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**Does Participation Matter? Exploring the Role of Participation in Corporate
Leadership Development Programs on the Intent to Stay of High-Potential
Employees in the Biotech Industry**

Submitted to Southeastern University

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Organizational Leadership

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March 22, 2024

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership
Southeastern University

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**DOES PARTICIPATION MATTER? EXPLORING THE ROLE OF
PARTICIPATION IN CORPORATE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMS ON THE INTENT TO STAY OF HIGH-POTENTIAL
EMPLOYEES IN THE BIOTECH INDUSTRY**

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Abstract

The idea of leadership development programs for high-potential employees within organizations has long been a standard for driving employee retention within organizations. Yet, employee retention is different from employee intent to stay. Retention metrics measure historical data, looking back to determine how long an employee has stayed in the organization. Employee intent to stay measures, at that moment, data that contribute to an employee's motivation to stay with the organization. Employers spend significant budgets on leadership development programs for high-potential employees and report on that participation in company retention metrics. Does the investment in these programs also support an employee's internal motivation to stay with the company, or are these programs better categorized as a development tool? Understanding the factors that compel employees to stay with the organization would reduce turnover and retraining costs by a significant margin. The aim of this bounded case study was to determine the factors of intent to stay for employees working in the biotechnology industry within the United States. Eight interviews were conducted with employees in the biotechnology industry, including four participants in leadership development programs and four non-participants in a leadership development program. Three themes emerged that drive overall employee intent to stay: positive employee experience, significant employee engagement, and a supportive employee ecosystem. Additional research is suggested to support these findings further and provide specific tactics employers can implement to increase the intent to stay for all employees.

Keywords: employee experience, employee engagement, ecosystem, leadership development programs, biotechnology

Dedication

At the beginning, it was a dream. Almost four years later, it became a reality. I could not have completed the rigorous four years in pursuit of my PhD without the support of my family, my friends, and my cohort.

My husband, Nicholas, may you no longer have to hear, “Sorry, I can’t do that this weekend,” or “No, I can’t go out to dinner tonight,” due to the endless hours of research and writing. You have been my constant support and cheerleader – thank you! If I could give an award for “Most Patient Spouse” it would go to you as you have been endlessly patient, supportive, and encouraging during this four-year journey! Thank you, and I love you always!

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My family and friends, thank you for your encouragement and support during this process. The simple checking in to ask how it was going, or the encouragement to tear myself away from the computer screen for a brief moment to enjoy a moment with you helped make this happen. Knowing you cared enough about me to check in will always make me smile. Thank you and know that I appreciate and love you!

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Table of Contents

Dedication iv

Acknowledgementsv

Table of Contents vi

List of Figures xi

Chapter 1 – Introduction1

 Statement of the Problem2

 Purpose of the Research Study.....4

 Research Questions4

 Significance of the Research6

 Conceptual Framework7

 High-Potential Employees7

 Leadership Development Programs7

 Intent to Stay Within an Organization7

Methodology8

 Participants.....8

 Data Collection.....9

 Data Analysis10

 Ethical Considerations10

Scope and Limitations.....10

Definition of Terms.....11

 High-Potential Employee11

 Learning and Development11

 Organizational Talent Review (OTR).....12

Summary12

Chapter 2 – Literature Review	14
Leadership Development Programs	14
Recognition of High-Potential Talent	16
Employer-Sponsored Learning	17
Developing Leaders in the Biotech Industry	19
Summary: Leadership Development Programs	20
Employee Intent to Stay	20
Motivation to Stay: Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory	22
Career Development.....	29
Employee Retention in Biotech Industry	31
Summary: Employee Intent to Stay	32
Summary	33
Chapter 3 – Methodology.....	34
Research Positionality Statement.....	34
Research Design.....	35
Research Methodology.....	35
Research Orientation	36
Participants.....	37
Interview Protocol	38
Interview Questions	38
Research Question One	41
Research Question Two	41
Research Question Three	42
Instrumentation	43
Ethical Considerations	43

Data Collection and Analysis.....	43
Conclusion	44
Chapter 4 –Results	45
Sampling	45
Research and Interview Questions	47
Research Question One	48
Research Question Two	55
Categories Derived from Research Question Two.....	58
Summary of Themes for Research Question Two	61
Research Question Three	62
Themes Derived from Research Question Three	66
Summary of Themes for Research Question Three	68
Summary	68
Chapter 5 – Discussion	70
Research Questions	70
Research Question One	70
Research Question Two	72
Research Question Three	73
Definitions of Themes.....	75
Engagement.....	76
Experience.....	79
Ecosystem	81
Theoretical and Practical Implications.....	84
Leadership Development Programs	84
Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory.....	85

Factors of Intent to Stay	87
Synthesizing the Factors of Intent to Stay.....	88
Positive Employee Experience.....	89
Significant Employee Engagement	90
Supportive Employee Ecosystem.....	91
Interconnectedness of Experience, Engagement, and Ecosystem.....	92
Limitations of the Study.....	94
Recommendations for Future Research	95
Concluding Reflections.....	97
References	99
Appendix A	118
Appendix B	119
Appendix C	121

List of Tables

Table 1.....46
Table 2.....52
Table 3.....54
Table 4.....59
Table 5.....60
Table 6.....61
Table 7.....66
Table 8.....67
Table 9.....76

List of Figures

Figure 140
Figure 294

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Retaining employees is becoming a significant global challenge for businesses in today's knowledge-intensive and fiercely competitive business world (Naz et al., 2020). Employee retention encompasses the measures organizations take to keep employees within the organization for longer and is one of the most challenging tasks facing managers (Singh, 2019). Organizations lose their competitive advantage when key employees leave to take roles in other companies, impacting profitability and customer satisfaction. Talent shortage has grown into a severe problem (Keefe, 2014; Shakeel, 2015). The deficit of a skilled workforce, global mobility, a growing economy, and high employee turnover contribute to the need for greater retention within companies (Wakabi, 2016).

Recruiting and replacing an employee who leaves an organization costs half to 200% of the employee's original salary (Cloutier et al., 2015). Retaining employees is a critical need for companies to accumulate and build upon skills and knowledge to drive overall performance and productivity (Rafeeq & Shariff, 2015; Wakabi, 2016). One-fifth of company budgets within the United States are allocated to wages and salaries alone, with over \$150 billion spent on rewards and incentives. Nevertheless, companies struggle to retain their employees (Thibault-Landry et al., 2017). Employees average 4.6 years of tenure at American companies, which erodes profitability, competitive advantage, in-company knowledge retention, company culture, hard costs, soft costs, and opportunity costs (White, 2017). Compounding the impact of turnover with the heightened costs of terminations, recruiting, selection, training, and onboarding of new employees are additional costs associated with the impact on remaining employees who experience mounting duties and accumulation of additional work when their colleagues leave the organization (Arshad & Puteh, 2015).

Learning and development play an essential role in employee retention, as companies can avoid business instability when talented employees are retained and stay with the company for longer periods (Abba, 2018). Fully integrative retention programs are essential to minimize the replacement costs of critical employees

(Aruna & Anitha, 2015). Promotional and career opportunities must be integrated across the company to promote the positive work performance of each employee and motivate them to stay with the company (Qazi et al., 2015).

Research indicates that one way to improve employee retention rates is to provide high-impact learning and development opportunities (Bryant & Allen, 2013; Guilding et al., 2014; Nkosi, 2015). Development opportunities can increase retention when employees are engaged and committed to developing new skills aligned with advancement opportunities for their professional growth (George, 2015). According to Kossivi et al. (2016), promotion chances encourage employee commitment to stay, and personal and professional progress determines retention. Employers are hesitant to invest in long-term learning and development programs due to the risk of the employee leaving the organization before the investment pays off. However, the employee's motivation and intention to stay are directly related to their perception of their employer's willingness to invest in their development (Griffith et al., 2019). The aim of this study was to understand whether participating in a leadership development program with one's employer increases an employee's overall intent to stay.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the shortage of talented professionals, companies have adopted various creative programs for attracting and retaining talent, including employee learning and development (Akbaş, 2013). Although employee development is cited as a method to increase retention, there has been limited consensus on why employees leave their jobs (Johennesse & Chou, 2017; Voigt & Hirst, 2015). Employee engagement is one such driver for retention and is derived from high energy and involvement with one's work and does not depend on being involved in learning and development opportunities (Fletcher et al., 2018). Employee turnover reduces consistency in employee contributions across an organization. Organizations are seeking ways to motivate their employees to stay and reduce turnover. Turnover is addressed differently depending on resources, commitment to

development, and understanding of drivers for retention within a particular organizational landscape (Mohammed, 2015).

The reasons why people leave their professions are still being investigated, but the results have been inconsistent and limited in scope (Abdullah et al., 2017). According to Korsakienė et al. (2015), significant factors impacting an employee's decision to stay with a current employer include relationships with co-workers, work-life balance, financial rewards, and interesting work content. Reasons for leaving employers include inadequate financial rewards and unacceptable leadership styles. Learning and development opportunities and inclusion in high-potential leadership programs were not significant drivers for retention (Korsakienė et al., 2015). Talent management and leadership development training, specifically as connected to retention, has been under-theorized and requires further research (Crowley-Henry et al., 2019; Hanaysha, 2016). A gap exists in the literature regarding the connection between learning in the corporate environment and an employee's motivation to stay with the company (Ejaz et al., 2023; Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013). Additionally, there has been little attention in the academic literature on development activities for employees in the biotechnology industry (Lorenzi & Sørensen, 2014).

Companies spend an average of \$4,000 and 39 hours per employee participating in leadership development programming, equating to millions of dollars, developing high-potential leaders with the goal that they will retain their top talent (Gallup, 2020). Therefore, due to a gap in the literature regarding the understanding of the factors of an employee's intent to stay, there is a need to further study employees who participate in leadership development programs to understand their mindset and motivations, and whether participation in a leadership development program increases overall intent to stay.

Enhancing an organization's competitive advantage requires high-potential employees to be engaged and thus retained (Keefe, 2014; Ozcelik, 2015). Employees will search for alternative job opportunities if they lack substantial growth opportunities (Arshad & Puteh, 2015). Leadership development training exceeds \$366 billion globally (Westfall, 2019). However, there is limited research

to determine whether enrollment in corporate-sponsored internal high-potential leadership development programs factors into participants' intent to stay when faced with a choice to remain in their company or leave to pursue another opportunity (Ejaz et al., 2023).

Purpose of the Research Study

Corporations invest significant resources in leadership development programs to grow and retain top talent. Despite these efforts, employee retention still needs to be improved (Maphisa et al., 2017). This bounded case study encompassed an exploration of the factors that influence an employee's intent to stay with an organization after participating in a high-potential leadership development program sponsored by the organization. Determining the specific factors that motivate employees to remain with a company will provide insights into what factors companies should implement to retain their top talent (Puni et al., 2016). This case study involved identifying and interviewing employees who had worked within the biotech industry, had completed a high-potential leadership development program within the previous 6 to 12 months, and were still employed with the same employer. The interview and coding processes allowed themes to naturally emerge to understand whether a relationship exists between participation in a leadership development program and an employee's intent to stay at the company. Also interviewed were employees who had not participated in a corporate-sponsored leadership development program and had been employed with their employer for at least 1 year to understand the factors that drive this population's intent to stay with the organization for comparative purposes.

Research Questions

Employers face significant challenges in developing strategies to increase employees' intent to stay with their employer and minimize the costs of replacing employees who leave the company (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Development programs for employees are one method employers use to entice employees to stay. Whether involving employees in leadership development programs will make them feel empowered and motivated to impact change directly and will increase job

satisfaction has not been proven in research. This form of engagement is a driving factor in the employee's perspective to believe they should not leave the company and seek external growth or job opportunities (Bilan et al., 2020).

Organizations must pay close attention to turnover intention as it can negatively impact stability and productivity and can be expensive (de Klerk & Stander, 2014). Leadership development practices enable companies to invest in employees who are strategically perceived to hold high value to the organization due to having unique skills (Chami-Malaeb & Garavan, 2013). Development opportunities can, however, have a negative effect as there can be a difference in organization commitment between those who participate and those who do not (Marescaux et al., 2013). Development programming within organizations motivates employees in their current roles to achieve higher performance from a career development perspective (Hassan et al., 2013), yet it has not been proven to increase an employee's intent to stay, and could actually increase turnover if there are no opportunities for employees to use their more highly developed skillsets (Mehta et al., 2014).

Factors for intent to stay can be challenging to determine as emotional components are integrated into employees' perceptions of providing value and being valued by the organization (Al-Hamdan et al., 2017). Furthermore, employee turnover intentions are positively and frequently linked to workload and job stress (Qureshi et al., 2013). Employees who experience high levels of emotional exhaustion find it difficult to improve or even maintain a high level of involvement in work activities, thus lowering overall intent to stay with their employer (Fletcher et al., 2018).

There is a need to understand factors that apply to employees' intent to stay so that companies can implement solutions to retain talented employees longer and reduce talent acquisition expenses (Narayanan, 2016). This study involved an exploration of the relationship between an employee's experience participating in high-potential leadership development programs and overall intent to stay with the organization as influenced by their selection for and involvement in the leadership program. The following overarching research question guided this study: How do

companies reduce the retention risk of talented employees by increasing an employee's overall intent to stay?

RQ1: What factors influence employees' decisions to participate in or abstain from organization-sponsored leadership development programs, and how do these programs impact their perceptions of the organization's commitment to their growth and development?

RQ2: What external factors, including experiences with managers and colleagues, influence employees' intent to stay with the organization, and can specific instances of these factors be identified as significant contributors to their decision-making?

RQ3: How does employee perception of the organization's commitment to their growth and development relate to the role of leadership development programs in enhancing employee intent to stay with the organization?

Significance of the Research

Although the construct of employee retention has been widely studied, there is a need for deeper insights into predictors and factors of intent to stay to fill the literature gap (Naz et al., 2020). Although personal growth and development improve well-being and experiences, organizational commitment and optimal functioning are not directly connected to company-sponsored high-potential leadership development programs (Anderson et al., 2020; Seopa et al., 2015; Thibault-Landry et al., 2017; Tnay et al., 2013).

A \$366 billion global industry, with a \$166 billion annual budget in the United States alone, leadership development training is focused on improving employee talent and growing capabilities (Chami-Malaeb & Garavan, 2013; Westfall, 2019.). Understanding whether this significant spending for training and development factors into greater company retention would reinforce the need for development programs and their importance. The research will also yield insights into whether the focus on leadership development programs should be for development, retention, or both. Additionally, understanding other drivers of intent

to stay besides development programs would be helpful for companies who seek ways to retain talent.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was threefold: high-potential employees, participation in leadership development programs, and factors for intent to stay within an organization.

High-Potential Employees

High-potential employees are recognized for their capabilities and potential to advance within an organization. They are identified by their ability, skills and knowledge, attributes, and capabilities contributing to high-capacity and highly-effective performance (Armitage et al., 2006). Retaining key employees is vital to an organization's health and profitability; it involves attracting, selecting, engaging, developing, and retaining high-potential employees recognized as capable of growing alongside the organization to drive future results (Oladapo, 2014).

Leadership Development Programs

Nomination into a leadership development program by one's manager or other leaders is a significant recognition of the employee's abilities. It also signals to the employee that the employer values them as contributors. Often these programs are lengthy, expensive, and substantially time-consuming, requiring commitment from the organization and the employee. The challenge is that this programming needs to address the specific needs of leaders in the current environment. There is a gap in motivation between the skills covered in the programs, as related to the company's needs, and the ability to transfer the skills learned to the job (Moldoveanu et al., 2019). Leadership development programs are one response to the quest to develop strong talent across organizations to drive company strategy to meet changing market demands (Debebe et al., 2014).

Intent to Stay Within an Organization

Retention of employees is a challenge for employers around the world. The true motivations shaping an employee's perspectives toward loyalty to the organization and commitment to stay are yet to be determined. Retaining an

employee is challenging, and employers must creatively determine ways to engage employees to stay in the organization (Anitha & Begum, 2016). Training and learning opportunities also influence employees' intent to stay within an organization. If they cannot improve their skills within the organization, they will seek other opportunities elsewhere (Abdullah et al., 2017).

Methodology

This bounded case study methodology encompassed an evaluation of the factors that drive the intent to stay for high-potential employees within an organization. The qualitative study provided deep insights into employee motivations, thoughts, and feelings influencing their commitment to and overall intent to stay with the organization. The parameters of the bounded system case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) included employees within the biotech industry in the United States who had participated in a leadership development program targeted to high-potential employees. In this study, participants of corporate leadership high-potential development programs who had completed the program within the previous 6 to 12 months took part in a 60-minute interview. Employees who had not participated in leadership development programming within the corporate environment—considered high performers—and had been with their employer for at least 1 year also participated in interviews to gain their perspectives. All participants held professional-type roles. The results were analyzed to explore the factors derived from participation in leader development programs that may influence an individual's intent to stay with the organization. The one-to-one interviews entailed asking participants questions and engaging them in an descriptive and exploratory dialogue to fully explore the experience being examined (Roberts, 2013).

Participants

Participants were professional-level employees working in the biotech industry and located in the United States. Each participant had to verify whether they have participated in a company-sponsored leadership development program and have been employed at the company for at least 1 year. Employees who had

participated in a leadership development program were asked to confirm that they completed the program within the previous 6 to 12 months. Participants who had not participated in a company-sponsored leadership development program confirmed that they had been employed at the company for at least 1 year.

