive establishment knowledge are valuable

resources for public HEIs (An, 2019). Educational institution leaders must use effective strategies to reduce the harmful effects of employee turnover on the organization and economy. The costs associated with employee turnover significantly impact an organization's output and revenues (H. S. Jung et al., 2021). Employee turnover can lead to skill failures and negatively influence financial results (Carter et al., 2019). For this reason, it is essential to identify current retention tactics to reduce employee turnover and avoid the expense of finding, hiring, and training new personnel.

### **Problem and Purpose**

Employee turnover is a problem for all businesses, including HEIs (Reed, 2021). The specific business problem is that some U.S. HEI leaders lack effective strategies to reduce employee turnover. The high employee turnover rate costs U.S. businesses \$550 billion annually (Clack, 2020). The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies that some U.S. HEI leaders use to engage their employees to reduce employee turnover and achieve growth and sustainability. The participants are leaders from Florida HEIs who have engaged and kept their employees for at least 1 year. Talking to such participants helped uncover effective strategies that reduce turnover and achieve growth and sustainability. Using open-ended interview sessions allowed to engage the study participants and gather information about their effective retention tactics. Reviewing organizational documents such as the employee's handbook, suitable compensation and benefits, possibilities for advancement, employee reward program, supporting development and training opportunities, and fostering activities that promote work-life balance showed more about the participant's retention strategies. Leaders of

HEIs create a climate to develop further students' learning experiences, results, and graduation rates by retaining high-performing employees (Cloutier et al., 2015).

### **Population and Sampling**

The targeted population for this study consisted of six leaders at two HEIs in Jacksonville, Florida, purposively chosen because they have successfully reduced employee turnover. I initially employed a nonprobability purposive sampling technique to select four participants for the study. Using purposive sampling helps to examine each participant's unique characteristics and ensure alignment with the study's objectives (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). However, the fourth participant brought new information, preventing data saturation, so it was necessary to use snowball sampling to gain access to more participants and reach data saturation. The sample for this research study consisted of six leaders from two HEIs in Jacksonville, Florida, who have successfully retained their staff and faculty for longer than 1 year and have met the study participation criteria.

The population was appropriate for the study because HEI leaders add value to society by graduating students with more significant potential to work on their vocations, networks, and community (Abad-Segura & González-Zamar, 2021). The participants understood organizational policies regulating hiring, retaining, evaluating, and terminating employees, and additionally, participants successfully used strategies that reduced employee turnover by at least one employee. The primary data source consisted of semistructured interviews. Secondary data were employee handbooks; participants' company websites; and social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, which revealed more about their strategies to minimize turnover. The participants'

collective bargaining agreement (CBA) and employee handbook were available on their institution's websites, and public data such as faculty work hours and responsibilities, professional development opportunities and social media platforms, and company events were also publicly and freely available. Researchers use various methods to collect data in qualitative research, including semistructured interviews and reviewing company documents (Ajgaonkar et al., 2022). In this qualitative study, I used the interview data collected and the secondary data reviewed from the HEIs' websites to explore strategies leaders at HEIs employed to retain their employees.

### **Nature of the Study**

According to McKim (2017), the three research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. Scientists applying the qualitative investigation technique employ open dialogue to understand what has happened (Hollstein, 2019). Researchers use the quantitative method to apply the logical strategy to analyze connections and contrasts among factors to clarify complex issues with closed-ended questions (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The mixed method combines the quantitative and qualitative approaches (Piccioli, 2019). The qualitative methodology and multiple case studies allow researchers to accumulate, examine, and construe data to gain a more profound knowledge of the problem or phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Qualitative methods may help determine leaders' abilities to empower their workers and decrease employee turnover at HEIs. The quantitative and mixed research approaches were not appropriate to explore the effective leadership strategies some U.S. HEI leaders use to reduce high employee turnover.



Experts applying the case study configuration examine single or various phenomena inside a limited framework and certifiable setting and accumulate and dissect several sources of information (Yin, 2018). A multiple case study configuration is proper for the research study since the study aimed to investigate successful strategies leaders at two HEIs in Jacksonville, Florida, used to reduce staff and faculty turnover and remain profitable. Qualitative researchers use multiple case study techniques to gather information in comparable settings, improving the validity and dependability of their conclusions (Brink, 2018). The multiple case study methodology was more suitable than the single case study design to get diverse perspectives from HEIs executives struggling with turnover and retention.

Other qualitative research designs not selected for this study include phenomenology and ethnography. According to McNarry et al. (2019), researchers should stress the participants' lived experiences while employing a phenomenological design. Researchers use phenomenological design (Larkin et al., 2019) to explore the relationships of individuals who encounter comparable events and explore lived experiences. However, the phenomenological research design was not practical for this study since the investigation was not about the significance of members' lived encounters. Researchers use an ethnographic plan to center on a culture-sharing crowd's beliefs, convictions, or language in a social setting (Tickle, 2017). Researchers who employ the ethnographic method ensconce themselves in individuals' environments to study behavior (Rashid et al., 2019). The ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study because, as opposed to understanding the culture of the participating companies,

the goal was to understand the leadership tactics used by some HEI leaders to reduce turnover.

### **Research Question**

What effective strategies do some HEI leaders use to reduce employee turnover?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies do you use to reduce employee turnover?
2. What strategies do you use to improve the efficiency of these strategies?
3. What are some challenges you encounter in implementing these strategies?
4. What strategies did you use to overcome these challenges?
5. What do you do to personalize your retention strategies to fit the various worker groups, like staff, and faculty members?
6. What methods do you apply to keep your employees motivated?
7. What methods do you apply to empower your employees?
8. What techniques do you take to increase employee work satisfaction?
9. How have these techniques helped you retain employees?
10. What supplementary knowledge would you like to share about your strategies to reduce employee turnover?

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study's conceptual framework is the transformational leadership theory developed by James McGregor Burns in 1978 for his work on political leaders (Burns, 1978). In 1985, Bernard Bass expanded the transformational leadership theory, debated Burn's idea, and specified that the transformational leadership is a set of techniques that

improves followers' motivation, morale, and overall performance (Bass, 1985b; Burns, 1978) through cooperative and interactive approaches to circumstances. Bass (1985a) also indicated that transformational leadership motivates followers to go beyond expectations and that leaders can affect followers' expectations, perceptions, and motives to achieve common objectives.

In this qualitative study, I asked participants in semistructured interviews questions that contextualize the four components of transformational leadership: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The transformative leader gives each employee particular attention and takes the time to understand them and build a relationship with them (Avolio et al., 1999). According to Bass (1985a), the idealized influence paradigm encourages the leader to set an example for subordinates, present an unclouded vision for the business, and gain followers' respect and devotion in return. The leader stimulates followers' minds by asking them to think of creative ways to complete assignments (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1985a).

The four components of the transformational leadership framework as they affect the occurrence of employee turnover, form fundamental connections for my study. I used Questions 5 to 8 were to obtain data on individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation. When leaders treat each employee as an individual, it motivates the employee to do what they can to help the organization do well. Through collaborative efforts, a transformational leader encourages collectivism, focusing on exceeding corporate objectives (Bastari et al., 2020). The

research implies that leaders should carefully intervene in conceptualizing individuals to make knowledge actionable in social contexts to create favorable conditions for knowledge sharing and organizational learning (Khandakar & Pangil, 2019). In the study, the goal was to explore the leadership strategies employed by various HEI leaders in the United States to lower employee turnover per the precepts of the transformational leadership theory.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Employee motivation:* Employee motivation is the incitement of enthusiasm and tenacity to pursue an action toward employment (De Sousa-Sabbagha et al., 2018).

*Employee turnover:* Employee turnover is the coming and going of organizational personnel (Masood et al., 2020).

*Idealized influence:* Idealized influence occurs as leaders serve as role models and demonstrate high capabilities and work ethic (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

*Individualized consideration:* Individualized consideration is a leadership technique that fosters a positive relationship between followers, which aids in the growth of each follower's needs (Abun et al., 2020).

*Inspirational motivation:* Inspirational motivation is a leadership behavior that outlines and expresses expectations and demonstrates a commitment to goals and a shared vision. The leader motivates followers to see the desired future state (Bass, 1985a).

*Intellectual stimulation:* Intellectual stimulation is the leadership style that encourages followers to help the organization address problems and feel like they are a part of the organization, and the issues are theirs (Abun et al., 2020).

*Job satisfaction:* Job satisfaction measures employees' contentedness with their jobs and facilities (Zhang, 2020).

*Turnover intention:* The turnover intention is an employee's objective to end the employment relationship with an employer (Huang & Su, 2016).

*Transformational leadership:* Transformational leadership involves encouraging followers to support company goals and then giving them the authority to do so (Yukl, 1998).

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

A researcher may encounter constraints while conducting scientific research because of assumptions, limitations, and delimitations included in the process. Acknowledging inadequacies and weaknesses and making the best adjustments empowers the researcher. The researcher must state all assumptions, limitations, and reasons for narrowing the scope of the study (Malekpour & Newig, 2020; Schroter et al., 2020).

#### **Assumptions**

In research, assumptions are fundamental notions, problems, or viewpoints assumed to be accurate, considered rational, and widely accepted throughout a study (Kane, 2020). Believing that each participant gave an honest and factual response to each interview question is an assumption. According to Yin (2018), research investigations

that put assumptions to the test add to the professionals' body of knowledge. As part of the study's assumptions, the qualitative method emerged most suitable for exploring the retention strategies of leaders in HEIs and collecting data pertinent to the research.

Assumptions are so fundamental that the research problem would not be possible without them (Li et al., 2019).

### **Limitations**

According to Liao and Hitchcock (2018), study limitations are any features of the design or technique that have an impact on or shape the interpretation of the research's findings. Limitations are uncontrollable factors that may influence the outcomes of a study and contribute to its deficiencies (O'Neil, 2019). The study's main flaw was the inability to project an adequate sample size to reach data saturation. The results could be particular to the situation and reveal various outcomes for a different group or situation. Because of the lack of payment for their services, not everyone qualified to participate in the semistructured interview chose to attend. The presence of multiple participants from the same educational institution was also a limitation, as it reduced the variety of available experiences for the study. However, incorporating participants from two distinct HEIs mitigated this limitation.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations comprise the parameters or realm of the study (e.g., what the researcher opted to include or exclude; Yin, 2018). The study used six leaders in two HEIs in Northeast Florida, which served as the study's first delimitation because all participants were from one place. The participants' geographical location may have

impacted their experiences, knowledge, and perceptions. Another delimitation of the study was that the data collected was from department leaders of two HEIs in the Florida region. A further study delimitation was the appropriateness of the data collection timespan. The scope centered on the effective retention strategies leaders at certain U.S. HEIs have employed to retain their faculty and staff for more than five years. Minowa and Belk (2020) argued that data collection should transpire over extended intervals. However, utilizing virtual interviews as a methodological strategy, I ensured the facilitation of member checking by interacting seamlessly with participants to validate and corroborate the collected data.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is how its findings may contribute to business practices and may impact social change. Cloutier et al. (2015) stated that the maintenance of employees stays a fundamental component of strength, development, and favorable outcome for HEIs. Scientists have utilized the qualitative technique to accumulate shared information from participant members to acquire employee maintenance knowledge and help to lessen turnover (Eide & Showalter, 2012). Businesses should take on a two-pronged approach comprising engaging intelligent individuals and figuring out how to maintain those individuals in their organizations (Ahmad et al., 2020). Leaders at HEIs might benefit from this study in creating successful strategies for holding significant employees and reducing the turnover rate in their businesses.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

HEI leaders may benefit from this present study's fragments of knowledge and convert them into viable strategies to reduce employee turnover. Commitments to strategic policies include further developing employees' efficiency and decreasing high personnel training costs in HEIs. According to Cloutier et al. (2015), retaining employees in HEIs is essential to an educational organization's stability and development.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Leaders of HEIs confront genuine difficulties concerning how they prepare students to impact society with positive social change and implement social and community obligations (Hayter & Cahoy, 2018). Social change emerges from productive initiative through the progression and advancement of an organization. Leaders of HEIs add value to society through developed student learning and outcomes because graduating students acquire a superior capability to work on their vocation, community, and culture (Abad-Segura & González-Zamar, 2021). This study's implications for positive social change include the potential for U.S. HEI leaders to further develop students' learning encounters, impacts, and completion rates by retaining qualified educators, faculty, and staff.

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

In this qualitative study, the goal is to investigate effective retention strategies that some leaders at HEIs in the United States use to reduce turnover. Given employee turnover's ubiquity and adverse effects on firms, it is crucial to comprehend why turnover occurs and how to reduce it (Sija, 2021). The literature review includes professional and



scholarly work on the construct and business problem, an analysis of the writing related to the conceptual framework, transformational leadership theory, and an overview of topics and concepts relating to or contrasting turnover in HEIs. By accumulating, researching, analyzing, and synthesizing various materials connected to the suggested study, I illustrated preexisting knowledge of the business problem while emphasizing the need for further research. Several academic resources were reviewed for this research, including the Walden Library, ProQuest Database, Crossref.org, EBSCO Online Research Database, Google Scholar, and Science Direct Database. *Employee turnover, employee retention, job satisfaction, employee empowerment, employee engagement, communication, leadership, and transformational leadership* are significant terms and phrases that served as a guide for the literature review.

The literature review contained 151 references, of which 81.8% were published between 2018 and 2022. Table 1 contains the references, accompanied by their respective publication years. The research strategy to undertake the literature review consisted of searching (a) Walden University library for peer-reviewed journal articles and doctoral studies, (b) Google Scholar for peer-reviewed journal articles, (c) U.S. federal and state government websites for public information, and (d) reviewing and analyzing seminal and authoritative sources in scholarly databases (see Table 1).

**Table 1***Literature Review References*

Reference type	Total	Total published in or after 2018	Percentage published in or after 2018
Peer-Reviewed	129	91	85.4%
Non-Peer Reviewed	2	2	100.0%
Government Sources	8	8	100.0%
Seminal Works	6	0	0.0%
Dissertation/Doctoral	6	5	83.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>77.7%</b>

Literature from peer-reviewed articles, journals, books, dissertations, websites, and corporate and U.S. government reports comprises this literature review. The specific focus areas include an analysis and synthesis of the literature. The analysis and synthesis include the expansion of transformational leadership supporting and contrasting theories (i.e., transformational leadership theory development, theory of motivation and hygiene, transactional leadership, and social exchange theory). The review also includes literature related to the employee, specifically employee engagement, satisfaction, retention, and empowerment, followed by burnout and turnover intentions. This literature review culminates with the impact of transformational leadership on turnover intentions and transformational leadership and workplace culture.

Along with the conceptual framework literature, the literature review will focus on the following: (a) strategies for reducing employee turnovers, such as internal communication, (b) the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement, (c) the relationship between job satisfaction and employee retention, (d) the

relationship between leadership styles and employee behavior, and (e) the relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention. The semistructured interviews allowed them to grasp the strategies that some U.S. HEI leaders use to reduce employee turnover.

I organized the literature by subject matter and content. The strategies that leaders have adopted in the past and their efficacy will resurface. This literature review may be helpful to leaders in addressing employee turnover, recruiting, and implementing methods for employee retention due to the analysis of pertinent published information. These obstacles negatively impact talented employees' retention, motivation, and dedication to the organization. Planning the literature review helps the researcher better grasp the topic of the investigation (Leite et al., 2019). The goal of this study was to research the transformational leadership theory to create a logical flow of information that shows how the conceptual framework underpins the phenomena of employee turnover.

The conceptual framework of this study is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is suitable for this study because it highlights the significance of leadership style in influencing employee behavior and sustaining a positive work environment. This study included the use of the transformational leadership conceptual framework because of its ability to potentially help increase leaders' understanding of the factors that contribute to employee retention in HEIs and enhance their ability to build strategies to reduce turnover and retain competent employees. Transformational leadership may contribute to the body of knowledge and assist leaders

in keeping skilled and experienced employees, thus boosting their capability to compete and ensure sustainability. Performance in complex environments demands leaders to reconcile the inherent contradiction between flexibility and efficiency for their organizations (Wamalwa, 2022). Transformational leadership is a significant leadership theory that captures the interest of academics worldwide.

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

The significance of transformational leadership lies in its ability to provide a transformative impact (Kuepers, 2011). Leaders are expected to utilize this transformative impact to enhance the comprehension and endorsement of the organization's missions and objectives among followers, thereby promoting and prioritizing followers' interests over their immediate self-interests (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership arose in response to issues identified in previous leadership studies. Initiated by Burns (1978) based on a qualitative investigation of the biographies of many political leaders and Bass (1985a), transformational leadership is a leadership in which leaders and their personnel raise their motivation during contact to a substantially higher degree (Burns, 1978).

According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership is a creative interaction style between leaders and followers in which both sides have a dynamic role in influencing the other's views and behaviors. Transformational leadership refers to how leaders and followers motivate and inspire one another to reach high moral standards regarding their primary responsibilities and shared obligations. Bass (1985a) posited that transformational leaders are attentive to the needs and desires of their followers, striving

to elevate their moral values so that they might grow, eventually transform into leaders, and, in turn, demonstrate the way to their former mentors. Bass and Avolio (see Bass, 1985a; Bass et al., 2003) extended Burns' concepts and proposed the formal notion of transformative leadership. Bass (1985b) established various categories of transformative leadership behaviors.

