

2019

## Strategies for Reducing Voluntary Employee Turnover in Public Schools

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Peggy Proctor-Matos

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2019

Abstract

Strategies for Reducing Voluntary Employee Turnover in Public Schools

by

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MMHRM, University of Phoenix, 2007

BA, University of Scranton, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2019

## Abstract

The oversight of systematic approaches to reducing voluntary employee turnover decreases educational institutions' budgets and performance. In the United States, public schools spend over \$2.22 billion annually in voluntary employee turnover costs. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The population consisted of 3 leaders from 1 public school located in Georgia, with successful experience reducing voluntary employee turnover. The conceptual framework for this study was grounded in Vroom's expectancy theory. The data collection process included semistructured interviews and organizational documents and artifacts. Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis. Three themes emerged from the data collected: building a collaborative and supportive work environment, creating work motivation, and implementing incentives, rewards, and professional development. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce the local government's expenditures associated with the replacement of employees and to increase resources for supporting social initiatives and more effective instruction for students in the community.

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## Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate the completion of this doctoral study to my Lord and Savior. Through him, all things are possible. To my husband and best friend, Edwin, you are my hero and number one supporter. Thank you for always supporting my dreams. To my guardian angels, my Mom, Mary Ann, and sister, Carolyn, you are my light and inspiration. Thank you, Mom, for showing me the value of education. To my family and friends, your positive words were a source of motivation, which kept me focused on completing this study. To my colleagues and mentors, many thanks for your support, guidance, and listening ear . . . you too have made an everlasting impact on making this journey a success.

## Acknowledgments

Completing this doctorate was only possible through the grace of God, the love and support of family and friends, and the talented Walden University family. To my best friend, confidant, and mentor for 22+ happy years, my husband, Edwin, thank you for your unwavering commitment, love, and dedication. I cannot begin to express how thankful I am to have you share my dreams. You sacrificed time and finances so that I could accomplish this educational goal. To my brothers, Charlie, Robert, and James, your belief in my intellectual abilities kept me motivated throughout the doctoral process. To my family and friends, I genuinely appreciate your support and encouragement. Special thanks to Aretha, Beverly, Linda, Jasmine, Jarvise, Holly, Sharon S., Sharon E., Danessa, Maryann, Cecider, and Qushanda. To my mentor and friend, Dr. Regina, for her guidance and mentorship, which was invaluable to my success. To the Walden University family for a productive doctoral journey. Dr. Jorge Gaytan, my Chair, thank you for your support, firmness, and steadfastness for excellence. Dr. Carol-Anne Faint, Second Committee Member, and Dr. Cheryl Lentz, University Research Reviewer, for your attention to detail and feedback. Your combined efforts contributed to the successful completion of this study. To the research participants, your participation in this study helped me achieve this educational milestone.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

School leaders must develop strategies to retain talented employees because high voluntary employee turnover decreases organizational performance and effectiveness (Cho, Rutherford, Friend, Hamwi, & Park, 2017). Job satisfaction plays a pivotal role in reducing voluntary employee turnover (Addai, Kyeremeh, Abdulai, & Owusu Sarfod, 2018). By tailoring employee retention strategies to fit the organizational culture, school leaders may improve employee job satisfaction and reduce voluntary employee turnover (Ahmad & Ahmad Rainyee, 2014). In this qualitative case study, I explored the strategies that public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

### **Background of the Problem**

Voluntary employee turnover negatively affects an organization's performance and financial resources (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017). In 2005, over 285 million employees chose to leave their jobs in all business industries throughout the United States (U.S. Department of Labor [USDOL], 2016). In the education sector, 3.9 million employees voluntarily left their jobs between 2006 and 2015 (USDOL, 2016). Public school districts spend over US\$2.22 billion annually in employee turnover costs (Rumschlag, 2017). The cost of replacing one employee is between 15% to 250% of the employee's yearly salary (Rahim, Civelek, & Liang, 2015). Public school leaders may lack strategies to address voluntary employee turnover intentions to reduce replacement costs and increase employee retention. Voluntary employee turnover results from job dissatisfaction, poor career progression opportunities, poor work-life balance, and inadequate compensation and benefits (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017). Enhancing employee

retention could help public school leaders secure and retain talented employees in their organizations (Lee, Hom, Eberly, & Li, 2017a). Public school leaders may also use employee retention strategies to improve job satisfaction, which may increase their employee's work performance. The focus of this study was to explore strategies that public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

### **Problem Statement**

Between 2006 and 2015, 3.9 million employees in the education sector voluntarily left their jobs (USDOL, 2016). The replacement cost of voluntary employee turnover in the education industry can range between 15% to 250% of an employee's annual salary (Rahim et al., 2015). The general business problem was that voluntary employee turnover negatively affects educational institutions' budgets, performance, and employee retention. The specific business problem was that some public school leaders lack strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The target population for this study consisted of three public school leaders from one public school located in Georgia with successful experience in using strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce voluntary employee turnover in educational institutions, which might reduce the local government's expenditures associated with the replacement of employees and increase

resources for supporting social initiatives and more effective instruction for students in the community.

### **Nature of the Study**

The three research methods available to researchers are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). Researchers use the qualitative research to explore the *what*, *why*, and *how* of a research problem (Yin, 2018). I selected the qualitative research method because the goal was to explore the *what*, *why*, and *how* of voluntary employee turnover. Quantitative researchers use statistical data to examine the relationship among variables (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The quantitative research method was not suitable for this study because the intent was not to use numerical data to examine the significance of relationships among variables. The mixed methods is a combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate complex research questions (Taguchi, 2018). To explore the strategies that public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover, I did not use analytical procedures to examine the significance of variables' relationships or differences, which would have been the quantitative portion necessary for a mixed methods study.

Research designs available to qualitative researchers included case study, phenomenological, and ethnography. Researchers use a case study design to study an organization, group, or person to generate in-depth insights to explore the underlying issues of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). I used a case study design for this study because the aim was to research a case organization to gain an improved understanding of a phenomenon, which was strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover.

Researchers use the phenomenological research design to interpret the meanings of lived experiences of participants (Aagaard, 2016). The phenomenological research design was not appropriate for this study because the focus of the study was not to explore the meanings of participants' lived experiences. The purpose of the ethnographic research design is for researchers to study the culture of a group (Ellis, 2015). The ethnographic research design was not suitable for this study because the goal was not to study the behaviors and ritual traditions of a cultural group.

### **Research Question**

What strategies do public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies have you employed to reduce voluntary employee turnover?
2. What strategies have you instituted that, based upon your organization's experience, motivated employees to remain in the organization?
3. How was the effectiveness of the strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover assessed?
4. Based upon your organization's experiences, what role, if any, do organizational incentives play in retaining skilled employees?
5. What is the single most crucial employee retention strategy in your organization?
6. How, if at all, are the successful strategies reflected in the organization's long-term employee retention sustainability plan?

7. What additional information would you like to provide regarding strategies your organization has successfully used to reduce voluntary employee turnover?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The expectancy theory, developed by Vroom (1964), was the conceptual framework for this study. Vroom explored how perceived outcomes influence efficient job performance and workplace motivation. In the expectancy theory, the theorist indicated that employees demonstrate positive job performance when they perceive the results produced specific work incentives and rewards that justified the expected amount of effort to meet performance goals. The fundamental constructs in the expectancy theory are (a) valence, (b) instrumentality, and (c) expectancy (Vroom, 1964). Valence is the importance employees place on incentives and rewards for achieving their organization's goals (Vroom, 1964). Instrumentality is when school employees perceive that their performance would actually result in achieving specific work incentives and rewards (see Vroom, 1964). Expectancy is when school employees may perform the necessary work efforts that lead to successful performance (see Vroom, 1964). Public school leaders may increase valence, instrumentality, and expectancy to reduce voluntary employee turnover (see Vroom, 1964).

In this study, the goal was to use Vroom's expectancy theory as the conceptual framework through which to explore the strategies that public school leaders used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The purpose was to explore how and what work outcomes can influence positive job performance to boost employee retention and



sustainability in an organization. By exploring what motivated employees to perform at specific levels, public school leaders could retain talented employees to deliver high-quality services to the students and their families.

### **Operational Definitions**

The following definitions may provide a better understanding of the terms used in the study.

*Employee motivation:* The effort employees make to accomplish organizational goals (Sabbagha, Ledimo, & Martins, 2018).

*Employee retention:* When leaders encourage employees to remain in the organization (Perreira, Berta, & Herbert, 2018).

*Job satisfaction:* The positive or negative feelings that employees experience from their job and the work environment (Yenen, 2019).

*Organizational commitment:* An employee's emotional commitment to the organization (Erdogan & Cavli, 2019).

*Retention strategies:* Initiatives that leaders implement to mitigate the loss of skilled employees from the organization (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019).

*Turnover:* Frequency that employers gain or loss employees (Adnot, Dee, Katz, & Wyckoff, 2017).

*Voluntary employee turnover:* When an employee intentionally quitting their current job to take another job (Nelissen, Forrier, & Verbruggen, 2017).

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

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are speculations related to the study that a researcher accepts as true for the purpose of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The following four assumptions influenced this study. The first assumption was that the participants provided open and honest responses to the interview questions without personal biases. The second assumption was that the concept of voluntary employee turnover was familiar across industries, cultures, and organizations. The third assumption was that data collection contributed to answering the overarching research question. The fourth assumption was that public school leaders would be eager to participate in the study and that organizational and archival records would be accessible for review.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses in the study outside the control of the researcher (Morgado, Meireles, Neves, Amaral, & Ferreira, 2018). Conducting this study at one organization within a designated geographical environment limited the generalizability of the findings across public schools. As a result, the study was specific to a small sample size of public school leaders working in the same public school.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations refer to the boundaries or scope of a study a researcher establishes (Bilbo, Bigelow, Escamilla, & Lockwood, 2015). In this study, the goal was to conduct in-depth, semistructured interviews with three public school leaders of a public school located in Georgia. Only designated participants who meet the eligibility criteria

participated in this study. The public school leaders had to possess successful experience in establishing strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study are significant for public school leaders to discover strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover and improve the work environment to retain skilled employees. Voluntary employee turnover decreases productivity and organizational efficiency (Lee, Yang, & Li, 2017b). Curtailing voluntary employee turnover helps leaders reduce human capital costs and maintain a competent workforce to achieve the organization's goals (Mapolisa, 2015). The long-term success of public schools relies on a skilled workforce to achieve strategic goals (Kundu & Lata, 2017).

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The findings of this study might be of significance to business practices by assisting public school leaders in recruiting and retaining skilled employees as well as providing insights into strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover and employee replacement costs. High employee turnover affects (a) productivity, (b) profit margins, and (c) budget decisions (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones, 2015). In the workplace, leaders should retain skilled employees to be economically competitive (Das & Baruah, 2013). The sustainability of an organization relies on the retention of key staff personnel. Effective employee retention strategies can improve employee satisfaction and boost employee performance (Perreira et al., 2018).

## **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce voluntary employee turnover in educational institutions, which can reduce the local government's expenditures associated with the replacement of employees and thereby increase resources for supporting social initiatives and more effective instruction for students. Effective employee retention could also increase student achievement, which can increase graduation rates (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005). The results of this study may help public school leaders formulate systematic approaches to retain talented employees in public schools.

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

I reviewed the literature on voluntary employee turnover published in various journals and seminal scholarly books. Google Scholar, linked to the Walden University Library's website, served as the primary source for accessing journal articles. The Walden University Library provides students with access to various databases. Databases used to obtain literature for this study included Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, Sage Premier, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest Central. Furthermore, various open journals were also used to obtain literature related to voluntary employee turnover. AOSIS OpenJournals provided open access to peer-reviewed scholarly journals from various academic disciplines. Similarly, ScienceDirect provided both tolled and open access to a full-text scientific database containing journal articles and book chapters. In addition, I also used some government websites to obtain information about voluntary employee turnover.

The strategy for searching through existing literature entailed the use of keywords and phrases in the various databases listed above. I applied filters to database searches to narrow down the search results. These filters included specific keywords, a specified period, and specific databases. First, Google Scholar was the primary source for accessing journal articles published in or after 2015, ensuring the literature is topical and relevant. Second, Walden University's Library has various databases available to acquire peer-reviewed articles. The keywords and phrases I used in my search were *employee turnover*, *turnover intentions*, *job satisfaction*, *organizational commitment*, *expectancy theory*, and *employee retention*. Crossref and *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory* were the tools I used to verify that literature was peer-reviewed. The literature review includes 158 references, with 144 (i.e., 90%) of them published within the past 5 years (i.e., 2015-2019). In addition, 154 of these 158 references (i.e., 96%) were peer-reviewed articles and excluded websites and nonscholarly articles.

### **Literature Review Organization**

This literature review section has several subsections. Topics covered in this subsection begins with an introduction, which includes information about the strategy for searching the literature, the frequencies, and percentages of peer-reviewed articles as well as publication dates. In the next section, I focused on the application of the literature to the research question and included a brief description of the purpose of the study. The themes discussed in this literature review are expectancy theory, employee turnover, job satisfaction, and employee retention. Throughout the literature review, I compared and

contrasted different points of view and relationships between previous research and findings with this study.

The first theme, employee turnover, includes a critical analysis and synthesis of the conceptual framework selected for this study, which was Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, using supporting and contrasting theories from relevant literature on the topic of voluntary employee turnover. Some of the supporting and contrasting theories are Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory; Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) two-factor theory; and Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics model theory.

The second theme, job satisfaction, starts with a brief overview of the development of voluntary employee turnover construct over time. Discussion includes common concerns relating to the construct as well as the various definitions, antecedents, and consequences of voluntary employee turnover. The third theme for discussion is employee retention. The theme begins with a general discussion about leadership and leadership styles as it related to voluntary employee turnover. Leadership styles reviewed include transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and leader-member exchange.

### **Application to the Applied Business Problem**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that public school leaders used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Exploring such strategies required a qualitative approach, more specifically an exploratory single case study design. The findings from this study might provide insights into voluntary employee turnover from the perspective of a group of leaders.

The findings of the study may assist with the development of appropriate strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover. Once an understanding of the underlying meaning emerges, appropriate strategies might equip leaders with the skills to improve voluntary employee turnover. The findings from the study might also be used to improve business practices by identifying appropriate strategies, leading to increased productivity and organizational competitiveness. The potential for social change rests in the development of strategies to improve voluntary employee turnover and personal well-being.

### **Expectancy Theory**

The conceptual framework of this study was Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Vroom indicated that employees demonstrated positive job performance when they perceive their work outcomes produce specific rewards. The fundamental constructs of Vroom's expectancy theory are valence, instrumentality, and expectancy. Vroom (as cited in Mapolisa, 2015) outlined a rational context of a person's work motivation and decision-making.

Self-efficacy and job satisfaction may influence an employee's work motivation. In practice, Mapolisa (2015) indicated that Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory is one of the most popular motivation theories that exist. Gerhart and Fang (2015) used the expectancy theory to show the manner in which perceived outcomes influence efficient job performance and workplace motivation. Expectancy is an employee's perceived effort from improving a performance (Nimri, Bdair, & Al Bitar, 2015). Nimri et al. (2015) asserted that an employee determines expectancy by assessing their self-efficacy

to perform an attainable goal, which results in a high level of job satisfaction and motivation. In the context of this case study, self-efficacy and job satisfaction may eradicate turnover intentions in public school employees.

Kanfer, Frese, and Johnson (2017) applied Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory to explore the effect of work motivation on goal choice. Kanfer et al. argued that the level of job satisfaction expected from achieving a work outcome influences an employee's decision to determine a specific goal and to stay with the organization. Lloyd and Mertens (2018) implied that employees exhibit work effort to maintain a social status and to retain their job. Kanfer et al. showed that work motivation is a goal-directed resource allocation process that relates to time, experience, and place. Kanfer et al. asserted that, when employees perceive that goal accomplishment produces intrinsic or extrinsic outcomes, employees adopt organizational-desired work goals, which increases employee retention. Aruna and Anitha (2015) postulated that leaders increase effort-to-performance expectancy by mitigating problems that stagnate an employee's performance to accomplish desired performance goals reducing turnover.

Kanfer et al. (2017) and Turabik and Baskan (2015) found a link between work motivation and goal choice. From a process-oriented perspective, Turabik and Baskan applied the tenets of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory to examine the importance of motivating education employees to accomplish the education system's goals. Leaders aligned motivational strategies with organizational goals to inspire specific work behaviors toward desired goals (Moffett, Frizzell, Brownlee-Williams, & Thompson, 2014). Every organization needs highly motivated employees to achieve the



organization's goals more effectively. The application of the expectancy theory to implement motivational strategies may increase employee retention in educational institutions. Turabik and Baskan indicated that employees working in the education field have personal and professional needs they attempt to satisfy for themselves. Garnasih (2017) found that intrinsic motivation drives research lecturers to satisfy the need to remain teaching in the university's science department. Both Turabik and Baskan and Joubert, Madau, and Grobler (2017) asserted that an employee's needs drive a behavior and effort to perform and to fulfill a human requirement. Excelling at work may serve as a predictor for school employees to continue working at the school. However, Ola and Igor (2018) implied that some individuals work for a sense of identity, which also increases employee retention.

Turabik and Baskan (2015) concluded that school leaders and administrators should understand the needs of employees in educational institutions to reduce turnover. People's needs are different; therefore, employees' value and desire rewards differently. Turabik and Baskan speculated that school leaders need to identify the desired behavior and the performance that the organization needs, determine the type of reward education employees' value, and align the reward with the performance outcome to increase employee retention. Rahardjo (2017) found that compensation influences work behaviors and motivation of professors in higher education. Employees in educational institutions invested maximum effort to perform and obtain desired rewards, which may reduce turnover (Rahardjo, 2017).

Lazaroiu (2015) found that employer-employee engagement is essential to achieving organizational outcomes. Lazaroiu suggested that interpersonal and organizational behaviors are vital to improve work performance and employee retention. Employees need engagement and motivation to accomplish organizational goals (Debora, Maura, Carol, & Michael, 2017). Debora et al. (2017) found that empowering employees to make effective decisions increase performance, saves money, and reduces voluntary employee turnover. Lazaroiu used Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory to examine the effect a manager's interpersonal behaviors have on an employee's work motivation. Lazaroiu found that employees join an organization for specific work demands and incentives. A dynamic and flexible work environment may encourage employees to remain in the organization (Debora et al., 2017). Katuma and Kwasira (2015) implied that compensation promotes positive job performance and increases employee retention.

However, Purvis, Zagenczyk, and McCray (2015) advised that intrapersonal behaviors influence an individual's work behaviors and motivation. Purvis et al. used the expectancy theory to explore the intrapersonal motivators that stakeholders use to decide if the organization would implement project management software. Pacagnella, Silveira, Ornella, and Salgado (2015) asserted that establishing project management technology increased a stakeholder's opportunity of completing a project. Stakeholders use project management technology to improve engagement and collaboration throughout the project's lifecycle and provide essential capabilities to reach specific goals (Pacagnella et al., 2015). Purvis et al. concluded that the assessment of the psychological climate motivates stakeholders to utilize project management software. Psychological factors and

the organizational environment also motivate employees to achieve the desired outcome. Both Purvis et al. and Pacagnella et al. discovered that creating an organizational culture and climate that supports employees' creativity may increase employee retention. Jones and Griep (2018) found that the subjective agreement between the employer and employee increases the effort that employees make in exchange for something valuable. The literature indicated that employer-employee relationships might increase job satisfaction in public schools reducing voluntary employee turnover.