Saturation is a criterion used to justify qualitative inquiry sample sizes (Guest et al., 2006). Code saturation provides for the identification of thematic issues and meaning saturation provides a richly textured understanding of issues (Hennink et al., 2017). Qualitative research generally involves fewer participants than quantitative research, but delves more deeply into developing a holistic understanding of the meaning within the participants' responses (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Recommendations for numbers of participants for qualitative study vary greatly. Saturation will occur when there is a reliable sense of thematic exhaustion, which is anticipated to occur with a sample size of 12 participants (Guest et al., 2006). Therefore, to obtain code and meaning saturation, this study included a minimum of eight participants and continued until saturation was met.

I collected demographic information to understand the general level of experience in-role, age range, type of industry, and general geographic information. All participants resided in the United States and lived in the northeast, southeast, midwest, northwest, or southwest regions of the country. My goal for this study was to interview an equal number of male and female participants.

Data Collection

Participants took part in individual 60-minute semi structured interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams. Otterai.com, a voice-to-text transcription tool, assisted in recording and transcribing the interview conversation. Participants were informed that questions about their participation in leadership development programs would be asked, their responses would be recorded, data would be gathered, transcripts would be coded, and themes would emerge that align with the research question, as Creswell and Poth (2018) explained. Participants signed consent forms before the interview. Follow-up interviews occurred as necessary and until reaching saturation on the three components of the study's conceptual

framework: high-potential employees, leadership development programs, and intent to stay within an organization.

Data Analysis

A thorough analysis of the data captured in the individual interviews was essential to this study (Yin, 2018). I reviewed the data captured with the Otter.ai transcript for accuracy before analysis. Coding, the process of determining categories from the data, followed to identify descriptions or themes from the content of the interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The next step was reviewing the data before starting the coding process.

I reviewed the transcript and used the coding software, MAXQDA to import the interview transcripts from Otter.ai for coding. The processing of the interview transcripts involved three coding passes: (a) one *In Vivo Coding* pass, (b) one *Values Coding* pass, and (c) one *Process Coding* pass. The In Vivo coding method reveals the themes from the participants' language, Values Coding labels values, attitudes, and beliefs experienced by the participant, and Process Coding exposes forms of action, reaction, and interaction identified as themes in the data (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Following the analysis of the three types of codes, I identified key findings and then developed a narrative for each theme for input into a summary or discussion section for the findings of this comprehensive study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations of this study included confidentiality, support, and anonymity of the participants. I assured participants in this study that their comments and contributions would be confidential and not shared beyond the study. Changing the participants' names also ensure the protection of their identity. This anonymity was essential as the participants' organizations still employ these individuals. Any commentary they may have made throughout the study should not be used to evaluate their work performance or promotion potential.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this research study involved participants in leadership development programs and participants who were not involved in leadership

development programs. All participants were from the United States and worked in the biotech industry. The limitation of this study is primarily its focus on one industry and located in one country. The study also included participants employed for a minimum of 1 year, which may not be a long enough term of employment to assess intent to stay accurately. As management and human resources (HR) departments have different convictions about the usefulness of talent development programs (Oladapo, 2014), the findings of this study only reflect the experiences of the employees who have participated in the leadership development training as related to intent to stay. Leadership development programming is a career growth opportunity for employees based on recognition of capabilities, expertise, and potential for higher-level roles, and are constructed on management and operational skills of employees (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013). An additional limitation of this study is the unavailability of specific company metrics on employee retention, numbers of employees participating in leadership development programs, or other information that may support this study. This limitation was due to the highly regulated, competitive, and confidential nature of the biotech industry and the lack of publicly available specific company metrics.

Definition of Terms

Several commonly used terms are used throughout this study about the corporate environment, leadership development programming, and HR department practices.

High-Potential Employee. In this study, a high-potential employee refers to an employee identified as a top talent with the potential to grow in capabilities and responsibilities (King, 2016). Typically, high-potential employees are viewed as future leaders within the organization. Top talent can communicate effectively, enthuse and inspire others, and is proactively able to market ideas while being highly ambitious and passionate about their work (Bjorkman et al., 2013; Thunnissen & Van Arensbergen, 2015).

Learning and Development. Learning and development is the ongoing process of enhancing employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities to improve their

job performance and achieve organizational goals. Learning and development, in this study, is defined by the programs and processes designed to grow the individual and their capabilities. Learning and development can include training programs, coaching, mentoring, job rotations, and online learning. All activities are designed to provide employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently.

Organizational Talent Review (OTR). OTR is a process by which an organization evaluates its employees' performance, potential, and development needs to identify and nurture high-potential talent. The primary objective of OTR is to identify employees who have the potential to assume leadership roles and critical positions within the organization in the future. The OTR process typically involves the participation of senior leaders and direct managers who assess employees' performance, potential, and development needs based on criteria such as leadership skills, specific expertise, and problem-solving abilities. The assessment is usually based on performance ratings, employee engagement scores, and feedback from managers and colleagues.

Summary

Companies have an opportunity to motivate and inspire employees to remain dedicated to their roles and the impact they can create within an organization. Employee turnover impacts a company due to a loss of knowledge, productivity, skills, and morale (Ghosh et al., 2013). The more companies can engage their employees and grow capabilities, the more interested employees will be in staying at a company to drive growth and ultimately make a difference. This commitment is because they feel empowered to impact change directly and grow organizational results. As job satisfaction plays a vital role in the overall performance of an organization, knowing how employers can increase an employee's intent to stay with the organization can achieve extraordinary results (Latif et al., 2013). Overall, the outcome of this study provides information to incorporate into learning and development programs to retain top talent, increase

company-wide intent to stay, reduce turnover expenses, and retain intellectual knowledge within the company.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that influence a high-potential employee's intent to stay with their organization following participation in an employer-sponsored leadership development program compared to the intent to stay for high-potential employees who have not participated in a leadership development program. In this chapter, existing studies and literature related to corporate leadership development programs and integrated participation of high-potential employees are examined. Second, employee intent to stay within companies with special consideration to employee motivation is explored.

Leadership Development Programs

Employee leadership development programs play a crucial role in cultivating effective leaders and driving organizational success. Human capital is a fundamental component for the success of any organization (Cimatti, 2016). Accelerating leadership development is necessary for organizations to remain competitive and drive their strategic goals (Meister & Willyerd, 2021). By investing in the development of their workforce, organizations can foster a culture of leadership, retain top talent, and position themselves for long-term growth and competitiveness in the corporate environment (Cloutier et al., 2015; Griffith et al., 2019).

Although an extensive history of leadership theory and research covering more than a century of research exists, there is limited research and theory on the topics of leader and leadership development (Day et al., 2014). Early documentation on the study of leadership focuses solely on the individual as the leader and specifically those seen in roles such as prophets, priests, kings, and role models for society (Lawal, 2015). Per the 'Great Man Theory,' leaders were born, not made, and were subsequently elevated to a position of power to direct, command, or guide the activities of others (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010). Individual leaders are the focus of 'leader development' whereas 'leadership development' focuses on the development of multiple individuals, such as the leader and their associated team (Day et al., 2014). The traditional development

model for producing leaders is not equipped to keep up with the demands of modern business and pace of change (Iordanoglou, 2018).

Employee leadership development programs aim to enhance the leadership skills and capabilities of employees at various levels, from emerging leaders to senior executives. The overarching goal is to develop a pipeline of competent leaders who can drive success, foster employee engagement, and navigate complex business challenges (Ejaz et al., 2023). Leadership development programs often include the elements of training and development, coaching and mentoring, experiential learning, networking and collaboration, and performance evaluation and feedback (Beer et al., 2016).

Benefits of employee leadership development programs often include development of enhanced leadership skills for the participants, greater talent retention and engagement, more streamlined succession planning, increased organizational performance, and overall, a more positive organizational culture (Kudus et al., 2023). Today's business environment requires leaders to possess innovative, adaptive, and complex thinking abilities (Lawrence, 2013). Globalization has dramatically increased the need for organizations that are responsive and nimble (Brown & Harvey, 2006). Although these benefits of leadership development programs are significant, they are not without challenges, and a gap exists in the knowledge regarding what exactly is integrated into effective leadership development programming (Paton et al., 2023). Implementing employee leadership development programs requires time, funding, and effort. Organizations often face the challenge of buy-in from senior leadership, aligning program objectives with business goals, measuring program effectiveness, and ensuring engagement and commitment to stay with the organization from participants. Leadership development today revolves around developing leadership expertise, cultivating new perspectives on the role of leader identity, and building adaptive leadership capacity (McCleskey, 2014). As a result, organizations cannot develop leaders quickly enough or with the right skillsets to keep up with the frenetic pace of business changes (Lawrence, 2013).

Organizations are also recognizing that what is known as traditional leadership development, restricted to the few who are in or close to the C-suite, must change (Moldoveanu et al., 2019). Research shows that boundaryless careers are driven by individuals across all levels of the company and do not conform to the traditional landscape of organization-driven leadership development programs (Crowley-Henry et al., 2019; Moldoveanu et al., 2019). Organizations should develop and promote leadership development programs that span entry-level employees to executives (Griffith et al., 2019). Learning, as a whole, should become personalized, relevant, and timely for employees to participate and remain engaged (Moldoveanu et al., 2019).

Recognition of High-Potential Talent

Workforce trend reviews highlight the ongoing war for talent resulting in a focus on filling future gaps in leadership pipelines and a laser focus on identifying and retaining high-potential talent (Church & Rotolo, 2013). As a result, organizations often employ rigorous processes to identify individuals with high leadership potential, or those in need of skill development to transition to a strategically important role (King, 2016; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Seopa et al., 2015). This identification process may involve performance assessments, evaluations, and interviews to determine eligibility for participation in the program. High-potential individuals possess exceptional capabilities, skills, and attributes that distinguish them as future leaders and key contributors to organizational success, providing a competitive advantage for the company (McDonnell et al., 2017). High-potential talent, once formally identified, often feel obligated to enhance their work performance in response to the investment in their continued development by the organization (Gelens et al., 2014).

High-potential talent is most often recognized via the criteria factors of performance excellence, demonstrated potential for growth and advancement, adaptability, innovation, strategic thinking, and strong interpersonal skills (McDonnell et al., 2017). Talent calibration and review sessions incorporate viewpoints of senior leadership to collaborate on designating key employees as top talent. Appropriately selected and motivated employees provide leaders with more

options to drive strategic decisions (Finegold & Frankel, 2006). An employee is identified as high-potential top talent may be offered targeted training programs, stretch assignments, job rotations, and mentorship or coaching to enhance their leadership capabilities.

Although talent and its potential value are recognized in the literature, more research is required to identify the talent-strategy link and how HR can grow internal talent for long-term business advantages (King, 2016). Benefits of formally recognizing top talent and providing development opportunities include building a robust leadership pipeline for future positions, increasing employee engagement, increasing organizational agility, and hopefully reducing turnover while retaining top talent. Research indicates that turnover among highly talented non-engaged employees is equal to the turnover rates of disengaged and less talented employees (Gallup, 2020). Top talent that is not acknowledged is prone to a decrease in motivation and increase in intent to leave (Gelens et al., 2014; Griffith et al., 2019; Skelton et al., 2019).

Although many organizations use competency models to identify transferable skills and development opportunities for potential leaders, there is a risk of a limited view of true potential when relying solely on these models (Armitage et al., 2006). Engaging employees in conversations that incorporate personal goal-setting and performance metrics increases career satisfaction overall as employees feel valued at a personal level, especially those considered high-potential talent (Ejaz et al., 2023). Identifying high-potential and high-performing employees establishes the expectation that these identified employees would then have a different relationship with the organization than those employees not identified as high-potential talent (Seopa et al., 2015).

Employer-Sponsored Learning

Employer-sponsored learning and development refers to programs, initiatives, and activities organized and funded by employers to support the continuous learning, skill development, and professional growth of their employees. These programs are designed to enhance employees' knowledge, capabilities, and competencies, enabling them to perform their current roles more

effectively and prepare for future career opportunities within the organization or outside of the organization (Midtsundstad, 2019; Singh, 2019). Workplace learning is a way for employers to develop their existing workforce in lieu of needing to recruit and hire for specific roles or skills (Olsen & Tikkanen, 2018).

Key components of employer-sponsored learning and development include training programs, onboarding and orientation, leadership development, professional certifications and credentials, continuous learning resources, career development programs, and mentorship and coaching, much of which is now accomplished via digital learning (Egloffstein, 2018; Finegold & Frankel, 2006). Monitoring a participant's career progression by analyzing promotions and role advancements is important to track employee development and determine the effectiveness of employer-sponsored learning (Gurdjian et al., 2014). There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach for learning in the workplace as so many roles and various responsibilities need to be considered (Manuti et al., 2015).

Learning and training programs are also used as a motivational tool for employee retention as it can increase organizational commitment (Singh, 2019). Providing learning opportunities for employees increases employee productivity, commitment, and reduces turnover (Abba, 2018; Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017; Latif et al., 2013). Employer-sponsored learning increases an employee's ability to practice greater problem-solving on the job, which increases their confidence and motivation overall (Singh, 2019). Employers have found it is more effective from a cost perspective to invest in providing training for existing employees to increase retention as a strategy to reduce the high cost of constantly training new employees (Griffith et al., 2019; Latif et al., 2013; Mehta et al., 2014).

Employer-sponsored learning and development programs are essential for organizations seeking to enhance employee performance, engagement, and retention while fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth. These programs affect employee performance, job embeddedness levels, and contribute to the long-term success of both individuals and the organization as a whole (Skelton et al., 2019).

Developing Leaders in the Biotech Industry

The biotechnology industry is a science-based global industry covering a diverse range of fields, including therapeutics, agriculture, and the environment. It is considered an entrepreneurial, innovative, rapidly changing, and knowledge-intensive sector (Lorenzi & Sørensen, 2014). A rapidly growing sector of the global economy, biotechnology is a fast paced, long-term, high-risk, and costly industry as it takes 8 to 10 years to develop and get approvals for new drugs (Finegold & Frankel, 2006).

On an upward trajectory, the biotechnology industry is anticipated to surge to an anticipated worth of approximately \$727.1 billion by 2025 (Omnicores Agency, 2023). In the United States alone, there are currently 6,653 biotech companies, contributing to a global total of 20,922 such firms. This rapidly expanding sector is constantly evolving due to numerous advancements and developments, which have a direct impact on its progress. As of 2023, the industry employed 408,376 people in the United States (Omnicores Agency, 2023; *IBISWorld*, 2023). However, it faces a noteworthy challenge in terms of employee turnover, which averages 9.42%, notably higher than the national average of 3.8%, as reported in *Key HR Statistics and Trends in 2023* (2023). This high turnover rate underscores the need for the biotech sector to focus on talent retention and workforce stability to sustain its impressive growth.

A dynamic and rapidly evolving sector, the biotech industry requires strong leadership to drive innovation, navigate regulatory complexities, and achieve commercial success. The biotechnology industry needs leaders who can lead scientists beyond the science to a destination of commercially viable products that make it to those in need of help (Kearney & Langer, 2018). Developing leaders in the biotech industry is crucial to ensure organizations have the capabilities to adapt to technological advancements, attract and retain top talent, and effectively compete in the market (Marra & Wang, 2022). Successful leaders in the biotech industry enjoy a combination of industry-specific knowledge, leadership competencies, and exposure to diverse experiences. Investing in targeted training, education, mentoring, and fostering a culture of learning and innovation, allows

organizations to cultivate a strong leadership pipeline equipped to navigate the unique challenges and drive success in the dynamic biotech industry (Finegold & Frankel, 2006; Marra & Wang, 2022).

Biotech companies are often seen as hybrid organizations that incorporate a blend of academic and corporate elements, which, in turn, creates a challenge for HR to build individual and organizational capabilities that are aligned (Finegold & Frankel, 2006). Effective use of human capital ensures innovative behavior to create a competitive advantage in the global marketplace with drives career trajectories of high-potential employees (Berlin et al., 2019; Marra & Wang, 2022). As the biotechnology industry is dependent on development and application of new knowledge, keeping employees to maintain knowledge retention is extremely important (Kumar, 2017).

Summary: Leadership Development Programs

Leadership development programs are structured initiatives designed to cultivate and enhance the leadership skills, capabilities, and potential of individuals within an organization. These programs aim to identify and nurture emerging leaders, equipping them with the knowledge, competencies, and experiences necessary to take on leadership roles effectively. By providing tailored training, mentoring, and opportunities for personal and professional growth, leadership development programs not only benefit the individuals involved but also contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of the organization.

Employee Intent to Stay

Understanding and promoting employee intent to stay is crucial for any company's success. Although addressing reasons for turnover is vital, it is equally important to focus on why employees choose to remain in their positions.

Employees often stay out of inertia until compelling factors prompt them to leave. These factors include job satisfaction, company culture, growth opportunities, and personal considerations such as financial responsibilities and community ties. Organizations can reinforce the right reasons for employees to stay by aligning workplace conditions with their values (Flowers & Hughes, 1973). This positive

approach to managing retention can be more effective in the long run compared to solely concentrating on reducing turnover.

Employee commitment plays a significant role in retention, with emotional attachment and identification with the organization influencing the likelihood of voluntary departure. Responsible leadership is also linked to employee motivation, strengthening the employee-organization relationship. Organizational culture also plays a pivotal role in retaining employees. When leaders and managers consistently demonstrate the values they promote, and systems align with those values, trust and commitment among employees grows (Haque et al., 2018).

Various factors, including corporate culture, relationships with coworkers, support, growth opportunities, and compensation, contribute to employee satisfaction or turnover. Hiring practices, managerial style, recognition, compensation systems, and workplace environments also contribute to an employee desiring to stay or to leave. Autonomy in decision-making and control over work pace are crucial factors in retaining employees (Ghosh et al., 2013). Employee intent to stay is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, from individual values to organizational culture, and addressing these aspects is essential for building a loyal and committed workforce (Ellera et al., 2023).