Bass and Avolio extended the paradigm of transformational leadership to characterize industry leaders. Transformational leadership has been favorably associated with employees' attitudes regarding their jobs in various commercial organizations (Anderson, 2017). According to Bass (1985a), leaders exercise transformational leadership by encouraging their staff to connect individual goals to organizational goals and motivating their colleagues to accomplish high-level goals. Transformational leaders inspire their supporters to exceed expectations by fostering an atmosphere of trust and producing higher-order demands. Transformational leaders motivate followers to adopt new thinking methods by appealing to their followers' ideals and values.

The transformational leadership theory captures the attention of academics and professionals, who have applied it in diverse business contexts. Fundamentally, transformational leadership involves encouraging followers to support company goals and giving them the authority to do so (Yukl, 1998). By setting an example, encouraging others to take more responsibility for their work, and identifying followers' strengths and weaknesses, leaders can assign followers to tasks that best suit their abilities. The outcome should improve follower performance, at least theoretically (Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1998). The transformational leadership theory accentuates the significance of leadership

style in influencing employee behavior and enhancing a positive organizational culture, making the concept a suitable framework for this research.

According to Bass (1990b), transformational leadership takes place when leaders enlarge and transcend the aspirations of their employees, when they build understanding and acceptance of the goals and missions of the group, and when they stimulate their employees to see beyond their self-interest for the group's welfare. Furthermore, Bass (1990a) stated that going beyond one's interests is for the benefit of the group, organization, or society. The transformation of followers into leaders, and leaders into moral actors, is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation. Consequently, employees feel empowered and engaged knowing that their transformational leaders are concerned more about their progress and development, which according to Yücel (2021), impacts their intent to leave the organization negatively. The transformational leader presents the vision compellingly and transparently, explains how to achieve it, behaves with assurance and optimism, shows faith in the followers, promotes values through symbolic actions, sets a positive example, and empowers followers to realize the goal (Tian et al., 2020).

Leaders at institutions of higher education need specific strategies to reduce turnover. Avolio et al. (1999) identified four key components of transformational leadership: (a) idealized influence (or charismatic influence), (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. Acceptance of the four constructs dominates mainstream understandings of transformational leadership. Strategies like having exciting conversations with employees may fulfill a need for

idealized influence. Giving valid praise could be a way to motivate. Offering innovative educational resources could stimulate intellectual curiosity. Scheduling one-on-one meetings might provide individualized consideration. Questions 5 to 8 of the semistructured interviews with participants revealed how leaders use the four constructs to reduce employee turnover.

### ***The Four Pillars of Transformational Leadership***

The four pillars of the transformational leadership theory emphasize a leader's style's role in shaping employee behavior and fostering a positive workplace culture. These pillars can be described as follows:

1. *Idealized influence* refers to charismatic goals and conduct that others want to emulate.
2. *Inspirational motivation* persuades people to support the concept.
3. *Intellectual stimulation* fosters originality and creativity.
4. *Individualized consideration* adapts instruction to followers' individual needs.

Charisma, persuasion, inventiveness, and empathy are leaders' qualities needed to connect with their followers to build healthy, authentic relationships. According to Tian et al. (2020), transformative leaders may mislead followers when their goals contradict the company's. In this study, I explored successful strategies leaders at HEIs use to reduce employee turnover.

**Idealized Influence.** Building trust and confidence while serving as a role model that followers aspire to be like is what idealized influence is all about (Khan et al., 2022).

Followers will attempt to adopt the traits of their leaders, forming a group with high moral standards and a culture of trust (Henry et al., 2019). Idealized influence improves the productivity and caliber of the employee because they trust their leader's virtues and are more likely to accept their suggestions for change. When leaders exude selflessness, assurance, and respect, their followers are more adept at appreciating and trusting them (Khan et al., 2022). Leaders who impact their subordinates positively inspire them to work harder and remain loyal to the organization, reducing employee turnover.

The most crucial concept of transformational leadership is charisma (Bass, 1985a). Followers consider their leaders' behavior as an example for them, and they have entire faith in the leader to conquer any challenge and are pleased to be affiliated with such a leader. For example, Lee Iacocca took over and revived the struggling Chrysler Corporation. When he took over Chrysler, the company was on the verge of bankruptcy, and he set out to change the values of his closest colleagues. Consequently, this began to influence the company's culture. The company soon consisted entirely of influential leaders because transformational leaders inspire others to become transformational leaders, and the connection between charismatic and transformational leaders is most apparent in times of crisis (Mbindyo et al., 2021). The more a leader embodies the vision, the more followers will attribute a significant impact to that leader.

According to Henry et al. (2019), individualized influence occurs when new learning chances exist, and a positive environment exists. Idealized influencers are ethical mentors who hold their followers to high moral standards. Therefore, the employees become more committed to the organization and strongly desire to remain (Khan et al.,



2022) asserted there is a substantial link between the idealized influence component, work satisfaction, and emotional organizational commitment. Idealized leaders get their followers to do more by focusing on the followers' values and helping them align those values with the organization's values. Successful leaders in HEIs may be able to retain more employees by employing a strategy of gaining the devotion of their employees.

**Inspirational Motivation.** Inspirational motivation pertains to a leader's capacity to create a compelling improved vision of the organization's direction for their people by shifting their employees' self-interests to the company's common interest (Kariuki, 2021). Employee engagement, employee retention, and inspirational motivation go hand in hand. Inspirational leaders may persuade the entire organization to adopt a new strategy. Inspirational stimulation may increase staff retention by increasing an employee's joy and enthusiasm (Kariuki, 2021). Inspirational leaders nudge followers to integrate themselves into the larger organizational culture by communicating ambitious standards and expectations (Kariuki, 2021). Motivated employees connect with the organization's goal and remain committed; hence, corporate leaders should purposefully inspire their employees to reduce turnover intentions and maintain their commitment. Responses to the interview questions demonstrated strategies the participants used to motivate employees in ways that reduced employee turnover.

**Intellectual Stimulation.** Leaders who display intellectual stimulation foster creativity pushing followers to question presumptions and approach old problems in novel ways, fostering innovative ideas (Gan & Voon, 2021). Intellectual stimulation strengthens one's sense of duty and commitment to the job, which enhances cognitive

development at work (Khan et al., 2022). These leaders criticize privately and invite followers to participate in resolving issues and discovering answers. Leaders assess problems from various perspectives and do not judge followers whose opinions differ. Emotional employees involved in their intellectually challenging work experience have greater job satisfaction and personal fulfillment. In this study, leaders revealed how implementing intellectual stimulation might preserve employee engagement and job satisfaction, reducing employee turnover.

Transformational leaders exhort their supporters to act and think unconventionally without fretting about the repercussions (Boamah, 2022), which increases the intention to remain within the organization for extended periods (Geh Ming et al., 2021). Consequently, there is a good connection between intellectual stimulation and employee retention (Gabriel et al., 2022). The characteristics of motivational leadership behavior measure the efficacy of leadership in higher education and influence individual performance by increasing motivation to attain performance objectives. In this study, leaders discussed strategies they have used to increase employee motivation, resulting in employees who are more committed to their tasks and loyal to their organizations.

**Individualized Consideration.** Individualized consideration, according to Gan and Voon (2021), has two components: (a) treat each follower as a person with specific needs and (b) discover the weaknesses and strengths of followers and encourage their development and improvement. Transformational leaders recognize their followers' unique knowledge, talents, and capacities individually. Individualized leaders pay attention to each employee's needs while fostering a positive work environment (Henry

et al., 2019). Leaders who practice individualized consideration increase employees' confidence by attending to their requirements (Bass, 1985a). In this study, leaders revealed how using individual consideration creates a strategy for developing the next generation through coaching and mentorship to show high commitment to their organizations. Individual consideration permits and encourages an equitable workplace where leaders get to know their followers better, listen to their ideas, and notice their worries (Henry et al., 2019).

By implementing the four characteristics of transformational leadership, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, of transformational leadership into practice, the transformational leader cultivates a sense of community and inclusion wherein followers perceive themselves as being recognized and esteemed. According to Cardona and Rey (2022), when Louis V. Gerstner took over as CEO In 1993, he guided IBM through the required transformative reforms and barred the corporation from a great fall. IBM lost billions of dollars and only had 100 days before their cash ran out (Khizrana, 2009). Gerstner acknowledged IBM's vertical integration of hardware, software, and services as its key competitive advantage. Gerstner was a transformative leader who led IBM to the most significant turnaround in modern business history; at the HEIs where the participants of the study work, the participants may have employed similar strategies of influence, motivation, stimulation, and individual attention to reduce employee turnover.

Leaders face a unique leadership dilemma when deciding which leadership style to adopt concerning specific environments and characteristics. Transformational

leadership is the strategy that organizations use the most frequently to understand individuals and groups and maximize organizational effectiveness (Wamalwa, 2022). At all levels of the organization, transformational leadership must inspire others, bolster their confidence, and improve working performance, especially in today's unpredictable and turbulent environment. Transformational leadership functions as an inter-relational process between personal, social, and structural systemic components and economic influences (Pettigrew, 1987), requiring an integrative approach (Küpers & Edwards, 2008), fostering creativity, and generating more significant benefits. The interview participants shared ways they could influence an employee's intent to leave.

Yücel (2021) studied the influence of transformational leadership on employees' inclinations to leave their jobs. According to Yücel, transformational leaders are essential for influencing employee performance and reducing their intention to leave a company. Given the mediating function of employees' performance, he tried to clarify how (a) transformational leadership relates to employees' intentions to leave their jobs, (b) transformational leadership relates to employee performance, (c) employee performance relates to intentions to leave jobs, and (d) employee performance mediates the relationship between intents and transformational leadership. The findings showed that employee behavior modulates the association between intentions to leave and transformational leadership. Transformative leaders foster employee success, lowering employees' intent to quit their jobs.

Employees who feel supported by their leaders are typically more devoted to their companies and perform better, which reduces turnover and enhances employee

performance by fostering an environment for growth and sustainability. Ng (2017) backed the claim made by Antonakis et al. (2014) that transformative leadership has attracted scholars' constant attention because of its crucial significance to the overall health of a company. The literature has demonstrated that followers of transformative leaders are very productive, regardless of how performance measurement, whether individually, in a team, or at the organizational level. According to Boamah (2022), transformational leaders have the motivational skills necessary to advance employees' well-being by fostering a successful workplace. Followers of such leaders display elevated levels of job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and civic virtue.

Transformational leaders can cultivate an environment conducive to relationship-building and establish a climate of trust, enabling effective communication of visions. Through this process, these leaders can influence the values of their followers, aligning them with the overarching vision and goals of the organization (Bass, 1985a). Such leaders encourage their employees' creativity and originality and never publicly criticize them for their mistakes.

Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon offers a grandiose vision of what the most prominent online retailer in the world could develop into and how he would go about doing it (Gradinaru et al., 2020). Bezos is the ideal example of a transformational leader, showing that one can attain larger goals by focusing on a series of short-term tasks. The ideals and behaviors of transformational leaders inspire employees to strive for excellence and appreciate the complexities of life (Gradinaru et al., 2020). Leaders at

HEIs could use the transformational leadership to push their employees to reach for higher goals while pursuing personal advancement.

### ***Transformational Leadership Theory Development***

James V. Downton (1973) was the first to draw a contrast between transactional and transformational leadership (Al-Nawafah et al., 2022). Transactional leadership refers to the leadership style of a leader who holds power, maintains control, and delivers contingent rewards to followers who comply with the leader's directives. Still, it was not until Burns's (1978) analysis of political leaders that the concept took off. While certain perceive leadership as a continuum with transactional leadership at one end and transformational Leadership at the other, Burns thought leaders were either transformational or transactional. Bass and Avolio (Bass, 1985a; Bass and Avolio, 1990) extended Burns's concepts and proposed the formal notion of transformational leadership). Transformational leadership is an approach in which a leader collaborates with followers to identify needed change, develops a vision to inspire the difference, and then works with committed group members to conduct the change (Bass, 1985a).

Over the past three decades, there has been an increase in interest in the transformational leadership theory due to two trends (Simic, 1998). First, the worldwide economic developments in the early 1970s compelled various prominent western corporations, like General Motors and AT&T, to reevaluate their business models (Simic, 1998). Second, the dominant leadership theories of the 1970s considered certain atypical qualities of leaders. These theories primarily examined traits, actions, circumstances, and contingency theories (Simic, 1998). Companies needed new leadership strategies because

they had to discover ways to bring about change while boosting employee morale and motivation and reducing turnover. Transformational leadership influences employee-related factors, including motivation, performance, vision, empowerment, job satisfaction, and commitment.

Transformational leadership is one of the most effective leadership styles, adopted in various organizations and environments and followed by academic leaders (Ghimire, 2022). Leaders with transformational leadership styles are positive, energetic, trustworthy, emotionally intelligent leaders who encourage teamwork and create multiple opportunities for administrative performance enhancement. Transformational leaders may inspire followers to transcend their interests for other communal goals, such as to love, learn, and leave a legacy. According to Barbuto, Jnr, (2005), Jambawo (2018), and Robbins and Davidhizar (2020), followers of transformational leaders develop traits like respect, adoration, loyalty, and trust. The transformational leadership style requires that leaders interact with followers as individuals rather than just employees. Leaders have a transformational role by understanding their followers' needs, inspiring them, and criticizing their followers' work (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Others may regard transformational leaders as mentors and role models (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders encourage a positive work environment by empowering their employees (Robbins & Davidhizar, 2020), inspiring their team members to work harder, be happier in their jobs, and be more inventive and creative, enabling them to do their best work (Alhashedi et al., 2021). For decades transformational leadership has affected managerial variables in diverse ways, and

according to Al-Nawafah et al. 2022, transformational leadership works exceptionally well in educational settings. When school administrators take on transformational leadership, they can help to establish a positive school culture. As opponents (e.g., Yukl, 2002) point out, transformational leadership has its dark side and other shortcomings.

### ***Criticisms of Transformational Leadership***

Scholars have criticized Transformational leadership theory and found shortcomings (Yukl, 2002). Because transformational leaders engage followers by appealing to powerful emotions, regardless of the long-term impact on followers, and without necessarily focusing on moral ideals, people have questioned the morality of transformational leaders and the use of the theory. As (Gregory Stone et al., 2004) noted, transformational leaders can exert tremendous influence over their followers, who respond with trust and esteem. Transformational leadership contains the potential for abuse of authority. Bass (1999) asserted that transformative leadership lacks the checks and balances of opposing interests, influences, and power that may prevent dictatorship and minority domination by the majority.

Leaders with narcissistic traits may thrive on power and manipulation. Historiography presents examples of leaders, such as Hitler and Mussolini, who exploited their followers and whose visions led to the death of their followers. However, transformational leadership, according to Bass (1990b), occurs when leaders expand and elevate the interests of their employees, when they produce acceptance of the group's purpose and mission, and when they inspire individuals to look beyond their self-interest



for the welfare of the group (p. 21). According to Bass (1990a), this transcending of self-interest is for the group, organization, or society (p. 53).

Transformational leadership is the process of generating commitment to corporate goals and empowering followers to achieve those goals (Yukl, 1998). Theoretically, this process improves follower performance (Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1998). Transformational leaders are more concerned with engaging and securing the support of their followers for organizational goals. With transformational leadership, the leader's attention is on the organization, and his or her behavior strengthens follower commitment to organizational goals by empowering followers to achieve those goals (Yukl, 1998). While transactional leaders focus on trade relationships with followers, transformational leaders motivate followers to perform at higher levels for the organization's benefit (Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1998). The fundamental notion of transformative leadership is developing corporate goal commitment (Yukl, 1998).

According to Northouse (2019), leaders that adopt the transformational leadership paradigm may have a disadvantage due to the potential overlap or lack of precise definition of the four behavioral traits. However, transformational leaders may benefit from an advantage in employee favorability by prioritizing the needs of their followers, which encourages continued leader development (Ghimire, 2022). A crucial aspect of transformative leadership is building and sustaining strong relationships with followers but doing so can be emotionally draining and contribute to management burnout (Lin et al., 2018). Nevertheless, I chose the transformational leadership theory as the conceptual framework for this study because HEI leaders in the United States may use its four

pillars—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation—to reduce employee turnover.

### **Theory of Motivation and Hygiene (Two-Factor Theory)**

Motivators and hygiene factors are the two constructs of the motivational-hygiene factor hypothesis (Kampkötter, 2017). The motivational-hygiene hypothesis, formulated by Herzberg et al. (1959), aims to investigate the impact of organizational factors on employees' work environment. This investigation seeks to determine the extent to which these factors contribute to employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction, influencing their attitudes and motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959). The first is an intrinsic element, often known as the motivation factor, which relates to the working environment and the demands for psychological development (Herzberg et al., 1959). The second is an extrinsic component, also referred to as the hygiene factor, and it is the workplace circumstance connected to discontent brought on by discomfort or pain (Alshmemri et al., 2017). According to Herzberg et al. (1959), various characteristics contribute to workplace satisfaction, distinctive from elements contributing to workplace unhappiness and employee turnover.