Brandi and Kemelgor (2015) used Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory to explore the reasons entrepreneurs choose to go public with offerings of securities in privately held firms. Brandi and Kemelgor revealed that entrepreneurs show the way an initial public offering (IPO) created liquid cash to grow the firm. Brandi and Kemelgor found that the expectancy of improving the firm's working capital and reducing the firm's debt motivates entrepreneurs to adopt an IPO model. Additionally, Brandi and Kemelgor noted that the decision to take the company public could improve the firm's net worth, increase the firm's future borrowing power, and recognize the company as a publicly traded company. Brandi and Kemelgor contended that additional funding resources and borrowing power motivate privately held firms to go public. Kotlar, Signori, De Massis, and Vismara (2018) noted that using an IPO is not practical for every small business owner to create wealth. Brandi and Kemelgor recommended that entrepreneurs take a company public only if the rewards provide value. The authors showed a link between the expectancy theory and innovation strategies, which business leaders implement to remain profitable during a period of transformative change. Innovating public schools

may provide additional motivation and incentives to encourage school employees to remain in the organization.

Emilia (2017) examined the work motivation of 115 civil servants working in a Romania city hall. Emilia utilized the expectancy theory to determine the factors that influence civil servants' work motivation. Kjeldsen and Hansen (2018) suggested that leaders use public service motivation to encourage individuals to choose public service jobs to give back to the community. Individuals with a high public service motivation possess a higher level of job satisfaction than those in the private sector (Li & Wang, 2016). However, Emilia found that 86% of civil servants received performance-based rewards, which encouraged individuals to work and remain in the public sector. By exhibiting a high level of public service motivation, school employees may choose to continue working in the education sector.

Nimri et al. (2015) assessed the motivation of public sector employees and found that intrinsic rewards affect civil servants' work motivation more than extrinsic rewards. Nimri et al. posited that managers should create a positive work environment that recognizes employees for their efforts and develop a professional development program. Creating professional development programs may incite job satisfaction, which reduces turnover (Arikan, Fernie, & Kantor, 2017). By incorporating these human resources strategies into the organizational framework, both Emilia (2017) and Nimri et al. speculated that productivity and retention might increase.

Simone (2015) used the expectancy theory to assess the work motivation and job satisfaction of healthcare workers in three government-funded hospitals. Simone

determined that healthcare leaders improve nurses' and staff motivation by enhancing the (a) organizational climate, (b) training and education, (c) extrinsic rewards, and (d) leadership practices. Healthcare leaders adopt better recruiting and management practices to hire trained personnel to improve patient care (Schopman, Kalshoven, & Boon, 2017). Healthcare leaders also provide their staff with adequate resources and time to conduct their job adequately (Schopman et al., 2017). Simone noted that good leaders give clear expectations and help employees attain desirable performance outcomes.

Simone (2015) concluded that healthcare leaders align the organization's performance objectives to the employees' desired rewards and distribute rewards that employees value. These strategies may help increase employees' motivation, job satisfaction, and employee retention. Leaders also use rewards to motivate their employees to excel in their job performance and reduce employee turnover (Millar et al., 2017). Sholihah (2017) determined that leaders individualize rewards because most employees want different rewards. While some employees value promotions, other employees may value pay raises, improved rewards and incentives, or more benefits (Sholihah, 2017). Millar et al. (2017) found that some leaders use financial incentives to motivate healthcare workers to increase the quality of patient care to meet the hospital's performance objectives. As related to this study, public school leaders may use individualize rewards and financial incentives to boost their employees' work motivation, job performance, job satisfaction, and employee retention.

Harris, Murphy, DiPietro, and Line (2017) conducted a quantitative study of 755 restaurant managers and employees. Harris et al. used the expectancy theory to explore

individual food handler's motivation to obey the national food safety guidelines in restaurants. From a food safety perspective, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory suggests that food handlers choose to work in a restaurant with a positive reputation. Employees feel a sense of achievement when the restaurant receives excellent ratings on food safety inspections (Harris et al., 2017). The goal of this study was to explain the linkage between expectancy theory and intrinsic motivation. School employees may desire to work in public schools with a stellar reputation because employees expect that their exceptional performance may lead to specific rewards and self-gratification, which improves employee motivation and employee retention.

Cohen and Olson (2016) stated that most food safety errors relate to poor personal hygiene, cross-contamination, and improper temperature settings. Employees may need skill-based training to reduce food safety violations (Guchait, Neal, & Simons, 2016). Harris et al. (2017) found that complying with food safety regulations and receiving favorable outcomes from food safety inspections motivate restaurant workers to adopt safe food handling practices. Leaders may implement employee training and development programs to improve work outcomes and retain talented employees. Leaders also use incentives to encourage restaurant employees to become more proactive in alleviating food safety violations and reducing foodborne illnesses (Guchait et al., 2016). Harris et al. noted that leaders use intrinsic motivation to inspire restaurant workers to implement food safety practices. Adil and Awais (2016) and Shin and Jeung (2019) explained that employees with a high level of job involvement tend to exhibit more productivity and less turnover. Using rewards, incentives, and professional

development opportunities may help school leaders motivate and retain employees in public schools to achieve the school's strategic goals.

Yeheyis, Reza, Hewage, Ruwanpura, and Sadiq (2016) analyzed the motivation and work performance of 38 construction workers. Yeheyis et al. specified that construction workers' level of work motivation affects their work performance and productivity. Motivation is an instrument that leaders use to improve an employee's work performance (Kanfer et al., 2017). Construction managers use stress management techniques to persuade expatriates to remain working on international construction projects (Chan, Leung, & Liang, 2018). Construction workers accomplish specific tasks that generate instrumentality to earn predesignated rewards (Yeheyis et al., 2016). Yeheyis et al. hypothesized that bonuses and incentives increase construction workers' performance and decrease turnover. Rahardjo (2017) specified that school leaders use compensation plans, bonuses, and promotions to reduce employee turnover.

Many business students join campus organizations to increase professional opportunities, obtain internships, and gain entrepreneurial experience. Munoz, Miller, and Poole (2015) used the expectancy theory to determine the intentions of undergraduate students participating in professional student organizations. Membership in a professional student organization enables individuals to engage with diverse student populations and to develop leadership skills (Munoz et al., 2015). Professional student organizations are a form of experiential learning (Tanvuia, Reilly, Capatina, Micu, & Micu, 2017). Experiential learning activities build teamwork, increase student engagement, and

promote social connectedness (Tanvuia et al., 2017; Turton, Nauta, Wesselmann, McIntyre, & Graziano, 2018).

Munoz et al. (2015) asserted that business students actively engage in school organizations to establish networking relationships and for professional development opportunities. Faculty members use incentives to attract and retain students in collegiate organizations (Munoz et al., 2015). Baumann and Bonner (2017) applied the expectancy theory to examine the behavioral choices of groups. Baumann and Bonner revealed that groups require collaboration and rely on the expertise of their members to accomplish performance objectives. Creating a collaborative school environment in which students and school employees establish trusting relationships may reduce turnover intentions.

Soyoung and Sungchan (2018) explored the effects of organizational performance on U.S. federal employees' work motivation and job satisfaction. Soyoung and Sungchan explained that work performance influences job satisfaction because employees perform better when they expect rewards for exceptional performance. Employees with a perceived higher level of work motivation possess a higher level of job satisfaction (Gileanu, 2015). In addition, Gileanu (2015) suggested that managers measure job satisfaction to increase employee motivation and attain higher performance rates.

Soyoung and Sungchan (2018) discovered that valence and expectancy in the work unit performance foster U.S. federal employees' job satisfaction. Rahardjo (2017) emphasized that compensation plays a pivotal role in school employees, exerting a higher level of work effort to boost their job performance. As a result, leaders use performance-based incentives and managerial practices to enhance their employees' job performance,



work motivation, and job satisfaction (Aninanya et al., 2016). Performance management strategies may help businesses and schools attract and retain skilled employees.

Stereotypes about women possessing fewer mathematical abilities than men led to a study about female students' career intentions in math-related career fields. Song, Zuo, Wen, and Yan (2017) used the expectancy theory to explore math-gender stereotypes, competence beliefs, task value, and career intentions. Song et al. postulated that exposure to negative math-gender stereotypes affects female students' decision to pursue careers in math-related fields. Ehrtmann and Wolter (2018) concluded that gender differences between boys and girls affect a students' intellectual competence. Ehrtmann and Wolter identified girls as better readers and boys as better mathematicians. In the teaching profession, gender differences may generate a higher turnover rate in women than men.

Teacher feedback plays a pivotal role in female students' academic choices (Skipper & Leman, 2015). Song et al. (2017) exposed that female students make career choices based on the expectations for success, achievement, and subjective value. Skipper and Leman (2015) concluded that women are less likely to choose careers in science, technology, and engineering fields. Reducing math-gender stereotypes and increasing competence, belief, and task value might increase a female student's likelihood of pursuing math-related career fields. Master and Meltzoff (2017) confirmed that gender bias produces recruitment and retention challenges in science, technology, and engineering fields.

Othman, Latip, Ariffin, and Mohamed (2017) examined the motivation to participate in urban farming. Othman et al. used the expectancy theory to measure the

motivation of farmers to participate in urban farming engagement. Othman, Mohamad, Latip, and Ariffin (2018) and Yusoff, Hussain, and Tukiman (2017) showed that strong community engagement is crucial in implementing and sustaining urban farming activities in any community. Garnasih (2017) found that while internal satisfaction inspires an intrinsically motivated person, rewards stimulate an extrinsically motivated person. These studies provided a clear understanding of the linkage between extrinsic rewards, intrinsic rewards, job satisfaction, and employee turnover. A community-oriented work environment may increase an employee's job satisfaction and reduce employee turnover.

In Malaysia, the government encouraged the public to participate in urban farming for food and economic security (Othman et al., 2018). Othman et al. found that bonding with other community members in the neighborhood also encouraged Malaysian farmers to participate in urban farming activities. The Malaysian government increased urban farming initiatives to highlight the social and health benefits of urban farming (Othman et al., 2018). Yusoff et al. (2017) found that urban farming activities promote healthier lifestyles by improving the community food supply. Similarly, Baudoin (2017) specified that individuals use rooftop gardens to grow organic food for a more nutritious and safer diet in populated urban environments. The literature implied that team building activities promote workplace collaboration, job satisfaction, and employee retention.

In 2009, the World Health Organization reported that obesity and chronic diseases in the United States contributed to an economic burden on the healthcare industry. Blotnick, Mann, and Joy (2015) studied the healthy eating behaviors of 188 students

from two universities. Poor eating habits increase obesity and overweight (Niba, Atanga, & Navti, 2017). From an expectancy theory lens, Blotnicky et al. reported that healthy eating habits lead to good health outcomes, as college students and consumers experience a decrease in obesity and other diseases. In the context of this study, the application of the expectancy theory may allow school employees the discretion and autonomy to make informed decisions to improve student academic standards, which may decrease employee turnover.

Oguz, Cemcem, Camci, and Gurkan (2017) found that enhancing students' self-efficacy and knowledge of nutrition increases students' decisions to make healthier food choices. Consumers who successfully follow healthy food habits possess higher levels of self-efficacy than individuals that do not accept a healthy eating regiment (Oguz et al., 2017). Yahia, Wang, Rapley, and Dey (2016) found that motivation for a healthy eating lifestyle affects men differently than women. Yahia et al. argued that males are more overweight and disinterest in improving eating habits than females. Oguz et al. stated that healthier students and consumers perform better mentally and physically. Increasing self-efficacy could motivate school employees to increase their job performance, which may facilitate higher levels of job satisfaction and retention.

### **Other Supporting and Contrasting Theories**

Researchers use multiple theories to explore work motivation that influences employees' interpersonal behaviors and decisions to reduce voluntary employee turnover. To explore employee motivation, I conducted a review of the most common motivation theories. This section includes information on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs

theory, Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory, and Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics theory.

**Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory.** Both Vroom's (1964) and Maslow's (1943) theories focused on explaining the motivational factors that promote employee motivation. An individual's basic needs determine the amount of work effort that the individual exerts to obtain a specific need (Turabik & Baskan, 2015). Although similarities exist between the two theories, there are differences. While Maslow fixated on fulfilling an individual's needs, Vroom focused on rewarding an individual for specific performance outcomes. Maslow implied that satisfying an employee's basic needs fosters job satisfaction. The five basic needs that attain an individual's job satisfaction are (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) social, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Maslow theorized that an individual's needs and wants are in a hierarchy of lowest needs to highest needs. Maslow implied that human beings are never fully satisfied for an extended period (Talabi, 2016). A satisfied need is less potent and would not motivate an individual (Kanfer et al., 2017). By fulfilling school employees' basic needs, school leaders could improve employee retention.

Fisher and Royster (2016) applied Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory to develop a hierarchy that depicts mathematics teachers' needs. Fisher and Royster studied four mathematics teachers from diverse teaching backgrounds to understand teachers' needs, stress levels, and teacher retention. As applied to the teaching profession, Fisher and Royster indicated that mathematics teachers need (a) resources to operate classrooms, (b) personal and financial security, (c) collaboration and teamwork, (d) respect and

recognition, and (e) self-actualization. Talabi (2016) argued that teachers gain job satisfaction from extrinsic rewards, such as salary and advancement opportunities. Like Vroom, Talabi revealed that high work performance leads to rewards and recognition, which meets the needs of employees. Both Fisher and Royster and Talabi posited that school leaders meet teachers' needs through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to boost job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Fisher and Royster found that reducing teachers' stress levels and improving the work environment increase mathematics teachers' support for the organization and teacher retention.

Leaders must identify the specific needs of employees and motivate employees to remain in the organization. Soni and Soni (2016) used Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explore the need for compassionate and ethical leadership in individuals, organizations, and nations. Soni and Soni specified that empathy, goodness, and purposefulness motivate individuals to achieve their full potential. Leaders should forgo their egos and show kindness to others (Soni & Soni, 2016). Baumeister (2016) and Sun, Gergen, Avila, and Green (2016) asserted that leaders address employees' physiological and safety needs first before satisfying lower needs. By addressing the physiological needs of employees, leaders improve employees' job satisfaction, work performance, and eventually employee retention. Sun et al. postulated that when leaders adopt the transformational leadership style, employee turnover decreases in the organization.

**Herzberg et al's. two-factor theory.** Herzberg et al. (1959) stated that work should bring pleasure and satisfaction to employees. Herzberg et al. focused on two-factors of job satisfaction. The two categories of job satisfaction entail a motivating factor

(internal), which employees develop from meeting self-actualization needs, and a hygiene factor (external) that emerges from executing a job (Herzberg et al., 1959). While motivational factors create job satisfaction, the lack of hygiene factors generates dissatisfaction (Krasniqi, 2018). Herzberg et al. advised that decreasing dissatisfaction and increasing satisfaction improve productivity and employee retention. The motivational factors of (a) achievement, (b) appreciation, (c) advancement, and (d) recognition create organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Fareed & Jan, 2016). The hygiene factors are (a) working conditions, (b) supervision, (c) salary, and (d) job security (Matei & Abrudan, 2016). Both Vroom (1964) and Herzberg et al. postulated that effective leadership is crucial in motivating employees (Fareed & Jan, 2016). Leaders motivate employees to maximize their full potential to accomplish organizational goals.

Turabik and Baskan (2015) asserted that leaders using only hygiene factors are not enough to influence an employee's job satisfaction. Ziar, Momtazmanesh, and Ahmadi (2017) applied Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory to explore the job motivation of 137 faculty members in 12 universities. While motivational factors are essential in younger individuals, the hygiene factor is critical in older individuals (Ziar et al., 2017). Ziar et al. reported that career progression opportunities, salary, and training boost faculty members' job motivation. In the retail sector, Kotni and Karumuri (2018) used Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory to test the motivation of 150 employees working in 15 retail outlets. Kotni and Karumuri found that both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards motivate retail employees. However, retail employees prefer extrinsic rewards more than

intrinsic rewards, which lead to an increase in job satisfaction and productivity. In the absence of motivational and hygiene factors, employees may feel unhappy with their occupation, causing an increase in employee turnover.

**Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model theory.** Hackman and Oldham (1976) created the job characteristics model to focus on job enrichment. Hackman and Oldham stated that motivated employees perform better to complete job-related tasks. The components of the job characteristics model are (a) skill variety, (b) task identity, (c) task significance, (d) autonomy, and (e) feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Faturochman (2016) indicated that employees gain motivation and job satisfaction when leaders give their employees the autonomy to make work decisions. Leaders provide feedback about an employee's work outcomes to acknowledge the completion of job demands (Turabik & Baskan, 2015). Employees receiving feedback, job satisfaction, and internal motivation, which decreases absenteeism and turnover (Birtch, Chiang, & Van Esch, 2016). By increasing employees' work performance and job satisfaction, leaders provide employees with significant opportunities for job enrichment and personal achievement, which increases employee retention.

Zhao, Ghiselli, Law, and Ma (2016) used Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics model to examine the motivation of 401 frontline hospitality employees working in six upscale hotels. Job characteristics regulate emotional outcomes in employees (Hauff & Richter, 2015). For example, when completing a job task with certainty, hospitality employees feel empowered. Job satisfaction and work motivation increased in both employees and coworkers (Zhao et al., 2016). Zhao et al. determined

that autonomy, task identity, and task significance decrease job stress while feedback and task significance enhances job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Talabi (2016) posited that reducing job stress increases job satisfaction and decreases employee turnover.

Researchers acknowledged that job design increase employee morale and work effectiveness (Oldham & Fried, 2016). Job enrichment also influences better work outcomes and retention (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Hussein (2018) applied Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics model to explain the need for enriching the work of 211 employees in the media sector. Leaders improve media employees' job to increase work performance and productivity (Hussein, 2018). Both Hussein and Marinova, Peng, Lorinkova, Van Dyne, and Chiaburu (2015) found that employee engagement reinforces employees' needs and enrich work outcomes. Employees need to know the results of their work to generate positive or negative work motivation and job satisfaction. The degree to which an employee feels accountable for meaningful work is essential to the employee's value system (Marinova et al., 2015). Zhao et al. (2016) expressed that intrinsic motivation produces job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and happiness. Pee and Lee (2015) affirmed that job design affects an individual's intrinsic motivation to share institutional knowledge. The job design and internal reinforcement is an incentive for good performance and retention.

Hans and Gupta (2018) stated that organizations promote job characteristics in the workplace to stimulate positive employee attitudes. Leaders support shared leadership by developing a psychologically safe work environment and using job design to increase team performance (Hans & Gupta, 2018). Business leaders leverage psychological



behaviors through job characteristics to foster shared leadership in a team environment. According to Ghosh, Rai, Chauhan, Gupta, and Singh (2015), many organizations use collective leadership to make rapid talent and performance management decisions. As a result, leaders enrich jobs to motivate employees and to cultivate a collaborative work environment to retain highly skilled employees.