Building organizational commitment among employees is critical for successful organizational effectiveness (Hanaysha, 2016). Replacing an employee due to turnover increases costs in resources, recruiting, and time, which can be as high as 200% of the former employee's salary (Cloutier et al., 2015). Employee intent to stay refers to an individual's level of commitment and desire to remain with their current organization. It represents the extent to which employees intend to continue their employment, invest their time and effort, and remain loyal to the organization. Turnover intention, alternatively, is the intention of an employee to voluntarily change jobs or organizations (Arshad & Puteh, 2015). Intent to stay frequently involves an emotional component, whereas organizational characteristics drive overall job satisfaction (Al-Hamdan et al., 2017). Employee intent to stay, via work engagement, is a critical indicator of their dedication, vigor, job satisfaction, and overall organization retention (Mehmood et al., 2016). Factors that influence

employee intent to stay include job satisfaction, organizational culture and values, opportunities for growth and advancement, leadership and management, internal brand management, work-life balance, and organizational support and recognition (Cloutier et al., 2015; Du Preez & Bendixen, 2015). Employees with high degrees of commitment towards their work and their employer, maintain greater responsibility and job satisfaction (Hanaysha, 2016).

A positive ethical culture across the organization promotes employee intent to stay (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2013). Organizations must monitor and address employee intent to stay to reduce turnover, retain top talent, and maintain a motivated workforce (Tnay et al., 2013). Regular employee surveys, exit interviews, and engagement assessments can help identify factors influencing intent to stay and guide companies in implementing strategies to enhance employee satisfaction and commitment. Providing a strong onboarding process for new employees, fostering a positive work environment, providing growth opportunities, and demonstrating a commitment to employee well-being are all ways organizations can improve employee intent to stay and create a more engaged and productive workforce (Salau et al., 2014).

Facing the challenges of the business economic environment, and the ensuing results of gaps in employee supply and demand, employees are creatively designing retention offerings to retain valued people (Naz et al., 2020). Generational differences compound the challenge as motivating factors vary for different generations such as autonomy in role, employer loyalty, compensation, technical advances, corporate social responsibility, career development, retirement benefits, and training (Singh, 2019). These differences result in the adoption of various strategies by employers to retain their talent by understanding employee motivation to stay.

Motivation to Stay: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Factors that drive employees' motivations to stay with their employer often include career growth and development, compensation and benefits, job satisfaction, organizational culture and values, recognition and appreciation, work-life balance, training and learning opportunities, relationship with managers and

colleagues, and company stability and reputation (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017). These factors, also known as psychological contracts, are integral to motivating employees to want to stay with an organization (Seopa et al., 2015). It is important for organizations to understand these motivators and create an environment that fosters employee satisfaction, growth, and well-being. Additionally, providing opportunities for employees to contribute, participate in decision-making processes, and have a voice in shaping the company's direction via positive relationships can further strengthen their motivation to remain part of the organization (Madden et al., 2015).

An individual whose values are congruent with the values of the organization enjoys a higher level of commitment and motivation to stay with the company (Memon et al., 2014). Organizational commitment increases when employees have trust in their leaders, exhibit satisfaction in their work, and receive attractive compensation (Naz et al., 2020). Generational and cultural differences may also contribute to differences in how employees value their jobs and lead to variances in turnover intent (Skelton et al., 2019).

It is an ill-informed belief that pay is a primary driver of turnover. Pay level and pay satisfaction are weak predictors of turnover when compared to other predictors such as the withdrawal process, job attitudes, and the work environment (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Politically charged work environments further reduces engagement for employees in the workplace, further undermining motivation to stay (Qazi et al., 2015).

When motivation is low within an organization, employee morale, satisfaction, and productivity suffer. Successful companies can recruit and retain the best talent in the organization through positive promotion and reinforcement of motivational factors (Bhatt et al., 2022). Motivation, as a driver for performance, relies heavily on intrinsic motivation across tasks and contexts to predict strong outcomes (Kuvaas et al., 2020). Frederick Herzberg (1959) argued that a job must be fully enriched for a person to feel properly driven, giving them the chance for success and recognition as well as excitement, responsibility, and growth (Ramlall, 2004).

Numerous theories on motivation exist, including Frederick Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory of motivation, also known as dual-factor or motivation-hygiene theory. Some consider Herzberg's theory to contain some of the best ideas for motivation in today's workplace (McKee, 2007). Although Herzberg's theory was developed more than 60 years ago, the concepts are still applicable today.

Per Herzberg's two-factor theory, employee job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are influenced by separate factors (Pinder, 2024). Although bad working conditions may be a source of dissatisfaction, alternatively, excellent working conditions may not yield a satisfied workforce, whereas intrinsic motivating factors might change the results. In Herzberg's system, factors that can cause job dissatisfaction are called *hygienes*, whereas factors that cause satisfaction are called *motivators*. Job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are seen in separate dimensions, which is in direct contrast to the traditional psychological belief that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are contained within a single dimension (Gardner, 1977).

Herzberg identified five factors as strong indicators of job satisfaction, including achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement. On the contrary, company policy, administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions were significant factors that did not indicate job satisfaction (McKee, 2007). Herzberg theorized that the satisfier factors are related to an employee's relationship with what the employee does. In contrast, the dissatisfiers are related to the environment within which the employee does the job (McKee, 2007). Thus, satisfaction and motivation for the employee in the workplace is extremely complex as both can be a cause and a consequence of performance (Lawler III, 1970). Satisfaction and dissatisfaction cannot be seen on the same continuum, so they cannot be considered opposites as *hygienes* and *motivators* exist in different categories (Hogans, 2013; Pardee, 1990). Furthermore, a motivation for a person to act in a certain way or move toward a specific behavior is propelled by their basic needs or wants, especially when those needs or wants are unsatisfied (Pardee, 1990).

Per Herzberg's two-factor theory, the characteristics of an employee's work can gratify achievement, competency, self-realization, and other needs that make one happy and satisfied and do not lead to dissatisfaction if the same characteristics are absent. Employers who focus on increasing satisfaction and decreasing dissatisfaction per these parameters have a greater likelihood of motivating their employees. Dissatisfaction instead results from negative experiences with such components as company policies, salary, working conditions, and supervision (Hogans, 2013). Thus, to increase job satisfaction, companies should focus on the nature of the work itself, and to decrease dissatisfaction, companies should then focus on the job environment and working conditions.

Origin of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. First published in 1959 by Frederick Herzberg, Professor and Chairman of the Psychology Department at Case Western University, the Herzberg theory of job satisfaction addressed the understanding of motivation at work (Lindsay et al., 1967; McKee, 2007). The unique perspective was the idea that job enrichment is a continuous management function, not a one-time proposition (Herzberg, 1976). Herzberg intended to test the concept that employees have two sets of needs, basic fundamental needs such as salary, benefits, work environment, and management, and the needs to grow psychologically and feel a sense of contribution to the work and the organization (McKee, 2007).

The result of Herzberg's study challenged traditional job satisfaction views. Herzberg concluded that motivators such as recognition, work itself, advancement, responsibility, and achievement generates job satisfaction, whereas their absence leads to no job satisfaction but has nothing to do with job dissatisfaction (Malik & Naeem, 2013). Herzberg further attested that a lack of hygiene factors such as pay, job security, working conditions, and company policies can create job dissatisfaction and is not related to job satisfaction (Malik & Naeem, 2013). Although the lack of motivators will more often result in job unhappiness than their presence does, hygienes can significantly increase job dissatisfaction with limited power to change positive job attitudes (Lindsay et al., 1967).

Herzberg proposed that intrinsic factors, labeled satisfiers or motivators, created positive feelings about the job whereas extrinsic factors, labeled dissatisfiers or hygiene factors, often led to negative or unhappy feelings about the job (Brockman, 1971; Pardee, 1990). Motivators fulfill the individual's need for growth whereas hygiene factors help the individual to avoid discomfort and unpleasantness (Brockman, 1971). Hygienes cannot motivate, as they are extrinsic to what drives an employee. The hygienes are easier to measure and control, and the motivators are complex and too complicated to measure, and often companies focus on the hygienes, which results in an unmotivated workforce (Pardee, 1990).

Organizational Application of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. There is a clear distinction between hygiene factors and motivator factors. Hygiene factors are important to prevent dissatisfaction, yet preventing dissatisfaction will not drive employee engagement. When employees are more highly motivated and satisfied, which is shown as the result of motivator factors, commitment to self and to organization drives engagement, retention, and results.

The study of Herzberg's two-factor theory provides insight into the value of employers and managers incorporating motivation elements into employees' daily work rather than focusing solely on eliminating adverse hygiene factors (Pardee, 1990). Higher productivity and job satisfaction result when there is a focus on promoting intrinsic factors rather than focusing solely on extrinsic factors. Herzberg's study demonstrates that extrinsic factors serve to reduce job dissatisfaction, yet do nothing to improve satisfaction or motivation (Pardee, 1990). Organizations must review the basis of their reward systems. To create an environment of motivated employees, meeting hygiene needs alone does not suffice. To drive engagement and satisfaction, motivator factors are critical. Positive motivator factors will impact employee morale, satisfaction, and productivity.

Employee morale is directly impacted by intrinsic motivation. Herzberg's theory indicates that for organizations to maintain a positive and productive workforce, both motivator and hygiene factors must be addressed. For organizations, working toward addressing appreciation and support needs,

providing specific and meaningful feedback, and ensuring employees have confidence that they can grow personally and professionally within the company are crucial. These aspects address motivating factors of the employees. Companies should also address hygiene factors and provide supportive relationships, fair compensation, and top-class working conditions. (Souders, 2020).

Impact of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Increased employee morale, driven by positive intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, is achievable in organizations where the value of positive morale is recognized. Increased employee morale impacts employee engagement, which increases retention and productivity across the company. A company can use job design to align with positive employee morale. Job design, especially when the employee is involved in the design of their particular workflow, reduces job dissatisfaction, enhances the motivational potential of a job, fosters autonomous motivation, and increases employee morale (Liu et al., 2022). For jobs to influence employee morale, characteristics such as autonomy, skill variety, task identity and significance, and feedback must all be designed into the role (García-Chas et al., 2016).

Positive attitude and morale of employees drive productivity, performance, and retention and can circumvent the negative effects of low attitudes (Farr, 1977; García-Chas et al., 2016). Recognition for performance is another factor that boosts employee morale and motivation (French et al., 1973). For employees to experience morale and motivation, leaders must consciously encourage employee engagement (Orr & Matthews, 2008).

When motivators such as recognition, work itself, progress, responsibility, and achievement are present, it leads to increased productivity and job satisfaction; when they are absent, it results in job discontent or no job satisfaction (Malik & Naeem, 2013). Although both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators can drive employee satisfaction, intrinsic motivators are directly linked to the job itself and the enjoyment created by the work, which leads to high employee satisfaction (Gagne, 2014; García-Chas et al., 2016). Studies have shown that the greater the professional experience of the employee, the greater importance is placed on intrinsic rewards (Malik & Naeem, 2013). Employees also feel greater job

satisfaction when verbal reinforcement and positive feedback are used for reward; alternatively, when money is used to reward an activity, the intrinsic motivation for that activity decreases and leads to dissatisfaction (Deci, 1971).

When aligned and in accord, employee satisfaction and job satisfaction create a powerful combination and motivator to reduce employee turnover and increase employee performance. Organizational leadership should identify what satisfies and dissatisfies its workers and create the change that is necessary to nurture job satisfaction, which results in higher productivity and retention (Malik & Naeem, 2013). For employee satisfaction to positively impact performance, leaders and managers must provide challenging work to employees and ensure appropriate extrinsic and intrinsic rewards are available and applied (Octaviannand et al., 2017).

Employees who feel empowered and enjoy a sense of autonomy more frequently develop innovative projects and new ideas. Employers can empower their workers by providing resources and encouraging self-direction toward goals. These actions increase employee satisfaction and productivity (Hitchcock & Stavros, 2017). The internalization of desired behaviors will be facilitated by the presence of suitable goals, structures, and limit setting in the context of autonomy (Gagne et al., 1997). Empowered employees develop a strong capability for adaptive thinking, which allows them to adapt their environment and role to one that promotes satisfaction. Enlightened leaders do not drive their vision forward but rather draw the vision from their employees and then empower and nurture the employees to be creative, innovative, and courageous to bring their ideas forward. This process increases employee satisfaction and builds stronger companies (Mosley & Matviuk, 2010).

Employee productivity stems from the motivation to perform interesting work, perform the work well, and be rewarded appropriately for a job well done. The more motivated an employee feels the more productive they will become. Herzberg (1976) suggested that to bring about the most effective use of employees in a company, work should be enriched with intrinsic motivation. As intrinsic motivation occurs when an employee is driven to accomplish something because it

is personally rewarding, this motivation leads to greater productivity because the employee is enjoying the task and is therefore willing to perform the task at a higher level, resulting in increased productivity (Herrity, 2022). Positive intrinsic motivation creates a much more productive workplace than punitive or solely extrinsic motivation based on reward systems (Terry, 2013).

Organizations that have properly functioning employees are more successful and competitive. Therefore, businesses should figure out how to encourage, sustain, and keep up employees' maximum performance (Trépanier et al., 2015). Productivity diminishes when employees are unmotivated, discouraged, feeling undervalued, do not see development opportunities for growth, and do not feel a sense of autonomy in their work. More highly motivated employees are more highly productive. Employee morale, satisfaction, and productivity are dependent on increased intrinsic motivation.

Career Development

Career development and growth in the corporate environment refer to the process of advancing and expanding one's professional career within an organization or industry (Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Niati et al., 2021; Purnama et al., 2023). Internal development and long-term employee commitment are goals of career development programming (Seopa et al., 2015). It involves acquiring new skills, knowledge, experiences, and responsibilities to progress in one's chosen career path and through the various career states of an employee (Mulhall, 2014; Saleem & Amin, 2013). Career development and growth are essential for individuals to reach their full potential, achieve personal and professional goals, and contribute to organizational success (Aruna & Anitha, 2015).

Key components of career development and growth in the corporate environment may include goal setting, skills and competency development, continuous learning and education, performance and feedback, mentoring and coaching, career pathing and advancement opportunities, stretch assignments, networking, and relationship building (Saleem & Amin, 2013; Sinambela et al., 2023). These components are applied in the workplace as an ongoing practice to increase engagement, promote skill development, and increase organizational

commitment (Anderson et al., 2020). Benefits of career development include personal fulfillment, increased job satisfaction, potential retention of top talent, organizational success, and succession planning to support smooth transitions during leadership changes (Anderson et al., 2020; Debebe et al., 2014; Nkosi, 2015).

Career development of employees contributes to the success and survival of organizations as highly skilled employees are needed to run a company's operations (Pujiwati, 2016). Employee training is not only critical for organizational operations and organizational advancement but also vital for personal development and career advancement from an employee perspective (Nkosi, 2015). The more engaged employees are with development and skill building opportunities, the higher their motivation with the workplace to be successful, which benefits the organization as a whole (Ramlall, 2004).

Career development and leadership development of employees enriches the human capital component within the organization as talent can be more strategically leveraged to drive successful results (Debebe et al., 2014; Pujiwati, 2016; Westfall, 2019). Research has shown that employer-sponsored career development programs increases employee job embeddedness and reduces turnover intention (Qazi et al., 2015). Access to ongoing development positions the employee and the company for greater success (Marescaux et al., 2013; Purnama et al., 2023).

Development opportunities provide a sense of growth and value to employees as it relates to their career growth and perceived value to the organization in the eyes of their employer. Development opportunities promote a sense of belonging, community, and connectedness to the organization's fabric and make it stronger (Dysvik et al., 2013). Employees who do not see development opportunities as readily available for their personal growth become demotivated, less productive, and will explore other roles outside of the organization (Singh, 2019). High-performing employees should be rewarded with extra development opportunities to keep them motivated and engaged (Orr & Matthews, 2008). Employees who can participate in opportunities to experience various roles in

different departments, or have opportunities for promotions, are more likely to stay with that company (SHRM, 2022).

Growth opportunities such as promotions, learning-on-the-job activities, and developmental programs drive employee motivation as employees feel the organization invests in them as individuals (Bhatt et al., 2022). A conducive learning environment drives motivation toward individual growth alongside responsibility, recognition for achievement, and growth or advancement (Herzberg, 1976; Stamov-Roßnagel & Biemann, 2012). Companies that create opportunities for training and development aligned to their employees' personal and professional growth need a more motivated workforce. Assigned training that does not connect to development needs does not contribute to positive workplace motivation. It is important for organizations to create and assign training based on development needs and not solely on legal or compliance requirements, as this can demotivate a workforce as the development is not connected to their individual growth (Hur, 2018). Employees prefer to work in settings that present a challenge, present fresh learning opportunities, significantly contribute to the success of the firm, and provide prospects for growth and personal development based on success and demonstrated interest in a certain field (Debebe et al., 2014; Ramlall, 2004).

Employee Retention in Biotech Industry

In the dynamic landscape of the biotech industry, where innovation and breakthroughs shape the forefront of scientific progress, the concept of employee retention has an exceptional significance. A highly regulated industry, biotech jobs have become more stressful and complicated due to global competition (Hejase et al., 2016). As companies strive to push the boundaries of scientific discovery and commercialization, the ability to attract and retain top-tier talent plays a pivotal role in sustaining competitive advantage and driving long-term success (Béraud et al., 2020). The challenge in this intricate realm, where scientific expertise converges with business acumen, is that scientists do not generally have the experience, mindsets, or necessary skills to drive the commercialization of products (Kearney & Langer, 2018). Additionally, with the primary focus in the industry on the process of drug development, there is little time for attention to HR functions such

as development of employees, which results in high disengagement and turnover (Hejase et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2021).