Workplace characteristics influence employee satisfaction at work and determine if the employee will be happy or discontent. The two-factor theory inferred by Herzberg focuses on workplace factors and how employees perceive those aspects. Herzberg et al. (1959) researched the elements of an employee's workplace that contributed to pleasure or discontent (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015) and created a theory of motivation and job satisfaction because of the study (Ngo-Henha, 2018).

According to Herzberg et al., factors that contribute to job satisfaction differ from those that contribute to job dissatisfaction, and job enrichment is necessary to encourage employees. Satisfaction and discontentment are independent phenomena rather than existing on a continuum, with one increasing as the other decreases (Ngo-Henha, 2018). Hygiene and motivators are two aspects of employee happiness that impact the working environment, employee drive, and job satisfaction (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). The workplace has specific effects on employee motivation and satisfaction. Motivated employees are significantly more likely to perform at a higher level than disengaged ones. When employees experience a sense of appreciation, it serves as a motivating factor and empowers them, resulting in enhanced performance levels.

Executives may address hygiene factors first and then motivators (Alshmemri et al., 2017; Herzberg et al., 1959). In contrast to transformational leadership, leaders might utilize the two-factor motivation and hygiene theory to emphasize informal rewards, public acknowledgment, and solid interpersonal ties (Bass, 1985a; Hur, 2017). However, leaders employing the two-factor motivation and hygiene theory may choose to investigate additional leadership theories (Hur, 2017). Thus, the two-factor motivation and hygiene theory are consistent with the transactional leadership theory in terms of negotiated compensation, improved rewards, and the offer of rewards (Hur, 2017). However, additional research is necessary to evaluate whether the two-factor motivation and hygiene theory is superior to the transformational leadership theory in crisis. Leaders who possess a comprehensive understanding of their surroundings are more likely to

receive increased support compared to those who exhibit limited awareness, as the former possess the knowledge and acumen necessary to effectively navigate and accomplish their objectives. (Steffens et al., 2021). The two-factor and motivation-hygiene theories may not apply to retention issues (Raman et al., 2019). This suggests that the two-factor motivation and hygiene theory may not be the best suitable leadership theory for this study, as a comprehensive analysis is necessary to address the intricacies of employee turnover in the higher education setting in the United States.

### **Transactional Leadership**

Weber (1947) developed the transactional leadership theory upon the leader's position of power. Bass et al. (2003) explained the transactional leadership theory thoroughly and compared transactional and transformational leaders in diverse ways. In contrast to developing relationships to affect change, the transactional leadership paradigm is about positional hierarchy (Penny, 2017), where leaders use rewards, incentives, and penalties to influence behavior and performance results. Transactional leadership fails to motivate individuals beyond the specified objective and does not promote individual development. While transformational leaders may ignore enforcement to promote innovation, transactional leaders follow the rules and regulations to accomplish organizational goals (Bass, 1985a; Fletcher et al., 2019).

Transactional leaders may emphasize incentives and rewards, demand performance excellence, and reserve sanctions and other deterrents for changing behavior (Wamalwa, 2022). In contrast to transactional leaders, transformational leaders create strong personal and professional relationships and serve as perfect role

models for achieving organizational objectives. (Bass, 1985b; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978). Transactional leaders can use intellectual capital and build relationships with their team members to make decisions (Alrowwad et al., 2020). While transformational leaders may unite staff into culturally coherent teams to accomplish long-term corporate goals, transactional leaders improve team performance by fostering a supportive yet competitive environment (Alrowwad et al., 2020; Bass, 1985a; Bass, 1999; Burns, 1978).

Leaders can improve the effectiveness of their staff by combining a balanced mixture of transactional and transformative leadership behaviors. According to Hershkovich et al. (2016), transactional leadership was preferable to transformational leadership for those responding to crises like natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or medical emergencies. Rathi et al. (2021) found that some employees believed transactional leaders boosted performance, maximized potential, and demanded commitment in a study of 243 workers during the COVID-19 epidemic. However, Antonopoulou et al. (2021) denied the claim that transactional leadership was superior to transformational leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Transactional leaders prioritize short-term, day-to-day tasks without considering long-term, strategic objectives (Rathi et al., 2021). This philosophy does not fit this study's goal, which is to uncover the leadership tactics employed by some leaders of HEIs to reduce employee turnover.

### **Social Exchange Theory**

According to the social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), people avoid acting in ways that will get them in trouble and instead passively mimic the actions of other group members. According to research, followers can mimic the behaviors of their leaders in groups after learning them (Zhang et al., 2020). The relationship between leaders and followers is a two-way street. The social exchange theory has been widely employed to elucidate social behavior and relationships, particularly in relation to social identity, job motivation, employee equality, and expectation (Khan et al., 2022).

The role of leadership in firms is essential for comprehending employee conduct (Kahn et al., 2022), for people to observe, imitate, and model the behavior of others (Deaton, 2015). Social media has altered how people engage and interact with one another. Leaders can use Bandura's Social Learning Theory ideas to improve followers' engagement and learn in this social media environment. The existing literature explored the relationship between social media and social learning theory, but no significant connections or associations have been identified thus far. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the potential benefits that may arise from the integration of social media within a social learning context (Deaton, 2015). Due to the focus of this study on leadership styles and how leaders that display specific leadership styles can influence employee behavior, the social exchange theory is inappropriate for this research.

### **Employee Engagement**

Kahn (1990) was the first management scientist to describe and research employee engagement, defining it as the unique ways employees make their

personalities known physically. Subsequently, the new definition and model proposed by Kahn incorporated the concept of psychological presence. Specifically, the model proved that availability, meaningfulness, and safety influence an employee's psychological presence (Kahn, 1990). Availability encompasses the physical, emotional, and mental resources that may be necessary for the successful execution of a certain function. The outcomes of an employee's psychological presence are experience outcomes, performance, and development (Kahn, 1990).

For more than 30 years, academic literature has focused on this topic. Work engagement is a pleasant, rewarding state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Saks, 2022). When there is a higher level of engagement, turnover, and burnout will decrease while the quality of life improves. Engagement describes the all-encompassing sensation of being deeply interested in one's job (Van der Ross et al., 2022). Leaders foster three psychological conditions to impact directly and attain employee engagement: psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Kahn, 1990). Leaders must fulfill their strategic responsibilities to increase employee engagement by fostering a positive work environment (Joo & Lee, 2017).

In their investigation of engagement with current concepts focusing on the person-role link, such as those addressed in the job demands-resources model, Van der Ross et al. (2022) discovered that emotional involvement was highly associated with Khan's (1990) three psychological factors (meaningfulness, safety, and availability), which were a lack of reciprocity, perceived organizational support, and burnout risk. The perception of organizational support, job resources that met the standard for

psychological safety, and some aspects of meaningfulness were those factors most intricately linked to engagement (Van der Ross et al., 2022; Varma & Chavan, 2020).

Policymakers within HEIs should be aware of the challenges addressed, particularly the necessity to give organizational assistance in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 epidemic. Even during change and uncertainty, engaging the workforce remains one of the most important strategic imperatives for achieving success, as it impacts essential business outcomes such as productivity, customer satisfaction, discretionary effort, commitment, and well-being (Van der Ross et al., 2022). Leadership is essential to reach employee engagement, and leaders are responsible for influencing their followers to achieve the organization's objectives. Leaders must build and maintain a supportive work atmosphere and assist when necessary (Park et al., 2019). Therefore, leadership is among the most significant factors influencing higher education workplace environment and employee engagement perceptions. This study evaluated the impact of transformational leadership in determining the connection between employee engagement and attrition in HEIs.

### **Employee Satisfaction**

According to the research conducted by Hackman and Oldham (1975), the structuring of work should incorporate specific characteristics that promote elevated levels of work motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. The importance of job satisfaction in relation to organizational effectiveness cannot be overstated since it is undeniably impacted by the internal culture and leadership of the organization.



Employment satisfaction is a positive emotional state caused by the appreciation of one's job occupation or experiences (Locker, 1976). Attracting and retaining skilled employees is the duty of leaders to ensure that employees feel valued and appreciated, which can lead to satisfaction. Baranchenko et al. (2020) argued that organizational characteristics, such as employee friendliness, mutual trust, respect, and rapport between employees and superiors, might be significant predictors of employee job satisfaction. In addition, Billingsley and Cross (1992) also concluded that leadership support, work involvement, and low role conflict could predict job commitment, satisfaction, and hesitancy to leave their job.

In a study conducted by Siahaan et al. (2022) to evaluate success variables that can optimize job satisfaction and lecturer performance to enhance the quality of educational services, they determined that job satisfaction and lecturer performance are positively correlated. The results indicated that the quality of organizational ties had a substantial impact on the job satisfaction of professors. Siahaan et al. (2022) demonstrated that effective organizational interactions are essential for lecturers' job happiness. Job happiness and lecturer performance are unaffected by the level of work stress. The results indicate that professors' work stress has not impacted their job satisfaction and performance.

Siahaan et al. (2022) study also demonstrated that professors' work satisfaction has a positive, statistically significant, and dominant influence on lecturer performance in higher education. The more job satisfaction, the more zealously employees will fulfill their duties. Thus, it is vital to simultaneously control lecturer satisfaction, work stress,

and organizational connections. The findings imply that HEIs should be cautious while establishing positive work relationships. Satisfied employees will attain higher performance levels and increase their company's competitiveness. Employees must feel that the benefits they receive from their organization are proportional to their contributions (Kollmann et al., 2020). Monetary pay tends to be a primary motivator for younger employees, whereas older employees are largely driven by the sense of fulfillment derived from their contributions to the job. (Kollmann et al., 2020).

Dissatisfaction can have harmful effects on both well-being and the organization's mission. The intensity of faculty work life, stagnant compensation, rivalry for finite resources, and decreasing social life negatively impact faculty members' job satisfaction (Bodine Al-Sharif et al., 2020). Recent research has found that a perception of empowerment among managerial professionals in higher education was highly associated with job satisfaction (McNaughtan et al., 2019). Given the importance of faculty job satisfaction to the performance of HEIs, leaders at HEIs must comprehend the relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction (McNaughtan et al., 2022). Satisfied educators might enhance the reputations of their universities and create a loop of attracting high-quality students and professors.

Job happiness rises when followers recognize their place within an organization and sense their leaders' appreciation (Steinmann et al., 2018). During COVID-19, they encouraged a secure work environment to reduce perceptions of job insecurity and boost employee engagement (J. Jung et al., 2021). A recent study indicates that working employees experience higher levels of psychological stress, which increases turnover

intention and alcohol and drug usage (Bufquin et al., 2021). Former Marriott Corporation CEO John Smith stated, “You cannot have happy consumers if your employees are dissatisfied” (Emery & Barker, 2007). This study assessed transformational leadership’s influence in identifying the relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover in HEIs.

### **Employee Retention**

Ghani et al. (2022) evaluated and addressed employee retention tactics in the hotel business to retain qualified workers for a prolonged timeframe. They stated that employee retention depends on employee satisfaction, made of four factors: a sustainable positive work environment, sustainable growth possibilities, sustainable and effective communication, and sustainable and effective recruitment and selection methods. Ghani et al. concluded that happy employees are less likely to leave their present employment for a better career opportunity, but dissatisfied employees are likely to leave their current position for a better career opportunity.

Human resource management is crucial to employee retention. Elsafty and Oraby (2022) concurred that firms must not only attract experienced and skilled personnel but also retain them for an extended period. They explored the relationship between employee retention, training, and development, job performance, job satisfaction, and effective communication. They determined that training and development, as well as job satisfaction, had a beneficial effect on employee retention. However, job performance and effective communication does not affect the relationship between job performance and employee retention. Training is one of the most effective methods for employee

retention, as it is a crucial element in enhancing organizational performance. However, training strategies are infrequently adequately funded because certain leaders view training as an unnecessary liability (Varma & Chavan, 2020).

In the twenty-first century, permanent employment is now uncommon. According to Khalid and Nawab (2018), the global economy, technological breakthroughs, and trade agreements have fundamentally altered employee-employer interactions, with neither party able to guarantee long-term commitment. However, the changing business climate has increased employee competition and turnover. There is an increasing need for an efficient personnel retention strategy to boost the competitive advantage in higher education. In the twenty-first century, demographic shifts and skills deficits have significantly impacted the requirement to retain people. The poaching of staff by competitors has become a significant threat to firms' global and local profitability. Leaders must design successful employee retention programs to boost the organization's competitiveness. According to Lee and Chen (2018), the retention of productive employees has become a significant concern, prompting organizations and their human resources departments to develop effective strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of the talents and skills necessary to meet the organization's labor demands.

The development of successful retention strategies might be complex. However, Kurdi and Alshurideh (2020) discovered that 75% of human resource management departments in the United States mentioned employee retention as their primary concern. The workplace culture, employee motivation, and skilled employee retention that academics and business executives experience are all impacted by job engagement.

Before producing strategies to cut down on turnover and increase retention, leaders must first recognize the problem. The ability of a leader to adapt and develop strategies to remain competitive in higher education depends on how engaged and happy their workforce is. Continuous training, open communication, and transparency with the workforce are all essential to a manager's success. Most firms use talent management to describe the human resources activities that assist succession planning. Talent management identifies, retains, and develops skilled personnel (Jindal & Shaikh, 2021). In contrast to talent management, succession planning incorporates the organization's strategic requirements (Jindal & Shaikh, 2021).

Employee engagement, commitment, and intention to stay are recurrent themes in the literature because excessive employee turnover affects the labor market and increases globalization and competition. According to Lee et al. (2022), organizational cohesion is a feature that keeps workers loyal to their current firm. Therefore, leaders in higher education should encourage staff retention by providing them with continued training and benefits to earn their loyalty. Because employees' skills and knowledge are crucial for businesses to maintain their competitiveness and success, employee retention is exceptionally vital. Leadership's responsibility is to encourage team members to go beyond their own interests to achieve the organization's overall goals through a shared vision and teamwork (Bass, 1985b). Management at the university that cultivate relationships with their staff members help the staff member use their talents, skills, and abilities to further the organization's objectives. This study assessed transformational

leadership's influence in identifying the relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover in higher education.

### **Employee Empowerment**

In its most basic form, empowerment refers to giving employees assignments that enable them to take ownership of the work they wish to achieve. The concept of empowerment has several levels, including how leaders empower their team (the empowering), how team members react to the empowering (the empowered), and how team members connect (Kanjanakan et al., 2023). McNaughtan et al. (2022) observed that trust and personal consequence constructions within the empowerment framework are the most prominent factors in increasing faculty satisfaction. He conducted the study to enlighten professors and administrators of higher education about some aspects of empowerment for obtaining job satisfaction and improving the success of faculty and the students they serve. Empowerment is one possible method for bridging the gap between ideal conditions and the work environment (McNaughtan et al., 2022). In higher education, the strategic significance of various factors such as leadership effectiveness, employee well-being, job satisfaction, and staff turnover cannot be understated. Another 2021 quantitative study by Samad et al. showed that transformational leadership theory dramatically increased employee happiness and well-being while decreasing turnover intentions. Additionally, empowerment reduces employee turnover. McNaughtan et al. (2022) professed that although management research and practice have turned the phrase "empowerment" into a leadership buzzword, a wealth of data demonstrates that it is significant for organizational performance.

When leaders empower their employees, they lessen their desire to leave the company. According to the American Psychological Association (Ballard & Grawitch, 2017), empowerment is one of the essential characteristics of a psychologically healthy workplace. Transformational leaders can empower and motivate their teams (Koh et al., 2019), fostering a healthy work environment with the competitive edge necessary to drive positive transformation (Kanjanakan et al., 2023). Because transformational leaders provide a healthy workplace, employees feel empowered to perform meaningful work and are likelier to work diligently for the company (Bastari et al., 2020). Bass (1995a) argues that transformational leadership achieves results that exceed initial expectations by making employees aware of the significance of their tasks, stimulating subordinates' high-level needs, establishing an atmosphere of mutual trust, and empowering subordinates to sacrifice their interests for the organization's benefit.

### **Turnover Intentions**

According to Li et al. (2021) an employee's intention to leave is a subjective assessment of how likely they will leave their current employer very soon. Several intricate aspects may cause turnover intention (TI), including workplace comfort, safety, structure, organizational rules, labor market conditions, employee views, involvement in decision-making, job satisfaction, and support networks (Oh & Chhinzer, 2021). Training and leader support can help prevent TI because there is a link between job satisfaction and unfavorable TI (Oh & Chhinzer, 2021). Ismail et al. (2015) asserted that leaders may exhibit low motivation, subpar performance, absenteeism, and job sabotage if they do not address employees' TI. Leaders think that the detrimental impact of TI on an

organization's performance outcome is more severe than turnover behavior and calls for immediate intervention as a psychological variable.