### **Employee Turnover**

Employee turnover has a negative impact on teaching quality and effectiveness (Lee et al., 2017a). Employee turnover also places a financial burden on an organization (Anvari, JianFu, & Chermahini, 2014). Anvari et al. stressed that leaders should develop effective strategies to mitigate voluntary employee turnover and improve employee retention to preserve the organization. Mitrovska and Eftimov (2016) implied that human resources managers lack the necessary tools to manage the rate of employee turnover. In 2002, the national turnover rate was 15% (Rahim et al., 2015). Five years later in Indonesia, 90% of employees left their jobs voluntarily (Mitrovska & Eftimov, 2016).

Donitsa-Schmidt and Zuzovsky (2016) conducted a mixed methods study to highlight the magnitude of the voluntary teacher turnover phenomenon in public schools. Donitsa-Schmidt and Zuzovsky found that relocation between schools and the shortages of certified teachers for core classes lead to many employee turnovers. Beulah, Walker, and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz (2018) discovered that the employee turnover rate indicates job satisfaction, the morale and productivity of employees, and the effectiveness of human resources management activities. High employee turnover decreases organizational

productivity and performance (Beulah et al., 2018). Blackburn, Bunch, and Haynes (2017) and Cummings, Hewko, Fraser, Brown, and Wong (2015) indicated that a work-life balance and job satisfaction are factors that employees consider when deciding to remain in an organization. In the education community, the health of the education system relies on the quality of teachers (Donitsa-Schmidt & Zuzovsky, 2016). Therefore, school leaders could employ retention strategies to improve job satisfaction, which may reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Player, Youngs, Perrone, and Grogan (2017) studied the relationship between principal leadership and teacher turnover. High employee turnover restricts schools from maintaining staff cohesion (Burkhauser, 2017). Cummings et al. (2015) specified that a supportive work environment motivates employees to remain in the organization. Player et al. and Burkhauser (2017) found that a strong principal reduces staff turnover and increases staff retention. Effective management and communication reduce turnover (Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, & Goddard, 2015). Burkhauser also discovered that the school environment might increase employee dissatisfaction. More turnover exists in high minority and low-performing schools (Tran, McCormick, & Nguyen, 2018). Shaukat, Yousaf, and Sanders (2017) noted that job burnout causes employees to invest little effort in performing job tasks because work has little meaning. Job burnout leads to counterproductive work performance and withdrawal (Makhdoom, Mehmood, & Atta, 2017). However, supportive principal leadership increases job satisfaction and student achievement (Lee, Wang, & Weststar, 2015). A school leader's style of leadership may influence employees' desires and decisions to remain in the school.

Rumschlag (2017) disclosed that 50% or half a million novice educators leave the job or move to another school or school district within the first 5 years of teaching.

Teacher's frustrations manifest from being isolated in the decision-making process, which leads to turnover intentions or an actual turnover (Maier, Laumer, Eckhardt, & Weitzel, 2015). Teacher turnover is 30% higher than the turnover in any other profession (Ingersoll & Perda, 2014). In the next 5 years, Rumschlag speculated that the number of teachers leaving the profession would increase from 85,000 to 145,000. Disgruntled teachers might persuade a teacher candidate to pursue other career paths.

Balyer (2017) conveyed that principals' turnover increases due to frequent school transfers. A principal requires about 5 years to acclimate to a new school and improve the teaching staff to positively impact the school's performance (Balyer, 2017). Dissatisfied principals are more likely to leave the position and acquire nonprincipal jobs (Tran et al., 2018). Jacob et al. (2015) found that higher principal turnover is more likely in troubled and low-income schools; however, principals with long tenure tend to remain in the school and become successful.

### **Turnover Intentions**

Kim (2015) analyzed the relationship between work-related variables and employee turnover intentions in the public sector. Kim stated that social support, job motivation, and burnout influence turnover intentions. Kim specified that leaders use intrinsic motivation to reduce their employees' stress levels and turnover intentions. Interpersonal conflicts at work increase turnover intentions because employees lose their social networks (Shaukat et al., 2017). Shaukat et al. (2017) confirmed that denying

employees social support affects their emotional well-being. For example, when organizational leaders provide little to no social support or career development opportunities, an employee considers turnover as an alternative to finding better employment. Qiu, Ye, Hung, and York (2015) stated that recruiting employees with similar values to fit into the organizational culture would reduce turnover intentions. Qiu et al. suggested that forming social support groups within the organization creates a cohesive work environment. Kim found that high levels of job burnout, emotional exhaustion, and dissatisfaction with personal accomplishments increase turnover intentions. Turnover intentions decrease in employees with high intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Ertas (2015) compared the turnover intentions and work motivation of millennials and baby boomers working in the federal sector. The generational transformation in the public sector challenges human resources professionals in motivating and retaining the next generation of federal employees (Kosterlitz & Lewis, 2017). The millennial generation value a work-life balance and job satisfaction (Campione, 2015). Campione (2015) explained that restricting millennials' individuality leads to dissatisfaction and the desire to quit. In Indonesia, 60% of millennials disengage from their job and display a strong propensity to leave the workforce (Friani & Mulyani, 2018). Lee et al. (2017a) found that salary increases and compensation reduce turnover intentions. Friani and Mulyani (2018) concluded that alternative job opportunities and professional development influence turnover intentions. Ertas determined that the millennials cohort is more likely to report a turnover intention than the Baby Boomer generation. Human

resources professionals could establish talent management policies to accommodate the generational shift in the education sector to recruit and retain qualified employees.

Zhang, Ling, Zhang, and Xie (2015) used a parametric bootstrap method to explore the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intentions of 512 building engineers. Mathieu, Fabi, Lacoursiere, and Raymond (2016) posited that organizational commitment and job satisfaction are preliminary predictors of employee turnover intentions. Zhang et al. noted that employer-employee fit mitigates turnover intentions when employees commit to the organization. Committed employees are less inclined to leave an organization than uncommitted employees (Mathieu et al., 2016). Zhang et al. revealed that committed employees tend to produce positive work outcomes. For example, committed employees engage at work, which strengthens the bond between the employee and the organization. Zhang et al. found that work engagement mediates the adverse effect of organizational commitment on turnover intentions. Performance and productivity decline when competent employees voluntarily leave the organization (Rahim et al., 2015). Leaders should lessen turnover intentions to achieve organizational goals and retain skilled employees (Lee et al., 2017a). By improving employer-employee compatibility, human resources professionals might cultivate good working relationships in the organization to meet the needs of employees and manage turnover intentions.

Imran, Allil, and Mahmoud (2017) examined the effects of organizational commitment and work motivation of 467 public school teachers' turnover intentions. Organizational commitment is a vital factor in reducing turnover intention (Imran et al., 2017). Turnover intention is a predictor of actual turnover (Mapolisa, 2015). McInerney,

Ganotice, King, Marsh, and Morin (2015) argued that affective, normative, and continuance commitment negatively affect turnover intentions. McInerney et al. suggested that teachers from religious schools possess a higher affective commitment than teachers from a nonreligious school. Motivation also indirectly influences turnover intention through organizational commitment (Morin, Meyer, McInerney, Marsh, & Ganotice, 2015). An employee's occupational commitment may positively predict the employee's intent to stay in the organization (Morin et al., 2015).

Imran et al. (2017) found that enhancing work motivation and boosting employee commitment reduces turnover intention. Organizations that lose skilled employees experience a decrease in organizational performance and efficiency (Salleh, Zahari, Said, & Ali, 2016). Imran et al. advised that educational institutions should identify factors that increase an employee's turnover intention. Social mobility and greater job opportunities could cause teachers to leave their jobs (Salleh et al., 2016). Başar and Sıgır (2015) postulated that (a) organizational justice, (b) citizenship behavior, and (c) better communication reduces turnover intention. Imran et al. noted that school leaders establish motivation policies and strategies to increase organizational commitment and decrease turnover intentions. In addition, annual climate assessments might gauge the motivation levels of employees and encourage employees to remain in the organization.

### **Turnover Cost**

Mitrovska and Eftimov (2016) implied that human resources managers lack the necessary tools to manage the rate of employee turnover. The employee turnover rate indicates job satisfaction, the morale and productivity of employees, and the effectiveness

of human resources management activities (Schmidt, Willness, Jones, & Bourdage, 2018b). The turnover cost per employee averages between 50% to 200% of an employee's annual salary (Cloutier et al., 2015). Rahim et al. (2015) speculated that the cost of recruiting new teachers ranges from 15% to 250% of a teacher's yearly salary. For managerial positions and specialty positions, turnover costs may rise over 250% of an employee's annual salary (Mitrovska & Eftimov, 2016). Mitrovska and Eftimov discovered that human resources managers could calculate the cost of employee turnover by combining replacement costs, training and development costs, and turnover costs.

Tran et al. (2018) used the ingredients method to estimate the replacement costs of high school principals. The cost of replacing a principal is significantly higher than the cost of replacing a teacher. Tran et al. found that the cost of replacing a principal varies between \$10,413 to \$51,659 depending upon the school district. Teacher turnover costs range between \$4,366 in small rural districts and \$17,872 in large urban communities (Tran et al., 2018). In large Midwestern urban areas, teacher turnover costs an average of \$6,766 to \$33,403 (Tran et al., 2018). Rumschlag (2017) stated that the United States spends over \$2.2 billion annually on teacher attrition, which could rise to \$7 billion. Turnover costs may continue to escalate as public school employees leave the education profession.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction has a substantial influence on an employee's work performance, turnover intentions, and work behaviors. Leaders use innovative management techniques to improve the organizational climate and culture (Lee et al., 2017b; Parijat & Bagga,

2014). Increasing employees' salaries, promotion opportunities, and work conditions stimulate a high degree of job satisfaction (Afif, 2018). A high job satisfaction rate may equate to a low staff turnover rate because employees work harder and take more pride in their work (Scanlan & Still, 2013). However, high job satisfaction may produce job burnout, which leads to turnover intentions (Kim, 2015).

Rahmati, Sajjadi, and Negarestani (2018) explored the relationship between spirituality in the workplace with job satisfaction and work motivation in 80 special education teachers. Rahmati et al. showed a positive correlation between employee performance, employee motivation, and workplace spirituality. Rahmati et al. explained that fulfilling employees' spiritual needs and experiences increase job satisfaction. Bella, Quelhas, Ferraz, and Bezerra (2018) stressed that workplace spirituality supports an employee's spiritual needs to complete meaningful work. Spirituality in the workplace also fosters a happier work environment, improves employees' attitudes toward the job, and reduces the intent to quit (Hassan, Bin Nadeem, & Akhter, 2016). Rahmati et al. found that advocating spirituality in the workplace increases work motivation and job satisfaction among special education teachers. A sense of community also enhances work motivation because teachers feel connected to a group (Bella et al., 2018). This relationship helps special education teachers manage work-related responsibilities and job burnout. Spirituality in the workplace may increase job satisfaction and help employees cope with stressful situations.

Benevene, Ittan, and Cortini (2018) explored job satisfaction as a mediating role of teachers' happiness and self-esteem. Benevene et al. used the job satisfaction survey to



examine 300 primary and middle school teachers. Benevene et al. implied that work fosters teachers' happiness and self-esteem through job satisfaction. Happiness is a critical construct that helps teachers maximize their wellness (Cortini, Pivetti, & Cervai, 2016). Happiness or subjective well-being promotes healthy behaviors in teachers (Cortini et al., 2016). Satuf et al. (2018) highlighted that high levels of subjective well-being increase life satisfaction and job satisfaction. Work provides financial support as well as an employee's identity. Satuf et al. showed that employees viewing their job in a positive manner are healthier, more socially active, and retainable.

Benevene et al. (2018) found that job satisfaction predicts teachers' happiness, health, and self-esteem. Teachers' happiness and their health allow them to manage burnout and work-related stress (Benevene & Fiorilli, 2015). Benevene and Fiorilli (2015) reported that lower levels of absenteeism and student disciplinary problems boost teachers' job satisfaction and self-esteem. Additionally, organizational support has a positive influence on job satisfaction, which increases employees' health and happiness (Cortini et al., 2016). Leaders maintain their employees' subjective well-being to promote job satisfaction, and to minimize health insurance and turnover costs (Satuf et al., 2018). Benevene et al. postulated that leaders develop human resources policies to promote job satisfaction and to improve the work environments and employee wellness. Happier employees may increase teaching effectiveness and choose to remain in the education profession.

Agarwal and Sajid (2017) examined the relationship between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions in 206 public and private sector

employees. Agarwal and Sajid showed that organizational commitment and job satisfaction were high in the public sector whereas turnover intentions were high in the private sector. Job satisfaction is an employees' judgment on the degree of gratification obtained from a job (Talabi, 2016). Sabbagha et al. (2018) noted that job satisfaction increases employee performance, productivity, and retention. Organizational commitment is a predictor of job satisfaction (Cho et al., 2017). Abdirahman, Najeemdeen, Abidemi, and Ahmad (2018) found that job satisfaction motivates employees to perform better on the job and commit to the organization. Lee et al. (2017b) asserted that job satisfaction decreases employee turnover intentions and increases organizational commitment and productivity.

The four determinants of a teacher's job satisfaction are (a) pay, (b) promotion, (c) supervision, and (d) the job (Addai et al., 2018). Huang and Su (2016) discovered that the nature of an employee's position affects the level of job satisfaction and turnover intentions. In the public sector, leaders offer their employees extrinsic benefits and job security to generate organizational commitment and loyalty. Muguongo, Muguna, and Muriithi (2015) concluded that compensation and the work environment affects teachers' job satisfaction. Abdirahman et al. (2018) affirmed that leaders use rewards to influence an employee's work motivation and job satisfaction. Sabbagha et al. (2018) specified that compensation is the primary motivator to generate employee retention so that the organization may retain talented employees.

Addai et al. (2018) found that job satisfaction and organizational justice predict employee turnover intentions. On average, 10,000 Ghanaian teachers leave the teaching

profession annually because of job dissatisfaction and injustice (Addai et al., 2018).

Public sector employees tend to remain on the job even if they are dissatisfied with some part of their career (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). In contrast, private sector employees' turnover intentions depend strictly on the degree of satisfaction employees gain from the job (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Leaders should understand the mediating factors of job satisfaction and employee motivation to increase staff retention.

Mathieu et al. (2016) used a structural turnover model to examine the influences of leadership behavior, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment on turnover intentions. Mathieu et al. gathered data from 763 employees working in different industries. Rahim et al. (2015) discovered that leadership influences work outcomes, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Employees possessing a psychological commitment to an organization are more likely to remain in the firm (Mathieu et al., 2016). However, Mathieu et al. found that job satisfaction may not induce turnover intentions.

Chandra and Priyono (2016) observed the effect of leadership styles, the work environment, and job satisfaction on 45 employees' work performance. Chandra and Priyono stated that the work environment affects an employee's job satisfaction. Huang et al. (2016) found that a high safety climate fosters a high employee' job satisfaction because the organization cares about the safety of their employees. Kundu and Lata (2017) found that 80% of employees search for a supportive work environment. Employees who are happy with their jobs, are more engaged and tend to remain in the organization (Huang et al., 2016). Employees may require a positive work environment to remain in the organization and perform their jobs correctly.

Leadership styles, the work environment, and job satisfaction have a significant effect on employee performance (Eldor & Shoshani, 2017). An increase in job satisfaction reduces job insecurity, which leads to an increase in job performance (Chandra & Priyono, 2016). In education institutions, principals determine the direction, culture, and values of a school. Chandra and Priyono (2016) found that effective leaders influence employees to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Effective school leaders create a school environment that promotes learning and professional development opportunities (Larkin, Brantley-Dias, & Lokey-Vega, 2016). School leaders improve professional development and employee engagement to boost job satisfaction, which may help retain their talented employees (Eldor & Shoshani, 2017). By making the workplace more conducive and enjoyable, employees may become more satisfied with their jobs and remain in the organization.

### **Employee Retention**

Employee retention plays a vital role in the health and success of an organization (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2016; Lee et al., 2017a). Many organizations experience significant challenges with employee retention. Globalization and a competitive labor force magnify the need to retain skilled employees (Bibi et al., 2016). Competent employees now have the luxury to choose from numerous jobs in the workforce (Bibi et al., 2016). This section includes information on transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and leader-member exchange theories as well as employee retention strategies as they relate to voluntary employee turnover.

**Transformational leadership.** Berkovich and Eyal (2017) investigated the relationship between transformational school leadership and teachers' motivation and commitment. Transformational leadership is an effective strategy to affect organizational change and employees' attitudes and behaviors (Kouni, Koutsoukos, & Panta, 2018). Goswami, Nair, Beehr, and Grossenbacher (2016) stated that transformational leadership promotes favorable employee reactions. School leaders use transformational leadership to influence employees to commit to school goals (Bush, 2017). Additionally, transformational leaders focus on fulfilling employees' intrinsic needs to accomplish organizational goals (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Bush (2017) stressed that transformational leaders persuade employees to implement the leader's vision and values rather than the organization's values. Berkovich and Eyal found that transformational principals directly influence teacher's motivation and educational outcomes. Teachers feel more satisfied and perform better when school leaders are transformational leaders (Kouni et al., 2018). Transformational principals may offer teachers the emotional support needed to increase their work performance, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization.

Using the Buddhist noble eightfold path framework, Pravichai and Ariyabuddhiphongs (2018) assessed the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intentions. Transformational leadership influences an employee's job satisfaction and trust (Perilla-Toro & Gómez-Ortiz, 2017). The right speech philosophy suggests that employees should trust in their leaders (Pravichai & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2018). Leaders practicing right speech builds trust through their words and actions (Bamford, 2014). Bamford explained that right speech inspires leaders to act ethically

and nonconfrontational. Transformational leaders develop supportive work environments to enhance their employees' job satisfaction and productivity (Lin, Dang, & Liu, 2016). Pravichai and Ariyabuddhiphongs showed that through good deeds, leaders generate positive job satisfaction, improve job performance, and increase employee retention. When leaders treat their employees with respect and kindness, the organization may reduce turnover intentions.

In the 21st century, education leadership is a prevalent issue because the quality of leadership affects a school's effectiveness and student academic outcomes.

Arokiasamy (2017) examined the relationship between transformational leadership and the organizational health of school employees. School cultures serve as a moderator for transformational leadership and predict job satisfaction (Kanesan Abdullah & Arokiasamy, 2016). Kanesan Abdullah and Arokiasamy (2016) asserted that improving the school culture increases employees' job satisfaction and performance.

Transformational leadership practices amongst education leaders generate employee commitment to achieving the school's mission and goals (Arokiasamy, Abdullah, Ahmad, & Ismail, 2016). As transformational leaders, principals value their employees and assist in their professional development (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). Arokiasamy determined that school cultures influence transformational leadership and the organizational health of school employees. School principals should cultivate a positive organizational culture and climate to retain qualified employees.