The biotech industry, steeped in such sciences as therapeutics, agriculture, and the environment, is a global industry that is considered entrepreneurial, innovative, rapidly changing, and knowledge intensive (Lorenzi & Sørensen, 2014). Rigorous quantitative, analytic, and statistical skills are required in this highly competitive environment. It is a challenging environment in which to keep employees engaged, feeling empowered, and constantly trained to meet current scientific and technological advancements (Akil et al., 2016). Additionally, the volatile biotech environment of mergers, acquisitions, therapy approvals and denials, and competitive landscape for talented employees creates challenges for the retention of a company's workforce (Kessel, 2014).

Employers are facing major challenges when it comes to retaining employees. A causal relationship exists between a supportive work environment and retaining employees (Naz et al., 2020). Shrinking talent pools are driving 56.7% of biotech companies to develop their talent from within, whereas 62% of employees seek positions with greater work-life balance and are looking to leave the industry (Cottell, 2014). Science-based companies rely on intellectual and social capital to attain organizational goals, which requires a focus on presenting challenging and interesting work as a motivation to their science-focused employees (Finegold & Frankel, 2006). Therefore, an engaging work environment, rewards, promotions, incentives, and empowerment of employees are critical priorities for biotech companies (Koul, 2013; Kumar, 2017).

Summary: Employee Intent to Stay

Employee motivation and intent to stay within an organization are closely interconnected aspects of employee engagement and retention. Motivated employees are more likely to remain committed to their roles and the organization. Employee motivation can be driven by various factors, including recognition, opportunities for career growth, a positive work environment, fair compensation, and a sense of purpose in their work. When employees feel motivated and fulfilled, their intent to stay with the organization is strengthened, leading to lower turnover

rates and greater overall productivity. Consequently, understanding and addressing the factors that drive employee motivation can be a pivotal strategy for organizations looking to enhance and retain a dedicated and productive workforce.

Summary

Learning and development programs in the biotech industry play a role in shaping the employee experience. As the sector continually evolves, these programs empower professionals to acquire new skills, stay abreast of cutting-edge advancements, and engage in career growth. The biotech field demands a workforce equipped to navigate complex scientific and business challenges. By offering tailored learning opportunities, companies may enhance employee satisfaction, loyalty, and their overall intent to stay. Nurturing a culture of continuous learning not only aligns with the industry's rapid progress, but also serves as a potent catalyst for bolstering the longevity and success of biotech organizations.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This bounded case study encompassed an investigation of defined parameters through a determined scope of data collection and sequence of questions (see Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018) to explore whether participation in leadership development programs influence an employee's intent to stay with an organization. To accomplish the purpose of this study, three overarching research questions guided this exploration (see Figure 1):

1. What factors influence employees' decisions to participate in or abstain from organization-sponsored leadership development programs, and how do these programs impact their perceptions of the organization's commitment to their growth and development?
2. What external factors, including experiences with managers and colleagues, influence employees' intent to stay with the organization, and can specific instances of these factors be identified as significant contributors to their decision-making?
3. How does employee perception of the organization's commitment to their growth and development relate to the role of leadership development programs in enhancing employee intent to stay with the organization?

The examination of the factors that contribute to an employee's intent to stay with an organization can provide greater clarity into where companies should invest resources to maximize tenure of employees and to reduce financial and knowledge-loss liabilities due to employees leaving. Increasing overall intent to stay is good for the company as well as for the employee.

Research Positionality Statement

Bias of the researcher can undermine the validity of qualitative research and analysis (Tegelhutter, 2022). Valid results for a research study depend on being able to identify and comprehend research bias, or any factor that causes a distortion in the findings of a study. For qualitative researchers who employ interviews as a technique of data production for their research project, bias management is of

critical importance (Yin, 2018). The incorporation of different types of participants in this study helped avoid intrinsic bias associated with using only one type of participant group. Using the flow of questions targeted to the response type of participants (see Figure 1) further mitigated research bias as the questions aligned with the experiences of the participants.

Triangulation in a bounded case study ensures validity and credibility as it helps balance the perspectives of the interviews. Data triangulation allows the collection of information from multiple sources to corroborate the same finding (Yin, 2018). In this study, incorporating the perspectives of participants and non-participants in leadership development programs provided greater exploration of factors that may influence employee intent to stay.

Research Design

The research approach selected for this study was qualitative research to understand the experience and perspectives from the participants' point of view; qualitative researchers seek to understand a phenomenon's richness as opposed to the volume of facts that may be broadly applied. The study was set in the natural setting of the participants and the researcher served as the key instrument through interviews and observations. Qualitative research is used to empower individuals to share their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Another reason for choosing a qualitative case study for this study is that the research questions are "how" and "why" questions, there is little or no control over behavioral events, and the study itself is a contemporary phenomenon "case" (see Yin, 2018).

Research Methodology

The methodology for this study was a bounded case study methodology to evaluate the factors that drive the intent to stay for high-potential employees within an organization. The qualitative study provided deep insights into employee motivations, thoughts, and feelings behind their commitment to and overall intent to stay with the organization. The parameters of the bounded system case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) included employees within the biotech industry in the United States who had participated in a leadership development program targeted

to high-potential employees. In this study, participants of corporate leadership high-potential development programs who had completed the program within the previous 6 to 12 months took part in 60-minute interviews. Also interviewed were employees who had not participated in leadership development programming within the corporate environment and had been with their employer for at least 1 year to gain their perspective. All participants held professional-type roles. I analyzed the data to explore the factors derived from participation in leadership development programs that may influence an individual's intent to stay with the organization. Participants in one-to-one interviews answered questions and engaged in an descriptive and exploratory dialogue to fully explore the experience being examined (see Roberts, 2013).

Research Orientation

This study focused on exploring factors that contribute to an employee's intent to stay at the organization because of participating in a leadership development program. The research orientation represents the goals of understanding practical application and maximizing efficiencies for overall results. Companies struggle to retain employees and improve productivity and engagement (Gurdjian et al., 2014). Simultaneously, companies allocate significant resources to developmental programs with the hope that involved employees will have greater psychological attachment to the organization and a corresponding greater intent to stay (Seopa et al., 2015). If participation in leadership development programs does not drive intent to stay, organizations should shift their focus and resources to those factors that actually contribute to intent to stay. Development programs for the sake of developing employees for different roles or responsibilities should not be confused with methods to motivate employees to stay with the company. Additionally, leadership development programs are often used to target specific employees within the organization (Debebe et al., 2014). Significant resources are allocated to a microcosm of the employee base, but overall retention numbers are calculated on the number of all employees who leave the organization. This disparity prevents organizations from truly focusing investment of development

resources appropriately to align to the population that drives overall reporting results. I was curious to understand whether participation in leadership development programs contributes to overall intent to stay to better assess where financial resources should be applied most efficiently to grow overall intent to stay across the entire organization.

Participants

Participants were professional-level employees working in the biotech industry and located in the United States. I asked each participant to verify whether they had participated in a company-sponsored leadership development program and had been employed at the company for at least 1 year. I also asked employees who had participated in a leadership development program to confirm that they completed the program within the previous 6 to 12 months. Participants who had not participated in a company-sponsored leadership development program confirmed that they had been employed at the company for at least 1 year. Participants received and signed appropriate consent forms for full disclosure for the researcher and protection of the participants (see Appendices A, B, and C).

I collected demographic information to understand the general level of experience in-role, age range, role within the biotech industry (i.e. manufacturing, research and development, commercial, HR, IT, etc.), and general geographic information of regions of the United States including northeast, southeast, midwest, southwest, and northwest regions. Although geographic location information was collected, employee work designation of remote or on-site and role level in the organization (i.e. individual contributor, manager, director, etc.) were not included in the analysis. My goal for the study was to interview an equal amount of male and female participants.

Saturation is a criterion to justify qualitative inquiry sample sizes (Guest et al., 2006). Code saturation provides for the identification of thematic issues and meaning saturation provides a richly textured understanding of issues (Hennink et al., 2017). Qualitative research generally involves fewer participants than quantitative research, but delves more deeply into developing a holistic

understanding of the meaning within participants' responses (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Recommendations for numbers of participants for qualitative study vary greatly. Saturation will occur when there is a reliable sense of thematic exhaustion, which is anticipated to occur with a sample size of 12 participants (Guest et al., 2006). Therefore, to obtain code and meaning saturation, this study included a minimum of eight participants and continued until reaching saturation.

Interview Protocol

I selected participants based on their employment in the biotech industry within the United States. Participants who had participated in leadership development programs within the previous 6 to 12 months and non-participants received an email invitation to answer a series of questions (see Figure 1) (see Appendix A). All participants agreed to the interview via a signed consent form (see Appendix B and Appendix C). The interview lasted approximately 60 minutes in length and occurred virtually via Microsoft Teams. Participants were encouraged to speak freely and informed that all interviews were confidential.

Interview Questions

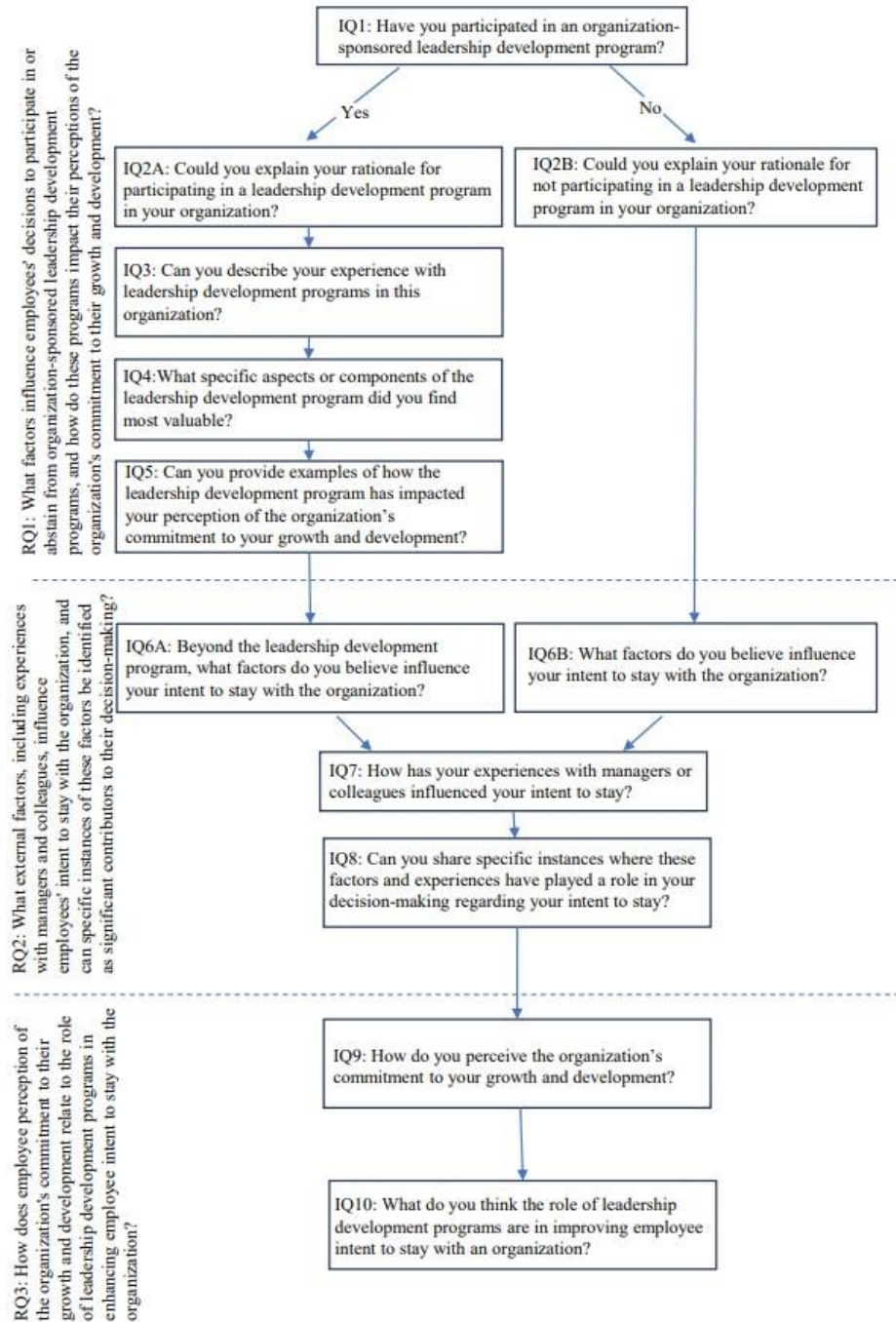
Qualitative interview questions serve as the foundational tools that enable exploration and discovery of the rich complexities of human experiences, perceptions, and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Carefully crafted interview questions encourage participants to share their stories, opinions, and attitudes in a meaningful and reflective manner. The essence of thoughts and meaning can be derived by carefully reviewing the responses of the participants to the open-ended interview questions (Yin, 2018). Open-ended qualitative interview questions provided rich content for analysis.

In this study, I explored three research questions through a series of interview questions. As depicted in Figure 1, the response provided to the first interview question whether the participant has or has not participated in a leadership development program, determined the sequence of the following questions posed to the participants. This decision-tree concept of questions allowed me to appropriately target questions as the conversation progresses. The flow of

questions allowed me to explore the topic of ‘factors contributing to intent to stay’ from the perspective of employees who had participated in leadership development programs and from the perspective of those employees who had not participated in a leadership development program. The goal of the questions was to understand factors that cause an intention to stay by either group of participants.

Figure 1

Interview Decision Tree Depicting Flow of Questions for Participants and Non-Participants of Leadership Development Programs



Research Question 1

When an employee leaves an organization, a company incurs substantial costs to replace or retrain for the vacant role and the social fabric of the organization is degraded (Ghosh et al., 2013). In the fight for skilled talent, companies are seeking to understand the drivers of employee engagement that result in higher employee intent to stay (L. Lu et al., 2016). One factor explored in this study for employee engagement was involvement in leadership development programs to create value for the employee, promote the development and a sense of belonging, and motivate them to want to stay with the company.

RQ1 was, “What factors influence employees' decisions to participate in or abstain from organization-sponsored leadership development programs, and how do these programs impact their perceptions of the organization's commitment to their growth and development?” The interview questions asked are as follows:

1. Have you participated in an organization-sponsored leadership development program?
- 2a. Could you explain your rationale for participating in a leadership development program in your organization?
- 2b. Could you explain your rationale for not participating in a leadership development program in your organization?
3. Can you describe your experience with leadership development programs in this organization?
4. What specific aspects or components of the leadership development program did you find most valuable?
5. Can you provide examples of how the leadership development program has impacted your perception of the organization's commitment to your growth and development?

Research Question 2

Research to identify the causes and factors leading to turnover or to identify approaches that motivate employees to stay is limited (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment vary significantly across employees, industries, company size, and organizational culture

(Ghosh et al., 2013). If involvement in leadership development programs does not contribute to an employee's intent to stay, it would be beneficial to explore other factors further.

RQ2 was, "What external factors, including experiences with managers and colleagues, influence employees' intent to stay with the organization, and can specific instances of these factors be identified as significant contributors to their decision-making?" The interview questions asked are as follows:

- 6a. Beyond the leadership development program, what external factors do you believe influence your intent to stay with the organization?
- 6b. What factors do you believe influence your intent to stay with the organization?
7. How have experiences with managers or colleagues influenced your intent to stay?
8. Can you share specific instances where external factors have played a role in your decision-making regarding your intent to stay?

Research Question 3

Job satisfaction can have a significant effect on intent to stay (Kurniawaty et al., 2019). Job satisfaction, however, incorporates other factors outside of leadership development programs such as job stress, compensation and appreciation, challenging work, atmosphere and organizational culture, supervisor support, and opportunities for promotion and development (George, 2015). Companies spend billions of dollars and significant time and effort on implementing leadership development programs with limited understanding whether the actual leadership development program increases employee intent to stay (A. C. C. Lu & Guroy, 2013). Therefore, it was important to compare how perceptions for intent to stay may align or be different between leadership development participants and non-participants.

RQ3 was, "How does employee perception of the organization's commitment to their growth and development relate to the role of leadership development programs in enhancing employee intent to stay with the organization?" The interview questions asked are as follows:

9. How do you perceive the organization's commitment to your growth and development?
10. What do you think the role of leadership development programs are in improving employee intent to stay with an organization?

Instrumentation

In qualitative research, the researchers collect data, observe behavior, and interview participants themselves. Open-ended questions are used and there is no reliance on instruments developed by other researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, I conducted all individual interviews with participants and followed the interview questions in Figure 1. I focused on the “how” and “why” questions throughout the interview and sought to fully explore the experience of the participant as it relates to the research (see Yin, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations of this study included confidentiality, support, and anonymity of the participants. I assured participants in this study that their comments and contributions were confidential and would not be shared beyond the study. Changing participants' names was a strategy used to protect their identity. This anonymity is essential as the participants' organizations still employ these individuals. Any commentary participants may have made throughout this study should not be used to evaluate their work performance or promotion potential.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants took part in individual 60-minute semi structured interviews via Microsoft Teams. I used Otterai.com, a voice-to-text transcription tool, to record and transcribe the interview conversations. I informed the participants that questions about their participation in leadership development programs would be asked, their responses would be recorded, data would be gathered, transcripts would be coded, and themes emerged that aligned with the research question (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants signed consent forms before the interview (see Appendix B and Appendix C). I conducted follow-up interviews as necessary

until reaching saturation on the three components of the study's conceptual framework: high-potential employees, leadership development programs, and intent to stay within an organization.