Magbity et al. (2020) alleged that leadership affects employees' intentions to leave a job. The findings also revealed that workers under communicative and encouraging leaders, like transformational leaders, have little to no intention of leaving them or the company. In the same context, a leader's lack of understanding, poor communication, and poor mentorship can cause employees to consider leaving an organization. Because turnover can be dysfunctional and disruptive to the organization, it is essential to understand the significant influencing variables to develop policies to minimize the consequences (Choy & Kamoche, 2021). A competent transformational leader with solid mentoring talents and excellent communication skills will increase staff commitment and decrease intention.

According to Li et al. (2021), one of the critical predictors of employees' intention to leave an organization is receiving unfavorable treatment from a superior. Leaders that effectively inspire and treat their workforce properly could increase their organizations efficiency and their employees' intentions to stick with the company. Transformational leaders impact increasing followers' faith in their superiors, reducing followers' intention to leave their current position (Ghimire, 2022). Furthermore, leadership that upholds moral principles, respects employees' opinions and acknowledges employees' differences (such as a transformational leader) frequently increases employees' commitment, loyalty, and intention to stay in their current position.



## **Burnout and Turnover Intentions**

Burnout is a job-related syndrome defined by three domains: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. It responds to chronic social and emotional pressures (Pittman, 2020). These three dimensions pertain to the emotional, interpersonal, and self-evaluative aspects of repercussions and are caused by continuous exposure to work-related stress. Boamah (2022) studied how the transformational leadership behaviors of nursing deans or directors affected the workplace culture, faculty burnout, and job satisfaction. Boamah (2022) concluded that transformational leadership directly influences faculty burnout and has an immediate negative effect on workplace culture and job satisfaction. Although workplace culture mediates the impact of leadership on job satisfaction and burnout, the baseline model did not account for COVID-19's moderating influence. The results thoroughly grasp the variables influencing nursing faculty wellness and have proved that transformational leaders can increase retention through a supportive workplace culture. Even during an unforeseeable catastrophe, like a pandemic, a transformational dean or director can actively modify the character of the academic work environment to reduce the risks of burnout, boost happiness, and, eventually, faculty retention.

Bass (1985a) stated that transformational leaders could bring about substantial organizational changes primarily by inspiring workers to produce results that benefit the whole organization. By impacting the organization's philosophy, transformational leaders can raise performance levels. To comprehend how positions in higher education changed throughout the pandemic and how these changes were related to people's burnout and

intention to leave higher education, Winfield and Paris (2022) undertook a mixed study. They discovered that higher education workers with a severe disruption in their work had greater odds of suffering burnout using multiple regression, theme analysis, and the framework for job demands and resources.

Additionally, Winfield and Paris (2022) discovered that the intention to leave one's current work in higher education has increased in correlation with eliminating staff positions and severe levels of burnout. Professionals in higher education have explained that leaders do not support the rising workloads and job expectations caused by the reduced staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in burnout. Such working conditions significantly impacted employees' personal lives, particularly their physical and emotional health triggering the intention to leave their current profession in higher education. Winfield and Paris (2022) suggested that future studies should take on the condition requirements of employment in higher education during the pandemic era and stressed the need for institutional leaders to strive toward structural improvements that would support staff members.

Academic support staff that deal with higher education student-athletes may experience job burnout due to issues related to the workplace environment, according to Mbindyo et al. (2021). Jobs in higher education necessitate high working capacities, lengthy working hours, persistent personnel shortages, sometimes a hostile administrative climate, and a lack of managerial assistance. Additionally, various social and economic issues influence the organizational structures for these positions, creating work environments with high resource requirements. In their study about burnout in higher

education, Agarwal and Bansal (2021) asserted that teachers are susceptible to burnout because of the sad truth of stress in education. Of the 100 survey participants surveyed, 69.8% reported high levels of burnout, compared to 51% of professionals who reported high levels of depersonalization and 44% who reported poor levels of personal achievement. The findings demonstrated that leaders should address stress among teachers to avoid diagnosing this social plague early. A large body of literature supports these findings consulted in this sense. Although this study is not about burnout, it is necessary to explore potential risk factors of burnout, especially in HEIs' staff members, because it impacts the turnover of employees.

### **Communication**

Communication is the foundation of leadership. A transformational leader is competent in communication when such a leader uses communication as a form of relationship-building to achieve the company's goals. Human resource department leaders are primarily responsible for identifying the company's goals and communicating them to subordinates to ensure that company and individual goals are aligned (Cao et al., 2022). However, communication is not just one of the most critical parts of leadership effectiveness; it is also considered a leadership process. Transformational leaders can use effective communication channels to build and expand their teams (Zhang et al., 2020) because employees feel that they can express their thoughts, their voices are heard, and they are empowered.

Every day, leaders encounter challenges in effectively conveying their messages due to disparities in linguistic patterns, syntactical structures, semantic interpretations,

tonal variations, and customary practices. Any organization's adequacy and competence depend on its workforce's fortification (Ganji et al., 2021), and the easiest method to accomplish such a workforce is to communicate the organization's goals to the employees. For employees to understand how they fit into the organization, leaders must have a consistent communication procedure that connects their leaders with the correct message (Krishna & Garg, 2022). As staff engagement is a critical objective for transformational leaders, they must appropriately articulate the vision to empower and motivate the staff. Supporting employees is therefore essential since it makes it simpler to adjust to a changing workplace, and communication aids in the process.

Netolicky (2020) investigated the complexity of the function of educational leaders. It entails strategy, culture, relationships, administration, communication, operations, and complex decision-making, with several moving pieces and frequently competing stakeholder perspectives. During the COVID-19 epidemic, schools, and educational systems also adapt to continually changing conditions, the increasing complexity of the lives of individuals they serve, and external narratives. A shared vision and moral purpose anchor their decisions, and they align their operations with the plan. These leaders make decisions using excellent communication, intuition, swiftness, and conscious, deliberate, and well-considered preparation. Leaders must communicate with precision, intent, compassion, and humanity.

Effective communication has enormous potential for promoting employee performance and increasing job satisfaction (Amadu & Anyarayor, 2022). If those in positions of authority within organizations want to achieve their objectives more quickly,

they must adopt a solid and efficient communication system that promotes collaboration and feedback. Transformational leadership enables employees to better comprehend the organization's operations, support, caring, and ideals, fostering connections with members and fostering an elevated level of affective commitment through effective communication (Yücel, 2021). In addition, transformational leaders use communication as a useful tool for organizational crisis management that promotes job satisfaction and motivates employees to work well and effectively reach the organization goals.

### **Impact of Transformational Leadership on Turnover Intention**

Gan and Voon (2021) observed that proponents of transformational leadership assert it provides an unfavorable turnover effect and a solution for leaders with followers that have a negative attitude on the organization. A transformational leader may align organizational aspirations and individual goals over time by establishing a personalized and meaningful relationship with his or her followers, aligning followers' moral ideals, and guiding followers' behaviors. Moreover, transformational leaders can adapt to the historical, social, and economic environment, the type of organization, the leader's personality, and values. Transformational leaders are more likely to discover new ideas with their followers in times of crisis, such as COVID-19 and rapid change, because they can engage and encourage followers to realize exceptional accomplishments (Bass, 1985a).

Consequently, Alatawi (2017) discovered that the transformational leadership style has a negative link with the intention to leave. Leaders adopting this leadership style might anticipate lower attrition rates, allowing them to remain competitive in an unstable

environment and gain increased productivity, outstanding performance, and cost savings. Alatawi (2017) established that transformational leadership is a successful management approach. Leaders may adapt their management style to the high-tech corporate environment and improve their transformational leadership talents and capacities. When leaders attend seminars, webinars, workshops or join organizations that educate and train members on transformational leadership concepts, they perform efficiently. HR leaders who hire more transformative prospects may increase employee retention overall. Leaders who support transformational leadership encourage staff information sharing, resulting in good behaviors between knowledge sharing and creative work practices (Afsar et al., 2019).

Several elements influence employee turnover intent, with leadership being one of the most important because it significantly impacts the employer-employee relationship (Hauer et al., 2021). The purpose of Hauer et al.'s study was to examine the impact of leadership on employee retention and to provide essential advice for leaders to increase staff retention, considering cultural factors. According to the participants' perspectives, the results provide a comprehensive staff retention framework and define the most critical factors a leader may consider. Hauer et al. (2021) discovered that motivating variables and managerial competencies, such as emotional intelligence, communication, and transformational leadership style, are top priorities for effectively retaining people. Employee retention is crucial because organizations rely on employees' skills and knowledge to maintain competitiveness and success (Hauer et al., 2021). A leader's

primary duty is to communicate feelings like passion and enthusiasm, inspire others to attain their goals, and keep them in the company because they are happy with their jobs.

### **Transformational Leadership and Empowerment**

To concentrate on employee career development and long-term retention, firms must emphasize learning more than securing their loyalty (Hayat et al., 2022). To help their team members improve their weaknesses, transformational leaders recognize their abilities, skills, and needs and then provide coaching and mentoring, thus empowering them to be successful. Transformational leadership fosters a positive atmosphere that encourages collaboration, empowerment, and guidance, so enabling individuals to exercise autonomy in decision-making and embrace failures without apprehension of retribution. Transformational leaders foster the development of shared values and beliefs within the group treating every employee fairly and creating a mutual understanding among them. Hayat et al. (2022) further stated that empowerment is an essential determinant of adequate quality, efforts, and processes and is seen as an endorsement of the employee's capacity to make a meaningful contribution to the organization's goals. Employees who feel empowered exhibit initiative, trust in their workplace, positive attitudes, enhanced performance, job and career engagement, and organizational attachment.

Transformational leaders strive to increase cooperation, productivity, and employee involvement. Romão et al. (2022) conducted a phenomenological study to define transformational leadership qualities in sports with 271 participants from various organizations. Participants indicated their satisfaction and turnover intention, as well as

the coaching abilities of their leaders. According to the research findings, while a leader's coaching skills are detrimental to an employee's intention to quit, they are beneficial to that employee's satisfaction, with the latter mitigating the relationship between the first two factors. Organizations should encourage leaders to incorporate more coaching skills into their leadership styles because they should be aware that a leader's coaching abilities are helpful not only for the pleasure of the employee but also for preventing turnover intention. Romão et al. (2022) further posited that coaching-skilled leaders create a trustworthy work environment where staff may perform better, develop self-awareness, and feel more satisfied with their jobs, leaders, and organizations. Along with imparting knowledge, a leader coach encourages counsel and offers a careful critique. This leadership approach is an organizational tool for inspiring, encouraging, and satisfying employees' innovative actions.

Transformational leaders possess the qualities of trust, sincerity, direction, structure, and foresight that enable them to empower their followers, decreasing the turnover rate. Joo et al. (2022) examined the relationship between empowering leadership and employee innovation and the mediating roles of work engagement and knowledge sharing. Joo et al. (2022) discovered a favorable and statistically significant relationship between empowering leadership, work engagement, and information sharing. Work involvement was strongly associated with information sharing and staff innovation. There was a meaningful relationship between knowledge sharing and employee innovation. This finding indicated that the direct effect of empowered leadership on employee



creativity was insignificant but that there was a substantial indirect effect via the primary mediation functions of job engagement and knowledge sharing.

According to Lee and Chen (2018), longevity provides firms with a significant competitive advantage in the form of in-depth expertise. The difficulty of replacing talented individuals heightens the organization's requirement for long-term retention. According to Khalid and Nawab (2018), it is challenging for businesses to replace talented employees with others with comparable skills. Proper training and possibilities to improve and grow motivate employees to remain in a firm. When employers do not allow employees to catch up with constantly evolving job requirements, they become unhappy, insecure, and want to resign. The lack of adherence to advance in their careers and acquire new skills through training (Adomako & Nguyen, 2020) will cause employers to lose their workers. Employers with a higher likelihood of facilitating professional advancement have a greater chance to retain their employees (Frega, 2021) when they offer training services and career development.

### **Transformational Leadership and Workplace Culture**

Before designing measures to decrease attrition and boost retention, Leitão et al. (2021) assert that leaders must identify the problem. The literature focuses on the importance of leadership adaptability in developing strategies to maintain competitiveness in higher education. However, workplace culture is a recurrent topic when examining leadership style, retention, and attrition in higher education. Lee et al. (2022) noted that organizational involvement is a factor that maintains employee loyalty to their current employer. Transformational leaders inspire staff to improve performance

and frequently encourage and motivate their followers to perform above and beyond. In a 2020 study, Park and Pierce discovered that workplace culture mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' commitment to the firm and decreased turnover intentions.

Experts such as Parker and Pierce attribute transformational leadership's effectiveness to its favorable impact on organizational culture. The promotion of beneficial workplace behaviors and the development of an inclusive culture are hallmarks of transformational leaders. Such leaders create structurally empowered workplace environments that encourage collaboration, independence, and logical thought (Boamah, 2022). Therefore, followers motivated by their transformational leaders know what their leaders want from them and make every effort to help the organization achieve its goals. As a result, they look for creative ways to approach their work, reflecting on their creative behavior.

Leaders should foster a culture that acknowledges and establishes an effective communication process. Leaders can accomplish such goals through effective leadership, and a company culture encourages a healthy learning environment (Campbell et al., 2012). The firm must develop strategies to build a dedicated team of employees to represent them, which is only achievable if leaders provide employees with more useful assignments and training (Ji et al., n.d.). To be efficient at work, every employee deserves a suitable working atmosphere (Gan & Voon, 2021). The transformational theory claims that leaders who practice transformational leadership create an emotional bond with their

team (Bastari et al., 2020), fostering an inclusive workplace atmosphere and emphasizing good behaviors.

Bergstedt and Wei (2020) reviewed several studies researching nurse engagement in hospitals. The results found that nurses are more engaged in work environments that support their values. Work engagement is contagious because engaged individuals go beyond self-interest and can better meet the job's objectives while establishing a workplace environment suitable for progress. Leaders should use specific strategies to promote engagement. According to Bergstedt and Wei (2020), nurse leaders should have an environment centered around empowerment, prioritizing accessibility, training, self-reflecting, conducting formal studies around engagement, and listening to their employees.

Drysdale et al. (2016) analyzed the data from the International Successful School Principalship Project using a case study technique to determine how principals contributed to the success of their schools. The results indicated that the balance between management and leadership was crucial to the roles of leaders (Drysdale et al., 2016). Vision, integrity, character, ethics, communication, respect, and trust are essential qualities for an effective school leader. The leadership styles of school principals have influenced teachers' perceptions of them. Khatri (2005) presented an alternative kind of transformational leadership that focused more on charm and vision, two often-overlooked elements. Teachers were more committed to their institutions when their educational leaders displayed transformational leadership (Bayler, 2012).

## **Strategies to Reduce Turnover**

Individuals leave their jobs for distinct reasons, and management is frequently unaware of them. However, listening to their requirements and implementing retention tactics based on those needs could help management keep talented employees. According to Oprea et al. (2022), Managing turnover is an essential human resource practice, as high turnover rates can impact organizational success in diverse ways. Management must scrutinize staff retention tactics more than the job's specific responsibilities, for humans are purposeful and expressive of self-concepts (Oprea et al., 2022). Employees need to feel supported, appreciated, and invested in wanting to remain in a company.

One possible way to increase retention is to encourage bonds among coworkers. Coworker support is emotional or task support, which may play distinct roles in reducing turnover (Self et al., 2022). Support from coworkers lowers social pressures and employee burnout while assisting staff resolve work-related issues. While it is human nature for people to repay or reciprocate the kind words or deeds, they receive, coworkers who converse with one another frequently build ties with one another. Employees who enjoy supportive relationships at work are more inclined to reciprocate this behavior and feel a sense of belonging or integration inside the company (Self et al., 2022). Management must acknowledge efficacious strategies and implement them to enhance staff retention. Giving workers a chance to express their opinions about the workplace atmosphere raises satisfaction levels inside the company (Fatmasari & Badaruddin, 2022).

Cloutier et al. (2015) proposed that employee retention strategies should be the most crucial aspect of any business by building a strategic plan that prioritizes employee retention, beginning with the firm's vision, values, and operational procedures. Cloutier et al. (2015) suggest four strategies for successful employee retention: effective communication, a diverse workforce, hiring skilled employees, and development and training programs. The phenomenon of communication holds significant sway over the level of dedication exhibited by employees toward the overarching vision and values of the organization. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge the significance of cultivating a heterogeneous workforce and exercising meticulous discernment in the recruitment process to ensure optimal alignment between individuals and their respective roles.

Ibrahim Alzamel et al. (2020) asserted that management must create a work-home balance in their business due to frequent workplace changes. Employees look for jobs with benefits, including flexible scheduling, personal time off, educational possibilities (such as tuition reimbursement), retraining seminars, and job rotation. Employers can retain current employees, and the organization's performance will increase if they create a positive working environment and meet the staff's needs. Employees who are content with their work environment are likelier to remain loyal to their firm. The intention of employees to leave a company will be less if they are satisfied and receptive to their working environment conditions (job requirements). Therefore, according to Ibrahim Alzamel et al. (2020), organizational commitment is a significant predictor of the intention to quit; individuals who show a high level of commitment and connection to

their organization were less likely to have the intent to leave and had longer tenures in the same business.