**Transactional leadership.** Many organizations focus on leadership practices to retain employees in the public sector. Caillier (2018) investigated the effect that

leadership styles have on employees' behaviors and turnover. Prasad and Junni (2016) posited that transformational and transactional leadership styles exist on opposites ends of a continuum. Transactional and transformational leadership are corresponding leadership styles (Xenikou, 2017). Transactional leadership is a style of leadership in which a leader exchanges rewards and punishments for performance (Asencio & Mujkic, 2016). Transactional leaders motivate their employees to accomplish the organization's goals by communicating expectations and rewarding employees when they attain the expectations (Caillier, 2018). Transactional leaders also generate higher performance and organizational commitment by establishing clear performance goals, dispensing desired rewards, and providing constructive feedback (Xenikou, 2017). Both the leader and employee benefits from the exchange of pay for performance.

Ma and Jiang (2018) specified that effective leadership practices accentuate intrinsic and extrinsic incentives to persuade employees to remain in the organization rather than leave. Pay satisfaction is a proxy to explain an employee's perceptions of the psychological benefits of staying in an organization (Pohler & Schmidt, 2016). Employees may stay in an organization for financial security. However, employees leave the organization when they feel dissatisfied with their performance awards and perceive the cost of departing the organization outweighs the benefits (Pissaris, Heavey, & Golden, 2017). Afshari and Gibson (2016) found that fulfilling psychological needs encourage employees to remain in the organization. Intangible rewards, such as learning opportunities in exchange for employee performance, may boost employees' willingness to perform and commit to the organization (Afshari & Gibson, 2016). Caillier (2018)

determined that transformational-oriented leadership lowers voluntary turnover, but transactional-oriented leadership increases resignations and transfers. By improving the employee-organization fit, business leaders may reduce voluntary employee turnover and retain competent employees in the organization.

Khan (2017) discussed transactional leadership in educational institutions. Khan argued that the complexity in the teaching environment requires a flexible and supportive leadership strategy. Educators commonly use transactional leadership to entice their students to achieve educational standards (Khan, 2017). Transactional leaders provide rewards and punishments as a component of the leader-follower relationship (Eratlı Şirin, Aydın, & Pervin Bilir, 2018). Aga (2016) found that transactional leaders become dependent on the rewards and punishment approach to achieve business objectives. Transactional leaders who focus solely on rewards for performance might incur a decline in employee motivation, job performance, and retention (Khan, 2017). Masa'deh, Obeidat, and Tarhini (2016) noted that transactional leaders might not recognize employees for their contributions beyond the predetermined performance goals. Transactional leaders' unwillingness to consider the ideas of others limits the creativity of their employees (Ma & Jiang, 2018). Khan specified that without flexibility, transactional leadership is ineffective for education institutions. Transactional leaders provide employees with psychological rewards to complete their contractual obligations, but transactional leaders may fail to consider the internal and external factors that might affect an employee's motivation to remain in the organization.

**Leader-member exchange leadership.** Leader-member exchange influences job



satisfaction, turnover intentions, and employee retention (Li, Zhu, & Park, 2018). Li et al. (2018) discovered that leaders strengthen their employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment by offering monetary incentives and a positive work environment to increase employee retention. Adil and Awais (2016) expressed that individuals in high leader-exchange relationships possess a high level of support and trust from their leaders, which causes employees to remain in the organization. Senior leaders speculate that leader-member relationships also lessen stress and improves job satisfaction (Akdo & Arikboga, 2017). Adil and Awais claimed that excellent relationships with supervisors might increase an employee's attraction to the external labor market causing a deliberate intention to leave the organization. Low-quality leader-member exchange relationships lack trust, communication, and rewards, which causes employees dissatisfaction, but high-quality interpersonal relationships increase employee retention.

Flickinger, Allscher, and Fiedler (2016) analyzed the mediating role that leader-member exchange and job satisfaction play as precursors of turnover intentions for temporary and permanent employees. Using a total effects moderation model on 593 temporary workers, Flickinger et al. advised that temporary work decreases job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Temporary work settings hinder leader-member exchange relationships because employees fail to form stable relationships with their colleagues, which contributes to low job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Flickinger et al., 2016). Flickinger et al. found that permanent employees' high leader-member exchange influences job satisfaction and turnover intentions, but temporary employees'

job satisfaction does not affect high leader-member exchange. Findings from this study indicate that permanent work environments might allow employees to develop collaborative work relationships, which may increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover intentions.

Ali, Lodhi, Orangzab, Raza, and Ali (2018) found that coaching relationships between the leader and employee facilitate a high leader-member exchange quality, which improves employees' job satisfaction and work outcomes. Leaders establish coaching and mentoring programs to optimize employees' performance, productivity, and retention (Callahan, 2016). Soleimani and Einolahzadeh (2017) showed that improving employee's emotional intelligence increases leader-member exchange quality and decreases turnover intentions. Employees may feel that leaders recognize their talents and abilities, which may increase their job satisfaction (Soleimani & Einolahzadeh, 2017). By developing effective business relationships, understanding staff problems, and increasing job satisfaction, leaders reduce employee turnover.

**Compensation and benefits.** Anvari et al. (2014) found that pay increases are an effective employee retention strategy. Organizations use compensation and benefits packages to attract, motivate, and retain employees (Bibi et al., 2016). Leaders also utilize compensation tactics to enhance an employee's job performance and work outputs (Seeletse & Thabane, 2016). Liu, Zhao, and Xie (2016) found that money does not motivate some educators. Educators receive personal gratification through monetary and nonmonetary incentives, which may encourage them to remain in the teaching profession (Mapolisa, 2015). School leaders use pay-for-performance plans to reward high

performing teachers for accomplishing specified performance standards (Shifrer, Turley, & Heard, 2017). Pay-for-performance strategies may lead to an increase in teachers' retention rates (Shifrer et al., 2017). Pay satisfaction may boost school employees' job performance, work efforts, and employee retention.

Gevrek, Spencer, Hudgins, and Chambers (2017) investigated the role that pay has on employee retention and turnover. Gevrek et al. gathered data from 174 educators regarding their perception of their coworkers' pay raises. A mismatch between pay increases, employee rankings, and the understanding of low pay raises amongst peers may cause dissatisfaction with an organization (Gevrek et al., 2017). Tran et al. (2018) revealed that high school principals place value on their salaries, teachers, and other principals within their school district. Employees less satisfied with their salaries are more likely to quit (Seeletse & Thabane, 2016). Compensation and benefits may increase employee retention; however, the perception of fairness in distributing pay raises amongst peers may influence employee turnovers.

**Work-life balance.** Sinha and Sinha (2018) evaluated the effects of demographics and gender on work-life balance. Sinha and Sinha found that gender influences work-life balance. Women experience greater difficulty in managing work-life balance than men because of their dual role as employees and caregivers (Hagqvist, Gådin, & Nordenmark, 2017). Watanabe and Falci (2016) determined that a supportive work-family culture reduces employee turnover intentions. Teachers improve work-life balance by inviting family members to random school events (Jiang & Shen, 2018; Sinha & Sinha, 2018). School leaders increase their employees' job satisfaction and retention

by reducing work-related spillovers into nonwork hours (Watanabe & Falci, 2016).

Educational institutions may also create employee assistance and well-being programs to help teachers better manage daily tasks, work stressors, and time management (Sinha & Sinha, 2018). Flexible work practices help employees balance the demands of work and family life, which improves employee retention, productivity, and commitment (Umamaheswari & Krishnan, 2016). Oduaran and Akanni (2017) found that an educator's personality plays a vital role in balancing work-life obligations. Work-life balance policies may mitigate work-life disparities and increase employee retention.

### **Transition**

Section 1 contains information focused on strategies that public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. In Section 1, I also introduced the background of the problem; problem and purpose statements; nature of the study; overarching research question and interview questions; conceptual framework; operational definitions; assumptions, limitations, and delimitations; contribution to business practice; implications for social change; and the review of the professional and academic literature. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory was the conceptual framework for this study. The literature review includes the conceptual framework, employee turnover intentions, and employee retention.

Section 2 encompasses the restated purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, and ethical research. This section also includes the data collection instruments and technique, data organization technique, data analysis, reliability and validity, and the transition and

summary. Section 3 includes the introduction, presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for further research, reflections, and the conclusion.

## Section 2: The Project

Section 2 contains a discussion of the restated purpose statement and the role of the researcher throughout the research process. The remaining subsections include the descriptions of the participants, the research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and technique, data organization technique, data analysis, as well as reliability and validity. This section ends with a transition and summary.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The target population for this study consisted of three public school leaders from one public school located in Georgia with successful experience in using strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce voluntary employee turnover in educational institutions, which might reduce the local government's expenditures associated with the replacement of employees and increase resources for supporting social initiatives and more effective instruction for students in the community.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher is to conduct and transcribe the participants' experiences (McVay, Stamatakis, Jacobs, Tabak, & Brownson, 2016; Nagasaka, Böcher, & Krott, 2016). Kim, Deatrick, and Ulrich (2016) revealed that qualitative researchers serve as the primary research instrument to collect and analyze all raw data, identify and

code themes, and establish data saturation. The researcher should represent the actual findings of the research study (Henderson, 2018). I served as the primary research instrument for this study because I collected and analyzed data from multiple sources, conducted and transcribed interviews, analyzed and coded thematic data, and established data saturation.

I was not familiar with voluntary employee turnover in public schools; however, I am skilled in leadership and human resources management. As a leader in the Department of Defense, I led a diverse workforce with specific human capital needs. As a human resources director and retention manager, developing and implementing talent management and employee retention policies were one of my primary job responsibilities. My military experiences also taught me a great deal about forecasting workforce requirements and requisitioning personnel replacements, which helped me explore voluntary employee turnover in public schools.

*The Belmont Report* protocol outlines specific ethical principles that the researcher should follow to protect the rights of participants engaged in the research study (Friesen, Kearns, Redman, & Caplan, 2017). *The Belmont Report* encompasses three ethical principles, which are (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Miracle, 2016). Researchers adhere to the respect for persons principle to acknowledge the autonomy of the study participants and to protect the rights of those with diminished autonomy (Adashi, Walters, & Menikoff, 2018). Researchers follow the beneficence principle to maximize potential benefits and minimize potential harm to participants (Adashi et al., 2018). Researchers use the justice principle to implement fair procedures

to select the study participants (Adashi et al., 2018). Friesen et al. (2017) stated that researchers should receive informed consent from the participants, conduct an assessment of the risks and benefits, and establish a selection process to determine the study participants to follow the ethical principles outlined in *The Belmont Report*. I followed the principles in *The Belmont Report* and Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) process to protect the human subjects involved in this research. I also provided a safe environment for the participants engaged in this study.

Woods, Macklin, and Lewis (2016) stated that qualitative researchers mitigate bias' by managing their reflexivity. The researcher identifies stereotypical assumptions to alleviate predispositions that might alter the research purpose (Nilson, 2017). Caretta (2015) and Harvey (2015) indicated that member checking allows the researcher to interpret the participant's experiences without preconceived prejudices. I treated all the research participants fairly and analyzed their experiences objectively.

An interview protocol is a procedural guide to aid researchers in preparing and conducting interviews (van de Wiel, 2017). Researchers use an interview protocol to list the order of interview questions and relevant topics to explore during the interview process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Heydon & Powell, 2018). In this study, the interview protocol (see Appendix A) served as a guideline to follow throughout the interview process outlining the purpose of the study, defining a script of the introduction and conclusion, listing the interview questions, and identifying cues to obtain a signed informed consent form from the research participants.



## Participants

To be included in the study, qualified participants should possess experience and knowledge relating to the case study (Kiernan, Opezzo, Resnicow, & Alexander, 2018). Humphreys, Weingardt, Horst, Joshi, and Finney (2005) revealed that the participants' eligibility criteria affect the research outcome. Many researchers use sampling strategies to set boundaries to identify the target population (El-Masri, 2017; Padgett, 2017). The eligibility criteria for participants in this study were public school leaders from one public school located in Georgia with successful experience in using strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. I purposively gathered information from public websites, such as those of the Georgia Department of Education, the public school and the district, to screen potential candidates. These websites maintained the public school's (a) address, (b) telephone number, (c) secondary websites, and (d) faculty email addresses. In addition, some of the secondary websites ranked the best public schools in Georgia and provided teaching quality and academic information.

Høyland, Hollund, and Olsen (2015) asserted that gaining access to the study participants requires continuous negotiations and consent. A researcher's access to participants may also depend on the working relationship between the researcher and the gatekeeper of the organization (Amundsen, Msoroka, & Findsen, 2017). Therefore, access to the participants, interview locations, and organizational documents may rely on the rapport between the researcher and the gatekeeper. After being granted approval by the university's IRB, a researcher may use existing contacts to gain access to the research participants (Murphy, 2018; Saunders et al., 2015). Firmino-Machado, Mendes, Moreira,

and Lunet (2017) stated that researchers solicit participants to join a research study via email, phone, or mail. After receiving Walden University IRB approval, I searched for eligible participants. The strategy was to use public websites to (a) search for public schools in Georgia with a high employee retention rate and teaching quality and (b) identify public school leaders that possess successful experience in using strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Conducting this study in Georgia allowed me to gain access to public schools in the geographical location where I live. From the list of eligible participants, the goal was to use purposeful sampling to determine the sample population. Participants received an invitation from me via email or phone to join in this study. I emailed the informed consent form to potential participants to allow them to review the informed consent form before the scheduled interview. Signing the informed consent form validated the participant's eligibility.

Researchers use various strategies to establish a positive working relationship with the research participants. Raheim et al. (2016) stated that developing a strong working relationship with the participants may help researchers collect and interpret meaningful interview data. Newton (2017) and Yin (2018) implied that researchers should prioritize the well-being of participants throughout the research study. Communicating the benefits of the research and the interview process may also help researchers establish a positive working relationship with participants (Yin, 2018). The informed consent form provides participants with information regarding the potential benefits and risks of the research study (Karbwan et al., 2018; Luehnen, Muehlhauser, & Steckelberg, 2018). During the communication process, I did not collect or record any

personal data from the potential participants before they signed the informed consent form. I informed the participants that they could voluntarily withdraw from the research study at any time (see Luehnen et al., 2018). Researchers also use an interview protocol to build trust with participants (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The interview protocol outlines the ground rules of the interview process, which may facilitate a quality interview (Hamilton, Powell, & Brubacher, 2017; Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, (2016). I established a positive working relationship with participants by building a good rapport with participants, communicating the benefits and risks of the study, informing participants of their privacy rights and informed consent, and describing the interview process.

Researchers should select the correct participants that meet the eligibility criteria, which aligns with the overarching research question. Korstjens and Moser (2017) posited that the research design should align with the research question. In case studies, Gregory et al. (2018) declared that the research participants should possess real-world experience and familiarity with the research phenomenon to contribute relevant research data. Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to identify the target population and to study a case in-depth (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). The study participants were public school leaders located in Georgia with successful experience in using strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Following the recommendation of Gregory et al., I selected public school leaders who had experience in voluntary employee turnover in the education industry to align with the research phenomenon. Participants had to possess at least 2 years of experience in reducing voluntary employee

turnover in public schools to be included in the study. I gathered information from public websites, such as those from the Georgia Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics, to screen potential candidates. Using purposeful sampling ensured the selected participants possessed expertise and knowledge on voluntary employee turnover to ensure alignment with the overarching research question.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

Researchers use the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods to conduct scholarly research (Salvador, 2016). The qualitative research method was most appropriate for this study because I used open-ended questions in the interview process. Researchers use the qualitative research method to study participants in a natural setting (Saunders et al., 2015). Qualitative researchers focus on exploring the worldview of an individual (Mijović, Račić, Tanasković, Stanić, & Bojanić, 2018). By using an inductive approach, qualitative researchers identify themes and patterns in the research data to develop the research findings (Farinde, Allen, & Lewis, 2016; Park & Park, 2016). The qualitative research method was suitable for this study because the intent was to research *what, why, and how* of voluntary employee turnover.

The quantitative research method was not suitable for this study because I did not measure and generalize the research findings from the target population. Quantitative researchers use surveys or experiments to collect numerical data (Chu & Ke, 2017; Risso, 2016). Using a deductive approach, quantitative researchers isolate specific variables to test the correlation, relationship, and causation amongst variables in a study (Almalki,

2016). Quantitative researchers also develop hypotheses to anticipate the outcome of the research question (Ullah & Ameen, 2018). Therefore, quantitative research method did not meet the needs of this study.

Mekki, Hallberg, and Øye (2018) stated that researchers use a mixed methods to explore the research problem more thoroughly. A mixed methods approach was inappropriate for this study because the intent was to collect the research data using primarily semistructured interviews. Researchers use the mixed methods sequentially to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Inuwa, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2018). Bovermann, Weidlich, and Bastiaens (2018) indicated that the mixed methods research allows researchers to integrate both an interactive and iterative approach during data collection and analysis. By integrating the qualitative and quantitative methods, researchers may combine the research data to triangulate the results (Lipatov, 2018). The mixed methods approach helps researchers establish greater diversity and credibility in the study (Saunders et al., 2015). However, I did not utilize the mixed methods approach in this study to explore the strategies that public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

### **Research Design**

Qualitative researchers use the case study, phenomenological, and ethnography research designs. I chose to use a single case study because the goal was to investigate the dynamics of the research phenomenon. Researchers use the case study design to explore an event in a real-life setting (Mohajan, 2018). Ridder (2017) asserted that qualitative researchers use case studies to explore a research phenomenon. Qualitative

researchers conduct case studies as social science inquiries to promote new ideas and products (Grover & Froese, 2016). The case study design was most appropriate for this study because of the ability to gain a better understanding of voluntary employee turnovers in public schools.

Researchers use the phenomenological research design to study participants' experiences related to a specific phenomenon (Alase, 2017). Phenomenological researchers access participants' repressed memories to understand the essence of lived experiences (Chan, Walker, & Gleaves, 2015; Farinde et al., 2016). Smith (2018) argued that phenomenological research design encompasses a reflective and prereflective domain of lived experiences. The phenomenological research design was not suitable for this study because the aim of the study was not to explore the participants' lived experiences.

Researchers use the ethnographic research design to discover the shared beliefs, behaviors, rituals, and languages of groups (Van Maanen, 2015). Arikan et al. (2017) noted that ethnographers study the culture of diverse groups of people for an extended period. Some ethnographers also engage with participants to gain a better understanding of everyday life in a specific group or culture (Gergen & Gergen, 2018). The ethnographic research design was not suitable for this study because the aim of this study was not to explore the social behaviors of a group or culture.

Data saturation is the point at which new information provides little if any, additional insights (Tran, Porcher, Falissard, & Ravaud, 2016). When no new themes and codes exist in the data collection, researchers achieve data saturation (Lowe, Norris,

Farris, & Babbage, 2018). Researchers possess enough data to replicate the research study (Tichenor & Yaruss, 2018). By finding no new content in scholarly sources, qualitative researchers reach data saturation (Morse, 2015). Qualitative researchers also continue to conduct semistructured interviews until no new additional themes emerge to achieve data saturation (Saunders et al., 2015). The sample size is uncertain in qualitative research (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, & Young, 2018). Researchers achieve data saturation quick because of the fixed boundaries in census sampling (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To achieve data saturation, I collected data using semistructured interviews until no new themes and codes emerged in the research data. After receiving IRB approval, I interviewed three public school leaders from one public school with successful experience in using strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

### **Population and Sampling**

In qualitative studies, Turner-Bowker et al. (2018) argued that the appropriate sample size is unclear. However, Dworkin (2012) stated that the sample size in qualitative studies is smaller than quantitative studies because qualitative researchers seek to gain an in-depth understanding of a research topic. A narrow research study requires a smaller sample size because the research phenomenon is more comprehensive (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). Sample sizes also depend on data saturation, the sample specificity, and information power (Malterud et al., 2016). For this qualitative single case study, the sample size was three public school leaders from one public school.