A thorough analysis of the data captured in the individual interviews was essential to this study (see Yin, 2018). I first reviewed the data captured with the Otter.ai transcript for accuracy. The next step was coding, the process of determining categories from the data, to identify descriptions or themes from the content of the interviews (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). I reviewed the transcript and used the coding software, MAXQDA, to import the interview transcript from Otter.ai for coding. The processing of the interview transcripts involved three coding passes: (a) one *In Vivo Coding* pass, (b) one *Values Coding* pass, and (c) one *Process Coding* pass. The In Vivo coding method exposed themes from the participants' language, Values Coding labeled values, attitudes, and beliefs experienced by the participant, and Process Coding revealed forms of action, reaction, and interaction identified as themes in the data (see Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Following the analysis of the three types of codes, I identified key findings and developed a narrative for each theme for input into a summary or discussion section for the findings of the comprehensive study.

Conclusion

The research design for this study facilitated an in-depth exploration of the factors that influence employee intent to stay. The research methodology supported a process by which selected participants could freely share their thoughts and experiences as it related to participating in leadership development programs and how that participation may have factored into their overall intent to stay. The design of the bounded case study created a clear designation of the parameters of the study to further explore the factors that contribute to employee intent to stay with their organization. The overall purpose of this study was to identify the factors that promote greater intent to stay for employees in their organization to provide more support to those factors across an organization.

Chapter 4 –Results

The aim of this qualitative study was to ascertain whether involvement in leadership development initiatives influences the factors for workers' intentions to stay with a company. In this chapter, the findings from the eight participant interviews are presented, including half of the participants in a leadership development program and half of non-participants in an employer-sponsored leadership development program. The sample size in this qualitative study proved adequate, reaching data saturation on the core phenomena (see Sargeant, 2012). Demographic information of the participants is presented in this chapter as well as the data collected using the interview questions listed in Chapter 3. The case study methodology facilitated an examination of factors contributing to employee commitment and intent to stay. Manual coding, employing in vivo, values, and process coding, as well as MAXQDA 2024 software, were used for data collection and coding in this study. I uploaded the transcribed interviews into the software for coding using the three coding methods with the tools provided in the software. I then reviewed the interview transcripts a second time and listed the codes in Excel, identifying categories as they emerged from the two coding processes. Following the emergence of categories, themes emerged that are highlighted in the results presented in Chapter 5. Codes are presented in brackets and italics as follows: [*code*].

Sampling

Participants in this study were all employees of a biotechnology company based in the United States. They were selected randomly from two groups; one group having participated in leadership development programming within the previous 2 years and one group having not participated in company sponsored leadership development programming. Each participant had been employed at the company for at least 2 years. General demographic information for the participants is provided in Table 1. Participants are identified by a participant number rather than their actual names. Following Table 1 is a brief profile of each study participant.

Table 1*Participant General Demographic Information*

Identifier	Gender	Region	Years in Biotech	Participation
Participant 1	F	Northeast, U.S.	4	Yes
Participant 2	M	Northeast, U.S.	8	Yes
Participant 3	F	Southeast, U.S.	3	Yes
Participant 4	F	Central, U.S.	10	Yes
Participant 5	F	Northeast, U.S.	4	No
Participant 6	F	Northeast, U.S.	6	No
Participant 7	F	Northeast, U.S.	17	No
Participant 8	F	Northeast, U.S.	4	No

Participant #1. Participant #1 was a female working and residing in the Northeast region of the United States. She has worked in the biotech industry for 4 years and participated in a leadership development program sponsored by the company. Participant #1's role was in the Information Technology (IT) function of the company.

Participant #2. Participant #2 was a male residing in the Northeast region of the United States and working on a global team. He has worked in the biotech industry for 8 years and participated in a leadership development program sponsored by the company. Participant #2 was a scientist and is part of the Research and Development function of the company.

Participant #3. Participant #3 was a female working and residing in the Southeast region of the United States. She has worked in the biotech industry for 3 years and participated in a leadership development program sponsored by the company. Participant #3's role was in the Human Resources (HR) function of the company.

Participant #4. Participant #4 was a female residing and working in the Central region of the United States. She has worked in the biotech industry for 8 years and participated in a leadership development program sponsored by the

company. Participant #4 was a member of the Commercial function of the organization, specifically in the sales division.

Participant #5. Participant #5 was a female residing and working in the Northeast region of the United States. She has worked in the biotech industry for 4 years and has not participated in a company sponsored leadership development program. Participant #5's role was in the Research and Development function of the organization in a position supporting the pipeline development of therapies.

Participant #6. Participant #6 was a female residing and working in the Northeast region of the United States. She has worked in the biotech industry for 6 years and has not participated in a company sponsored leadership development program. Participant #6's role was in the Commercial function of the organization, specifically managing HR processes for the Commercial teams.

Participant #7. Participant #7 was a female working and residing in the Northeast region of the United States. She has worked in the biotech industry for 17 years and has not participated in a company sponsored leadership development program. Participant #7 was in the People Relations function of the organization, specifically focused on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) priorities and programs.

Participant #8. Participant #8 was a female working and residing in the Northeast region of the United States. She has worked in the biotech industry for 4 years and has not participated in a company sponsored leadership development program. Participant #8 was a member of the Learning and Development function which sits within the HR division.

Research and Interview Questions

The interview questions that each participant received were designed to examine the factors that contribute to an employee's intent to stay with the organization. The open-ended questions throughout the interview provided the opportunity for participants to share in their words their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs as they responded to each question. The participants did not receive the interview questions in advance, and throughout the session, they all enjoyed a

casual conversation answering the research questions and exploring their experiences. At the same time, I used the virtual transcription software, Otter.ai, to capture the dialogue to provide further analysis and capturing of the conversation.

Research Question One

RQ1 for this study was, “What factors influence employees’ decisions to participate in or abstain from organization-sponsored leadership development programs, and how do these programs impact their perceptions of the organization’s commitment to their growth and development?” This research question was answered by posing Interview Questions (IQs) 1 to 5 to the participants.

Interview Question 1. IQ1 was, “Have you participated in an organization-sponsored leadership development program?” In response to this question, four of the participants responded that they *had not* participated in a company sponsored leadership development program and four of the participants responded that they *had* participated in a company sponsored leadership development program (see Table 1). This question was used to compare the responses of both groups to determine whether there were similarities or differences in the responses to the questions as related to overall intent to stay. IQ1 was the start of a decision-tree model of questions (see Figure 1) to ask appropriate questions to the participants based on whether or not they had participated in a company sponsored leadership development program.

Interview Question 2A. This second interview question, posed to those participants who *had* participated in a leadership development program, was, “Could you explain your rationale for participating in a leadership development program in your organization?” In response to this question, all four participants shared their rationale for agreeing to participate when nominated into the program. Four in vivo codes emerged under this question: people involved (3), selected (6), manager influence (2), and felt honored (3). Two values codes emerged from participant responses: curiosity (2), and motivation for professional development (3). Two process codes emerged from participants: embracing opportunity (2) and network and relationship building (6). Participant #4 responded to IQ2A with, “I’m

embracing the opportunity even through I'm not a first line leader right now" [*embracing opportunity*], and, "I now have relationships with people that I wouldn't otherwise have had" [*people involved*], and that, "My manager and I have regular conversations along the way" [*manager influence*]. Participant #1 stated, "I felt very honored to be nominated" [*felt honored*], and "Part of my rationale [*to participate*] was that I was selected" [*selected*]. Participant #2 responded to the question, "Finally my manager is like, you know what, you're pretty good at this and he approved my participation in the program" [*manager influence*]. Participant 3 stated that, "I was seeking to build my network" [*network and relationship building*], as a response to IQ2A. Each respondent shared their personal motivations as to why they participated in the leadership development program.

Interview Question 2B. The second interview question posed to those participants who had *not* participated in a leadership development program was, "Could you explain your rationale for *not* participating in a leadership development program in your organization?" Numerous codes emerged from the responses to this question. Five in vivo codes emerged from the responses from all four participants: not chosen by manager (4), question being valued, heard, and seen (4), content where I am (4), no bandwidth (9), and would have participated if asked (5). One values code emerged from the interviews: relieved (3). Two process codes emerged from the conversations: nominating only select employees (5), and frustrating to not be selected (5). Participant #5 responded to IQ2B with, "It's very frustrating for me because I want to climb the ladder" [*frustrating to not be selected*], and "I'm very content with my job" [*content where I am*]. Participant #6 stated, "I was very glad this year that I was not asked to participate" [*relieved*], and "I definitely would not have had the bandwidth" [*no bandwidth*], and "I'm hanging by a thread trying to do my regular job" [*no bandwidth*]. Participant #7 responded to the question, "The top talent goes through the programs, and I wasn't a participant" [*nominating only select employees*]. Participant #8 joined in with "I would have but wasn't presented with that opportunity" [*would have participated if asked*]. Participant #5 additionally commented that, "I believe how it works is you

have to be nominated, that you have to be chosen” [*question being valued, heard, and seen*] in response to IQ2B.

Following IQ2A and IQ2B, IQ3-5 were asked solely to those participants who *had* participated in a leadership development program to explore more deeply the specific aspects of the leadership development programs and the potential relationship to employee intent to stay.

Interview Question 3. The third interview question was, “Can you describe your experience with leadership development programs in this organization?” As the participants responded to this question, several codes emerged. Two in vivo codes emerged from all four interviews: great experience (3), and impactful (2). Three values codes emerged under this question: commitment (3), challenging (3), and learner centered approach (3). Additionally, three process codes were represented from the four interviews: disappointing experience (3), wasting time (2), and disappointing because of no next steps (5). In response to IQ3, Participant #4 responded that the program “was very impactful for the learners” [*impactful*], and that “there were all kinds of challenges” and that “we lost members of the group” [*challenging*] due to changes in the business. Participant #3 expressed that though the program “was helpful and enjoyable” [*impactful*], there was a lack of direction or next steps as “for whatever reason, I guess introverts aren’t supposed to manage people, that there is some kind of belief” [*disappointing because of no next steps*]. Participant #2 stated that she, “personally had a great experience” [*great experience*] and “appreciated the “executive level type of commitment” [*commitment*]. Conversely, Participant #2 did not, “feel everybody was taking it as seriously as [she] was taking it” and that “there could have been more executive level involvement” [*disappointing experience*]. Participant #1 added that involvement in the leadership development program has, “kind of empowered me to make suggestions that can impact others” [*impactful*] in response to IQ3.

Interview Question 4. The fourth interview question posed to participants who *had* participated in a leadership development program was, “What specific aspects or components of the leadership development program did you find most valuable?” Two in vivo codes emerged from the interviews: opportunity to interact

in a group (2) and helped me understand others better (2). Three process codes emerged: building rapport (2), assessing individual capabilities (3), and managing stressful time commitments (4). In response to IQ4, Participant #2 responded, “the self-assessments were powerful to be able to reflect on yourself and receive feedback from others” [*assessing individual capabilities*]. Participant #2 added, “It helped me understand why people like me have trouble getting ahead” [*helped me to understand better*]. Participant #4 shared that, “it was fascinating to hear about things I might not get to hear” [*opportunity to interact in a group*], and that the experience was, “a more open dialogue about women’s access to leadership” [*building rapport*]. Participant #1 also shared her participation was “very much the opportunity to interact in a group” [*opportunity to interact in a group*] and that the experience, “was very stressful, not enjoyable, and we were managing a lot of personalities on a tight schedule” [*managing stressful time commitments*].

Interview Question 5. The fifth interview question asked to employees who *had* participated in leadership development programs was, “Can you provide examples of how the leadership development program has impacted your perception of the organization’s commitment to your growth and development?” Four in vivo codes emerged from the responses: manager involvement (3), team commitment (4), felt supported (2), and does not seem to have made a difference (4). Two values codes emerged from the interviews: disconnected (4) and committed to employee development (4). Finally, two process codes were identified: empowering employees (5), and frequent changing leadership roles creates confusion (4). In response to IQ5, Participant #1 shared that involvement in the leadership development program “empowered me to make suggestions for things that can impact people in a more broad sense” [*empowering employees*], and that she “felt supported” [*felt supported*] by her manager. Participant #2 response was that her participation reinforced the company’s “commitment to women, leadership, and learning” [*committed to employee development*]. Participant #3 revealed that as an introvert, involvement in the program “helped me to understand why it is difficult to get ahead as the environment is designed by extroverts” [*disconnected*] and that “I’m still sort of floating in the organization”

[*disconnected*]. Additionally, Participant #3 shared that “nothing has changed since the program” [*doesn't seem to have made a difference*]. Finally, Participant #4 shared that her involvement allowed her to see “opportunities to take other leadership development programs” [*committed to employee development*] that the company would support and encourage continued involvement.

Research Question One Themes: As a theme is an outcome, categorization, or analytic reflection of coding (Saldana, 2021), it is incumbent upon the researcher to review and synthesize the codes to identify the themes. Three themes emerged from the coding process in response to RQ1 for this study. Table 2 shows the themes under RQ1.

Table 2

Research Question One Themes: Participants

Themes	Categories	Codes
Navigating career development (58)	Professional development & opportunities (32)	Motivation for professional development (3) Networking & relationship building (6) Embracing opportunity (2) Impactful (2) Learner centered approach (3) Assessing individual capabilities (3) Team commitment (4) Committed to employee development (4) Empowering employees (5)
	Selection process & employee feelings (25)	Selected (6) Manager (5) Disappointing experience (3) Disappointing because of no next steps (5) Wasting time (2) Doesn't seem to have made a difference (4)
Employee sense of value (18)	Personal & emotional responses (8)	Felt honored (3) Curiosity (2) Great experience (3)

	Communication & relationships (12)	Opportunity to interact in a group (2) Helped me understand others better (2) Building rapport (2) Disconnected (4) Manager influence (2)
Interaction with management (19)	Leadership & organizational dynamics (7) Work environment & constraints (12)	People involved (3) Frequent changing leadership roles (4) Commitment (3) Challenging (3) Managing stressful time commitments (4) Supported (2)

The first theme, navigating career development (58) was broken down into the following categories: professional development and opportunities (32) and selection process and employee feelings (26). These categories were derived from the following codes: motivation for professional development (3), networking and relationship building (6), embracing opportunity (2), networking and relationship building (6), impactful (2), learner centered approach (3), assessing individual capabilities (3), team commitment (4), committed to employee development (4), empowering employees (5), selected (6), manager (5), disappointing experience (3), disappointing because of no next steps (5), wasting time (2), and doesn't seem to have made a difference (4).

The second theme, employee sense of value (18), comprised two categories: personal and emotional responses (8), and communication and relationships (12). These categories were composed of the following codes: felt honored (3), curiosity (2), great experience (3), opportunity to interact in a group (2), helped me understand others better (2), building rapport (2), disconnected (4), and manager influence (2).

The third theme, interaction with management (19), incorporated two categories: leadership and organizational dynamics (7) and work environment and constraints (12). These two categories were composed of the following codes:

people involved (3), frequent changing leadership roles (4), commitment (3), challenging (3), managing stressful time commitments (4), and supported (2).

Non-participants of leadership development programs were asked the same interview question and two themes emerged from the coding process in response to RQ2. Table 3 shows the themes under this RQ2 for this group.

Table 3

Research Question One Themes: Non-Participants

Themes	Categories	Codes
Employee sense of value (21)	Selection process & employee feelings (14)	Not chosen by manager (4) Nominating only select employees (4) Frustrating to not be selected (5)
	Personal & emotional responses (7)	Feel valued, heard, and seen (4) Relieved (3)
Interaction with management (18)	Work environment & constraints (18)	Content where I am (4) No bandwidth (9) Would have if asked (5)

Theme 1, employee sense of value (21), was composed of two categories: selection process and employee feelings (14), and personal and emotional responses (7). These two categories were synthesized from the following codes: not chosen by manager (4), nominating only select employees (5), frustrating to not be selected (5), feel valued, heard, and seen (4), and relieved (3).

Theme 2, interaction with management (18), was identified from one category: work environment and constraints (18). This category was identified from three codes: content where I am (4), no bandwidth (9), and would have if asked (5).

Summary of Themes for Research Question One. The themes that were synthesized from the codes and categories for RQ1 that was asked of participants and *non*-participants of company sponsored leadership development programs included navigating career development, employee sense of value, and interaction with management. The themes of employee sense of value and interaction with management were the same for both groups, indicating that both groups had similar

feelings on these topics. The theme of navigating career development was distinct to the group of participants of leadership development programs.

Research Question Two

RQ2 for this study was, “What external factors, including experiences with managers and colleagues, influence employees’ intent to stay with the organization, and can specific instances of these factors be identified as significant contributors to their decision making?” This question was explored by asking IQs 6 to 8 to the participating employees. IQ6 comprised IQ6A, posed to employees who had participated in a leadership development program, and IQ6B, posed to employees who had not participated in a company sponsored leadership development program.

Interview Question 6A. IQ6A, posed to participants of leadership development programs was, “Beyond the leadership development program, what factors do you believe influence your intent to stay with the organization?” Participant interviews resulted in five in vivo codes: colleagues (6), manager (6), communication (4), age (3), and feel embedded in the organization (3). One value code was identified: diversity and DE&I efforts (2). Three process codes also emerged: supporting wellbeing (6), staying for the science (6), growing in my role (3). Participant #4 commented that she is “growing up with the organization and growing her role” [*growing in my role*], which motivates her to want to stay. Participant #4 shared that “good relationships, experiences with managers and colleagues, and interactions with stakeholders” [*colleagues*] drives her intent to stay. Participant #3 responded, “The leadership training doesn’t matter as I’m mostly staying for the science that drives me” [*staying for the science*]. Participant #3 also clearly responded that they are, “staying for the science” [*staying for the science*]. When responding to IQ6A, Participant #2 shared, “the focus on DE&I has a big impact for me” [diversity and DE&I] and that “the fitness allowance and stuff like that increase every year” [*supporting well-being*] as motivators for staying with the organization. Participant #1 summarized this question by adding, “literally my teammates, my manager, my director, and up the chain is big for me and why I stay” [*manager*] and [*feel embedded in organization*].