Ibrahim Alzamel et al. (2020) argued that if work-life quality improves, as reflected in formal organizational rules and procedures in hospitals, nurses' perceptions of the relationship between work-life quality, organizational commitment, and intention to leave will improve. The findings confirm the significance of work-life balance in improving nurses' commitment and retention in their company. The organization should investigate the needs of nurses to enhance the quality of work life for nurses, hence increasing their commitment and decreasing their desire to leave. An organization's commitment significantly affects the quality of a nurse's work life and her intention to leave her position; hence, leaders should pay more attention to it.

### **Transition**

In Section 1, I discussed the problem identified for this study and its context. The proposed study functions as the foundation for the investigation, incorporating the interview questions used for data collection. The conceptual framework chosen amplifies the value of TL and offers an operational definition for the terminology used in this study along with the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. As discussed, the study might bring a contribution to corporate practice and the potential for positive social transformation. The study concludes with a comprehensive exploration of the professional and academic literature, which included information about the transformational leadership theory and other theories, the impact of transformational

leadership on turnover intention, empowerment, workplace culture and certain strategies that may help to reduce turnover.

Section 2 describes the processes and methods used to perform this multiple case study. Section 2 encompasses an examination of various key aspects within the realm of research, including the researcher's function, participant population and sample techniques, study methodology and design, as well as ethical considerations. Also included in Section 2 are data gathering tools, data methodologies, and data analysis. The second section ends with an assessment of the study's reliability and validity.

The third section presents the findings and their application to business practice. The discussion also includes the significance of the findings for constructive social transformation, the actionable ideas, and suggestions for future research. The conclusion in Section 3 also includes comments on the doctoral study process.

## Section 2: The Project

The section begins with a restatement of the purpose of the study, a description of the role of the researcher, justifications for the research method and research design, a discussion of population and sampling, ethical considerations, and data-related activities. Kiwanuka et al. (2021) highlighted the impact of transformational leadership on employee job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and employee turnover. This study emphasizes the cost of employee turnover and how it can prevent a business from sustaining and expanding. Management must provide for their needs to retain skilled and devoted employees in the organization. This study's findings could enhance the leaders' capacity of HEIs to retain their employees for more than two years and reduce organizational turnover.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore successful strategies that some U.S. HEI leaders use to engage their employees to reduce high employee turnover and achieve growth and sustainability. The participants are leaders who have engaged their employees and retained them for at least one year at U.S. HEIs within Florida. Such interviews helped discover their successful strategies to reduce turnover and achieve growth and sustainability. These leaders shared their successful employee retention strategies through open-ended interviews. Leaders of HEIs create a climate to develop further students' learning experiences, results, and graduation rates by retaining high-performing employees (Cloutier et al., 2015).



### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher's responsibility for the study's data collection equipment is one of the most crucial factors in the study's success. According to Yin (2018), a researcher's role is to review the literature, define the sample, recruit participants, and collect and analyze the data. Such an assignment is problematic because it requires exploring the participants' thoughts and emotions (McGrath et al., 2019). The researcher's primary responsibility is to protect the participants and their information, regardless of how they collect the data (Kelly et al., 2021). The researcher must effectively communicate these safeguards to participants and must be authorized by the relevant research ethical review board prior to the commencement of the study. As the primary research instrument, I had to recruit participants, develop interview questions, conduct interviews, maintain objectivity, and limit bias. I also developed the interview protocol (see Appendix), which contains the interview questions to ensure a planned, standardized, and effective interview process.

In this study, I explored strategies that leaders at U.S. HEIs employ to reduce their staff and faculty turnover. Interviews with a semistructured format elicit the information required to evaluate business strategies (Lawrence, 2022). This multiple-case study illustrates some strategies HEI leaders in northeast Florida used to reduce employee turnover. Multiple qualitative case study research enables the examination of replication and repeatability, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of study findings (Yin, 2018). Conducting a multiple case study provided the most insightful responses to the

research question. This research aimed to identify successful retention strategies to reduce the high employee turnover rate at U.S. HEIs.

To collect exhaustive data, semistructured interviews with open-ended questions helped investigate the responses of leaders from two HEIs that have successfully retained their staff for over 2 years. Given the inherent uniqueness of retention strategies concerning individual leaders and organizations, including multiple cases in this study facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the efficacy of mitigating employee turnover. The intention to leave the company and seek other opportunities depends on diverse factors. Before conducting this study, I had no in-depth understanding of the retention process at HEIs because I had never worked in the field. I chose the education industry as my research target to mitigate personal bias because I had no prior knowledge.

Adherence to the *Belmont Report* to perform my study ethically and to safeguard and respect the research subjects satisfies three fundamental principles, respect, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1978). The *Belmont Report*, signed into law in 1979, has been a pillar of the ethical conduct of research involving human people (Siddiqui & Sharp, 2021). The *Belmont Report* demonstrates respect for individuals and integrates at least two ethical convictions: (a) that individuals are autonomous agents and (b) that individuals with who have compromised autonomy has a legitimate entitlement to protection (Earl, 2020). Complying with the *Belmont Report* standards means ensuring that each participant is aware that their participation is

voluntary, treating each subject equally throughout the duration of the research project, and ensuring that each participant understands the consent form.

To respect the participants' autonomy, I sent each participant a consent form that required signing before participating in the study. The written consent included details about the study, the researcher, and a statement confirming their voluntary participation. The participants could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The written consent form also explained the researcher's responsibility to protect their identity, privacy, and confidentiality. Getting the participants' written consent helps them understand the study's involvement in deciding whether to participate (Gillies et al., 2018).

Throughout the investigation, the researcher must be responsible and honest. In qualitative research, researchers must be aware of potential personal biases that may impair the study's reliability and devise ways to detect and mitigate prejudice (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). To ensure objectivity in the research, the interviews were video recorded on Zoom or Teams with the participants, who are HEI leaders in Jacksonville, Florida, to whom I have no professional ties. Not having a previous relationship with the participants mitigates observer bias and validity concerns (Bierema et al., 2021). Bracketing refers to the researcher's own experience, cultural influences, or assumptions that may alter or influence how he or she interprets the acquired data (McNarry et al., 2019). It is practical to use bracketing to reduce personal prejudice.

Conducting semistructured interviews allow investigating in-depth distinctive aspects of the respondents' experiences (McGrath et al., 2019). A researcher uses the

interview process as a guide for gathering data to reduce bias (Schnefke et al., 2019). Having an interview protocol enhances the quality and validity of the data obtained from the participants (Yin, 2018). Each participant received the same set of 10 questions and participated in a similar interview protocol (see Appendix) to track their point of view and maintain consistency. To avoid personal bias during the interviews, I remained open-minded and refrained from making any judgments about the participants' responses. The interview questions and processes were uniform across all participants as a quality control measure.

### **Participants**

Identifying appropriate participants is a crucial aspect of qualitative research studies. It is vital to select participants who will provide the best information for the research because they have experienced the phenomenon of interest (Dyar, 2022). The investigation featured six leaders from two HEIs in Northeast Florida. To qualify for participation in the study, respondents had to have held their current roles for at least 1 year to demonstrate their familiarity with employee turnover and faculty and staff evaluation and feedback. According to Knechel (2019), the study quality stems from participants who comprehend the complexities of the phenomenon in question. Data and study quality depend on the correct specification of eligibility criteria for participants (Yin, 2018). The utilization of deliberate sampling in participant selection permitted the capture of valuable and pertinent information from everyone involved in the study.

The participants received email notifications 2 weeks ahead of time, giving them enough notice to plan and a reminder 2 days before the meeting. Email functions as a

method to elucidate the principle of confidentiality, guaranteeing a thorough demonstration of transparency within the research setting. This medium is employed to acquire the consent of participants while simultaneously facilitating the coordination of interviews per their respective schedules and availability. The preparation for a qualitative interview is as crucial as the interview itself, if not more so. According to Vogel (2017), getting data from various participants while focusing on the overall research issue guarantees the reliability of the results. Ferguson et al. (2017) argued that participants contribute to a research project based on their interest in the issue, the availability of effective management tools, and social interaction.

The participants were free to accept or decline the invitation to participate in the research project. As proof of their willingness to engage in the interviewing procedure, eligible participants had to respond to the email, including the consent form approved by the Walden IRB. However, to preserve the safety of all participants and myself, I did not conduct in-person interviews because of the post COVID-19 pandemic. The participants attended Zoom or Teams interviews, depending on their comfort level with the platforms. Each interview lasted 30–45 minutes to get as much rich data as possible. The purposeful sample for this study comprises six leaders of U.S. HEIs who met the criteria for selection.

Trust is vital to the design of a study because trust fosters beneficial connections between researchers and participants. Transparency and excellent communication are key to establishing participant trust in research (Khodakarami & Dirani, 2020). To maintain effective communication during data collection, it is imperative to cultivate a good

rapport with the participants. Employing a congenial, friendly, approachable manner in using talking points to discuss the overall topic of the research project and providing a transparent explanation of the study helps establish rapport with the participants. Kelly et al. (2021), in their reflections on the research fieldwork procedure, urged researchers to routinely engage with participants and develop relationships based on shared interest, trust, and respect.

Accessing the participants included conducting internet searches for participants through institutions' websites, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The institution leaders' list of potential study participants is available on the institutions' websites. Researchers employ a variety of approaches for population sampling in qualitative case studies. Snowball sampling is a recruitment strategy used when locating or identifying individuals is difficult (Dyar, 2022). I used the snowball approach to solicit more individuals to participate in the study to help achieve data saturation or redundancy. With snowball sampling, a researcher might begin with a single person in contact with a small group of relevant individuals and ask them to refer additional potential participants (Engward & Goldspink, 2020). The participants received the informed consent form by email. The video-recorded semistructured interview took place using the Zoom and Teams applications.

### **Research Method and Design**

Identifying the suitable research approach and strategy to address the study question and analyzing each research method and design to select the most appropriate for the research topic is vital to the study. Kelly et al. (2021) defined qualitative,

quantitative, and mixed techniques as the main categories of research methods, and each method encompassing a variety of study designs. The use of the qualitative research method and the adoption of a multiple case study design have been deemed appropriate for this study and are substantiated in the subsequent sections.

### **Research Method**

Qualitative research is the most direct method for describing occurrences (Kong et al., 2022). Combining the data gathered through the qualitative method makes it possible to appreciate the participants' experiences. Semistructured interviews allow for an in-depth investigation of the unique characteristics of respondents' experiences (McGrath et al., 2019). To minimize bias, a researcher employs the interviewing procedure as a guide for data collection (Schnefke et al., 2019). By using unbiased, semistructured interviews, I was able to collect rich data that aided in exploring successful strategies certain leaders of HEIs in the United States use to reduce employee turnover. Qualitative methodologies provide a deeper grasp of the phenomenon under investigation and increases a study's rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth, thereby capturing as much as possible of the socially constructed aspect of reality (Rocha, 2022).

According to Stutterheim and Ratcliffe (2021), researchers employ a qualitative approach to examine complicated phenomena by including relevant parties. The study's objective is to identify the successful business strategies employed by leaders at HEIs in the United States to decrease staff and faculty turnover; therefore, the qualitative research design was the most appropriate method. The qualitative technique enables researchers to

understand more in-depth how individuals perceive a phenomenon using open-ended questions (Busetto et al., 2020). A qualitative research method aims to gather and explore diverse perspectives by posing “why” and “how” questions (Yin, 2018). The qualitative technique was ideal for this study, which explored a complex phenomenon and interviewed leaders in U.S. HEIs using open-ended questions.

Researchers use the quantitative method to analyze variables and numerical measurements concerning a phenomenon methodically (Casarrubea et al., 2019). The quantitative technique would have been ineffective for this study because the purpose of the study was not to examine variables and numerical data nor to test any hypotheses about the phenomena of employee turnover, or to look at correlations between variables. Using quantitative methods entails gathering data, reviewing variables, analyzing data, and comparing outcomes based on the relationship between factors, including qualitative and quantitative approaches (Kelly et al., 2021).

Researchers must be able to do quantitative and qualitative research to conduct mixed-method studies, which combine qualitative and quantitative methods (Yin, 2018). This study seeks to explore the strategies leaders use in HEIs. Therefore, it was appropriate to perform a qualitative study. This study’s primary objective did not involve examining variables, characteristics, degree of differences, or the interaction between components, nor did it aim to predict a meaningful outcome. Therefore, the utilization of a mixed-methods technique was deemed inappropriate. The mixed technique was inadequate because the study is not about analyzing variables and numerical data. The qualitative technique is suitable for a study that employs open-ended questions, focuses



on a particular occurrence or concept, and analyzes rich and complete data to reveal interpretations (Rocha, 2022). I used the qualitative method to answer the research question because open-ended questions yielded the rich data needed to explore the strategies certain leaders at HEIs used to reduce employee turnover.

Achieving data saturation in a qualitative study improves confidence in the results of the qualitative study. Bierema et al. (2021) asserted that data saturation means that additional data gathering, or analysis is superfluous based on the acquired or analyzed data. Scholars identify certain ambiguities about how to conceptualize saturation and inconsistencies in its use. In their groundbreaking work on grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (2017) defined saturation as the criterion for determining when to stop sampling the various groups relevant to a category. Data saturation indicates no new data from which a sociologist may derive the categories featured (Bierema et al., 2021). By repeatedly observing comparable situations and similar or the same answers to questions in the interviews, it was evident that a category was saturated and no longer needed more data collection. Interviewing six leaders at two U.S. HEIs allowed me to reach data saturation for this study. To ensure saturation is based on the broadest range of data conceivable for the category, using diverse employee groups as much as feasible sufficed.

### **Research Design**

Choosing the multiple case study research design allowed me to describe the problem for this study. A multiple case study enables a researcher to concentrate on in-depth analysis and review specific instances or cases to elicit real-world viewpoints such as behaviors, life cycles, change processes, relationships, and organizational and

management processes (Yin, 2018). I chose the multiple case study design over alternative qualitative approaches. Applying a qualitative multiple case study approach permits the examination, replication, and repeatability of study findings, thereby enhancing their reliability and validity (Yin, 2018). In studying how six leaders achieved the critical task of retaining their employees, using semistructured interviews to explore the strategies' effectiveness yielded rich and valuable data.

Researchers who employ a case study design may provide a comprehensive grasp of social perspectives associated with an organization's better practice (Yin, 2018). For this study, I used the multiple case study research approach to explore strategies that certain leaders at HEIs employ to reduce employee turnover and increase profitability. I considered additional qualitative study designs, but none other than the multiple case study seemed appropriate for my study. I assessed the ethnography, the narrative, the phenomenology, the grounded theory, and the case study research designs.

Ethnography is appropriate for a researcher to examine a particular cultural or ethnic group for an extended period (Vougioukalou et al., 2019). Because I did not examine the culture of a particular group, the ethnographic research design was inappropriate for this study. I wanted to investigate tactics HEI leaders use to reduce employee turnover in the workplace to boost profitability.

A researcher uses a narrative study approach to investigate the differences in individual social experiences in an environment through the personal tales of the participants (McGrath et al., 2019). The narrative research design was inappropriate and

could not facilitate the ability to investigate the phenomenon's why or how and understand the business problem.

An alternative design option revolved around applying a phenomenological approach to the study. Blakley (2022) asserted that phenomenological studies explore human experiences through the participants' descriptions. These phenomena commonly denote lived experiences. A phenomenological study investigates one or more people's perceptions of a concept or phenomenon (Blakley, 2022). The objective of this method is to convey the essence of various forms of personal experience and to see things through another person's eyes; therefore, it also addresses the practitioner's perspective (Blakley, 2022). The phenomenological research design was inappropriate and would not allow for investigating the why or how of the phenomenon at hand and understanding the business problem.

The grounded theory approach has become popular as a qualitative method in various academic disciplines (Sebeelo, 2022). Researchers using this design strive to construct theory through inductive analysis. Glaser and Strauss (2017) developed this strategy by combining components of numerous qualitative research techniques to provide a systematic roadmap that allows researchers to process data concurrently rather than sequentially throughout both the data collecting and analysis stages (Hussein et al., 2020). One of the main grounded theory methods is the continuous comparative approach, in which the researcher compares data, first comparing data with data and then comparing their conclusions translated into codes and categories with further data (Sebeelo, 2022). The grounded theory research design was inappropriate because I was

not comparing data with previously collected data. The grounded theory would not allow investigating the phenomenon's why or how and understanding the business problem.

In qualitative experiments, considerations such as the need to achieve data saturation may influence research design and sample size. Researchers consider that they have reached data saturation when no new relevant information, codes, categories, or themes arise (Kong et al., 2022). Chitac (2022) asserted that data saturation is when no new themes or information appear during data collection. A researcher has reached data saturation when data no longer adds new knowledge and additional coding is unnecessary. I knew that I have attained data saturation after I have identified recurring themes among all participants, and they provided no added information.