Purposeful sampling is the intentional selection of information-rich cases (Bungay, Oliffe, & Atchison, 2015). Researchers use purposeful sampling to study cases

rich in-depth to yield a more profound understanding of the research topic (Benoot et al., 2016). Duan, Bhaumik, Palinkas, and Hoagwood (2015) implied that qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to strategically select participants possessing specific knowledge and experiences connected to the research phenomenon. The purposeful sampling method was appropriate for this qualitative study because I identified and selected three leaders from one public school who possessed meaningful knowledge and experience to answer the research question. The life experiences of the research participants facilitated an enhanced understanding of reducing voluntary employee turnover in education institutions. Participants possessed at least 2 years of experience in reducing voluntary employee turnover in public schools. Using purposeful sampling ensured the selected leaders possessed experience in reducing voluntary employee turnover to collect rich data and acquire a better understanding of the participants' perspectives.

Data saturation occurs when no new themes and no new data add substantive insights into the research question (Tran et al., 2016). Researchers determine data saturation when there is a redundancy of information provided by the research participants (El Hussein, Jakubec, & Osuji, 2015). In qualitative studies, researchers achieve data saturation when the research participants provide enough information to replicate the research study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Interviews continued until reaching data saturation.

Dawson, Hartwig, Brimbal, and Denisenkov (2017) claimed that an appropriate interview setting is private, spacious, accessible, and free from interruptions. Researchers



establish a relaxed interview environment to build rapport with the research participants (Madsen & Santtila, 2018). The interview setting may influence the participants' willingness to disclose information (Boser & LaRooy, 2018). A private interview setting may breakdown hidden boundaries that the research participants possess to facilitate productive semistructured interviews (Thorpe et al., 2018). The selected participants' work schedule and geographical location created challenges in conducting face-to-face interviews. Therefore, I conducted semistructured interviews using Voice over Internet Protocol technology via FaceTime from a private home office. I created a private interview environment and safeguarded the identities of the three participants to capture meaningful data related to voluntary employee turnover.

### **Ethical Research**

Before data collection, researchers should meet various ethical requirements. Researchers must acquire approval from Walden University's IRB to start data collection. Martino and Schormans (2018) asserted that the IRB protects human subjects in the research process. The IRB approval number for this study is 06-25-19-0736080. In addition to the Walden University IRB approval, researchers should request permission from the prospective organization and participants to join the research study. Each participant who meets the eligibility criteria must give written consent to participate in the study (Rostami, Ashcroft, & Tully, 2018; Schmidt, Warns, Hellmer, Ulrich, & Hewig, 2018a). The informed consent form outlines the scope and purpose of the research study, the interview process, the benefits and risks, and the data protection requirements (Karbawang et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). The informed consent form states that participation

in a research study is voluntary (Colledge, De Massoungnes, & Elger, 2018; Yin, 2018). I provided each participant in the study an informed consent form with Walden University's IRB approval number before beginning data collection.

Knepp (2018) acknowledged that the informed consent form explains the withdrawal process. Participants may accept or reject an invitation to participate in a research study (Dadzie, Runeson, Ding, & Bondinuba, 2018). Participants joining a study may withdraw at any time without penalty (Singh, 2018). Participants may notify the researcher in-person, via phone, email, or other means to eject from the study (Firmino-Machado et al., 2017). I provided eligible participants with an informed consent form explaining their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Researchers use incentives, such as thank you cards, for acknowledging participants for joining a research study (McGinn, 2018; Yin, 2018). Blades, Stritzke, Page, and Brown (2018) explained that incentives might affect a participant's responses to the interview questions. To avoid the perception of coercing participants to join a research study, Kramer, Tinschert, Scholz, Fleisch, and Kowatsch (2019) recommended that researchers not provide incentives to participants. I did not offer incentives, payments, or thank you gifts to any participants for participating in the research study because incentives might coerce participants to join this study.

Researchers should abide by the data protection guidelines to safeguard the research data (Satinsky, Driessens, Crepaz-Keay, & Kousoulis, 2018). Mostert, Bredenoord, Biesart, and van Delden (2016) and Naum (2014) recommended that researchers use simple data management practices to establish a generic naming

convention to protect the privacy of both the participants and the organization. I will maintain the raw data in a password-protected safe for 5 years to protect the rights of participants and the organization as required by the university. After 5 years, I will destroy the research data to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the stakeholders who participated in this study.

Researchers should protect the participants' and the organization's privacy and confidentiality (Dhakal, 2018; Yin, 2018). Morton (2018) found that researchers use pseudonyms to disguise the identities of the participants and the organization in the study. I assigned pseudonyms, such as P1, P2, and P3, in the research findings to keep the study's participants' identities confidential. The participants also received a copy of the research findings depicting the outcome of the study.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

In qualitative studies, the researcher serves as the primary data collection instrument (Yin, 2018). Researchers function as the main data collection instrument to ask participants pertinent questions related to the research topic (Xu & Storr, 2012). As the primary data collection instrument, researchers explore the intricacies of social issues and relationships through direct contact with the research participants (Kaczynski, Salmona, & Smith, 2014). I served as the primary data collection instrument in this study. In case studies, Yin (2018) confirmed that conversational interviews are one of the most effective data collection processes. Mselle, Kohi, and Dol (2018) specified that semistructured interviews allow the researcher to ask interviewees open-ended and probing questions to obtain a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon.

Researchers use semistructured interviews to corroborate the research findings (Walker, Neoh, Gilkes, & Rayment, 2018). I used semistructured interviews to ask open-ended questions to understand the participants' perspectives about the research topic and showed public school leaders potential strategies for dealing with voluntary employee turnover.

When conducting semistructured interviews, Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley, and McKenna (2017) implied that researchers use an interview protocol to standardize the data collection process. Researchers should develop an effective interview protocol that aligns the research question with the interview questions (Yeong, Ismail, Ismail, & Hamzah, 2018). Platt and Skowron (2013) and Yin (2018) found that researchers apply the interview protocol to semistructured interviews to ask participants the same interview questions to enhance the reliability in the research study. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to standardize the semistructured interviews in this study. I included interview questions (see Appendix B) in the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to ensure alignment with the overarching research question.

Researchers use secondary data, such as organizational documents and archival records, in addition to semistructured interviews to enhance the reliability and validity of the research data and findings (Yin, 2018). Fischer and Van de Bovenkamp (2019) mentioned that researchers use methodological triangulation to examine all credible information related to the research phenomenon to increase the quality of the data collection. Pepina et al. (2018) advised that triangulating the research data increases the reliability and validity of the research evidence. I conducted methodological triangulation

using the data obtained from conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational documentation and archival records to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection and analysis.

Researchers also use member checking to validate the interview transcriptions for accuracy (Madill & Sullivan, 2018). Iivari (2018) specified that researchers use member checking to share interpreted interview data with participants for validation. Member checking improves the reliability and validity of the research results (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). I also performed member checking to increase the validity and reliability of this study by interpreting the participants' responses to the interview questions, giving these interpretations back to the participants, and asking participants to verify the accuracy of my translations of their responses.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Researchers use semistructured interviews to collect rich and thick data related to the research question through shared knowledge from the research participants (Nowak & Haynes, 2018). Yin (2018) emphasized that researchers use semistructured interviews to ask participants predetermined questions in a conversational manner. Brown and Danaher (2019) showed that semistructured interviews increase authentic dialogical interactions between the researcher and participants. Researchers use open-ended questions to encourage the study participants to elaborate on their experiences (Brubacher, Powell, Skouteris, & Guadagno, 2015; Tran et al., 2016). Kurniawan, Putri, and Hartono (2018) noted that open-ended questions allow the interviewees to answer the overarching research question and interview questions in their own words. Researchers may use

mobile devices to video and audio record the collected data (Hribar, Dvojmoč, & Markelj, 2018). Guest et al. (2017) and Xue, Zhao, and Cai (2017) recommended that researchers use recording devices in interviews to transcribe the interviewee's rendition of events verbatim. Using the interview protocol (see Appendix A), iPhone FaceTime application, and audio recording devices, I conducted in-depth semistructured interviews, asked open-ended questions (see Appendix B), and collected verbatim thematic data on voluntary employee turnover.

Researchers also use document analysis to collect data and discover new insights about the research phenomenon (Siegener, Hagerman, & Kozak, 2018). Organizational documents may provide thick data pertinent to understanding the research topic (Bowen, 2009). Atchan, Davis, and Foureur (2017) argued that organizational documents provide historical insights that help researchers better understand the research problem. Yin (2018) asserted that researchers use organizational records as secondary data to triangulate the collected data and increase the credibility of the study. The names and types of organizational data available through public websites and internal resources were unknown until I conducted this study. Participants shared information that was publicly available within the scope and authority of their position. I reviewed and analyzed documents on employee turnover data from 2014-2017. Other sources of secondary data included the school mission and belief statements, employee handbooks, compensation and benefits programs, and other documents related to the overarching research question, which provided pertinent data to explore voluntary employee turnover. The goal was to

use methodological triangulation of the data collected from conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational documents.

There are many advantages and disadvantages to using semistructured interviews and organizational documents in data collection. The benefits of using semistructured interviews include that they may generate rich and thick data (Nowak & Haynes, 2018). Lo Iacono, Symonds, and Brown (2016) discovered that internet video calls using FaceTime is a viable alternative to face-to-face interaction and works well as a complementary data collection method for qualitative interviews. Using FaceTime for face-to-face online interviews allow researchers to communicate in a cost-effective manner across time and space, increasing the variety of the sample size (Weller, 2017). Brubacher et al. (2015) and Yin (2018) argued that using semistructured interviews helps researchers elicit narrative data from the study participants. Lo Iacono et al. noted that researchers using FaceTime encourage participants to communicate openly and honestly during semistructured interviews. Researchers use open-ended questions to capture an interviewee's sense of reality about the research phenomenon (Mitchell et al., 2018). Brubacher et al. and Weller et al. (2018) stated that open-ended questions encourage participants to disclose specific aspects of the research phenomenon freely. Nowak and Haynes (2018) noted that the study participants might respond informatively to open-ended questions exposing their subjective experiences. As a data collection technique, I used FaceTime coupled with an audio recording device to conduct semistructured interviews with three public school leaders. I also used open-ended questions, which

encouraged the participants to elaborate on the interview questions without any hesitations, to better explore the research phenomenon.

The disadvantages of using semistructured interviews may negatively influence the research findings. Lo Iacono et al. (2016) implied that FaceTime might affect the rapport between the researcher and the participants. Participants may provide limited responses to the interview questions or digress from the research topic (Weller, 2017). Ilyushin and Azbel (2017) and Yin (2018) warned that the relationship between the researcher and the participants might also affect the outcome of the interviews. Therefore, researchers should remain engaged during interviews to collect relevant research data. Researchers should develop self-reflexivity to minimize unintentional methodological threats such as researcher's bias (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, Pawa, Robson, and Hull (2017) specified that researchers might alter their interview techniques between interviewees to gather meaningful data. Saunders et al. (2015) cautioned that the way researchers ask participants questions might cause participants to misinterpret questions or inject bias in their responses. I conducted semistructured interviews using FaceTime to develop a strong working relationship with the research participants. I performed member checking to validate the interpreted data in this study.

Mok, Nabulsi, and Chowdhury (2018) argued that an advantage of reviewing organizational documents might provide additional information relevant to the case study. The benefits of document reviews may help researchers collect in-depth data, such as mission statements, capability reports, operating procedures and policies, employee handbooks, and other institutional documents, relating to the research topic to enhance



the credibility in the findings (Liang et al., 2018; Siegner et al., 2018). Morton (2018) stated that document reviews are a useful way researchers discover themes and patterns in the data collection. As a data collection technique, I reviewed and analyzed organizational documents on employee turnover data from 2014-2017. Participants shared publicly available information that they have the authority to share, which provided relevant research data from a professional perspective. Other sources of secondary data included the school mission and belief statements, employee handbooks, employee turnover data from 2014-2017, compensation and benefits programs, and other documents related to the overarching research question. The document reviews produced essential data and key themes relevant to this case study.

The disadvantages of document reviews may provide researchers information from various sources causing a conflict in data interpretation (Panteliadis, Vassilyadi, Fehlert, & Hagel, 2017). Penner, Anagnostou, Andoni, and Ungar (2018) argued that researchers formulate different assumptions from document reviews. Wood, Burke, Byrne, Enache, and Morrison (2016) revealed that flexibility in data collection might decrease the reliability and validity of the research findings. Using outdated organizational documents may threaten the accuracy and reliability of the results (Dadzie et al., 2018). Bowen (2009) suggested that researchers assess the completeness of all organizational documents because incomplete documents may lack important details that affect the researcher's interpretation of the secondary data. Hadi and Jose Closs (2016) warned researchers to consider the subjectivity and personal bias of the authors of organizational documents. Although there are numerous disadvantages to reviewing

educational institutions' documents as a data collection technique, the advantages of using document reviews as a secondary data source to triangulate the collected data outweighed the limitations. I reviewed organizational documents as a secondary data source to increase the credibility in this study's findings.

Researchers use pilot studies as a dress rehearsal to test the integrity of the interview protocol and refine the data collection techniques before conducting larger studies (Doody & Doody, 2015; Hassan, Schattner, & Mazza, 2006; Lancaster, 2015). Saunders et al. (2015) and Schwind et al. (2017) suggested that researchers ask experts to review the suitability of interview questions and make suggestions to establish content validity before executing the study. After IRB approval, a pilot study was unwarranted because I conducted a single case study exercise during my coursework at Walden University. Before conducting the exercise, Walden University's faculty evaluated the interview questions and research design in my case study to check the validity and clarity of the research instruments to establish valid interview questions, which minimized any ambiguities or redundancies in the data collection plan. The case study exercise provided me the experience to conduct semistructured interviews using an interview protocol and audio recording devices. An interview protocol ensured each participant received the same interview and follow-up questions, which guaranteed consistency in the data collection techniques. I used an audio recordings device to produce a reliable account of the participants' responses, transcribed a verbatim account of the participants' responses to the interview questions, gave participants my interpretations of their responses, asked

them to verify the accuracy of my interpretations, and eliminated researcher's bias from the transcribed interview data.

Researchers use member checking to allow the study participants the opportunity to correct and approve the interpreted data and results (Caretta, 2015; Harvey, 2015). Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, and Rees (2017) claimed that member checking increases the validity and credibility of the data interpretation and analysis. Smith and McGannon (2018) contended that follow-up member checking might help researchers reach data saturation by enhancing the rigor in the research study. I conducted the initial interviews, interpreted what the participants shared, and gave my interpretations of the interview data to the participants for validation. Participants member checked and validated the interpreted interview transcripts for no more than 7 days. Member checking provided participants the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of their interview responses. Participants validated the interview data for me to begin data analysis.

Hall and Rist (1999) argued that triangulating interviews, observations, and document analysis enhances the research. Triangulating semistructured interviews, organizational documents, and archival records strengthened the validity of the research (Yin, 2018). I triangulated the semistructured interviews, organizational documents, and archival records to further enhance the validity of this study.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Data organization techniques allow researchers to organize, log, code, and catalog data throughout the data collection process. Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) emphasized that researchers arrange their field notes by themes to quickly retrieve the interview data.

Researchers may create a case study database to organize and store their field notes, reports, and other raw data in an orderly manner (Yin, 2018). Salma (2018) noted that researchers who organize their collected data conduct a rigorous research study. I used data organization systems, such as research logs, recording devices, external hard drives, and cataloging and labeling systems, to organize the data for this study. I stored the research logs, electronic transcripts, and recordings in a specific folder on a password-protected external hard drive. I converted the electronic organizational documents into a portable document format file and stored the file in an assigned folder on a password-protected external hard drive. Performing these data organization techniques maintained the integrity and validity of the collected data for this study. In addition, these procedures allowed me to organize and store the research evidence securely for easy retrieval.

Researchers use research logs to document the research process (Hort, 2017). Friesner and Hart (2005) noted that using logs, journals, and summaries allow researchers to catalog interview data logically. By documenting and cataloging significant evidence in the research logs, researchers may compare and contrast the interpreted data to make sound conclusions about the research topic (Zhou, Huang, & Yuan, 2018). I used research logs and recording devices to record the interview data so that I may accurately interpret the data and reach sound conclusions.

Bashan and Holsblat (2017) stated that reflective journals are useful tools that help researchers collect and record the participants' experiences accurately. Kheng (2017) proclaimed that maintaining a reflective journal enhances a researcher's critical thinking skills to identify themes and patterns in the research data. Taliaferro and Diesel (2016)

and Zori (2016) stated that documenting the evidence creates transparency in the research process. I maintained a reflective journal to document the research process noting themes and patterns in the data, my opinions and insights during the document reviews, and the effectiveness of the interview protocol. I observed and documented the participants' nonverbal communication to collect additional data relating to the research topic. Using a reflective journal created transparency throughout the data collection process.

Chowdhury (2015) implied that coding is an iterative process. Labels and codes help researchers protect the identity of the study participants (Morton, 2018; Yin, 2018). Dhakal (2018) recommended that researchers assign a specific code to each participant to maintain their confidentiality and privacy. Researchers use pseudonyms as designated codes for the participants. I assigned each participant a designated code, such as P1, P2, and P3. I also used the official name of the organizational document, such as school mission and belief statements, employee handbooks, employee turnover data from 2014-2017, compensation and benefits programs, and other documents, related to the overarching research question. Documentary data produced essential information and key themes relevant to this case study.

Belotto (2018) implied that researchers create a coding scheme before collecting data to label and organize the interviewees' responses to each interview question. Vaughn and Turner (2016) determined that researchers should use thematic coding to categorize each interview question. Researchers use NVivo 12 software to code large amounts of qualitative data by identifying themes in the interview transcripts (Pawa et al., 2017; Zamawe, 2015). Freitas et al. (2017) determined that computer-assisted qualitative data

analysis software (CAQDAS) aids researchers in data management, data interpretations, content searches and analyses, data mapping, and rigor. I used NVivo 12 software to code, categorize, organize, map, and analyze data collected from multiple sources, such as interview transcripts, document reviews, field notes, research logs, and journals. Using NVivo 12 software helped improve the data management, organization, analysis, interpretation, and retrieval of the collected data in research studies, as recommended by several researchers (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & de Eyto, 2018).

Data protection regulations dictate the use, access, and storage limitations of any research data (Dinu, 2018; Hribar et al., 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2018). Begum, Huang, and Lau (2015) revealed that data protection laws outline comprehensive safeguards for processing and storing personal data for research purposes. Walden University requires that all raw data, including external storage devices remain stored securely in a password-protected safe for 5 years. I have stored all the research evidence and external storage devices in a password-protected safe and will maintain the data for 5 years. After 5 years, I will destroy all the research data and storage devices as required by the university.