Interview Question 6B. IQ6B, posed to participants of the study who had *not* participated in leadership development programs was, “What factors do you believe influence your intent to stay with the organization?” A significant number of in vivo codes resulted from the interviews: manager (6), workday flexibility (5), work-life balance (4), individual growth (9), learning (6), culture (5), and colleagues (3). One value code emerged in this question: feel valued (8). Two process codes were identified: driving curiosity (4) and leveraging my talents (2). Participant #5 responded to IQ6B that the “the biggest reason why I stay is how I am treated and feel valued” [*feel valued*]. Participant #6 also shared that she “has a very good relationship with [her] supervisor” [*manager*]. Participant #6 shared that her main reason for staying is “the flexibility to have work-life balance” [*work-life balance*] in addition to “room for growth” [*individual growth*]. Participant #7 responded to this question, stating, “One significant factor was the organization’s curiosity about what I have to offer” [*driving curiosity*] alongside the “culture, the colleagues, and the mission of the company” [*culture*]. Finally, one of the main reasons Participant #8 stays is the ability to “continue to learn through new experiences” [*learning*].

Interview Question 7. IQ7, asked to both groups of participants was, “How has your experiences with managers or colleagues influenced your intent to stay?” Coding results with employees who had *not* participated in leadership development programming showed five in vivo codes: relationships with people (3), happy in role (6), recognized for my work (4), trust in management (4), and leadership (2). Three values codes emerged: grateful (3), feels valued (4), and strong connection with colleagues (4). Two process codes were presented: enjoying my team (2) and aligning with effective managers (3). Participant #5 responded that her intention to stay was influenced by a “very good relationship with my team” [*enjoying my team*], and that her manager “sees me as a leader” [*feels valued*]. Participant #6 shared that her manager “trusts me and gives me a lot of responsibility” [*feels valued* and *grateful*]. In response to this question, Participant #7 responded, “A sense of connection to others was critical” [*strong connection with colleagues*]. Participant #7 shared that “the manager wasn’t always the compelling feature, but it

was often a contributing factor to my enjoyment” [*leadership*]. Participant #8 responded to IQ7 by sharing that she has had “the best experience with managers with open communication and trust” [*trust in management*].

Coding results for those employees who *had* participated in leadership programming resulted in two in vivo codes: manager (6) and feels accepted (3). One values code emerged from this interview question: honest communication (4). Three process codes were identified: communicating transparently (2), focusing on science instead of my manager (3), and believing in the science (3). Participant #1 responded to IQ7 that “honesty in conversations with managers” [*honest communication*] is a motivator for her intent to stay. Participant #2 added that she “feels accepted in terms of her opinions” [*feels accepted*] and that “a very welcoming manager in terms of caring about wellbeing and removing roadblocks” [*manager*] has been critical. In response to IQ7, Participant #3 shared that he “is mostly staying for the science” [*focusing on the science*]. Participant #4 added to this question that she stays because she feels “humbled by the science and a part of solving huge problems” [*focusing on the science*] and that “people are always grateful for whatever I can do to support them and that feels good” [*feel accepted*].

Interview Question 8. IQ8, asked to both groups of participants was, “Can you share specific instances where these factors and experiences have played a role in your decision-making regarding your intent to stay?” The participant interviews of those who had *not* participated in a leadership development program resulted in one in vivo code and three values codes. The in vivo code was relationship with manager (8). The values codes identified included transparency (2), trust (5), and learning mindset (8). Participant #8 responded to IQ8 as follows: “on this team I feel there’s trust not just for me but across our team and everyone can share and be open” [*trust*]. Participant #8 also shared that “I can continue to learn and grow and am not judged” [*learning mindset*]. Participant #7, reflecting on experiencing a difficult time, shared “a colleague stepped up to support me and got me moved into a different role and that saved my career” [*trust*]. Finally, in response to IQ8, Participant #6 shared, “In a conversation with my manager, I shared my concerns

about juggling the needs of my family and returning to the office and he supported my working from home to take care of my family” [*relationship with manager*].

The participant interviews of those who *had* participated in a leadership development program resulted in in vivo, values, and process codes. The in vivo codes included incentives (3), change (2), and honest conversations with managers (8). The one value code identified was communication (5), whereas the one process code identified was communicating effectively (6). Participant #1 shared, in response to IQ1:

My manager called me randomly for a check in call and when I shared that I had gone on an interview and was considering taking the role, instead of trying to convince me to stay he offered to talk about it and asked what was making me consider leaving and we had a very open and honest conversation [*honest conversations with managers*].

During the interview, Participant #3 responded that, “incentives are a factor for potentially staying” [*incentives*], and “incentives basically encouraged me to stay” [*incentives*]. Additionally, Participant #3 noted that, “People are thinking about change, and it would be suspicious to stick around and not take the extra money” [*change*]. Participant #4 appreciated her interactions with her manager as she responded that her manager “took the time to have an honest conversation with me” [*honest conversations with managers*] and “we’ve had honest conversations about what’s going on in the company” [*communication*]. Finally, Participant #2 reflected,

I’m about to retire and I came from such a bad place where I previously worked and that’s another factor that prevents me from thinking about leaving because it’s better than where I was, and I just want to get through to retirement [*incentives*].

Categories Derived from Research Question Two

Four categories emerged from the coding process in response to the RQ2 asked of participants of leadership development programs. Table 4 shows the

categories under this research question from responses from participants of leadership development programs.

Table 4

Research Question Two Categories: Participants

Categories	Codes
Work environment (20)	Communication (4) Feel embedded in the organization (3) Supporting well-being (6) Honest communication (4) Focusing on science instead of manager (3)
Relationships (26)	Colleagues (6) Manager (12) Honest conversation with manager (8)
Organizational culture & values (10)	Diversity and DE&I (2) Believing in the science (3) Incentives (3) Change (2)
Professional development & career growth (12)	Staying for the science (6) Growing in my role (3) Age (3)

The category of work environment (20) was synthesized from the five codes: communication (4), feel embedded in the organization (3), supporting well-being (6), honest communication (4), and focusing on science instead of manager (3). The second category of relationships (26) was derived from the three codes: colleagues (6), manager (12), and honest conversation with manager (8). Finally, the category of professional development and career growth (12) was developed from the three codes: staying for the science (6), growing in my role (3), and age (3).

Five categories emerged from the coding process in response to the RQ2 asked of *non*-participants of leadership development programs. Table 5 shows the categories under this research question from responses from non-participants of leadership development programs.

Table 5*Research Question Two Categories: Non-Participants*

Categories	Codes
Relationships with Managers (30)	Manager (6) Relationships with manager (8) Trust management (4) Leadership (2) Transparent (2) Trust (5) Aligning with effective managers (3)
Relationships with Peers (10)	Relationships with people (3) Connection with others (4) Colleagues (3)
Work environment & culture (34)	Workday flexibility (5) Work-life balance (4) Culture (5) Feel valued (12) Driving curiosity (4) Leveraging my talents (2) Enjoying my team (2)
Personal growth & development (23)	Individual growth (9) Learning (6) Learning mindset (8)
Recognition & satisfaction (13)	Happy (6) Recognized (4) Grateful (3)

The five categories were synthesized from the codes from responses to non-participant responses to RQ2. The category of relationships with managers (30) developed from the codes of manager (6), relationships with manager (8), trust management (4), leadership (2), transparent (2), trust (5), and aligning with effective managers (3). The category of relationships with peers (10), was derived from the three codes of relationships with people (3), connection with others (4), and colleagues (3). The category of work environment and culture (34) was identified from the seven codes of workday flexibility (5), work-life balance (4), culture (5), feel valued (12), driving curiosity (4), leveraging my talents (2), and enjoying my team (2). The category of personal growth and development (23) was

identified from the three codes of individual growth (9), learning (6), and learning mindset (8). Finally, the category of recognition and satisfaction (13), was synthesized from the codes of happy (6), recognized (4), and grateful (3).

Summary of Themes for Research Question Two

The responses to RQ2, “What external factors, including experiences with managers and colleagues, influence employees’ intent to stay with the organization, and can specific instances of these factors be identified as significant contributors to their decision making?” resulted in three themes. When the codes and categories of both participants and non-participants were synthesized, the following themes were identified across both groups: supportive employee experience (56), meaningful engagement (78), and cultivating ecosystems (44). Table 6 shows the themes under this research question from responses from the participants and the non-participants of leadership development programs.

Table 6

Research Question Two Themes: Participants and Non-Participants

Themes	Categories	Codes
Supportive Employee Experience (56)	Work environment (20)	Communication (4) Feel embedded in the organization (3) Supporting well-being (6) Honest communication (4) Focusing on science instead of manager (3)
	Personal growth & development (23)	Individual growth (9) Learning (6) Learning mindset (8)
	Recognition & satisfaction (13)	Happy (6) Recognized (4) Grateful (3)
Meaningful Engagement (78)	Relationships (26)	Colleagues (6) Manager (12) Honest conversation with manager (8)

	Relationships with Managers (30)	Manager (6) Relationships with manager (8) Trust management (4) Leadership (2) Transparent (2) Trust (5) Aligning with effective managers (3)
	Relationships with Peers (10)	Relationships with people (3) Connection with others (4) Colleagues (3)
	Professional development & career growth (12)	Staying for the science (6) Growing in my role (3) Age (3)
Cultivating Ecosystems (44)	Organizational culture & values (10)	Diversity and DE&I (2) Believing in the science (3) Incentives (3) Change (2)
	Work environment & culture (34)	Workday flexibility (5) Work-life balance (4) Culture (5) Feel valued (12) Driving curiosity (4) Leveraging my talents (2) Enjoying my team (2)

The first theme, supportive employee experience (56), was synthesized from the following categories: work environment (20), personal growth and development (23), and recognition and satisfaction (13). The second theme, meaningful engagement (78), was derived from the categories of relationships (26), relationships with managers (30), relationships with peers (10), and professional development and career growth (12). The third theme identified for RQ2 was that of cultivating ecosystems (44), synthesized from the categories of organizational culture and values (10) and work environment and culture (34).

Research Question Three

The third research question posed in this study was, “How does employee perception of the organization’s commitment to their growth and development

relate to the role of leadership development programs in enhancing employee intent to stay with the organization?" This question was explored by asking IQs 9 and 10 to both groups of participants, those who *had* participated in a leadership development program and those who had *not* participated in a leadership development program sponsored by the organization.

Interview Question 9. The ninth interview question was, "How do you perceive the organization's commitment to your growth and development?" The participant interviews of those who had *not* participated in a leadership development program resulted in three in vivo codes, four values codes, and two process codes. The in vivo codes included feel really valued (5), appreciated (3), and bias (4). The four values codes identified were as follows: manager empowers me (2), feel important to organization (5), supported (2), and committed to employee development (3). The two process codes that emerged with this question included receiving recognition feels good (3), and experiencing rotational roles helped me grow (2).

In response to IQ9, Participant #5 stated, "There's been a lot of bias" [*bias*]. Regarding the perception of commitment to growth and development, Participant #5 responded, "This isn't about money, but it's that expression of support" [*manager empowers me*]. When asked IQ9, Participant #8 reflected, "I wasn't aware of all of the different learning and development opportunities that were available. Now I am blown away by all of the learning opportunities sponsored by the organization" [*committed to employee development*].

Participant #6 shared, "I actually feel really valued by this company. I really have been lucky" [*feel really valued*] and that after a particularly stressful time, "They really appreciate that I've been killing myself at work" [*appreciated*]. Participant #7 responded to IQ9 by reflecting,

Every time I wanted development, even if the more expensive thing I wanted to do wasn't available, they would always find alternatives and support me" [*feel important to organization and supported*]. I've seen such amazing learning come out of rotational job assignments. That's another

great way for people to gain experience and learn across functions
[*rotational roles helped me grow*].

The participant interviews of those who had participated in a leadership development program resulted in one in vivo code, value code, and process code. The in vivo codes included organization's commitment (5). The value code that emerged was feel supported (2). The process code identified included developing my skills (2).

In response to IQ9, Participant #1 shared, "I perceive the commitment is there and I feel fully supported but I need to be the one to go find the opportunities" [*feel supported*]. Regarding organizational commitment, Participant #2 responded, "I think they're highly committed" [*committed to employee development*], while Participant #3 stated, "I do believe the organization more broadly, is still interested in investing in me as a person" [*organization's commitment*]. Finally, Participant #4 reflected on IQ9 and stated, "I do think the organization and my manager are committed to my development by sponsoring me to attend conferences and encouraging me to strengthen my skills with new assignments" [*developing my skills and organizations' commitment*].

Interview Question 10. The tenth and final interview question posed to all participants was, "What do you think the role of leadership development programs are in improving employee intent to stay with an organization?" The responses to IQ10 by those participants who had *not* participated in a leadership development program resulted in in vivo, values, and process codes being derived from their responses. Five in vivo codes were identified: promotion opportunities (5), recognition (6), community (2), leadership development (4), and a stepping stone to leave (6). Two values codes emerged, which include prestige (4), and misleading (4). Finally, one process code was identified, which is changing perspective (6).

All four participants, who had *not* participated in leadership development programs within the organization, made strong statements in response to IQ10. Participant #8 stated, "It was really the minds coming together and thinking and talking about things that is the greatest benefit. I don't think there needs to be a specific program to make that happen" [*changing perspective*]. Participant #7

reflected, “Leadership development programs are seen as very white, and there is limited access to people of color. The nomination process felt infused with bias” [*misleading*]. Participant #6 added,

I think that the recognition and investment piece is directly tied to employee retention. Employees feel valued, they feel seen, they feel recognized, and they want to feel part of something good. Development programs have a lot of potential when they are done right and people feel good about participating, if nothing else, they feel lucky to be selected [*recognition and prestige*].

Participant #5 concluded, “I think these programs give a person a stepping stone to leave and they don’t really make a difference for a person to be successful” [*stepping stone to leave*].

The responses by those interviewees who had participated in a leadership development program sponsored by the organization resulted in in vivo, values, and process codes. One in vivo code emerged: does not play a part (6). One value code was identified: inclusive relationships (5). Finally, two process codes resulted from the interviews: offering a variety of learning opportunities (3) and participating does not drive intent to stay (3).

All four participants who were part of organization sponsored leadership development programs reflected and responded. Participant #4 stated,

Participation in a program itself may not actually be a driver for someone to want to stay with the organization [*participating does not drive intent to stay*]. A risk is we get someone overly excited or expecting a particular role to open up, so we are building potentially unrealistic expectations for a next level role as a result of participating in a leadership development program. If the next level role does not happen quickly enough, they leave [*participating does not drive intent to stay*].

Participant #3 said,

I don’t know that participation plays any role. And the reason isn’t because I don’t think they’re valuable. I think they are valuable. It’s just that there are people who will do it and then just move on anyways because they just

wanted experience to get into leadership, so they participated and moved on [participating does not drive intent to stay].

Participant #2 said, “Some people are not happy no matter how many classes they take in leadership development, they are not going to stay no matter what you do. I think it’s the total package that you have to consider” [offering a variety of learning opportunities]. Finally, Participant #1 stated, “I don’t think there is a one size answer to this as it depends on who the audience is and what they’re trying to achieve” [participating does not drive intent to stay].

Themes Derived from Research Question Three

Two themes emerged from the coding process in response to the RQ3 asked of non-participants of leadership development programs. Table 7 shows the themes that emerged under this research question.

Table 7

Research Question Three Themes: Non-Participants

Themes	Categories	Codes
Organizational culture (50)	Employee experience & perception (44)	Feel really valued (5) Appreciated (3) Feel important (5) Supported (2) Committed to employee development (3) Receiving recognition feels good (3) Experiencing rotational roles helped (2) Promoting opportunities (5) Recognition (6) Community (2) Leadership development (4) Prestige (4)
	Intentions & career transitions (6)	Stepping-stone to leave
Management dynamics (16)	Managerial empowerment & support (2)	Manager empowers me (2)

Perception of bias & misleading information (14)	Bias (4) Misleading (4) Changing perspective (6)
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Theme 1, organizational culture (50), emerged from the categories of employee experience and perception (44) and intentions and career transitions (6). The category of employee experience and perception (44) was derived from the following 12 codes: feel really valued (5), appreciated (3), feel important (5), supported (2), committed to employee development (3), receiving recognition feels good (3), experiencing rotational roles helped (2), promoting opportunities (5), recognition (6), community (2), leadership development (4), and prestige (4). Additionally, the category of intentions and career transitions (6) occurred from the code of stepping-stone to leave (6).

Theme 2, management dynamics (16), was synthesized from the categories of managerial empowerment and support (2) and perception of bias and misleading information (14). The category of managerial empowerment and support (2) was supported by the code of manager empowers me (2), whereas the category of perception of bias and misleading information (14) was synthesized from the codes of bias (4), misleading (4), and changing perspective (6).

One theme emerged from the coding process in response to the RQ3 asked of participants of leadership development programs. Table 8 shows the themes that emerged under this research question.