### **Population and Sampling**

The participants in this study consist of administrators with at least 2 years of experience at two HEIs in Northeast, Florida. To produce a credible research conclusion, a qualitative researcher should carefully consider employing a sample technique that matches with the research objectives while selecting research participants (Yin, 2018). Obtaining IRB approval before the study begins is a precautionary measure. I contacted the IRB departments of the institutions where the participant work to ensure that the Walden University IRB approval suffices to interview their leaders. The participants' contact information was on their respective institutions' official websites. Only those with managerial authority received an invitation to participate in the study, as their alignment with the overarching research topics was essential. While Sim et al. (2018) indicated that 4 to 10 participants are appropriate, Yin (2018) argued in favor of modest

sample sizes in qualitative case studies, and Braun and Clarke (2019) theorized that an adequate sample size should consist between 10 and 15 participants. However, it is possible to perform case studies with tiny sample sizes (Sim et al., 2018). I have access to an ample population of administrators from which I can draw to exceed eighteen participants. Once the interview process began, the achievement of data saturation where no latest information elicited showed that I did not need to interview new participants.

Researchers use judgment or purposive sampling to select a sample of individuals familiar with the topic Hjertstrand et al. (2021). It is essential to exercise discretion when selecting participants for the study depending on their contextual awareness. I selected administrators who fit the following criteria: (a) administrative authority to participate in the study; (b) the ability to retain personnel for more than two years; and (c) evidence that their retention tactics have increased profitability. The participants were fully immersed in and regularly tasked with retaining personnel, successfully used strategies that retain them, and helped the HEIs financially by their actions.

To comprehend the subject of their research, a researcher must collect sufficient data (Yin, 2018). Adjusting the sample size until I reached data saturation was necessary after interviewing my fourth participant. The appropriate number of participants is important to comprehend leaders' strategies to improve employee retention. Braun and Clarke (2019) define data saturation as the moment at which no new themes or codes emerge from the data. When new data began replicating, and no new themes emerged after data analysis, I knew I had reached data saturation.

I conducted open-ended, semistructured interviews for this research. To address the research topic, researchers may ask participants open-ended questions that allow them to expound (Yin, 2018). To preserve uniformity, I asked each participant the same questions. The interviews continued until the responses began to resemble each other. I adhered to the interview protocol to remain focused throughout the entire interview. The participants allowed me to recall information accurately and discuss the most effective approaches to reduce employee turnover. The interviews took place in compliance with the policies of Walden University and the COVID-19 restrictions.

### **Ethical Research**

Obtaining the participants' informed consent is ethical. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that all studies adhere to the university's ethical standards and governmental requirements in the United States. Once the IRB representative at Walden University approved the project for data collection, my permission number became available. My IRB approval number for this final doctoral dissertation is 05-22-23-1072482, and I included it in the emails I sent to my participants. The informed consent included the study's history and purpose, information on the researcher, and an explanation of how I would maintain confidentiality.

According to Yin (2018), research ethics attain credibility. Once acquiring the IRB permission, I emailed each potential participant an invitation with the informed consent and a statement with withdrawal information, guaranteeing their participation was voluntary. The participants knew they could withdraw from the study and would not

get monetary compensation for their participation. Any participant could withdraw from the study before, during, or after the interview.

Informing the participants of my responsibility to safeguard the confidentiality of all data was important. The Common Rule (45 CFR 46, Subpart A) requires IRBs to decide that there are acceptable procedures for preserving subjects' privacy and maintaining the confidentiality of data while reviewing research proposals. In addition to an offer to join, the consent form included participation protocols, vital details, voluntary parts of the study, rewards and hazards, and the researcher's contact information. If they withdrew from the study, I would delete the participants' data and information.

The participants were cognizant of their active participation in the research endeavor. I sent an email comprising a concise summary of the interviews to the participants, requesting their confirmation of the veracity and accuracy of my interpretation of the collected data, thereby initiating the member-checking procedure. Busetto et al. (2020) shared one method of member checking as sending a summary of the interview transcript to each participant. The interviews happened after acquiring IRB approval and the signed informed consent from the participants. I did not reward the participants or offer any incentives. Ilyas et al. (2020) stated that researchers should use codes to label acquired data to ensure sample participant differentiation and confidentiality.

Privacy and anonymity are crucial factors in ethical data-driven research (Ross & Bibler-Zaidi, 2019). Ensuring the confidentiality of each participant's data by assigning a unique code to participants, such as Participant 1 (P01), and to their institutions as I01.

My home computer had a folder for storing electronic files that I protected with a password. I will store the study data for 5 years on a password-protected, encrypted flash drive that keeps locked away in a safe. After 5 years, I will securely delete all electronic materials and shred all paper files. By deleting firm names from interview transcripts, further strengthens anonymity.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

I served as the primary data collection instrument. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as a data collection tool (Roberts, 2020). As the primary instrument for data collection, I conducted open-ended, semistructured interviews utilizing the interview protocol, which contained data that served as a guide before, during, and after the interviews. Researchers utilize an interview protocol to build a good interview procedure. McGrath et al. (2019) proposed that researchers create an interview guide in advance because the interviewer may ask respondents to think on issues that may be crucial to them. I used semistructured interviews to explore some U.S. HEI leaders' strategies to reduce high employee turnover. A semistructured interview allows the researcher to examine a topic in-depth and identify dimensions that are difficult to reach with other methods (Tzagkarakis & Kritas, 2022).

After completing the interviews, I compiled the data and emailed it to the participants requesting their feedback on my interpretation of their responses. According to Busetto et al. (2020), this technique is member checking. Ensuring the accuracy of data gathering while conducting interviews via Zoom or Teams, transcribing, and checking the data is essential. The interview recordings data will stay in their raw form. Fusch et



al. (2017) reported that researchers use a reflexive journal to reflect on rapidly collected data. I shall record my preconceptions to remain cognizant of them during the investigation.

I used pseudonyms for the information acquired during interviews to protect the participants' privacy. Each pseudonym holder communicates based on a virtual identity that cannot be linked to the holder's real identity, making the pseudonym a successful method of evading opponent tracking (Manthan et al., 2021). I labeled the participants P01 through P06. I stored the interview materials securely on my computer, an external hard drive, and a flash drive with password accessibility. My technique for gaining access to participants was to identify them through the institution's social platforms and by emailing them. I emailed the participants whose contact information I obtained on the institutions' websites and urged them to recommend other qualified participants.

### **Data Collection Technique**

After obtaining Walden University's IRB approval, I began collecting data. Upon approval from the IRB, I asked for permission to access participants and verify that they met predetermined interview criteria. Interviews are the preferred data collection technique in qualitative case studies and can be a structured, semistructured, or unstructured (Yin, 2018). I emailed 10 potential leaders from two institutions in Northeast Florida who met the study's eligibility requirements to introduce myself and explain the initial contact's aim. I encouraged the potential participants to respond within seven days and indicate their availability for a virtual interview if they are interested in participating in the research study. I also asked them if they could refer others who might

meet the study's eligibility requirements and be interested in participating in expanding the pool of candidates.

I informed the participants that the requirements for participating in the study included being leaders who have held leadership roles for a minimum of 4 years in various areas of the selected HEIs. Those who respond affirmatively will get a second email detailing the study's goal and requesting their informed permission. The researcher reminded the participants that involvement in the study is entirely voluntary, and that all information collected will be strictly confidential per the consent form. After receiving their responses and signed consent form via email, the researcher invited four participants via email for the Microsoft Teams or Zoom interview, based on COVID 19-guidelines and restrictions, to ensure the participant's level of comfort with the process. I conducted the interviews virtually although the physical location of data collection was my home office.

Throughout these communications, I always reminded participants that participation is voluntary, and candidates may withdraw from the interview process by email at any time during the recruiting and interview process. An interview offers the researcher a semistructured, open discourse regarding the study subject (Lancaster, 2017). I discussed the confidentiality and informed consent process, scheduled the interview according to the participant's availability, making myself available to accommodate the participant's schedule. Interviews in a semistructured style yield descriptive data helpful in answering the key research topic (Lancaster, 2017). Full, rich

data was necessary to explore the strategies used by some leaders at two HEIs in the Northeast Florida to reduce employee turnover and achieve growth and sustainability.

I collected data for this study through open-ended questions, semistructured interviews and adhered to the interview methodology. McGrath et al. (2019) suggested drafting an interview guide in advance because the interviewer may ask respondents to consider subjects of vital relevance to them. Multiple data-gathering methods are available to qualitative researchers, including interviews, sites visit, telephone and video conferencing (Yin, 2018). I conducted the interviews utilizing Zoom, Teams, and the recording function on the computer. With the participant's permission, I have followed the protocols indicated in the interview protocol to audio record the semistructured interviews through MS Teams or Zoom. Face-to-face interviews have been the standard for qualitative interviews for a long time; nevertheless, the Covid-19 outbreak has expedited the need to investigate alternate methods.

Using modern tools to interview via video, telephone, and online applications has advantages and disadvantages (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). I also used my phone as a backup to prevent interview disruptions or should anything happen while using Zooms or Teams. Computers provide a unique chance to record and conduct interviews without a face-to-face interview, although conducting a remote interview presents various obstacles to the researcher (Kelly et al., 2021). Recording the interview is advantageous since it helps identify data errors and preserves the interviewee's responses to the questions (Marchand et al., 2020). In addition to enhancing the data's reliability, recording the interview allows the researcher to go back and verify the information. The interviews will

continue until the desired level of data saturation is reached, indicated that no new data is shared by interview participants.

I used member checking after the interview, which means that participants validated my interpretation of the interview data. Member checking, also known as respondent validation, is the process of revisiting study respondents to determine if the research matches with their perspectives (Busetto et al., 2020). I carefully assessed the information from each interview and continuously revised reports to ensure the correctness and reliability of the data. The procedure of member verification enables the participant to confirm the researcher's translation of the data (Naidu & Prose, 2018). I added participant member checking to validate the accuracy of my interpretation of the data. According to Busetto et al. (2020), a researcher should present a summary of the interview and invite the participant to clarify or expand upon their comments. I emailed the interview summary to each participant and asked them to validate and revise their responses within five business days according to the permission form's instructions. Busetto et al. (2020) stated that one benefit of qualitative data collection methodologies employing case studies is the researcher's ability to evaluate contradictory theories, which increases the validity of the discoveries. I reviewed the websites of the institutions that employ the participants, interviewed and considered information that added to the richness of the data.

### **Data Analysis**

A codebook is a researcher's documentation of the data analysis procedure (Roberts et al., 2019). When a researcher employs analytic approaches to explain,

demonstrate, reduce, and analyze data, this is known as data analysis. I selected, evaluated, and reported on the data using theme analysis. The triangulation approach is vital for implementing systematic checks and balances in the research process (Pathiranage et al., 2020). Using the NVivo software to code the data created an electronic codebook for analyzing data.

As the researcher, I familiarized myself with the gathered data by taking notes, transcribing, and organizing the information. Before beginning the coding process, Braun and Clarke (2019) suggested that researchers acquaint themselves with the data, whereas Yin (2018) characterized qualitative analysis as evaluating and categorizing data to produce evidence-based results. I utilized NVivo 14 Pro qualitative analysis software to transcribe the recorded participant interviews. I also utilized a reflective notebook as an additional instrument to analyze the collected data. According to Abdalla et al. (2018), qualitative researchers have identified various data analysis abilities.

In qualitative investigations, researchers apply tools to assist with content analysis (Guo et al., 2019). In the second phase, I wrote codes after examining collected notes and data. I used NVivo to analyze data such as texts, interview transcripts, audio and video recordings to help me comprehend the complex relationships between the data (Guo et al., 2019). To increase clarity, we reviewed all transcripts for sorting purposes. Guo et al. (2019), notes that NVivo can facilitate qualitative research by means of data organization, concept management, data querying, and modeling. As ideas emerge from the transcripts' data, I jotted them down. I encoded all other information and placed them into the appropriate section of the text. According to Clark and Vealé (2018), data management

requires coding. Coding is a beneficial method for qualitative researchers to filter and organize data. I will retain records of the transcripts, my notes, and information from university websites.

I utilized the NVivo 14 software to upload the obtained data. NVivo is a program that will facilitate the researcher's data analysis. NVivo software enables users to import and manipulate research data from any source, such as surveys, interviews, articles, video, email, social media and web material, rich or plain text, PDF, audio, digital photographs, spreadsheets, and notes from integrated third-party programs (Dalkin et al., 2021). Researchers should adopt a data plan that specifies where, how, and for how long, and who will have access to the data, as recommended by Yin (2018). For five years, the researcher must store all physical documents in a file cabinet and all electronic data on a secure 32-gigabyte flash drive. After five years, the researcher must destroy all physical documents and a 32-gigabyte USB drive containing research data.

NVivo offers reporting, analytics, data preparation, and discovery. According to Clark and Vealé (2018), patterns and themes develop when coding and organizing data. Coding is used in qualitative data analysis to highlight developing patterns (Lowe et al., 2018). I organized the initial codes that correspond with the conceptual framework, the theory of employee retention, study findings, and the literature review, which explores strategies some U.S. schools and university leaders use to reduce excessive employee turnover.

The following methodical methodology will produce themes for the study: (a) assess the data in each paragraph and line of the interview transcripts; (b) establish

categories by assigning significance and meaning; (c) use the NVivo software to organize data and assign initial codes to recurring patterns; d) ensure that data saturation is achieved when no additional data are being found; e) review the preliminary groupings and combinations of data; and (f) conduct a final review to ensure a systematic and well-documented approach and methods.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Dependability and validity determine the worth of a study. Quantitative research frequently misses the big picture, which qualitative research helps to illuminate (Kellam & Cirell, 2018). Quantitative investigators establish dependability and validity by numerical representation of features, variables, or concepts, whereas qualitative researchers focus on people, relationships, settings, events, and processes (Kellam & Cirell, 2018). Qualitative researchers seek integrity using qualitative traditions such as methodological consistency, triangulation, data collecting, and reliability techniques (Roberts et al., 2019).

#### **Reliability**

Reliability and validity are required to achieve credibility in qualitative research. Multiple phases of the study procedure involve member verification. Member verification and rigorous triangulation improve the likelihood of validation (Yin, 2018). Member verification might occur during qualitative interviewing, after the study, or using both techniques (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Johnson et al. (2020) assert that four criteria are necessary to build the overall credibility of qualitative research results: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. In research, having a reliable source

also means having a trustworthy or dependable source, and the security of personal data is proportional to dependability and trust (Yevseiev et al., 2021). (Yevseiev et al., 2021). I addressed reliability by appropriately interpreting acquired data to validate this research investigation. Reliability necessitates that the research procedure be described in sufficient detail for the work to be repeated.

### **Validity**

A study should employ adequate, verified measures to corroborate its findings. In qualitative research, researchers must ensure the validity of their findings. In qualitative research, validation happens when participant verification is conducted (FitzPatrick, 2019). Credibility, transferability, and confirmability, which are quality validity indicators, constitute a second method of validation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Yin (2018), qualitative researchers may use semistructured interviews, preserved documents, and field notes to ensure triangulation, thus enhancing the credibility of their research. I provided the participants with a copy of the interpreted data for evaluation and validation to confirm my findings through member checking.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is having faith in the veracity of any conclusions. For a study to be credible, a researcher must exhaust all parts of the research process by conducting consistent interviews in accordance with an interview protocol. Interviews continued until the data collection process provides no current information, at which point the interview process concludes (Yin, 2018). A researcher must comprehend the research participants, environment, and procedure with precision and depth. A researcher can



establish credibility by demonstrating dedication, monitoring, and establishing audit trails (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I applied the interview process to ensure uniformity with each participant interview, do member checking with each participant, record the interview digitally, and keep a notebook.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is when outcomes can be replicated elsewhere. Enhancing the transferability of research efforts is the capacity to use a researcher's methods to achieve comparable outcomes. It refers to the extent to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to another environment or situation (Soltanpour et al., 2020). Readers gain information and understanding when a researcher thoroughly describes a research topic (Carminati, 2018). To ensure the transferability of the research process, I will adopt an interview procedure and maintain a written audit trail.

### **Confirmability**

The objective of confirmability is to ensure that the participants primarily influence the conclusions drawn from the research, rather than the researcher. Confirmability is the amount to which the results of a study represent the thoughts and experiences of the respondents rather than the researchers' biases, intentions, or interests (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Using NVivo to code and cluster data establishes confidence by exhibiting a strategy for organizing and providing meaning to the data. By using the method of member checking and conducting thorough data analysis, the software effectively enhances the reliability of the research endeavor, thereby imbuing it with a heightened level of rigor.

## **Data Saturation**

A researcher reaches data saturation when interviews yield no meaningful information (Chitac, 2022). In qualitative research, data saturation is the most used method for calculating sample sizes. Researchers continue to struggle with selecting a sufficient sample size for qualitative research. Gentles et al. (2015) stated that a sample size of four to ten is adequate; however, Guetterman (2015) stated that a sample size of four is sufficient. Data saturation is required to ensure the validity of qualitative research.

## **Transition and Summary**

The qualitative, multiple-case study will investigate the strategies some HEIs administrators in the United States employ to reduce high employee turnover. The leaders of HEIs in the United States and those in other industries could use the findings of this study to boost the dedication of talented employees and reduce the costs involved with hiring and training new employees. Face-to-face interviews with the leaders who created the strategies could provide a deeper understanding of their efficacy and implications for employee retention inside the firm.

In Section 1, I reviewed the goal of the study, its significance, contribution to corporate practice, and implications for social change.