### **Data Analysis**

Moon (2019) indicated that triangulation enhances the breadth, depth, and richness of the research. Researchers use multiple methods, such as methodological triangulation, to collect and confirm the research data and findings (Fischer & Van de Bovenkamp, 2019; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Methodological triangulation is applying various sources of evidence to increase the validity and credibility of the data (Drouin, Stewart, & Van Gorder, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Employing

methodological triangulation to the collected data provides researchers different perspectives in exploring a research phenomenon (Joslin & Müller, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). For instance, when a researcher triangulates data from semistructured interviews and document reviews, the researcher develops convergent evidence. Yin (2018) explained that converging evidence strengthens the construct validity in case studies. Methodological triangulation is an appropriate data analysis process that allows researchers to increase the confidence in case studies and to understand multiple realities from different perspectives. I triangulated evidence from various data sources, such as interview data, organizational documents, and archival records, using methodological triangulation. Applying methodological triangulation, the goal was to confirm the validity, credibility, and authenticity of the data, interpretations, and analysis. Comparing the member checked data with the information reviewed in the organizational documents was essential to verify the alignment of data.

Yin (2018) stated that researchers use five sequential steps in the data analysis process (a) compile, (b) disassemble, (c) reassemble, (d) clarify, and (e) conclude. First, compiled and organized data to search for patterns and themes in different interview transcripts. Fish, Prichard, Ettridge, Grunfeld, and Wilson (2019) recommended that researchers use qualitative data analysis software, such as NVivo 12 software, to code and analyze the research evidence. NVivo 12 software organize, code and categorize large amounts of data quickly (Robins & Eisen, 2017; Zamawe, 2015). Second, disassembled the data into fragments and assigned codes to pertinent data. Third, reassembled the data into sequence of groups and reorganized the data by themes. Fourth,

I used thematic analysis to interpret the data. Fifth, formulated conclusions and recommendations from the interpreted data.

Mselle et al. (2018) and Walker et al. (2018) indicated that thematic analysis helps qualitative researchers identify patterns and themes in the data to answer the research question. NVivo 12 software groups codes, map themes, and identify relationships between themes in the data sets (Robins & Eisen, 2017). Using NVivo 12 software in the data analysis process, I organized the research data by common themes, codes, and interpreted the raw data from the interview data and documentation reviews. Iivari (2018) stated that researchers use member checking to validate the interpreted data with the participants using thematic analysis. Member checking allows the research participants to check the interpreted data for accuracy.

Furthermore, Yin (2018) asserted that triangulating data enhances the richness and depth of the data. Researchers use methodological triangulation to substantiate the validity of multiple sources of collected data from semistructured interviews and document reviews (Drouin et al., 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using methodological triangulation, I triangulated data from semistructured interviews, document reviews, and archival records to corroborate the findings.

Lastly, Yin (2018) suggested developing conclusions and recommendations from the findings to answer the overarching research question. I compiled and assembled the collected data, disassembled the data by codes, reassembled the data by themes to understand the research phenomenon, used thematic analysis to interpret the interview



data, and formulated conclusions from the research results. These five sequential steps in the data analysis process aided in exploring the research phenomenon.

Researchers use CAQDAS as a data management and analytical tool (Silver & Rivers, 2016). Humble (2015) noted that researchers use CAQDAS to code, identify themes, analyze data, take notes, and create visual presentations of the collected data and research findings. Researchers also use CAQDAS to compile data, and organize and analyze key themes in the data collection (Antoniadou, 2017). Robins and Eisen (2017) stated that researchers use NVivo 12 software to organize, code, analyze, and categorize raw data in research. Woods et al. (2016) mentioned that researchers use CAQDAS to engage in reflexivity by helping researchers visualize the research data and findings. In addition, Thomas (2017) proclaimed that member checking helps researchers validate emerging themes identified by CAQDAS. Using data driven thematic coding, researchers may develop a codebook to organize themes from the interview transcripts into data categories (Rodik & Primorac, 2015; Saunders et al., 2015; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Researchers may export the interview transcriptions, organizational documents and records, and other relevant data into NVivo 12 software to categorize the data collection (Maher et al., 2018). I exported the collected data into NVivo 12 software to begin coding and categorizing the key themes into data categories.

Mapping the relationship between several codes helps researchers determine key themes in the research data to answer the overarching research question (Yin, 2018) and to correlate key themes in the literature and the conceptual framework (Branson, 2019). Researchers assign codes to data categories focusing on key themes in the research data

(Pawa et al., 2017). Belotto (2018) and Percy, Kostere, and Kostere (2015) advised that coding data with labels help researchers correlate key themes into data categories. By conducting a frequency analysis, researchers determine the statistical occurrence of thematic codes in each data category (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Leitch, Oktay, and Meehan (2016) and Maher et al. (2018) indicated that CAQDAS allows researchers to maintain a digital audit trail to provide the public access to code and analyze data, which improves the rigor in the research study. I used the data coding feature in NVivo 12 software to identify key themes into data categories, which enhanced the trustworthiness in this study. Miah, Shen, Lamp, Kerr, and Gammack (2019) claimed that the literature outlines key themes in the conceptual framework. Green (2014) and Murínová (2018) asserted that the conceptual framework provides a link to previous literature, the methodology, and the outcome of a study. I correlated the key themes with the literature and conceptual framework for this study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

In qualitative studies, researchers determine reliability and validity by addressing dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007). Researchers use these four verification strategies to establish trustworthiness and rigor in case studies research (FitzPatrick, 2019; Forero et al., 2018; Morse, 2015). Lewis (2015) stated that reliability and validity are essential to judging the quality of research. By employing similar criteria to authenticate data interpretations, researchers enhance the dependability in qualitative research (FitzPatrick, 2019; Schwandt et al., 2007; Yin, 2018). In this study, the goal was

to address dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability to increase the reliability and validity of the data collection and analysis.

### **Reliability**

Reliability means that there is enough data to replicate the research using the same data collection techniques to produce consistent results (Dikko, 2016; Karasakaloğlu, 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015). Houghton et al. (2013) argued that researchers judge the soundness of research to assess the reliability in the finding. Researchers use the interview protocol to achieve commonality in executing data collection and enhance the reliability of the research study (Platt & Skowron, 2013; Yeong et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). I used the interview protocol to ask participants the same interview questions ensuring the consistency in the data collection.

Qualitative researchers incorporate methodological strategies, such as member checking, to improve the trustworthiness of the research findings (FitzPatrick, 2019; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Varpio et al. (2017) revealed that member checking may increase the dependability in the research finding because participants authenticate the data interpretations. Caretta (2015) noted that member checking validates the data analysis and strengthens the study's results. By addressing dependability in the research, researchers maintain the study's reliability (Harvey, 2015). I clarified the interview questions ensuring the participants understood each question to minimize confusion. I transcribed the participants' responses to the interview questions, gave participants my interpretations of their responses to the interview questions, and asked them to verify the accuracy of my interpretations. Researchers establish dependability through accurate data

recordings (Lewis, 2015). Amirpour, Dadfar, Charvadeh, and Birashk (2018) asserted that audio recordings produce a verbatim account of the research phenomenon free from error, bias, and false assumptions. Guest et al. (2017) noted that researchers record interview data to interpret, transcribe, member check, and analyze the data collection. I used audio recording devices to produce a reliable account of the participants' responses, reducing bias in the data interpretation and analysis in this study.

### **Validity**

Validity refers to the correctness of data interpretation and analysis (Kural, 2018). Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) stated that validity entails developing a theoretical explanation from the research findings to corroborate the data. The three criteria of validity are credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt et al., 2007). Morse (2015) and Yin (2018) argued that these criteria enhance rigor in qualitative research.

**Credibility.** Credibility is a match between the participants' reality and the researcher's interpretation (Denzin, 2017). Researchers conduct member checking to allow participants to confirm and correct the interview data, observations, and notes (Madill & Sullivan, 2018; Moniz et al., 2016; Thomas, 2017). Kornbluh (2015) indicated that member checking enhances the credibility in qualitative research. Smith and McGannon (2018) claimed that member checking produces credible results, which validate the research findings. I interpreted and analyzed the interview and documentary data. I used member checking to allow participants to correct and confirm the interpreted

interview and documentary data for accuracy, enhancing the credibility of the data interpretations.

To reduce researcher's bias and increase credibility, researchers triangulate multiple sources of research data, analysis, and interpretations (Birt et al., 2016; FitzPatrick, 2019). Yin (2018) stated that triangulation adds depth, breadth, and richness to research. Marshall and Rossman (2016) recommended triangulating several different data sources, such as interviews, company documents, and observations, to ensure the credibility of the research data. Using methodological triangulation may allow researchers to think objectively and without prejudice (Yin, 2018). Conducting methodological triangulation with the semistructured interviews, archival records, and document reviews confirmed the validity, credibility, and authenticity of the research data, interpretations, and analysis. The documentary data included school mission and belief statements, employee handbooks, employee turnover data from 2014-2017, and compensation and benefits programs pertinent to the overarching research question. Comparing member checked interview transcriptions with organizational documents relating to the overarching research question ensured the alignment of information.

**Transferability.** Transferability refers to the transfer of research findings from one research study to inform other studies (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015; Pound & Ritskes-Hoitinga, 2018). Forero et al. (2018) mentioned that researchers transfer the study's results to other contexts or settings. Researchers should provide readers full descriptions of the research questions, design, background, interpretations, and population enabling readers to assess the transferability of the research findings (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Morse (2015) posited that thick data helps researchers evaluate a theory and conclusion. I provided future researchers and readers of this study thick descriptions of my research design, questions, population, background, and interpretations to provide them the opportunity to judge the transferability of my study to other settings or studies. I identified future research significance in the research findings.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability is the degree in which researchers collect data focusing on the participants' perspectives in an unbiased manner (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Wickham, Reed, & Williamson, 2015). Cope (2014) noted that confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the research data represent an accurate interpretation of the participants' responses, not the researcher's biases. Palmatier and Rovner (2015) indicated that researchers validate the accuracy of the research findings to establish confirmability. Yin (2018) specified that confirmability occurs after researchers establish dependability, credibility, and transferability. I conducted member checking by attentively listening to each participants' interview response and documented my opinions, viewpoints, and biases. I interpreted the interview responses, determined a connection between the collected data and findings, and used the literature to increase confirmability in the research results.

Qualitative researchers use triangulation to establish validity and confirmability in cases studies (Yin, 2018). Researchers enhance confirmability by triangulating multiple sources of evidence to make accurate conclusions (Cho & Trent, 2006; FitzPatrick, 2019). Kern (2018) stated that methodological triangulation increases the validity of the

research findings. To improve confirmability, I used methodological triangulation and member checking in this study.

Data saturation is when additional collection and analysis of data yield little research value (Tran et al., 2016). Hancock, Amankwaa, Revell, and Mueller (2016) implied that qualitative researchers continue data collection, such as additional semistructured interviews, until reaching data saturation. Researchers achieve data saturation when the redundancy of information suggests no new themes and further coding is not feasible (Lowe et al., 2018). Fusch and Ness (2015) implied that data saturation improves the credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the research findings. I collected and analyzed the research data until no new themes and codes existed in the data to add new insights to this study. Interviews continued until achieving data saturation. Member checking and triangulation of primary and secondary data sources confirmed the alignment of data.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 contained a discussion of the purpose statement and the role of the researcher throughout the research process. The remaining subsections included the descriptions of the participants, the research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and technique, data organization technique, data analysis, reliability and validity, as well as the transition and summary. Section 3 comprises the introduction, presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and the conclusion.

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

In this section, I provide an overview of the purpose of the study; state the research question; and present the findings, including the themes identified from the semistructured interviews. I also incorporate the application to professional practice and the implications for social change as well as suggest recommendations for action and further research. This section ends with reflections on my experiences, a summary, and conclusions.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. I conducted semistructured interviews with three leaders from one public school who possessed at least 2 years of successful experience in using strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Other sources of data included the school mission and belief statements, employee handbooks, employee turnover data from 2014-2017, and human resources policies related to voluntary employee turnover. Analysis of the study participants' responses and organizational documents revealed the following three emerging themes, which are (a) building a collaborative and supportive work environment; (b) creating work motivation; and (c) implementing incentives, rewards, and professional development.

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

The overarching research question for this qualitative single case study was: What strategies do public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover? To answer



the overarching research question, I conducted semistructured interviews with three public school leaders from one public school who successfully recruited and retained employees to reduce voluntary employee turnover. I also reviewed organizational documents. After analyzing and coding the interview data, I discovered three primary themes, which will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent subsections. In addition, I conducted reviews of publicly available data to achieve methodological triangulation in this study. Table 1 contains the public school leaders' demographic characteristics. The three research participants possessed over 80 years of combined experience working in and leading an educational institution.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Public School Leaders*

Item		Quantity
Gender	Female	3
	Male	0
Academic degree	Doctorate's	0
	Master's	3
Age	40-49	1
	50-59	1
	60-69	1
Years of experience	20-29	2
	30-39	1
Years of experience in current school	1-5	0
	6-10	3

The three themes that emerged from conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational documentation and artifacts were (a) building a collaborative and supportive work environment; (b) creating work motivation; and (c) implementing incentives, rewards, and professional development. The three study participants provided

relevant and consistent responses to the seven interview questions, which aided in conducting member checking and achieving data saturation. In the findings, I discuss the correlation and linkage of the key themes in the interview and organizational documents with the literature and conceptual framework of the expectancy theory (see Vroom, 1964).

### **Theme 1: Building a Collaborative and Supportive Work Environment**

The first theme that emerged from data analysis was building a collaborative and supportive work environment. P1 commented that a collaborative work environment encompassing team-building activities reduces voluntary employee turnover. In addition, P1 mentioned the importance of incorporating fun into the workplace to encourage teamwork and to increase employee retention. P1 stated that “one of the fun things we [leaders] do to build that collegial, collaborative environment is every year we [leaders] have a fun theme for our school.” Reeves, Pun, and Chung (2017) suggested that organizational leaders prioritize collaboration and teamwork to minimize employee turnover. P2 stated that a strategy to reduce voluntary employee turnover is “making sure that there is a balance between work and fun at school with teachers.” Becker and Tews (2016) advised that creating a fun work environment positively affects work outcomes and team-bonding and decreases employee turnover.

P1 and P3 noted that team-building activities, such as dressing up in theme-based attire for special events, reinforce teamwork and collaboration and reduce employee turnover. P3 stated that,

How we [leaders] try to build school culture is each year we [leaders] have a theme we [leaders] use . . . it [team-building activities] all ties into student achievement goals that we [leaders] have for the year. But it [team-building activities] also makes a lot of fun in the workplace . . . make it [team-building activities] fun to come to work and so while we [leaders] are highly focused on student achievement; we [leaders] also make it [team-building activities] fun.

Zhang, Huang, Liu, Yan, and Li (2016) stated that incorporating fun into the workplace leads to improved work collaboration, teamwork, and performance.

Reina, Rogers, Peterson, Byron, and Hom (2018) found that capacity-building strategies, such as team-building, networking opportunities, and peer learning, generate employee motivation and reduce voluntary employee turnover. Capacity-building is the process in which employees and the organization obtain skills, knowledge, resources, and training to improve the organization (Reina et al., 2018). Pandey, Schulz, and Camp (2018) announced that supportive leaders provide their employees' work-related resources to execute the organization's goals. P1 stated that,

It is very important to ensure that teachers have the materials and resources they [employees] need in their [employees] classrooms to teach . . . to provide differentiated instructions for students . . . if they [employees] need something, I am going to ensure that they [employees] have it [resources].

P2 explained that leaders should provide a relaxed school culture for employees to work, which increases employees' motivation and performance and reduces employee turnover. P2 stated that the single most crucial employee retention strategy is "the support

from the administration, in the areas of curriculum, supporting teachers, and specifically discipline.” In addition, P2 commented that school employees want to feel supported by a robust parent-teacher association. Sun and Wang (2017) asserted that organizational leaders create a collaborative work environment that facilitates positive social support between leaders, employees, and the organization, which decreases employee turnover.

P3 stressed the importance of creating a school culture where employees feel a sense of community to reduce employee turnover. P3 stated that “teachers want to stay . . . and be a part of a community.” Wang and Brower (2019) specified that a supportive work environment is an essential factor in establishing a community-oriented organization. Organizations create a supportive work environment to increase their employees’ valence and to decrease employee turnover (Chopra, 2019). When leaders develop a diverse and inclusive work community, Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez (2018) indicated that employees feel more accepted at work, which boosts collaboration, teamwork, performance outcomes, and retention.

In addition, P3 indicated the importance of a healthy employer-employee relationship to decrease voluntary employee turnover. P3 provided an example of the effect of creating an inclusive work environment in which leaders and employees work as a team to achieve the school’s strategic goals. When leaders support their employees, a caring relationship manifests that improves the work environment and employees’ organizational commitment and reduces employee turnover (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Vermooten, Boonzaier, & Kidd, 2019). P3 reported that leaders focus on relationship-building activities to establish open communication with their staff, which makes

collaboration easier. Furthermore, P3 stated that “the biggest things that we [leaders] focus on have to do with developing relationships with the staff members that work for us [leaders] so that we [leaders] have open communication.” Atouba (2018) argued that leaders use effective communication strategies between work teams to increase collaboration and enhance employee performance.

According to P3, when employees collaborate with an evaluator, the evaluators’ positive feedback corrects the employees’ performance and makes them feel supported. P3 noted that “our teacher evaluation system has administrators spending more time in the classrooms . . . evaluators provide a lot more feedback . . . commendations and then recommendations for improvement.” In addition, P3 stated that,

Giving a lot of feedback that was overwhelmingly positive because of all the good things I saw builds a lot of trust between us [employees and leaders]. And they [employees] were able to come to me when they [employees] did have concerns, or there were frustrations with students or kind of academic standards . . . They [employees] felt supported and felt we [employees and leaders] were in it [achieving academic standards] together.

Kurniawaty, Mansyur Ramly, and Ramlawati (2019) found that a facilitative work environment influences greater collaboration and commitment between leaders and employees, which reduces employee turnover. In addition, Torres (2016) indicated that a lack of support and trust are antecedents of voluntary employee turnover. When leaders develop a supportive relationship with their employees, Bilal, Shahjehan, and Shah (2018) emphasized that employees feel more confident in the work environment, which

encourages them to remain in the organization. P3 noted that the vast majority of veteran teachers stayed in the organization for the 2019-2020 school year. Popli and Rizvi (2016) proclaimed that employee-focused support positively affects work outcomes and turnover intentions.

I reviewed physical and archival documents to gather additional data to conduct methodological triangulation. In my examination of the public websites of the school and district, I discovered statements such as, “the mission of the staff is to facilitate a safe and supportive environment . . . and a safe and physically comfortable environment promotes student learning.” I also found the following comment: “communication with internal and external audiences is a priority.” I discovered that the school’s objective is for leaders and employees “to work together and support teaching and learning.” I found the following statements: “our [leaders and employees] goals throughout the year support student learning . . . The school council and school leaders collaborate to accomplish these goals.” The contents of these organizational documents are consistent with all three participants’ statements, which noted that a positive work environment improves collaboration and decreases voluntary employee turnover.