Table 8

Research Question Three Themes: Participants

Themes	Categories	Codes
Positive organizational ecosystem (20)	Organizational commitment (5)	Organization's commitment (5)
	Support & development (4)	Feel supported (2) Developing my skills (2)
	Inclusive environment (5)	Inclusive relationships (5)
	Learning opportunities (3)	Offering variety of learning opportunities (3)

 Intent to stay (3)

 Participating does not drive
 intent to stay (3)

The theme of positive organizational ecosystem (20) was derived from five categories that were synthesized from the codes from the responses of the participants who had experienced an organization sponsored leadership development program. The theme of positive organizational ecosystem (20) was synthesized from the following categories: organizational commitment (5), support and development (4), inclusive environment (5), learning opportunities (3), and intent to stay (3). The category of organizational commitment (5) was directly derived from the code of organization's commitment (5). The category of support and development (4) was synthesized from the codes of feel supported (2) and developing my skills (2). The category of inclusive environment (5) resulted from the code inclusive relationships (5). The category of learning opportunities (3) was derived from the code of offering variety of learning opportunities (3) and the final category of intent to stay (3) resulted from the code of participating does not drive intent to stay (3).

Summary of Themes for Research Question Three

The themes synthesized from IQ9 and IQ10, under RQ3, were organizational culture (50), management dynamics (16), and positive organizational ecosystem (20). There were similarities between the codes for the themes of organizational culture and positive organizational ecosystem, indicating the similarities of experience between those employees who *had* participated in a leadership development program and those employees who had *not* participated in a leadership development program sponsored by the organization. Both groups indicated that participation in a leadership development program does not drive overall intent to stay, as there are other, stronger, contributing factors.

Summary

Chapter 4 included the results of the coding and synthesis of the responses of participants in this study into themes. Every participant voiced their thoughts and

experiences as either a participant or a non-participant of employer sponsored leadership development programs in response to the research questions posed. The process of developing themes indicated similarities between the factors for intent to stay between employees who participated in leadership development programs and those who did not participate in leadership development programs. The similarities and differences are outlined in Chapter 5 of this study.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

The objective of this qualitative study was to explore the role of participation in corporate leadership development programs and the subsequent factors for intent to stay of high-potential employees in the biotech industry. The intent of qualitative research is to contribute to a more thorough understanding of the particular area of study (Sargeant, 2012). This research involved a bounded case study approach to understand more fully the factors for an employee's intent to stay by capturing the shared experiences of eight employees of a biotechnology company based in the United States. The participants comprised four participants who had participated in an employer-sponsored leadership development program and four participants who had *not* participated in an employer-sponsored leadership development program. All participants were based in the United States and had worked at the company for at least 2 years. In this chapter, the research questions are answered, the categories and themes are discussed and defined, the implications of the findings are explored, and the defining factors that drive employee intent to stay are discussed.

Research Questions

Data from the interviews provided data that not only answered the research questions but also further defined the factors of employee intent to stay in an organization. The findings indicate that specific leadership development programs do not necessarily contribute to an employee's intent to stay as strongly as manager involvement, communication, authenticity, and ability to grow and develop within the organization. Overall, employee experience, engagement, and the overall ecosystem were the motivating factors behind the intent to stay. The research questions are answered from the data and presented in the following sections.

Research Question One

RQ1 was, "What factors influence employees' decisions to participate in or abstain from organization-sponsored leadership development programs, and how do these programs impact their perceptions of the organization's commitment to their growth and development?" From the data collected from the interviews,

employees who participated in a leadership development program did so because they were motivated by the opportunity for professional development, and they felt it was a privilege to be selected. Those employees who had not participated in a leadership development program indicated that their failure to participate was not their choice, but rather was due to a lack of opportunity or not being selected. Both groups indicated that the programs themselves were an indication that the company was interested in employee growth and development, yet the non-participants felt they were being left out of the opportunity to develop themselves through a company-sponsored program. This lack of opportunity creates a retention risk for this group as developmental opportunities can, overall, increase employee commitment to stay (George, 2015).

The participants who did participate in the company sponsored leadership development programs had mixed responses regarding their overall experience. Although some participants found their involvement resulted in an impactful experience, that impact was not necessarily due to the program itself but rather because of the sense of community with fellow colleagues that emerged during the program. The organizational recognition of these participants as ‘top talent’ positively impacted their performance and motivation (Festing & Schäfer, 2014); however, simply being selected to participate did not create a long-lasting impact on perception of their value for these participants. Participants felt that from a development perspective, the program helped them grow. However, there was frustration that resulted at the conclusion of the program because there were no identified next steps for career progression. There was also a feeling of a lack of involvement from the organization’s leaders. Participant #2 stated that she “personally had a great experience and that there could have been more executive level involvement”.

When asked what components of the leadership development program was the most valuable, participants shared the value of working more closely with colleagues, building rapport, and learning how to manage the additional workload of the program on top of their existing responsibilities. This response supports the sentiment that there was a lack of leadership involvement as none of the

participants identified leadership involvement as a valuable takeaway from the program. Participant #1 also shared that her participation was “very much the opportunity to interact in a group and we were managing a lot of personalities on a tight schedule.” The underlying value for this group of participants was connection with colleagues and increased self-awareness of individual capabilities.

Under RQ1, the participants also shared their thoughts on how their participation in the leadership development program impacted their perception of the organization’s commitment to their individual growth and development. All felt supported mostly through the actions of their direct managers. Because of the personal connection participants had with their managers, they felt encouraged to continue to grow and learn. Employees who have a healthy relationship with their managers and feel a sense of autonomy and support in their role enjoy a greater sense of belonging (Ghosh et al., 2013). Beyond that relationship, participants felt little organizational commitment as upon completion of the program, they made little progress with career or position growth. Participant #3 commented that he “is still sort of floating in the organization.”

The themes that surfaced from the responses to RQ1 included navigating career development, employee sense of value, and interaction with management. These themes emerged across both groups of participants, regardless of participation in an organization-sponsored leadership development program. RQ2 is explored next regarding the factors outside of leadership development programs that contribute to intent to stay.

Research Question Two

RQ2 was, “What external factors, including experiences with managers and colleagues, influence employees’ intent to stay with the organization, and can specific instances of these factors be identified as significant contributors to their decision making?” The data collected from both the employees who had participated and those employees who had *not* participated in a leadership development program highlighted that colleagues, managers, and a feeling of being valued highly influenced employees’ intent to stay. Some participants also highlighted that their involvement in the science of developing and producing

therapies for patients around the world was a strong influence in their intent to stay as their work had strong personal meaning. Participant #4 shared that, “good relationships, experiences with managers and colleagues, and interactions with stakeholders” drives her intent to stay. Participant #3 responded, “The leadership training doesn’t matter as I’m mostly staying for the science that drives me.” Participant #6 specifically shared that her intent to stay is supported by “a very good relationship with [her] supervisor.”

Further data supporting experiences with managers or colleagues as a driver influencing intent to stay continued to be shared throughout the interview process with both groups of participants. Both groups highlighted the value of communication with managers, relationships with colleagues, and a sense of feeling valued as main drivers contributing to overall intent to stay. Participant #8 shared that she has had “the best experience with managers with open communication and trust” and Participant #2 added that she “feels accepted in terms of her opinions and that a very welcoming manager in terms of caring about wellbeing and removing roadblocks” has been critical. These responses provide insights into the ecosystem of the organization and what is valued by employees. All participants in this study felt passionate about working in the biotechnology industry with a focus on serving the patients. Their connection and collaboration with peers and managers made that work even more rewarding.

RQ2 resulted in three strong themes from both participants and non-participants of leadership development programs. The themes of supportive employee experiences, meaningful engagement, and cultivating a strong ecosystem resonated from the participants. RQ3, which is discussed next, brought together the question of perception of organizational commitment to employee growth and development aligned to leadership development programs.

Research Question Three

RQ3 was, “How does employee perception of the organization’s commitment to their growth and development relate to the role of leadership development programs in enhancing employee intent to stay with the organization?” Personal and professional growth through development and learning

opportunities directly influences retention (Kossivi et al., 2016). The data from the interviews questions asked to both participants and non-participants of leadership development programs indicate that simply having the programs available, whether employees participate or not in the programs, sends a signal to employees that the organization is committed to employee growth and development. Whether that relays to a factor of intent to stay by employees is a different issue. Although employees feel supported and encouraged to grow in their roles, that does not necessarily relate to their overall intent to stay. Participant #1 shared, “I perceive the commitment is there and I feel fully supported but I need to be the one to go find the opportunities.” Participant #1’s comment indicates that even though the organization is supporting development, she recognized that it is still the responsibility of the employee to move their career forward, whether internally or through pathways external to the organization.

The organization’s financial investment into the employee’s development did not have as much impact on intent to stay as perceived managerial support of the employee’s development. The way that people are managed and the perceived support of an employee’s growth and development by their manager have a direct influence on job satisfaction of employees (Kossivi et al., 2016). Participant #5 shared, “This isn’t about money, it’s the expression of support from my manager that really matters.” Participant #3 stated, “I do believe the organization, more broadly, is still interested in investing in me as a person, but my manager is the one who will make it happen, or not.”

The final area of exploration under RQ3 was specifically about the role of leadership development programs in improving employee intent to stay with the organization. Participants who had not been involved in a leadership development program indicated that there is potential bias in the selection process for leadership development programs and did not believe leadership development programs were necessary to drive intent to stay. Participant #8 stated, “It was really the minds coming together and thinking and talking about things that is the greatest benefit. I don’t think there needs to be a specific program to make that happen.” Participant #5 expanded further with a direct conclusion that, “I think these programs give a

person a stepping stone to leave and they don't really make a difference for a person to be successful.”

When the participants of the leadership development programs responded to this prompt, they too indicated that the programs themselves did not necessarily drive intent to stay. Participant #4 shared, “Participation in a program itself may not actually be a driver for someone to want to stay with the organization.” Participant #3 also shared,

I don't know that participation plays any role. And the reason isn't because I don't think they're valuable. I think they are valuable. It's just that there are people who will do it and then just move on anyways because they just wanted experience to get into leadership, so they participated and moved on.

Three themes emerged from questions posed for RQ3, organizational culture, management dynamics, and positive organizational ecosystem. These themes support the employee perception of the organization's commitment to their growth and development and the role of leadership development programs as directly related to overall intent to stay. A positive organizational ecosystem furthermore provided significant value to employees and was a greater factor in overall intent to stay than participation in a leadership development program.

Definitions of Themes

Multiple themes emerged from the three research questions, which were then synthesized into the following three overarching themes: experience, engagement, and ecosystem. These themes support and reinforce employee intent to stay, regardless of participation in a leadership development program within the organization. The themes of experience, engagement, and ecosystem emerged from the participant interviews to support and provide definition to the factors that drive employee intent to stay (see Table 9).

Table 9*Concluding Themes from All Three Research Questions*

Concluding Themes	Themes from All Research Questions
Engagement (175)	Navigating career development (58) Meaningful engagement (78) Employee sense of value (39)
Experience (109)	Interaction with management (37) Management dynamics (16) Supportive employee experience (56)
Ecosystems (114)	Organizational culture (50) Positive organizational ecosystem (20) Cultivating ecosystems (44)

The theme of engagement (175) was synthesized from the three themes of navigating career development (58), meaningful engagement (78), and employee sense of value (39). The theme of experience (109) emerged from the themes of interaction with management (37), management dynamics (16), and supportive employee experience (56). The final theme of ecosystems (114) was an aggregation of the themes of organizational culture (50), positive organizational ecosystems (20), and cultivating ecosystems (44).

Engagement

The overall factor of engagement was determined from the themes of navigating career development, meaningful engagement, and employee sense of value.

Navigating Career Development. The ability to grow within the organization and optimize internal career development was a strong influence for intent to stay. Participant #4 shared that her involvement allowed her to see “opportunities to take other leadership development programs” and that the company would support and encourage continued involvement. Participant #1 also shared, “I perceive the commitment is there and I feel fully supported but I need to be the one to go find the opportunities.”

Career development has long been viewed as an important component of employability and is essential as employees need to grow and learn to keep up with

the evolving needs of an organization (Luhn, 2016; Tejan & Sabil, 2019). Internal career development opportunities, such as leadership development programs, provides a source for employees to continue to learn and should be learner-centered, pragmatic, and practical to implement (Jeyakumar et al., 2023). Making the programs available is the first step, followed by encouraging participation and providing time for employees to participate. Employees who feel empowered to make their learning a way to develop their careers as part of their priorities and schedules feel a higher level of engagement and intent to stay within the organization.

Employees are more likely to remain committed and engaged when they see a clear path for advancement and opportunities for skill development and growth. Providing employees with access to training programs, mentorship opportunities, and career planning resources enables them to chart their career progression within the company. Regular performance feedback and constructive coaching from managers help employees identify areas for improvement and set achievable career goals. When employees feel supported in their career aspirations and see that the organization values their development, they are more inclined to stay and contribute their talents and expertise over the long term. Organizations that prioritize and invest in comprehensive career development initiatives are better positioned to retain top talent and foster a culture of continuous learning, professional advancement, and intent to stay.

Meaningful Engagement. Meaningful engagement was an important criterion to all participants of this study, regardless of whether they had participated in a leadership development program or not. Participant #4 shared, “I’m embracing the opportunity even through I’m not a first line leader right now and I now have relationships with people that I wouldn’t otherwise have had.” Participant #4 also added, “My manager and I have regular conversations along the way.” Participant #8 stated that she has had “the best experience with managers with open communication and trust.” Research has shown that a human-centered connection between a manager or leader in the organization with their employee greatly influences employee experience and intent to stay (Covella et al., 2017).

During this study interview process, Participant #1 shared an experience she shared with her manager that exemplifies meaningful engagement. After sharing with her manager that she was considering taking a job that had been offered to her at another company, her manager encouraged her to talk about the reasons she was considering the change. Participant #1 and her manager had a very open and honest conversation about what was best for her as an individual. The result was a feeling that her manager cared about her as a person, regardless of whether she remained in her role. This interaction further heightened her intent to stay because of the meaningful engagement. Meaningful engagement is a factor for intent to stay in an organization as connections are made between colleagues.

Meaningful engagement entails an emotional connection and sense of purpose in one's work. Employees who are meaningfully engaged feel a strong alignment between their values, goals, and the organization's mission. This engagement often translates into a genuine enthusiasm and commitment to their tasks, as they understand the significance of their contributions to the company's success. Meaningful engagement fosters a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction, as employees derive personal meaning from their work beyond just a paycheck. This emotional investment leads to higher levels of motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction. Meaningful engagement also creates a positive work environment characterized by collaboration, creativity, and mutual support, where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to make a difference resulting in a strong sense of loyalty and an overall greater intent to stay.

Employee Sense of Value. An employee's sense of value is a strong indicator for intent to stay. Participant #1 stated that involvement in the leadership development program has "kind of empowered me to make suggestions that can impact others." Participant #5 shared that the "the biggest reason why I stay is how I am treated and that I feel valued." Participant #3 stated, "I do believe the organization more broadly, is still interested in investing in me as a person." These statements indicate a sense of feeling valued by the organization, which strengthens the overall intent to stay.

Employee sense of value refers to employees' perception or feeling about their worth, contribution, and importance within the organization. It encompasses how employees perceive their role, their impact, and the appreciation they receive for their efforts. A sense of belonging is derived from feeling valued, which increases an employee's self-esteem and provides greater engagement in the organization (Begen & Turner-Cobb, 2015). A greater sense of self-esteem creates greater empowerment to share ideas, suggest improvements, and engage in new challenges, which then helps the employee to provide value and to feel valued. Ultimately, when employees feel valued, they are more engaged, motivated, and committed to their work and to the organization as a whole, leading to higher productivity, better performance, and lower turnover rates.

Experience

The factor of experience emerged from the themes of interaction with management, management dynamics, and supportive employee experience.

Interaction With Management. When asked about interactions with management, Participant #6 shared that she "has a very good relationship with [her] supervisor." Participant #5 responded that her intention to stay was influenced by a "very good relationship with my team and my manager sees me as a leader." Participant #6 also shared that her manager "trusts me and gives me a lot of responsibility." When employees feel a sense of connection and support from their manager or leader, it increases their level of experience, as they are willing to stretch themselves professionally, thus gaining more skills in the workplace.

When employees experience supportive, respectful, and constructive interactions with their managers, it fosters a sense of belonging, trust, and commitment (King, 2016). Effective communication, regular feedback, and recognition of achievements from management demonstrate that employees are valued, and their contributions are acknowledged. Furthermore, managers who actively engage with their team members, listen to their concerns, and provide opportunities for growth and development create a conducive environment where employees feel invested in the organization's mission and goals. As a result, employees are more likely to feel satisfied, motivated, and loyal, leading to a

stronger and more cohesive workforce. Positive interaction with management enhances employee morale and engagement and plays a pivotal role in influencing employee's intent to stay within the organization.

Management Dynamics. Management dynamics across an organization can directly impact an employee. Participant #1 shared that involvement in the leadership development program “empowered me to make suggestions for things that can impact people in a more broad sense and that [she] felt supported” by her manager who advocates for her with other leaders. Participant #1 shared that his involvement in the leadership development program provided insights into how leaders interacted with each other around a shared goal as they came together to share organizational initiatives with program participants.

When there is cohesion and alignment between management and leadership, employees are more likely to feel supported, motivated, and valued. Managers who are empowered by effective leadership are better equipped to create a positive work environment, provide clear direction, and foster open communication with their teams. Conversely, discord or inconsistency between managers and leaders can lead to confusion, frustration, and a lack of trust among employees. In such situations, employees may feel disconnected from the organization's goals and direction, impacting their sense of purpose and commitment. Therefore, strong collaboration and synergy between managers and leaders are essential for creating a conducive workplace culture where employees feel empowered, engaged, and motivated to stay and contribute to the organization's success (Covella et al., 2017). The stronger the connection between the employee and the manager, the greater the overall intent to stay within the organization.