The second section of this study discusses the researcher's role, with the primary purpose being to perform research ethically while safeguarding and valuing the participants. I adhered to the Belmont Report and chose participants using purposive sampling. I mentioned the potential participants selected for the study and the

participation requirements for this investigation. I chose a qualitative research method to investigate and explore concepts, views, or experiences.

Section 3 discusses the goal statement, researcher's role, and participant interviews in greater detail. In addition, it will include the study's findings, their applicability to professional practice, the ramifications of societal change, recommendations for action, suggestions for future research, reflections, and a conclusion.

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

The objective of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to examine the strategies employed by leaders of HEIs in the United States to mitigate employee turnover and ensure long-term viability. This section presents the findings derived from a series of semistructured interviews conducted with six leaders of two HEIs located in the Southeast region of the United States, specifically in Florida. Additionally, the findings derived from publicly available documents pertaining to the two HEIs where the six participants are employed. Based on the findings, a set of measures employed by leaders in HEIs to reduce employee turnover and ensure long-term viability were identified. These strategies include the establishment of (a) a positive workplace culture characterized by transparent and efficient communication, (b) the implementation of a salary and benefits strategy that incorporates rewards and recognition, and (c) the promotion of employee empowerment through training and opportunities for personal growth. The implications of these findings have the potential to enhance the capacity of HEI leaders to effectively retain their employees and attain sustainability while contributing to societal progress by enhancing student learning and outcomes.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

To answer the research question, What strategies do some leaders of HEIs use to reduce employee turnover? I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions with six leaders from two HEIs in Northeast Florida with over 5 years of leadership experience and survived the unintentional turmoil of the pandemic. In this study, I utilized in-depth semistructured interviews as the primary data source. In

addition, I gathered supplementary data from internal organizational documents and publicly available materials to validate the findings obtained from the interviews. I followed a protocol for conducting all the interviews to ensure consistency. Prior to conducting the interviews, I distributed to all participants a copy of the consent form and an email including comprehensive information regarding the study's specifics.

I safeguarded the identity and confidentiality of the participants by refraining from disclosing their names or the names of their respective institutions. I assigned codes to the participants (P01–P06). During the process of analyzing data with NVivo 14, special attention was paid to identifying and investigating themes that related to the research topic and were consistent with the conceptual framework. Analysis of the data collected from the six leaders revealed three major themes: (a) a positive workplace culture characterized by transparent and efficient communication, (b) the implementation of a salary and benefits strategy that incorporates rewards and recognition, and (c) the promotion of employee empowerment through training and opportunities for personal growth. Table 2 displays the key strategies leaders in the study used to reduce their employee turnover.

**Table 2**

*Strategies Leaders at Higher Education Institutions Used to Retain Employees*

Strategy	Percentage of use by higher education institutions
Positive workplace culture through effective communication	100%
Compensation, incentive and benefits strategies	80%
Engagement through empowerment, and professional growth	100%

**Theme 1: Positive Workplace Culture Through Effective Communication and Trust**

The first theme that emerged from the analysis was the impact of a positive workplace culture in reducing employee turnover. After analyzing the interview data of the participants, the institutions' internal documents and the publicly available information, I identified two important terms associated with a positive workplace culture: *communication* and *trust*. To reduce employee turnover, a positive workplace culture characterized by open communication and trust was deemed essential by all participants. Establishing an atmosphere grounded upon trust represents a notable advantage inherent to the managerial approach of transformational leadership. Leaders should foster a culture that acknowledges and establishes an effective communication process. According to Campbell et al. (2012), a positive company culture encourages a healthy learning environment.

Positive interpersonal relationships among employees and managers and their significance in today's dynamic and complex work environments cannot be underplayed (Khan et al., 2022). The theme of positive culture through relationship building and effective communication is consistent with the data provided from the interview responses and company documents. The participants insisted that internal communication builds and nourishes employee relations with their leaders, develops trust, offers timely and reliable information, and contributes to employee motivation, especially during change initiatives and stress-related issues. P01 indicated that creating a positive culture and team through relationship building, despite the presence of uncontrollable factors, helps make employees feel that they matter, that they are an important piece of the

puzzle. This statement is consistent with Windon et al. (2023) finding that open communication between employees and their employers has boosted work satisfaction and decreased turnover. P06 stated “we try to create an environment where people want to improve”.

The participants reported that effective communication enabled the employees to be aware of what is expected of them at the workplace and increased their commitment to the organization, reducing employee turnover. P02 indicated,

When there is a disruption in communication, employees’ self-esteem suffers, and conflicts will rise resulting in turnover. It is essential for employees working within a specific unit or department to have a solid understanding of their organization’s overall goals, duties, and even vision. Leaders should be the one to articulate these views to employees clearly and efficiently. One feasible way to increase retention is to encourage bonds among coworkers.

P02’s views on effective communication and positive culture align with Khodakarami and Dirani (2020) conclusion that leaders should establish a culture that recognizes and implements an efficient communication process.

P03 explained that communication in HEIs differs significantly from that in other business organizations. P03 added,

communication is more than just passing information; it brings people together and strengthens existing ties. In fact, it plays an essential role in the success or failure of an organization. Here we make sure that we create an environment where employees understand what is expected of them.

In contrast to business workplaces, universities have consistently demonstrated democratic values of free speech, unrestricted truth-seeking, and autonomy. P01 noted that faculty members have the academic freedom to communicate, discuss topics of interest, and exchange ideas which create a positive culture where everyone feels that they belong. HEIs differ from other organizations in terms of communication, values, and culture for these reasons. P04 stated,

as leaders at a higher education institution, we make sure that we practice what we teach, transparency, clear communication, employee participation, and constructive feedback all that contributes to the positive company culture we have at our college, which motivates our employees to remain. They want to be a part of the college family.

The words of P06 about effective communication and positive company culture are consistent with the findings of Steffens et al. (2021), who described the significance of interpersonal communication as an integral factor of a better work environment. P06 believed,

In the past, reasonable pay was often sufficient to maintain a team together; in today's workplace, this no longer is the case. Leaders can reduce employee turnover rates by promoting robust connections between themselves and their subordinates. You want to have your employees trust; you need to have a clear communication line which will support a positive culture across department and teams.



### ***Positive Workplace Culture, Clear Communication and the Literature***

Boamah (2022) observed that maintaining a favorable rapport with their manager leads employees to exhibit an inclination to remain employed within the same organization. P01 stated that the way employees engage with their managers can significantly impact their inclination to remain within an organization. P03 concurred with the literature when expressing, “I follow a managerial approach where I extend to my subordinates the same treatment that I desired to receive during my tenure in their respective roles.” The discovery also substantiates the assertions made by Zang et al. (2020), for an organization to attain efficiency and productivity, its leaders must engage in the dissemination of vital information, diminish hierarchical barriers, and cultivate harmonious human resource management systems that prioritize the well-being of employees and treat them with due respect. P02 harmonized saying, “In my earnest endeavor, I strive to extend a measure of reverence that was not extended to me.”

The theme creating a positive culture agrees with the findings of Ibrahim Alzamel et al. (2020) who asserted that management must create a work-home balance in their business due to frequent workplace changes. P04 stated, “a healthy environment encompasses many things.” The theme also supports the conclusions drawn by Joo et al. (2022) regarding the pivotal role played by implementing effective communication systems in mitigating conflicts of interest between management and employees, as well as diminishing employees’ tendencies to seek alternative employment opportunities. P01 asserted that if individuals are engaging in a conversation with one another in a conventional manner then you know that there exists a certain level of involvement or

interaction between them. Leaders should foster a culture that acknowledges and establishes an effective communication process. Sumaiya et al. (2022) contended that employees with a voice are less likely to leave an organization.

***Positive Workplace Culture, Clear Communication and the Conceptual Framework***

The alignment between the positive culture and clear communication theme is congruent with the conceptual framework of the transformational leadership theory underpinning this study. Per the scholarly work of Burns (1978), the concept of inspirational motivation pertains to the leader's aptitude to instill a profound sense of confidence, motivation, and purpose within the individuals who follow them. The transformational leader, as illustrated by Burns, effectively elucidates a visionary outlook for the forthcoming times, adeptly communicates the collective aspirations of the group, and unequivocally manifests an unwavering dedication towards attaining the organizational objectives. Zhang et al. (2020) argued that the tenet of inspirational motivation requires the leader to possess proficient communication abilities, as they are tasked with the precise and authoritative dissemination of information.

Zhang et al. (2020) demonstrated that employees who perceive their organization as providing a work environment that fosters productivity and well-being exhibit a diminished inclination towards turnover. The participants' websites and handbook furnished information aligning with these empirical findings. Leaders ought to initiate a cultural milieu that acknowledges and establishes a successful communication style (Boamah, 2022). I have concluded that fostering a conducive working environment is possible when employees are allowed to engage in open communication, based on my

inquiries and personal observations. All the participants made several declarations regarding the positive impact of creating a positive workplace culture and the promotion of effective interactions within the confines of their respective HEIs.

## **Theme 2: Compensation, Incentives, and Benefits Strategy**

### ***Compensation***

Theme 2 stemmed from the interviews with the participants, my notes, and information on the institutions' websites. All the participants mentioned that having a competitive employee compensation strategy, offering incentives, rewards, and having great benefits were relevant to employees and impact their decision to remain with the institutions. However, two of the participants indicated that some employees were willing to accept a lower starting salary if they believed in the institution's vision and mission and somehow wanted to give back to their communities. P01 confirmed,

In the past, reasonable compensation was often sufficient to retain employees; this no longer is the case. For example, one of our recently recruited full-time faculty members came with expertise in corporate affairs. He willingly accepted a significant salary reduction. In this situation, money is not the focal point. He dedicates himself to serving the students and fostering a cohesive team environment. To retain such workers, it may be more effective to employ informal strategies. Relationships that are deeper and more meaningful are essential.

Providing incentives can motivate employees by making them feel appreciated by the company (Wamalwa, 2022). P02 stated that creating employee-specific incentives

and objectives was one of the most effective strategies for reducing employee turnover. “It is imperative that individuals, regardless of their position on the academic grading spectrum, perceive a sense of appreciation for their efforts”. P03 asserted, “Faculty members can earn extra compensation by teaching summer courses, and qualified staff members can also teach courses and do supplemental work for additional compensation”. P05 also noted, “Faculty members can obtain additional compensation by writing grants and participating in special projects”. Four of the six participants said they offered competitive salaries to their employees. P03 and P04 revealed that they offer extremely competitive salaries to their employees to keep pace with competitors. P06 specified, “as an institution, we make every effort to provide compensation that conforms to the prevalent market standards, thereby ensuring a competitive compensation package”.

I discovered from the faculty and staff handbooks located on the institutions’ websites that all six participants’ institutions offered employees salary adjustments based on annual performance evaluations, promotions, and years of service. This finding confirmed the research of Jolly et al. (2021), who noted that companies rely on employee incentive programs as a strategic measure to improve job performance and curtail the occurrence of voluntary resignations. P06 stated,

Every four or five years we look at our scales to make sure that we value people via compensation at a level we think they need to be valued given their contributions to the college. And it is not necessarily person dependent, it’s more position dependent and trying to make sure those positions that are doing heavy loads are recognized for doing those heavy loads.

Based on the participants interviews, their institutions' websites and handbooks, I found that the institutions of all six participants compensate their employees competitively to reduce employee turnover.

### ***Incentive***

Incentives at P02's organization consisted of time flexibility, company's discount to state parks, sports events, museums, and paid training. The more incentive and rewards offered, the more satisfied the employees are. P03 discussed that "monetary incentives are more effective in promoting employee retention, as they provide a recurring increase in compensation based on annual performance evaluations." Many institutions start benefits after 90 days; both institutions offer benefits as of the first day. Starting benefits on the first day makes employees feel official and helps reduce employee turnover at these institutions. Another valuable tool for reducing employee turnover was to include a compensation package. This is consistent with Ibrahim Alzamel et al.'s (2020) findings that employees look for jobs with benefits, including flexible schedules, personal time off, educational possibilities (such as tuition reimbursement), retraining seminars, and job rotation.

### ***Benefits***

A recent study demonstrated that salary/benefits had one of the highest percentages for reducing employee turnover at 82% compared to other factors such as working conditions, working relationships, and motivation (Alshamrani et al., 2023). The study also revealed that organizations with low pay have a higher turnover rate (Alshamrani et al., 2023). P05 stated that "the university has a robust benefits package

including an above-average retirement contribution and an additional matching contribution program for employees who elect to participate.” Offering rewards and different compensation plans or reward performance is a helpful technique suggested by P04. Noticing the reward or incentive each employee enjoyed helped reduce employee turnover. P05 noted, “some employees prefer a day off or to leave early over a monetary reward”. P05 also stated, “we try to make sure that people have an awareness of the benefits that we have here at the college, but also, making sure that our team can get the skills that they need to do the job well.”

### ***Compensation, Incentives, Benefits Strategy and the Literature***

The findings confirm that benefits and incentives help motivate employees and reduce employee turnover. Institutions that provided competitive benefits and incentives retain their employees better. All participants provided competitive salary, benefits and incentives that helped to reduce employee turnover and increase job satisfaction. This finding intensified the research Bushi (2021) implementing that employee incentive programs represents a paradigm shift in the operational strategies of transformational leaders. Both institutions’ websites revealed that they offered in their benefits package saving programs; retirement benefits including matching retirement funds; health, long-term disability, dental, and life insurance; free parking; paid holidays, tuition reimbursement and paid memberships.

Conroy et al. (2021) found out pay volatility strongly led to employee turnover. Institutions leaders that can effectively control this volatility may gain a competitive advantage in their compensation plan without substantial increases in actual pay levels.

According to Elrayah and Semlali (2023) the compensation package may include both tangible and intangible assets offered by companies in appreciation of employee contributions. HEIs should conduct salary revisions to develop a compensation management structure that is externally competitive and internally fair. According to Abun et al. (2020), transformational leadership emphasizes using emotional intelligence to explain and direct programs and projects effectively, facilitating organizational transformation and reducing employee turnover.

### **Theme 3: Empowerment through Training, and Professional Growth**

The implementation of employee empowerment is of utmost importance for HEIs seeking to attain exceptional performance. When employees are empowered and thriving professionally, employee turnover decreases. HEIs need talented and knowledgeable employees to maintain a competitive advantage and achieve exceptional educational performance. P03 stated,

it is crucial that each employee gets the training they need to do their jobs well and grow personally and professionally. When people have trouble doing their jobs, they may feel inadequate and think they are not good enough or that no one appreciates them. This can lead to imposter syndrome in some people.

The six participants collectively affirmed implementing an employee development strategy is a highly efficient approach to reduce employee turnover. P01 declared, “Our employees expect that our institution will empower them by providing ways to improve their careers, giving them chances to grow and allowing them to get certified in different areas of education.”

According to Harrison et al. (2020), the facilitation of professional development cultivates technical proficiency, enhances the caliber of professional learning, and fosters collaborative endeavors with like-minded individuals, all to increase one's educational knowledge base and skill repertoire. P04 stated: "Since the pandemic, our esteemed faculty and staff are presented with many new and exciting opportunities. I believe in fostering an environment that not only encourages but actively supports the pursuit of personal and professional growth". P04 agreed by saying, "It is our collective aspiration to empower individuals to reach their full potential, ensuring that no limitations hinder their journey towards advancement and expansion." According to Vu (2020), in the contemporary business landscape, there is a growing urgency for employee empowerment. An empowering organization places emphasis on granting autonomy, providing accurate information, and fostering employee engagement to enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

Vu (2020) and Harrison et al. (2020) discoveries align with the assertion made by P03, where he stated, "We consistently offer our faculty continuous support to uphold their licenses, maintain organizational memberships, subscribe to scholarly journals, and engage in academic endeavors because we believe in equipping and empowering our employees." P02 asserted, "We support our faculty and staff by providing training or covering the associated fees. Employees are encouraged to attend external events or programs that fit their need to advance and grow." P05 alleged that "The institution provides its academic members with the opportunity to receive compensation for their involvement in professional development workshops, active participation in research



initiatives, and pursuit of scholarly possibilities.” P04 and P06 duly recognized that, alongside the implementation of professional development initiatives and faculty development programs, the institution also extends its support to staff members and faculty employees by encouraging their participation in tuition assistance and exchange programs, thereby facilitating their pursuit of undergraduate and graduate studies.

P06 commented,

Our employees often say they want to try diverse ways to grow and develop professionally. For example, they might want to look for opportunities at a different academic institution, get involved in research, take part in short-term professional learning experiences within the industry to get firsthand experience with exemplary methods in the field, or attend professional conferences to learn more and network with respected professionals. We actively support and accommodate these pursuits to facilitate their growth and improvement.

The present discovery supports the assertion made by Harrison et al. (2020) that fostering the advancement of educators’ professional development will lead to higher educational standards, effective attainment of strategic objectives, and the cultivation of a cohesive professional community.