I reviewed archival records of the school’s employee turnover data and found consistency between the publicly available information and the three participants’ statements. The school ranks in the top 1% (approximately 60 out of 1,235) of elementary schools in the state of Georgia in terms of employee retention (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). On average, the student-teacher ratio is 17:1, which aligns with the national average (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a). Based on the student-

teacher ratio, the school has no annual employee turnover. In 2015, the school maintained a surplus of two school employees. Table 2 depicts the school's profile and employee turnover data from 2014-2017.

Table 2

*School Profile and Employee Turnover Data*

	Student enrollment	School employees	Student-teacher ratio	Employee turnover	Free/reduced lunch
2014	773	45	17	0	24%
2015	840	48	18	+2	20%
2016	816	48	17	0	18%
2017	793	46	17	0	19%

From "District directory and details," by National Center for Education Statistics, 2019

(<http://www.nces.ed.gov/ccd/>).

From "Georgia public school districts' enrollment data," by U.S. Department of Education, 2019a

(<https://www.ed.gov/>).

**Correlation to the literature.** The findings specified in Theme 1 aligned with the findings of Holme, Jabbar, Germain, and Dinning (2018) regarding the causes and patterns of employee turnover identified in schools. P1 explained that "collaborating and working together is imperative. We [leaders] have fostered that culture and it [collaborating] helps so that if something is great in one classroom, it [something] is going to be shared, so it [something] is great in all classrooms." P1's statement is consistent with the findings of Holme et al. in that instructional and leadership support, adequate resources, and sufficient human resources policies lead to a more collaborative work environment and productive employees.

Theme 1 resonated with the findings of Yenen (2019), contending that unstable work environments lead to higher employee turnover. P1 pointed out that "high-quality

teachers want to work in a high performing school in a professional environment.” P1’s statement confirmed Yenen’s and Lazaroiu’s (2015) findings in that employees prefer to work in highly effective organizations with a positive work environment. Theme 1 also aligns with Ahmad’s (2018) findings in that employee turnover reduces performance outcomes and increases the cost of recruiting new school employees, which places financial burdens on the school. P1 stated that “we [leaders] have a high retention on staff, our staff stays with us [leaders], for a long time. It [high retention] allows me not to have to spend funds on the orientation of new teachers or on developing new teachers.”

Other researchers (Akdemir, 2019; Ingersoll, May, & Collins, 2019; Jiang & Shen, 2018; Polat & Iskender, 2018; Puspita & Susanty, 2017; Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015; Sahu, Kumar, & Pathardikar, 2018; Salma, 2018) have indicated a need for additional research to explore the voluntary employee turnover phenomenon. These researchers suggested that an increase in the number of longitudinal studies may improve the validity and reliability of the findings and show the linkage between (a) the work environment, (b) supervisory support, (c) teamwork, and (d) employee turnover. Therefore, leaders could use the findings related to Theme 1 to gain a better understanding of the work environment and talent management strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover and employee turnover costs.

**Correlation to the conceptual framework.** The findings in Theme 1 correlate with Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory because the three components of work motivation influence employee motivation, job performance, and employee retention. Vroom contended that leaders reduce employee turnover by changing their employees’



effort-to-performance expectancy, performance-to-reward expectancy, and reward valence. In this study, I found that public school leaders' ability to build a collaborative and supportive work environment influence their employees' positive work efforts and job performance. Vroom indicated that there is a positive correlation between employees' work efforts, job performance, and work motivation. Employees are more productive when individuals collaborate in work teams (Vroom, 1964). Vroom emphasized that teamwork increases employees' ability to produce positive work outcomes. Vroom found that effective leaders provide their employees with sufficient work resources, adequate time to perform their duties, and a supportive work environment. Adjusting the work environment through supportive leadership practices enable leaders to enhance their employees' work performance and reduce voluntary employee turnover.

## **Theme 2: Creating Work Motivation**

The second theme that emerged from data analysis was creating work motivation through employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee recognition. From analyses of the interview data and organizational documents, I identified three subthemes associated with work motivation and employee turnover that includes employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee recognition. The three participants conveyed that increasing work motivation was necessary for leaders to reduce employee turnover in public schools.

**Employee engagement.** All three research participants agreed that employee engagement increases work motivation and organizational commitment and reduces employee turnover. P1 stated that “we [leaders] know about the teachers and their

[employees] families. We [leaders] engage with them [employees] and ask about their [employees] families. Tepper et al. (2018) specified that leaders create psychological attachments with their employees to yield higher work motivation, organizational commitment, and employee engagement, which reduces voluntary employee turnover. Tepper et al. found that the benefits of an engaged workforce are the employees' commitment to the organization and their colleagues, low employee turnover, and high work motivation and performance.

P2 and P3 stated that engaging and empowering employees, listening to employees' concerns, and providing a platform for employees to share their ideas help reduce employee turnover. In some instances, leaders may integrate their employees' insights into the school's instructional framework. P1 mentioned that leaders empowering employees to develop education policies and procedures motivates them to remain in the school. P1 stated that, "we [leaders] empower teachers . . . they [employees] have written common assessments, so we [leaders] have effective teaching in all classrooms." Weale, Wells, and Oakman (2019) found that empowering employees to make decisions leads to higher levels of employee engagement and motivation, which increase employees' organizational commitment and reduce employee turnover. By empowering employees to have a voice in their work, employees experience higher work motivation and lower turnover intentions.

Wan, Li, Zhou, and Shang (2018) stated that leaders should motivate their employees to integrate different work designs into their jobs, which increases job autonomy and engagement and reduces employee turnover. Malinowska, Tokarz, and

Wardzichowska (2018) asserted that job autonomy affects work motivation and engagement and employee turnover. Wan et al. found that leaders giving employees more freedom over their work creates higher levels of work motivation and engagement. Leaders could use these antecedents to generate higher levels of employee motivation and engagement and reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Cheche, Muathe, and Maina (2017) stated that employee engagement is a pivotal factor in work motivation, organizational commitment, and employee turnover. Organizational leaders alleviate people issues by emphasizing employee engagement and intrinsic motivators, such as commitment and shared goals, to accomplish work tasks and reduce high absenteeism (Bishwajit, Khumyu, & Boonyanurak, 2016; Shmailan, 2015). By offering intrinsic motivators, Nimon, Shuck, and Zigarmi (2016) implied that leaders cultivate an engaging workforce to generate high work performance in accomplishing shared goals. P1 stated that,

We [leaders] created an organization where the staff and teachers understand that the students belong to all of us [leaders and employees] . . . together we [leaders and employees] are responsible for the learning of all of the students . . . We [leaders] are apart of an organization that is engaged with other likeminded professionals.

By consistently engaging with employees, Downes, Kristof-Brown, Judge, and Darnold (2017) noted that organizational leaders succeed at motivating their employees to complete the organization's strategic goals and reducing turnover intentions. Yadav (2015) advised that employees expect transparency and open communication with their

leaders and colleagues to accomplish their job. Yadav found that organizations with effective communication strategies demonstrate more employee engagement and less employee turnover. Leaders should engage with their employees through weekly staff meetings to solidify the organization's objectives and performance goals, and to voice issues and concerns, and to reduce turnover intentions (Gamage & Jayatilake, 2019).

P2 reported that the school established a committee, which allows an employee to engage with district leaders about local school initiatives on behalf of the committee. P2 stated that "every couple of months, each school has a representative that meets with the superintendent of the school to ask questions at the district level on behalf of the local school." P2 mentioned that by creating the committee, their employees seem more motivated and engaged at work because district leaders listen to their concerns. Plaskoff (2017) argued that allowing employees to engage with senior leaders to highlight local school initiatives helps leaders generate more employee engagement and work motivation, which may reduce turnover intentions.

Tepayakul and Rinthaisong (2018) examined the linkage between employee engagement and motivation and voluntary employee turnover. Leaders use motivation and engagement tactics to encourage their employees to work towards the same performance goals and to commit to the organization's objectives (Endayani, Musadieq, & Afrianty, 2018). Tepayakul and Rinthaisong found that employee engagement strategies and agile performance management techniques have a positive effect on employee motivation, employee engagement, organizational commitment, and employee turnover. Pieters (2018) affirmed that motivated employees are more likely to become

socially engaged in the workplace and committed to the organization, which could help decrease employee turnover.

**Job satisfaction.** All three research participants agreed that job satisfaction increases work motivation and job performance and decreases employee turnover. P1 noted that leaders reduce their employees' workload to decrease burnout and job dissatisfaction and to improve their employees' motivation and reduce turnover intentions. P1 stated that to reduce burnout, dissatisfaction, and employee turnover, "we [leaders] do everything we [leaders] can to relieve teachers of clerical duties and tasks. They [employees] are not inundated with paperwork and forms." Liu and Lo (2018) emphasized that leaders should understand the effect of heavy workloads on burnout, work motivation, job satisfaction, employee turnover, and turnover costs. Job dissatisfaction causes high employee turnover, which is detrimental to the organization's success (Ali et al., 2018; Sheraz, Batool, & Adnan, 2019). In addition, Coetzee, Maree, and Smit (2019) found that a loss of motivated and talented employees creates additional human capital costs to the organization.

P2 mentioned the importance of improving employees' work motivation through job satisfaction. P2 stressed that employees' unhappiness increases employee turnover.

P2 noted that for several years, the school's staff turnover had been zero. P2 stated that,

When the transfer process comes to our county, we [leaders] look at how many teachers are requesting a transfer based on their [employees] unhappiness or their [employees] willingness to move to someplace else. And, for the most part over the years, we [leaders] have had no teacher turnover.

Matsumoto and Gopal (2019) revealed that job satisfaction is a predictor of employee turnover. Happier employees are likely to remain in the organization (Putra, 2019). In addition, P1 specified that leaders use the Transfer Program to obtain an opportunity to selectively recruit talented employees to fill limited vacant positions. P1 mentioned that “the Transfer Program is a district-level recruiting and retention strategy, which allows employees to transfer to other schools or districts if the employee feels unhappy in the current school.” Kumedzro (2018) advised that an organization’s size, academic standards, and geographical location affect the leaders’ ability to motivate and satisfy their employees. P2 commented that P2’s employees did not use the Transfer Program to transfer to another school or district. Jovita and Mangundjaya (2019) asserted that job satisfaction motivates employees to remain in the organization. Choi, Goh, Adam, and Tan (2016) noted that leaders’ work-related behaviors toward their employees also facilitate higher employee satisfaction levels and lower employee turnover. Clarke and Mahadi (2017) found that leaders increase their employees’ job satisfaction and work motivation to gain their commitment towards the job and the organization and reduce turnover intentions.

P3 reported that “we [leaders] provide teachers opportunities to be leaders within the school, which motivates our veteran teachers.” By offering employees leadership training, Muchiri, McMurray, Nkhoma, and Pham (2019) posited that leaders induce greater job satisfaction and internal motivation in their employees, which reduces employee turnover. Furthermore, Chen and Wu (2017) found that when leaders allow

their employees to assume leadership roles, their employees exhibit more job satisfaction and work motivation.

Grujicic, Jovicic-Bata, and Novakovic (2018) expressed that work motivation has a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Leaders should motivate their employees to facilitate their job satisfaction (Tentama & Pranungsari, 2016). Samanez and Medina (2017) found that employees' level of job satisfaction and work motivation may change with certain facets of their job and the organization. Breugh, Ritz, and Alfes (2018) postulated that unmotivated employees feel less inclined to complete their work on time and feel dissatisfied on the job, which increases employee turnover.

**Employee recognition.** All three participants agreed that employee recognition is essential in motivating and retaining employees in the organization. P1 explained that leaders motivate their employees by recognizing them for their successful work efforts. P1 mentioned a strategy to reduce employee turnover is that "we [leaders] provide time to celebrate both the employees and their [employees'] families' accomplishments and successes." Hetland, Hetland, Bakker, and Demerouti (2018) professed that workplace recognition provides employees a sense of accomplishment, which produces high work motivation and lowers employee turnover. In addition, P1 stated that "I praise them [employees] for the effective strategies and the successes that I observed." Bethoux (2016) implied that praise and recognition is an essential component of work motivation. Some employees may thrive on positive reinforcement, which invokes workplace motivation and reduces employee turnover.

P2 mentioned the importance of recognizing employees to raise their work motivation and reduce job dissatisfaction and employee turnover. P2 explained that, “we [leaders] acknowledge them [employees] individually as well as in front of the faculty.” Mehta, Dahl, and Zhu (2017) stated that leaders use social recognition to promote an organizational culture of recognition and acknowledgment and to generate more employee motivation. Stansfield and Wibberley (2017) explained that organizations implement peer recognition programs to allow internal work teams to publicly recognize their colleagues for their outstanding work contributions. P1 and P2 mentioned that employees need to feel valued. P2 stated that, “teachers want to feel like they are appreciated. Teacher recognition is recognizing those teachers who are putting forth their best effort.” Jeon and Wells (2018) advised that organizational leaders embrace employee recognition programs to motivate employees, treat employees as valued members of the organization, and decrease employee turnover.

P3 commented that employee recognition highlights employees’ work efforts, which decreases turnover intentions. P3 stated that, “teachers want to stay in an organization that values them [employees] and appreciate and recognize them [employees] for the work that they [employees] give.” By recognizing and acknowledging employees for their hardwork efforts, Barcalow (2016) indicated that leaders produce more loyal, motivated, and committed employees, which stay longer in the organization. P3 stated that, an effective strategy to reduce employee turnover is “valuing educators and employees . . . helping them [employees] see how big an impact they [employees] make on students and our community . . . celebrating the excellence



that they [employees] show on a daily basis.” Li, Wang, Gao, and You (2017) specified that leaders motivate their employees by expressing gratitude for their job performance and impact at work. Li et al. found that organizations use employee recognition as a morale building tool to celebrate their employees’ successes and to improve employee performance and reduce employee turnover.

Crookes, Outram, and Else (2018) implied that the primary problem with low employee work motivation in the organization is the lack of employee recognition and appreciation from leaders. Organizational leaders can successfully motivate their employees by showing them appreciation through recognitions for their hardwork (Bake, 2019; Gretton & Raine, 2017). Masri and Abubakr (2019) found that when leaders integrate employee recognition techniques into their management strategies, their employees’ work motivation and performance increase because employees feel valued and exert more work effort into their jobs. Creating formal recognition programs illuminates employees’ successful work behaviors and motivates other employees to emulate their effective job performance (Amoatema & Kyeremeh, 2016). Recognizing employees through intrinsic motivators increases their organizational commitment, which reduces employee turnover.

After reviewing physical artifacts and public websites, I discovered human resources policies related to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee recognition. I found that school leaders work diligently to build an engaging and reciprocal employer-employee relationship with their employees. In my examination of an employee handbook, I identified statements such as “. . . positive and engaging

interactions between members of a diverse community.” I found a comment that read as follows: “School employees frequently receive recognition for awards and achievements of various national, state, and local accomplishments.” Lee (2019) emphasized that employee recognition is a leadership and motivation tool. In addition, the three participants agreed that performance management strategies, such as positive feedback and job autonomy, increase work motivation, employee engagement, and job satisfaction and reduce employee turnover.

Shabane, Schultz, and van Hoek (2017) found that employee engagement strategies positively correlates with employee motivation, job satisfaction, employee recognition, and job autonomy, which reduces employee turnover. All three leaders reported that when they recognize and value their employees for their work efforts, their employees become more motivated, engaged, and satisfied at work, which decreases employee turnover. The contents of the public websites and employee handbooks are consistent with all three participants’ statements.

**Correlation to the literature.** The findings specified in Theme 2 aligned with the findings of Ertas (2019) work motivation through employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee recognition. Ertas specified that motivated employees exhibit discretionary work efforts when they feel valued, respected, engaged, empowered, and emotionally committed to their work and the organization. P1 stated that “building trust with the teachers is crucial. We [leaders] always ensure they [employees] are treated in a professional and respectful manner . . . and when you [leaders] have trust, you [leaders] are able to empower teachers.” Ng and Ahmad (2018) contended that when employees

trust their leaders, they become more engaged at work and satisfied. P1's sentiments are consistent with the findings of Shmailan (2015) and Ng and Ahmad in that engaged employees feel a sense of commitment to the organization, which produces higher job satisfaction, work motivation, and job performance and lowers employee turnover. In addition, P1's comments corroborated Jalagat, Dalluay, Khamis Al-Zadjali, and Al-Abdullah's (2017) findings in that leaders increase their employees' job satisfaction and engagement by making them feel respected in the workplace.

P1 reported that "every year, teachers take a survey that focuses on employee satisfaction in the workplace . . . This [survey] is another way that we [leaders] gather information about how teachers feel about themselves [employees] in the workplace." P1's views on employee satisfaction and engagement aligned with Xu, Martinez, and Lv's (2017) findings in that leaders engage their employees through surveys to better understand the employees' job satisfaction and motivational expectations. P2 stated that "we [leaders] put in place a local school plan of improvement, which measures how we [leaders] retain our teachers." P2's internal evaluation procedures validated Tkalac Verčić and Pološki Vokić (2017) findings, which emphasized that effective employee engagement strategies help leaders measure employee turnovers and develop creative strategies to reduce turnovers.

Theme 2 also confirmed Xu et al.'s (2017) findings in that organizations use employee engagement surveys to engage with employees, collect data on the organizational culture, and measure their employees' work motivation and job satisfaction. P3 stated that,

Our district conducts a results-based evaluation survey each year . . . it [survey] provides data on how teachers are feeling in our school culture, specific to the leadership team, but also on the culture of the school . . . teachers like us [leaders] engaging them [teachers] on the survey results . . . We [leaders] are also partners with the Gallup organization. We [leaders] give a Gallup survey that collects data on the school climate . . . [and] how satisfied you [employees] are in the work environment.

**Correlation to the conceptual framework.** The findings in Theme 2 correlate with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory because work effort (expectancy) and performance (instrumentality) increase employees' engagement, job satisfaction, and work motivation. In this study, I found that public school leaders increase their employees' engagement and job satisfaction by engaging and motivating their employees to perform work related tasks and recognizing employees for their work contributions and impact. Vroom declared that leaders could motivate their employees if the employees believe that there is a positive correlation between (a) work effort, (b) job performance, (c) job satisfaction, (d) employee engagement, and (e) employee recognition.

Vroom (1964) noted that engaged employees are more motivated, satisfied, and committed to the organization than disengaged and unmotivated employees. Leaders provide their employees the autonomy to perform work tasks to achieve organizational goals (Vroom, 1964). Vroom found that organizational leaders optimize their employees' work performance by engaging employees in the decision-making process, providing employees the discretion to make changes to organizational policies and recognizing

employees' excellent job performance. By increasing their employees' work motivation through employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee recognition, leaders yield a higher work performance and lower employee turnover.

### **Theme 3: Implementing Incentives, Rewards, and Professional Development**

The third theme that emerged from data analysis was implementing incentives, rewards, and professional development. From analyses of the interview data and organizational documents and artifacts, I identified two subthemes associated with employee retention that includes incentives and rewards and professional development. The three participants mentioned that leaders might use incentives, rewards, and professional development as an employee retention strategy.