### ***Empowerment, Training and the Literature***

The literature aligned with the theme of training and empowerment. Many people widely recognize systematic and structured training as an effective approach for acquiring new knowledge and enhancing existing skills. Training that is pertinent and coherent has the potential to enhance employees’ job performance and increase their

efficiency. In their recent study, Ghani et al. (2022) concluded that individuals who experience a sense of contentment within their professional roles are less inclined to seek alternative career prospects. According to Vu (2020), empowerment is a catalyst for enhancing employees' creativity, improving their quality of work-life, fostering a sense of teamwork, and enhancing organizational effectiveness. The principle of intellectual stimulation within the transformational leadership framework highlights the profound appreciation for creativity and autonomy among valued followers (Burns, 1978). Empowerment gives subordinates a sense of support and boosts their confidence. Empowerment has a big effect on things like performance outcomes, employee satisfaction, and financial and organizational indicators Vu (2020). Leaders must evaluate the most pressing needs of the organization and subsequently implement training that successfully equips individuals with the required skills and competencies. This strategy enables workers to effectively perform their duties and experience job satisfaction.

### ***Empowerment, Training and the Conceptual Framework***

The subtheme of empowerment through training aligned with Burns (1978) theory. Employees are more likely to exhibit a strong level of dedication if leaders demonstrate commitment by providing appropriate resources (Burns, 1978). Leaders who practice individualized consideration increase employees' confidence levels by attending to their requirements (Bass, 1985a). Training will motivate employees to participate more actively by improving their confidence level. According to Vu (2020), there is a favorable association between employees' view of supportive leadership and their propensity to maintain affiliation with their individual firms. The principle of intellectual

stimulation within the transformational leadership framework highlights the profound appreciation for creativity and autonomy among leaders and their valued followers (Burns, 1978). The transformational leader wholeheartedly embraces empowering followers by actively involving them in the intricate decision-making process.

Furthermore, the leader fervently encourages and inspires their followers to unleash their boundless creativity and ingenuity, thereby fostering the development of groundbreaking solutions to the myriad challenges that lie before us (Burns, 1978).

In their seminal work, Cloutier et al. (2015) put forth a set of four strategies that have been found to foster employee retention effectively. These strategies involve (a) effective communication, (b) workforce diversity, (c) the recruitment of skilled personnel, and (d) the implementation of comprehensive development and training programs. Furthermore, Cloutier et al. (2015) underscore the significance of providing employees with effective training opportunities, as they believe such initiatives contribute to job satisfaction and create a positive organizational climate. P06 suggested that “it is incumbent upon leaders to cultivate a cultural environment built on the significance of employee retention, thereby facilitating a mutual relationship where both the organization and its employees benefit and succeed as stakeholders.” The implementation of employee training programs enhances their understanding of their job responsibilities, duties, and the necessary approaches to successfully accomplish tasks. Empowerment entails the cultivation of a shared mindset and the cultivation of distinct attributes: a sense of competence and self-efficacy, as well as a sense of self-organization. The three aspects

under consideration are the perception of efficacy, the perception of significance or importance, and the perception of trust in others.

### **Application to Professional Practice**

Although HEIs operate with a profit-oriented approach, seeking competitive advantage and long-term viability, its primary objective is to make a positive contribution to society through providing education and fostering awareness. The primary objective of this study is to provide a significant contribution to the improvement and progression of professional practices pertaining to the reduction of staff turnover, with the goal of accomplishing a competitive advantage and ensuring long-term viability. This study has the potential to address deficiencies in contemporary professional practices by arming leaders with the information and perspectives necessary to comprehend their pivotal role in formulating and executing strategies that enhance employee loyalty, engagement, and empowerment, thereby reducing turnover rates. Leadership practices used by HEIs to retain and sustain employees may benefit other corporation leaders.

Various strategies exist for leaders to reduce employee turnover. However, according to participants from two esteemed HEIs, some effective approaches involve (a) cultivating a positive workplace culture that emphasizes transparent and efficient communication. This strategy encompasses a multitude of factors that contribute to the creation of a healthy environment. (b) Demonstrating to employees that their contributions are highly regarded and acknowledged is achieved through the adoption of a comprehensive wage and benefits plan that emphasizes tangible rewards and recognition rather than mere verbal expressions. Consequently, this approach fosters

employee happiness and produces a heightened commitment to the organization, which promotes employee retention. (c) The implementation of appropriate training initiatives fosters an organizational climate that empowers personnel, thereby enhancing their level of dedication and ensuring the long-term viability and endurance of the institution. P06 stated, “when employees lack the necessary abilities required to fulfill their occupational responsibilities, they tend to disengage and lose interest in the institution.”

HEIs must effectively attract and retain a talented and dedicated workforce to maintain a competitive edge and ensure long-term viability. The use of the discoveries in the present study has the potential to assist leaders in HEIs in reducing employee turnover, minimizing superfluous personnel expenses, enhancing sustainability and employee satisfaction. The viability and success of HEIs necessitate diligent efforts from their leaders to address the escalating expectations of university students, parents, and stakeholders (Ntoyakhe & Ngibe, 2020). HEIs that implemented techniques to foster staff commitment experienced a decrease in employee turnover rates. Employees’ perception of the organization’s willingness to invest in their professional development and advancement positively influences their level of dedication to organizations.

### **Implications for Social Change**

This multiple qualitative case study explored effective strategies leaders at U.S. HEIs use to reduce employee turnover, thereby fostering positive social transformation through cultivating a positive workplace culture and creating happier and satisfied employees. HEIs foster a culture of respect and dependence among its community members, promoting a stronger feeling of social responsibility and active engagement in

both societal matters and environmental change (Serafini et al., 2022). When organizational leaders effectively build and sustain employee engagement, empowerment, and a positive culture, they are more inclined to achieve favorable outcomes at both the individual and organizational levels.

The implications of this study for positive social change encompass the possibility of U.S. HEI leaders enhancing students' learning experiences, outcomes, and graduation rates through the retention of competent educators, teachers, and staff members. The capacity of leaders at U.S. HEIs to contribute to societal transformation is contingent upon their capacity to provide job prospects, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life in the society. HEIs are essential and irreplaceable in promoting social equity, economic sustainability, and environmental protection in our global society (Serafini et al., 2022). Leaders of HEIs manifest the value they contribute to society through enhancing student learning and results. This is evident when graduating students acquire an enhanced capacity to effectively engage in their chosen profession, contribute to their communities, and enrich the cultural fabric of society (Abad-Segura & González-Zamar, 2021).

This study, which employs a primary qualitative multiple case design, holds the potential to make a substantial contribution towards fostering good social development. The main aim of this project is to enhance leaders' comprehension of diverse approaches that can be employed to enhance their employees work environments, consequently promoting the implementation of a more favorable and productive organizational culture. Leaders of HEIs face significant challenges regarding preparing

students to make a positive social impact and fulfill their social and community responsibilities (Hayter & Cahoy, 2018). Hence, it is imperative that leaders within the realm of higher education exhibit exemplary conduct and demonstrate a greater ability to retain their staff compared to leaders in alternative domains. The acquisition of this knowledge has the potential to yield advantageous contributions to the social milieu.

### **Recommendations for Action**

This qualitative multiple case study investigated the retention strategies of some HEI leaders. I recommend that HEI leaders implement a positive workplace culture pertaining to employee commitment to promote the satisfaction of their employees. The employees may exhibit a notable disposition to remain in their current employment arrangements. According to Kiuru, et al. (2019), interpersonal relations is the capacity to interact with one another in healthier ways that foster stronger relationships.

I recommend that leaders lead by example. The participants discussed how leading by example helps retain employees and facilitates delegating tasks. By setting an example, managers can reduce potential employee bitterness and unwillingness to complete tasks. According to Bass (1985b), the idealized influence paradigm encourages the leader to set an example for subordinates, present an unobstructed vision for the business, and earn the respect and devotion of followers in return. Additionally, leaders exert idealized influence when they serve as role models and exhibit high skills and work ethic (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

I recommend that leaders practice effective communication because it impacts various areas of human interaction. The participants unanimously agree that the

significance of effective communication in today's competitive business environment cannot be overstated. P01 stated, "Individuals and organizations must possess strong communication skills to thrive and function effectively in this competitive business landscape." According to Burns (1978), inspirational motivation refers to a leader's ability to instill a profound sense of confidence, motivation, and purpose in their followers. Consequently, business leaders need to emphasize communication effectiveness by articulating a clear and comprehensive vision for the future, effectively conveying the organization's expectations, and demonstrating a relentless commitment to achieving the organization's goals.

I recommend the implementation of a proficient employee feedback system. Feedback has the potential to enhance the prevailing working conditions and mitigate the occurrence of employee turnover. P02 stated, "Surveys give employees a platform to voice their concerns and suggest upgrades, however, employees want confirmation that they will not cost them their jobs". As an essential component of public relations, internal communication contributes to positive organizational outcomes such as employee engagement, commitment, and performance (Lee & Kim, 2021).

I recommend that (HEIs) invest heavily in technology. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic's emergence, technology has assumed a paramount role as the primary catalyst for innovation across various industries, particularly education, including a significant increase in opportunities to participate in online events and conferences (Camerlink et al., 2021). The advancement of education is not solely contingent upon



integrating contemporary technologies but encompasses facilitating the pedagogical journey to optimize previous processes (Wang et al., 2022).

I recommend that (HEIs) continue to seek innovative ways to show genuine concern toward their employees. When individuals are convinced that their employer is committed to investing in their future, they are likelier to remain engaged and dedicated to the organization. The findings unearthed in this study offer (HEIs) leaders a chance to highlight their commitment to fostering the growth and advancement of their employees. They present an avenue for these leaders to exhibit their dedication toward facilitating the ongoing professional enhancement of their employees.

I intend to share my research outcomes by publishing the study in ProQuest's well-regarded academic database. The research aims to disseminate the results obtained to enhance the current knowledge base in HEIs. This will be achieved through the publication of research findings and by establishing professional connections within the education field and beyond. I aim to engage in scholarly discussion by disseminating the research findings in reputable journals. I will actively seek opportunities to share the research through participation in professional and academic conferences and by approaching individual HEIs to deliver informed presentations. Mills and Inouye (2020) argue that researchers who communicate the results of their research play a significant role in enhancing the current body of knowledge.

### **Recommendation for Further Research**

According to O'Neil (2019), limitations are uncontrollable factors that may influence the outcomes of a study and contribute to its deficiencies. The study's main

flaw was the inability to project an adequate sample size, as this reduced the variety of available experiences. The interview participants are restricted to only six leaders from the Northeast region of Florida. However, this limitation was mitigated by incorporating participants from two distinct (HEIs). Future researchers may also approach the problem from different angles and reach out to a large sample of leaders from more than one region. Future researchers may also use more than one industry or field for comparison. It may be more difficult to find participants, but a researcher with more resources may also contact employees who have remained at an organization for specified period to find out what kept them at such institutions. Due to the time allotted for this research, I had to select significant themes. Future researchers could expand further and investigate deeper the themes and subthemes.

There may be subtle differences based on region or specific industry. The sample size was only six leaders and was restricted to the Northeast region of Florida. When interviewing P01, they mentioned that not every employee is in it for the salary, and the institution cannot impress everyone with its incentives. Personal growth through training is crucial to retain employees. Future studies should investigate other motivational factors that can increase employee retention or job satisfaction. The participants mentioned that leaders should approach retention differently considering today's changing work environment. Future researchers should investigate new and improved retention strategies grounded on innovation and current time.

The purpose of this study is to disseminate the findings to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of higher education business administration and

management. My intention is to further refine and present the outcomes of this research in a comprehensive manner for potential publication in respected academic journals, including but not limited to the *Active Learning in Higher Education*, *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *The Journal of Higher Education*, and *Teaching in Higher Education*. I intend to actively pursue opportunities to participate in higher education conventions and engage with colleges and universities to disseminate and share my research findings. Additionally, I intend to distribute my research findings by publishing my paper in ProQuest.

### **Reflections**

Doctoral studies offer extensive prospects for generating knowledge, critical introspection, self-awareness, and cultivating social capital among individuals engaged in professional occupations (Bukko & Dhesi, 2021). The experience was quite exhilarating. The COVID-19 pandemic has given us an opportunity to implement necessary changes that address the disparities between our aspirations and our current reality, to engage in introspection, and contemplate the desired long-term impact one wishes to have. The concept of normalcy had dissipated, and the prevalence of online existence allowed for no justifications. The term “change” was very prevalent. I made the decision to alter the trajectory of my future endeavors. The ability to alter one’s past is inherently impossible; nevertheless, the capacity to modify one’s future designation is within reach, as exemplified by my decision to adopt the appellation of Doctor Wilkenson for the duration of my existence. I am the first of my familial lineage to walk down this path, I am cognizant that subsequent generations will follow suit. I am committed to dedicating my

life to empowering individuals by disseminating knowledge and educational opportunities.

The DBA program presented various challenges and a sense of being overwhelmed. However, I express gratitude towards a collective group of doctors, Doctor of Determination (DoD) cohort members, family members, friends, and teammates who demonstrated unwavering dedication in genuinely supporting my successful program completion. Occasionally, I experienced moments of self-doubt. However, the program offered me a secure environment in which I felt embraced by a supportive community, facilitating my personal and intellectual development. Despite the various limits and obstacles posed by the COVID-19 epidemic, it has also catalyzed educational change. This unprecedented situation has motivated me to pursue a doctorate and has allowed me to further develop as an academic, enabling me to achieve my professional ambitions. Throughout my journey, I have acquired the skills necessary to cultivate learning independence, develop writing proficiency, engage in scholarly research, and embody the qualities of a scholar. I had the opportunity to engage in a competition focused on self-assessment and utilizing my personal skills. I had the privilege of conducting interviews with several individuals of high academic standing, including a Vice President of a college, a Dean, an HR Director, and numerous seasoned college executives. These participants willingly contributed to the enrichment of my study by providing valuable insights and addressing both the primary research question and the supporting inquiries.

Throughout my doctorate study, there has been a notable progression in my leadership practices and self-perception. I have acquired knowledge about implementing

successful leadership tactics to reduce staff turnover and techniques to address and minimize personal biases. Through my doctorate research, I have gathered data and offered insights that could be of significant value to leaders seeking to mitigate employee turnover. The COVID-19 pandemic has fostered more outstanding interpersonal bonds among individuals and between students and instructors, despite the transition from in-person to remote learning. The doctorate program has enhanced my motivation to actively seek my life's mission and instilled in me the self-assurance that I possess a unique calling that I alone can fulfill. The acquisition of information through conducting research, reviewing the literature, collecting and analyzing data has provided me with the tools to achieve my objectives effectively. I am persuaded that the notion of "I am not alone" has been apparent to me, as so well-articulated and exemplified by my chair.

### **Conclusion**

Personnel retention is vital for leaders, employees, and the local community. Organizational leaders must formulate and execute initiatives to enhance productivity, sustainability, and profitability. The results of the study revealed that leaders in HEIs who demonstrate exemplary behavior, foster a positive organizational culture, prioritize employee commitment, provide fair compensation and benefits, offer meaningful rewards and incentives, empower their staff through relevant training, and utilize employee feedback systems to enhance working conditions can effectively retain their valuable employees and mitigate turnover rates.

The achievement of organizational success is contingent upon the ability of leaders to formulate and execute initiatives aimed at enhancing employee engagement.

Managers' implementation of successful retention techniques positively impacts job satisfaction, increasing employee motivation as employees feel empowered to participate in the organization's mission and goals. According to Yücel (2021), there is a positive correlation between employees' perceptions of support from their leaders, their level of commitment to the organization, and their overall job performance. This relationship contributes to a decrease in employee turnover rates and an improvement in overall employee performance. Furthermore, building a supportive environment by leaders creates growth opportunities and ensures the organization's long-term viability.

Implementing the professional practice results discovered in this study can assist leaders at HEIs in mitigating staff turnover, decreasing superfluous personnel expenses, enhancing financial sustainability, and foster positive employee morale. In a study conducted by Serafini et al. (2022), they found that leaders in HEIs have the potential to make a positive impact on social change through the creation of employment opportunities, which in turn can lead to an improvement in the overall standard of living within the community. Additionally, these leaders can foster a sense of respect and trust among students, employees, community residents, and stakeholders by emphasizing the importance of business ethics, social responsibility, and active engagement in social issues.

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## Appendix: Interview Protocol

1. Introduce self to participant.
2. Present and go over the consent form and answer any questions from the participant as they relate to the consent form.
3. Provide the participant with their copy of the consent form.
4. Turn on the recording device and note the date and time.
5. Begin the semistructured interview with question one and continue through to question eight.
6. Follow up with any additional probing or clarifying questions.
7. End interview process.
8. Discuss the next steps, transcript review, and member checking with participant.
9. Thank the participant for being part of the study.
10. End of protocol.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee Alphanumeric Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Script:**

Hello, I just wanted to say hello and thank you for your time. Please let me know if you want me to pause recording at any point during the interview. It is entirely up to you whether you take part in this study, and you are free to change your mind at any moment. Are there any concerns you have regarding the consent form? Do you have any inquiries regarding the research study?

To transcribe our conversation and use your response to better understand the methods you employ to reduce employee turnover at your institution, I request your permission to record this interview. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Please allow me to begin the recording.

This recording is only for my records so that I may later transcribe our conversation and make sure I have a complete and accurate record of your response. Let us start the interview right now.