**Incentives and rewards.** All three participants agreed that incentives and rewards, which are monetary or nonmonetary, enhance employee retention. P1 stated that “many [leaders] prefer the performance-based incentive program.” Fisher and Royster (2016) implied that organizational leaders use personalized extrinsic incentives and rewards to influence their employees' performance and increase employee retention. Springer and Taylor (2016) found that offering employees monetary incentives for achieving the organization's performance goals leads to higher employee retention. P2 mentioned that the district implemented a performance-based incentives program to attract, reward, and retain outstanding local school employees. P2 stated that,

Incentives play a major part in [retaining skilled employees] . . . because that is how we [leaders] show our employees that we [leaders] appreciate them

[employees]. In education, we [leaders] do not work in this field for the money, but money is usually a good incentive.

Che Ahmat, Arendt, and Russell (2019) stressed that organizations provide their employees' incentives and rewards to show appreciation for their work efforts and job performance and to increase employee retention. Khalid and Nawab (2018) indicated that employees have competing work expectations and desires, which are often driven by incentives and awards. P1 and P3 reported that the district implemented a pay-for-performance system this year to provide financial incentives to high-performing local school employees for accomplishing specific performance goals. P3 reported that "the district has a long-term plan to fund the performance-based compensation system." For example, district leaders obtain federal and state funding to provide monetary incentives to high-performing local school employees for exceptional performance. Leaders integrate performance-based incentives into their compensation structure to link their employees' performance and achievements directly to specific organizational goals (Cook, Ramón, Ruiz, Sirvent, & Zhu, 2019; Feng et al., 2019). In addition, Vatankhah, Raoofi, and Ghobadnezhad (2017) found that a performance-based incentive system is an effective strategy to attract and retain talented employees.

P3 described the importance of using monetary and nonmonetary incentives and rewards as an employee retention strategy. P3 stated that "in previous years, we [leaders] had a teacher of the year award system . . . employees also received a yearly stipend." He, Shaw, and Fang (2017) found that leaders offer their employees a blend of monetary and nonmonetary incentives and rewards to incentivize the employees' exceptional job

performance and achievement, which enhances the employees' job performance and retention.

The three participants noted that offering rewards, such as treats, lunches, and retail discount coupons, boost employee retention. P1 stated that,

I think little touches [candy bars] help each month. We [leaders] put a little snack or a treat with a fun saying on it [snack] in a teacher's mailbox . . . We [leaders] want to make things inviting, and we [leaders] want them [employees] to feel special. I think that is very important in retaining teachers.

In addition, P2 stated that "we [leaders] use something as simple as jeans coupons to make sure our teachers feel appreciated because we [leaders] do want them [employees] to stay." Jeans coupons permit employees to wear jeans on school days except those listed on the coupon. Prasetio, Azis, and Anggadwita (2019) found that using incentives and rewards to express gratitude to employees stimulates higher levels of employee retention. Furthermore, P3 reported that "we [leaders] have different treats that we [leaders] offer them [employees] that they [employees] get throughout the year." Supriati, Agusdin, and Furkan (2019) stated that employees value individualized incentives and rewards, which lead to higher organizational commitment and retention.

P3 stated that "one new thing that my school district implemented that I think is very motivating to employees is the performance-based awards . . . employees will receive a monetary award based on their [employees] annual evaluation and their [employees] student achievement data." Nyberg, Pieper, and Trevor (2016) declared that organizations should ensure that high-performing employees receive the highest

performance evaluation ratings to receive a performance incentive or award. When school leaders employ a performance-based incentive system, their employees may work more effectively, which can increase student outcomes and employee retention (Chiang et al., 2017; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017). Willis and Ingle (2018) found that merit, bonuses, and multi-year pay compensation arrangements are predictors of high employee performance and retention. Public school leaders should communicate effectively with their employees, ensuring employees understand that their performance and annual evaluations determine the financial incentives and rewards.

**Professional development.** P1 noted that “we [leaders] provide professional learning opportunities to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the learning needs of the students.” Gyensare, Anku-Tsedde, Sanda, and Okpoti (2016) revealed that transformational leaders stimulate their employees learning by providing professional development opportunities, which leads to higher retention rates. P1 explained the importance of mentorship in developing and retaining competent employees to meet the organization’s strategic goals. To retain employees in the organization, P1 stated that “we [leaders] support the teachers, their learning and development through a literacy coach and a math coach . . . my administrative team and I act as coaches.” P1 noted that “the feedback we [leaders] give [teachers] is very instructional specific and related to the initiatives of the school and effective teaching strategies.” Opota and Greub (2017) indicated that a mentor teaches, coaches, and helps shape the professional growth and development of the mentee and evaluates the mentee’s morale in the organization. In addition, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019)



indicated that an effective mentoring program drives employee retention by providing employees continuous coaching and feedback.

P2 mentioned that the school is revising a mentoring program for new teachers, which outlines teaching expectations, provides more content-based instructions, and leads to higher employee retention. Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) asserted that leaders integrate mentoring and induction programs into the school's improvement plan to support their employees' professional development and to facilitate the induction of new teachers into the education profession and to increase employee retention. Callahan (2016) implied that an effective mentoring program increases employee retention by focusing on organizational learning and personal improvement opportunities.

According to P3, P3's school uses professional development opportunities as an employee retention incentive. P3 stated that "opportunities for professional learning are a positive incentive for teachers." P3 reported that "we [leaders] provide a lot of professional learning that deepens their [employees] professional satisfaction and give them [employees] opportunities to continue to learn and grow." Organizations develop professional development opportunities and continuous learning as incentives to enhance their employees' skills and increase employee retention (Endayani et al., 2018; Wikstrom, Eriksson, Karamehmedovic, & Liff, 2018). In addition, P3 noted that P3's school establishes professional learning opportunities to create career progression pathways for its employees. P3 reported that ". . . for special education teachers, there is a pathway to help teachers acquire their certifications and some of the tests that they [employees] need to maintain their [employees] certifications are paid for by the district."

After reviewing physical artifacts, I discovered human resources policies related to incentives and rewards and professional development. I found the following comments: “The flexible incentive system would reward employees for exceptional performance . . . the incentive system will help attract and retain teachers.” P3 noted that “the new compensation system will be multiyear, but you [employees] will not get compensation every year unless you [employees] get results.” The contents in the employee handbook are consistent with all three participants’ statements, which reported that the newly created performance-based incentive system provides incentives to top performing employees and enhances employee retention.

In addition, I found that school leaders provide their employees with professional development opportunities using managerial coaching and mentoring strategies to advance their employees’ competencies and student achievement. The following excerpt from an employee handbook included a comment which stated, “we [organization] offer extensive professional learning opportunities for teachers in content, pedagogy, and processes.” In addition, the school has a reputation of being a high performing institution that emphasizes “curriculum improvement and leaders focus on continuous quality improvement initiatives such as professional development, classroom instruction, and financial management.”

**Correlation to the literature.** The findings specified in Theme 3 aligned with the findings of Meena and Vanka’s (2017) human resources management practices on employee retention through incentives and rewards and professional development

opportunities. Meena and Vanka specified that leaders use incentives and rewards to attract and recruit talented employees to make an organization successful. P3 noted that,

In low incidents classrooms . . . you [employees] might get a stipend that is going to be a part of your [employees] pay every year because they [leaders] want to retain you [employee] in that position and not have a high turnover.

P3's comments confirmed Meena and Vanka's findings in that there is a positive relationship between financial incentives and rewards and employee retention. In addition, Meena and Vanka found that employees prefer to work in organizations with incentives and rewards, career progression opportunities, and employee recognition, but a lack of mentorship can reduce employee retention. By establishing these retention strategies, leaders may enhance employee retention.

**Correlation to the conceptual framework.** The findings in Theme 3 correlate with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory because exceptional employee performance leads to specific incentives and rewards. In this study, I found that public school leaders' human resources management practices, such as incentives and rewards and professional development opportunities, boost their employees' motivation, job performance, and retention. Vroom indicated that leaders use performance-to-outcome instrumentality to increase their employees' job performance and retention. Employees believe that they will receive an incentive or reward if their performance meets the expected standards (Vroom, 1964).

Vroom (1964) emphasized that leaders should know the value their employees place on incentives and rewards to exert work effort to accomplish specific performance

outcomes. When leaders place a high value on an employee's performance goals, the probability of the employee achieving the goal is higher (Vroom, 1964). Organizations must individualize incentives and rewards to fit their employees' desires and use performance evaluations to justify the incentives or rewards to match the employees' work performance. Vroom found that extrinsic motivators, such as incentives and rewards and professional development, are effective employee retention strategies.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Understanding employee turnover intentions and the problems inducing voluntary employee turnover may equip public school leaders with the knowledge and skills to develop effective employee retention strategies. High voluntary employee turnover strains an organization's financial resources, which may affect employees' work performance (Aeschlimann, Herzog, & Sander, 2019). Public school leaders have an opportunity to reduce voluntary employee turnover by establishing effective employee retention strategies.

The study participants offered suggestions and practices that could allow other public school leaders the opportunity to replicate voluntary employee turnover reduction strategies that focus on employee retention. Retaining competent employees is essential to the school's effectiveness and academic success (Shifrer et al., 2017). Public school leaders and other business leaders may apply the findings of this study to help reduce voluntary employee turnover by building a collaborative and supportive work

environment; creating work motivation; and implementing incentives, rewards, and professional development opportunities.

Participants in the study stated that a collaborative and supportive work environment is an effective strategy to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Leaders use strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover and improve their employees' work motivation, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee recognition. The three participants reported that employee engagement increases employees' work motivation and organizational commitment and reduces employee turnover. P1 noted that leaders reduce their employees' workload to decrease burnout and job dissatisfaction and to improve employees' motivation and reduce turnover intentions. P2 mentioned that recognizing employees raises their work motivation and lowers job dissatisfaction and employee turnover. Furthermore, the three participants stated that monetary or nonmonetary incentives, rewards, and professional development opportunities increase employee retention.

In this study, I found that leadership practices could add value to public schools' effectiveness and professional practices in the education sector. Leaders may use the findings of this study as a guide to explore new literature about the execution of professional practices in public schools to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Public school leaders could also improve teaching quality and effectiveness by (a) increasing professional development opportunities, (b) generating more employee engagement and recognition activities, and (c) empowering employees. Findings from this study support the need for effective strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Redding and

Henry (2018) asserted that teacher shortages were approximately 110,000 in public schools during the 2017-2018 school year. Given the severity of the employee turnover phenomenon, previous studies support the recommendation for public schools to implement comprehensive employee retention and human resources management strategies.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for positive social change include the potential for educational institutions to explore the underlying causes related to voluntary employee turnover. Decreasing voluntary employee turnover may reduce the local government's expenditures associated with the replacement of employees and thereby increasing resources for supporting social initiatives and more effective instruction for students. The possibility exists for positive social change when public school leaders reduce employee replacement costs and use additional expenditures to improve the standards of teaching quality and effectiveness (U.S. Department of Education, 2019b). Khan (2017) noted that improving the effectiveness of public schools may encourage talented employees to stay in the organization. Using the findings of this study, public school leaders may achieve social change by establishing effective employee retention strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover and improve teaching effectiveness, which benefits the students, schools, and the community.

In addition, the three participants indicated that social change initiatives facilitate their employees' professional development. Using social change initiatives, Brown (2018) stated that transformative learning strategies provide employees continuous

professional development opportunities, which may improve teaching quality and persuade employees to remain in the organization. When leaders implement integrative and accessible professional development throughout the employees' career, Arikan et al. (2017) found that leaders increase teaching quality, recruitment, and retention and decrease employee turnover. In addition, Arnoux-Nicolas, Sovet, Lhotellier, Di Fabio, and Bernaud (2016) specified that organizations use learning communities to develop employees into knowledge-rich educators to enhance teaching quality and student learning and reduce turnover intentions. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) emphasized that offering employees professional development could benefit organizations by increasing employees' work performance, teaching quality, and retention and generating new skills. Embracing retention strategies, such as professional development opportunities, may serve as a solution for public school leaders to reduce voluntary employee turnover and provide social benefits to meet the needs of school employees, students, and the community.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Haque, Fernando, and Caputi (2019) explained that a cohesive employer-employee relationship enhances employees' organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Employees often demonstrate a high level of trust, commitment, and job satisfaction if their leaders are collaborative and supportive, which decreases turnover intentions (Gyensare et al., 2016). Public school leaders and other business leaders should pay attention to the results of this study and consider assessing the strategies used to improve the work environment, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee

recognition, and to reduce voluntary employee turnover. These strategies, coupled with appropriate governmental policies, may lessen the shortage of highly competent employees in public schools and improve teaching quality and effectiveness. Based on the results of this study, I propose various recommendations for action, which may lead to higher employee retention in public schools:

1. Build collaborative and supportive work environments – This recommendation for action means that school leaders believe that a collaborative and supportive organizational culture increases school employees' work performance and reduces employee turnover. Haque et al. (2019) asserted that leaders create a collaborative and supportive work environment to build a sense of trust with their employees, increase employees' commitment, and reduce employee turnover. Public school leaders should provide their employees with leadership and administrative support to obtain a positive effect on teaching and student achievement. In addition, school leaders should strategically recruit candidates that fit into the school culture to improve teamwork and collaboration, which increases teaching effectiveness and decrease employee turnover.
2. Implement opportunities for professional development – This recommendation for action means that school employees need avenues for professional development to ensure that they thrive and succeed in the school, which increases employee retention. Kohli (2019) emphasized that organizational leaders increase their employees' organizational commitment



by providing professional development opportunities and leadership roles, which increases employee retention. Sustained professional learning communities can serve as powerful levers to improve teaching quality and increase student achievement and employee retention.

3. Establish adequate incentives and rewards – This recommendation for action means that school employees are adequately rewarded for their job performance, work efforts, and skills, which leads to higher employee retention. Adequate incentives and rewards are necessary to recruit and retain capable and motivated individuals. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) indicated that school leaders provide their employees with incentives and rewards similar to other professionals in similar fields to attract and retain more qualified school employees in educational institutions. School leaders must value their employees' expertise by rewarding their work contributions. In addition, Willis and Ingle (2018) noted that organizational leaders implement multi-year incentives and rewards to improve their employees' salaries, which leads to an increase in employee retention.

By implementing effective strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover, public school leaders may attract, recruit, and retain competent employees to improve teaching quality and effectiveness. I intend to publish the findings from this study in various academic business journals and disseminate the results in scholarly literature, conferences, and workshops related to voluntary employee turnover in public schools. I

recommend that public school leaders review the findings of this study and implement these retention strategies in their organizations.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that public school leaders in Georgia use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Although the findings of this study expanded my knowledge of the existing literature on voluntary employee turnover, public school leaders identified various reasons that school employees leave their jobs. The findings of the study indicated the need for further research. Because this study was delimited to public schools in Georgia, future qualitative researchers should explore strategies leaders consider effective in reducing voluntary employee turnover in other geographical locations.

Recommendations for future research should address some of the limitations of this study. The limitations of this study included using a small sample size of public school leaders from only one public school. I conducted the study at one school located in Georgia, which limited the generalizability of the findings. Future researchers should consider increasing the sample size of the study. In addition, sampling both public and private schools, as well as different levels of K-12 schools, should enable future researchers to collect in-depth data on voluntary employee turnover. Interviewing school employees in addition to their leaders should allow future researchers to explore different perspectives of voluntary employee turnover in public schools. In addition, future researchers should consider studying other leaders in various business sectors to determine if the findings can apply to other industries.

Furthermore, future researchers should consider using the quantitative or mixed methods research methodologies to examine the relationship between voluntary employee turnover and other variables, such as (a) collaborative and supportive work environments, (b) employee engagement, (c) job satisfaction, (d) employee recognition, (e) incentives and rewards, and (f) professional development. By conducting longitudinal studies to examine these variables, future researchers could provide school leaders with new statistical data that may reduce voluntary employee turnover in public schools.

### **Reflections**

The Doctor of Business Administration experience was time-consuming but enriching. Managing academics and family responsibilities were challenging. However, I prioritized my academic obligations to achieve a balance between family and college. My husband, family, and friends supported my devotion to completing this study, which made our lifestyle adjustments easier.

Throughout the research process, I learned the intricacies of using the qualitative research methodology and case study design and to critically evaluate existing literature relating to my research topic. The substantial knowledge that I gained helped me explore the strategies public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover in public schools. In my interaction with public school leaders, I learned that public schools adopt strategic recruitment and retention strategies to increase the number of certified employees in the classroom to improve teaching quality and student learning, which may close student achievement gaps throughout public schools in the state of Georgia.

Securing the research participants for this study was problematic during the summer months when many public school leaders attend leadership training, prepare for the upcoming school year, or take summer vacations. As the primary data collection instrument, I developed a strong working relationship with the three participants to conduct a more thorough and transparent interview. All three participants were eager to participate in this study and provided comprehensive responses to the interview questions.

### **Conclusion**

Voluntary employee turnover negatively affects an organization's performance and effectiveness (Nelissen et al., 2017). Retaining competent employees is vital to achieving the organization's strategic objectives (Shifrer et al., 2017). Organizational leaders must implement effective strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover and manage employee replacement costs (Schmidt et al., 2018b). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies public school leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The target population consisted of three public school leaders from one public school located in Georgia with successful experience in using strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

I used NVivo 12 software to code, organize, analyze, and identify themes in the data collection. The following themes emerged (a) building a collaborative and supportive work environment; (b) creating work motivation; and (c) implementing incentives, rewards, and professional development. The findings of this study aligned with the existing literature and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory relating to strategies

on reducing voluntary employee turnover. Recommendations for action include (a) building collaborative and supportive work environments, (b) implementing opportunities for professional development, and (c) establishing adequate incentives and rewards.

These strategies may help public school leaders develop new approaches to recruit and retain talented employees and reduce employee replacement costs in their schools.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. Greet the participant.
2. Introduce oneself to the participant.
3. Provide the participant a consent form and answer any questions or concerns.
4. Explain the interview process and the necessity to take field notes.
5. Turn on the recording device.
6. Begin asking the 7 interview questions and follow up questions if needed.
7. Complete the interview and explain member checking.
8. Thank the participant for joining the study and providing valuable information.
9. Ask the participant what additional information he/she would like to add to the interview about voluntary employee turnover.
10. Reiterate that a copy of the research findings will be emailed in no more than three weeks.



## Appendix B: Interview Questions

The targeted interview questions provide a contextual understanding of the research phenomenon.

1. What strategies have you employed successfully to reduce voluntary employee turnover?
2. What strategies have you instituted that, based upon your organization's experience, motivated employees to remain in the organization?
3. How was the effectiveness of the strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover assessed?
4. Based upon your organization's experiences, what role, if any, do organizational incentives play in retaining skilled employees?
5. What is the single most crucial employee retention strategy in your organization?
6. How, if at all, are the successful strategies reflected in the organization's long-term employee retention sustainability plan?
7. What additional information would you like to provide regarding strategies your organization has successfully used to reduce voluntary employee turnover?