Supportive Employee Experience. An employee who feels supported to make connections beyond their specific team enjoys a more holistic view of the organization and will have a stronger employee experience. Participant #3 stated, “I was seeking to build my network.” Participant #3's involvement in the program allowed her to accomplish that goal. Participant #4 commented that she is “growing up with the organization and growing her role,” which motivates her to want to stay. Newer in her career, Participant #4 recognizes opportunities within the

organization to grow her experience and herself. Exposure to colleagues from various divisions in the organization, through involvement in the leadership development program, broadens perspectives, increases understanding of the larger business, and expands networks. Participation in the cohort-based leadership development program provided encouragement for employees to look beyond their immediate role and team.

A supportive employee experience within an organization yields numerous benefits, both for the employees and the company as a whole. When employees feel valued, respected, and supported in their roles, they are more engaged, motivated, and committed. This mindset leads to increased productivity, higher job satisfaction, and lower turnover rates (Ghosh et al., 2013). Moreover, a supportive employee experience fosters a positive workplace culture where collaboration, creativity, and innovation thrive. Employees are more likely to do more than their job responsibilities when they feel supported by their managers and colleagues. Investing in a supportive employee experience is not only beneficial for individual well-being but also for organizational success and growth.

Ecosystem

The factor of an ecosystem and its importance on overall employee experience was formulated from the themes of organizational culture, positive organizational ecosystem, and cultivating ecosystems.

Organizational Culture. Overall, organizational culture and feeling a sense of belonging is a strong factor for intent to stay. Participant #2's response included that "participation reinforced the company's commitment to women, leadership, and learning and that the focus on DE&I has a big impact for me." Participant #3 shared that his participation in the leadership development program pushed him outside of his comfort zone to engage with colleagues he would have never met due to his work being very solitary. As a result, Participant #3 gained knowledge about other areas of the business that he found intriguing. Participant #5 discussed her need for feeling connected to the culture of the organization, which prompted her involvement in many of the Employee Resource Groups to create a sense of belonging.

A positive and supportive culture that values transparency, respect, and collaboration fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty among employees. Employees who feel aligned with the company's values and mission are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their work. Conversely, a toxic or unhealthy culture characterized by micromanagement, a lack of communication, or favoritism can lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement among employees, prompting them to seek opportunities elsewhere. Organizational culture is a by-product of organizational values, interactions between employees and leaders, and company priorities and standards being demonstrated consistently by leaders (Ellera et al., 2023). When leaders and managers align their actions with organizational values, trust and commitment of employees increases and the organizational culture thrives.

Positive Organizational Ecosystem. An organizational ecosystem that provides support for individuals beyond their specific role creates an enjoyable work-life balance. Participant #2 stated that she “personally had a great experience and appreciated the executive level type of commitment” during her involvement in the leadership development program. Participant #1 reflected that within the leadership development program, the team project resulted in a heavy time commitment and though “it was the least enjoyable, it was the most valuable part of the program” due to the connection that was created across the team and the support she received from her manager to take the time she needed during working hours to complete the project. Participant #1's manager recognized the importance of work-life balance and did not want her involvement in the program to impact her schedule outside of working hours. This commitment and support is an example of a positive organizational ecosystem in action.

A favorable organizational ecosystem that supports work-life balance impacts an employee's intent to stay within an organization. Employees increasingly prioritize maintaining a healthy balance between their professional and personal responsibilities. Within a healthy organizational ecosystem exists a harmonious interplay of various factors including supportive leadership, a culture of trust and collaboration, fair compensation and benefits, opportunities for growth

and development, and a focus on employee well-being. Employees feel valued, respected, and appreciated when these elements are in place, leading to higher job satisfaction and engagement. They are more likely to form strong connections with their colleagues and managers, feel a sense of ownership in the organization's success, and remain committed to contributing their best efforts over the long term when operating within a healthy ecosystem. A satisfied and motivated workforce leads to increased productivity, improved performance, and higher levels of innovation and creativity.

A positive organizational ecosystem not only benefits the individual employees but also contributes to the overall health and prosperity of the company and supports lower turnover. Lower turnover translates into significant cost savings as recruitment and training expenses are reduced significantly. Organizations with a reputation for prioritizing employee well-being and fostering a positive organizational ecosystem are more attractive to potential employees, creating a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Cultivating Ecosystems. Ecosystems within organizations are not meant to be stagnant, as that will deter employees from feeling engaged. A healthy organizational ecosystem should be cultivated with fresh ideas, employee involvement, and leader support. Participant #4 shared, "It was fascinating to hear about things I might not get to hear and that the experience was a more open dialogue about women's access to leadership." Participant #5 reflected on not being invited to participate in a leadership development program and feeling a loss of engagement: "This isn't about money, but it's that expression of support." Not having the opportunity to participate left her feeling unsupported by the organization.

Cultivating a company's ecosystem to create an environment where employees want to stay requires a multifaceted approach that addresses various aspects of organizational culture, leadership, and employee well-being. Fostering a culture of trust, transparency, and open communication is essential. Employees should feel empowered to voice their opinions, concerns, and ideas without fear of judgment or reprisal. Providing opportunities for professional growth and

development through training programs, mentorship, and advancement pathways demonstrates the organization's investment in its employees' long-term success (Flowers & Hughes, 1973). Offering competitive compensation and benefits packages, including flexible work arrangements and comprehensive wellness programs, reinforces the organization's commitment to supporting employee well-being and work-life balance. Strong and empathetic leadership is also crucial in setting the tone for a positive workplace culture and ensuring employees feel valued, respected, and appreciated for their contributions. By prioritizing these elements and continually seeking feedback from employees to identify areas for improvement, companies can cultivate an ecosystem where employees not only want to stay but also thrive and grow professionally.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study have theoretical and practical implications. Theoretical implications illuminate how this study contributes to existing literature, highlighting novel insights, theoretical frameworks, or perspectives. Practical implications offer recommendations and strategies to enhance practices in the real environment, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Leadership Development Programs

The theoretical implications resulting from this study challenge the idea that company-sponsored leadership development programs contribute to retention and employee intent to stay. Companies track participants of leadership development programs to determine how long they stay with the organization. This practice is a retroactive process and cannot measure the employee's intent to stay with the organization and whether that is a direct result of participation in the program or not. Companies in the United States spend an average of \$4,000 and 39 hours per employee participating in leadership development programming, equating to millions of dollars, developing high-potential leaders with the goal that they will retain their top talent (Gallup, 2020). Leadership development training exceeds \$366 billion globally (Westfall, 2019). The findings from this study indicate that although the leadership development program serves as a development tool, the

program is not solely responsible for participant's intent to stay. Other factors contribute to an employee's intrinsic motivation to want to stay with the organization. Although the components of the company-sponsored leadership development program were impactful, such as networking opportunities and increased personal awareness, employees who did not participate in a leadership development program were able to find and experience these same components in other ways.

A practical implication of this study, as related to leadership development programs within organizations, is that employer enhancing leadership development programs to include more of the factors for intent to stay can ultimately result in a strong development program that strengthens employee intent to stay. This study also provides employers the opportunity to specifically support employees who are not participating in a leadership development programs by creating a positive employee experience, building significant employee engagement, and providing a supportive employee ecosystem to promote intent to stay for this employee population. A small percentage of employees within an organization typically participate in designated leadership development programs, which incur a significant investment on the part of the company. A practical implication of this study would be to identify methods for those resources to be used more broadly across the organization to promote the factors that drive intent to stay. As a result, more employees would benefit, productivity and performance would increase, and ultimately retention would be greater across the organization.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

First published in 1959 by Frederick Herzberg, Professor and Chairman of the Psychology Department at Case Western University, the Herzberg theory of job satisfaction addressed the understanding of motivation at work (Lindsay et al., 1967; McKee, 2007). Per Herzberg's two-factor theory, employee job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are influenced by separate factors (Pinder, 2024). Herzberg identified five factors as strong indicators of job satisfaction, which included achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement. According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, the characteristics of an employee's work can

gratify achievement, competency, self-realization, and other needs that make one happy and satisfied and do not lead to dissatisfaction if the same characteristics are absent. Herzberg's two-factor theory is supported by the theoretical implications in this study. Herzberg's factors of achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement were all factors mentioned by the participants in this study. Whether they were involved in a leadership development program or not, these factors resonated with all of the participants in this study. The motivations for employees to stay with the organization are intrinsically motivated. Factors such as positive employee experience, significant employee engagement, and a supportive employee ecosystem support Herzberg's theory.

The practical implications of this study not only further support Herzberg's theory but also provide a template to promote engagement of employees in the workplace. This study revealed that participation in the leadership development program did not solely motivate the intent to stay. None of the participants felt that their nomination into the program or participation in the program would dissuade them from leaving the organization if presented with another opportunity. It was, however, the experience, engagement, and ecosystem that participants felt as a byproduct of the program, which motivated their intent to stay and to be less likely to explore outside opportunities. Study participants who had not participated in a leadership development program were able to find these same motivators outside of a formal leadership development program to further drive their intent to stay. Participants in the leadership development programs found the learning and development components embedded in the program to be beneficial for helping them to develop their professional skills; however, the development opportunity itself did not equate to the specific factors for their intent to stay. Participants in this study were able to clearly separate out the developmental value of the leadership development program, which resulted in better skills to perform their work, from the intrinsic motivators for intent to stay that were almost secondary in the program.

The practical implications of this study, as aligned to Herzberg's theory, provide an opportunity for employers to determine ways to strengthen the intrinsic

motivations of a positive employee experience, significant employee engagement, and a supportive employee ecosystem for all employees, not just for those employees participating in a leadership development program. Strengthening these factors across the entire organization will drive engagement and intent to stay for all employees.

Factors of Intent to Stay

To drive an employee's intent to stay within an organization, which promotes productivity and satisfaction, three practical implications should be considered: a positive employee experience, significant employee engagement, and a supportive employee ecosystem. Without these three factors, employee satisfaction decreases and a significant reduction in overall intent to stay is experienced. Characteristics of each factor were provided throughout the study interview process.

Positive Employee Experience. Practical implications regarding a positive employee experience include ways an organization can enhance the work environment, provide opportunities for personal growth and development, recognize and reward performance, and overall partner with employees to enhance satisfaction. Specific ways employers can promote a positive employee experience include consistent communication between leaders and employees, honest conversations about growth and development opportunities, support of work-life balance between professional obligations and personal commitments, and empowerment of employees as decision makers for work streams within their control. Encouraging a growth mindset among employees and their leaders also enhances the overall employee experience by fostering greater alignment of thinking across all levels of the organization, promoting collaboration and unity.

Significant Employee Engagement. Practical implications regarding significant employee engagement include strengthening relationships with peers, promoting supportive relationships with managers, and providing opportunities for professional development and career growth. Specific methods organizations can implement to promote significant employee engagement include consistent communication, involvement in decisions that involve the team, autonomy on lines

of work, and ongoing and consistent conversations that include feedback and suggestions for growth and development opportunities. Employees experience greater levels of engagement when they feel involved and that their contributions matter. To foster employee engagement, communication and feedback needs to be on a regular basis and include both positive feedback and constructive feedback. Employees are more engaged when the positive work they do is recognized and acknowledged as well as areas for improvement are identified.

Supportive Employee Ecosystem. Practical implications for a supportive employee ecosystem include a supportive organizational culture with an emphasis on values, a positive work environment and team culture, and promotion of an inclusive and purpose-driven environment. One way an organization can build a supportive employee ecosystem includes providing opportunities for employee involvement in organizational programs outside of an employee's specific role. This goal can be accomplished through volunteer opportunities, participation in employee resource groups, cross-functional job shadowing, rotational job exchanges, and more. When an employee is able to enjoy experiences beyond their specific role, the result is a stronger organizational lens, which provides greater insights and understanding of the company as a whole and supports a more inclusive and purpose-driven environment. When the employee ecosystem is established to support employees both personally and professionally, the entire organization benefits.

Synthesizing the Factors of Intent to Stay

The results from this study provided significant insights into the factors that contribute to employee intent to stay. This study involved an exploration of the role of leadership development programs within an organization and whether participation in those programs increases employee intent to stay. The findings of this study resulted in the determination of three key factors, outside of leadership development programs, that drive employee intent to stay: positive employee experience, significant employee engagement, and a supportive employee ecosystem.

Positive Employee Experience

Positive employee experience is a strong factor in overall employee intent to stay. The contributing factors synthesized from this study that drive a positive employee experience include work environment, personal growth and development, and recognition and satisfaction (see Figure 2). An organization's work environment is strengthened when employees feel embedded in the organization and perceive that they, and their contributions, matter. Promoting work-life balance with things such as workday flexibility and providing employees with a sense of autonomy throughout the organization is an important step in creating a vibrant work environment. Employees want to feel valued and be able to leverage their talents, explore their natural curiosity, and receive open and honest communication from their leaders.

Personal growth and development opportunities also contribute to an overall positive employee experience. Employees who are able to explore opportunities to grow in their role, personally and professionally, feel more valued by the organization. Learning specific role-based professional skills is as important as learning personal skills such as emotional intelligence and effective communication skills, which enhance the person in their role. Supporting a learning mindset across the organization drives innovation, productivity, employee development, and satisfaction. Providing development opportunities for *all* employees is also critical. Although there is a need to offer select development programs for different levels within an organization, it is important to create an inclusive environment where development is available for all employees to promote inclusion.

Employees who feel recognized and valued for their contributions report greater levels of satisfaction overall and are more likely to enjoy a positive employee experience. Recognition and reward programs highlight specific accomplishments for an employee, motivate them toward future achievements, and most importantly, allow them to feel that they are seen and that their work matters. Recognizing work anniversaries, encouraging involvement in additional projects or initiatives, supporting participation in employee resource groups, and acknowledging significant work accomplishments or contributions are ways to

provide recognition to employees. Simply thanking an employee for the work they do provides a strong sense of recognition. A positive employee experience happens when employees feel seen, heard, listened to, and valued.

Significant Employee Engagement

The second factor of intent to stay, significant employee engagement, is synthesized from the contributing factors of relationships with peers, relationships with managers, and professional development and career growth (see Figure 2). Employees who have relationships with their peers enjoy a higher intrinsic motivation to stay with the organization. As one participant in this study shared, “People matter.” Providing networking opportunities for employees across the organization itself and across all levels of the organization increases employee engagement. Supporting mentoring and reverse-mentoring programs also encourages employee engagement and the opportunity to learn from each other. An employee who is able to cultivate personal connections with colleagues has a higher emotional investment in the organization.

Employee engagement increases when an employee has a positive relationship with their manager. A manager who promotes transparency, honest communication, and alignment of an employee’s personal strengths with job responsibilities ultimately provides a higher sentiment of trust and engagement. Managers can build the employee-manager relationship through regular one-on-one meetings, taking interest in an employee’s personal and professional goals, providing opportunities for employee development, and providing autonomy for the employee to drive decisions. Positive manager-employee relationships create a conducive environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas, concerns, and aspirations. Managers who provide regular feedback, and avoid micro-managing, empower employees to perform at their best and take ownership of their work resulting in greater productivity and job satisfaction.

Professional development and career growth are significant contributing factors to promote employee engagement. Providing development opportunities for all employees contributes to their intent to stay, as they feel valued, learn new skills, and grow as individuals. As an example, employer-sponsored rotational

programs across the organization, where employees ‘rotate into’ a different role for a period of time, provide significant development for the employee and give the employee a broader breadth of experience to position them for potential new roles. When employees are provided with avenues for continuous learning, skill enhancement, and advancement, they feel valued and are more engaged overall. The prospect of career mobility and meaningful career paths motivate employees to remain engaged and dedicated to their work. As employees see their skills and competencies grow, they become more productive and committed to the organization overall. As a result, investing in professional development and career growth not only benefits the individual employee but also grows employee engagement overall.

Supportive Employee Ecosystem

The third factor of intent to stay, a supportive employee ecosystem, is derived from the supporting factors of organizational culture and values, work environment and culture, and an inclusive and purpose-driven environment (see Figure 2). A supportive employee ecosystem is created when there is alignment with overall organizational culture and values. Employees thrive with a sense of belonging in a culture that values diversity and promotes inclusion. A diverse and inclusive culture promotes innovation and creativity as different viewpoints are incorporated into discussions when there is a need to solve problems or make decisions. A strong organizational culture fosters norms, behaviors, and attitudes that promote collaboration, trust, and respect among employees. Employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement, motivation, and commitment when they perceive that their organization’s culture and values align with their beliefs and aspirations. In this type of ecosystem, employees have greater job satisfaction, engagement, and desire to stay with the organization.

The work environment and the culture within an employee’s specific team are additional components of a supportive employee ecosystem. Strong channels for transparent and frequent communication establish a positive work environment for employees across the team and help them feel embedded in the organization. A supportive work environment is characterized by open communication, trust, and

collaboration, where employees feel safe to voice their opinions, share ideas, and express concerns. A strong team culture fosters shared goals among colleagues, camaraderie, and mutual respect, promoting a sense of belonging and unity. A positive work environment and team culture contribute to increased productivity, creativity, and innovation as employees collaborate to achieve common objectives. By prioritizing a conducive work environment and a supportive team culture, there are opportunities to leverage diverse talents and employees will thrive.

A supportive employee ecosystem is a direct result of an inclusive and purpose-driven environment throughout the organization. A purpose-driven culture instills a shared sense of mission and values, aligning employees' personal aspirations with the organization's overarching goals. When employees understand and connect with the broader purpose and mission of the organization, they are more likely to feel a sense of meaning in their work. When employees understand how their work directly contributes to a larger purpose, they feel a deeper sense of community, fulfillment, and motivation. In the biotech industry, a focus on the science behind the work of the organization is important to employees as part of a strong ecosystem. Employees are motivated to solve scientific problems to provide better therapies for patients. The solving of challenging scientific problems requires significant inclusion and collaboration as scientists share findings, discoveries, and innovative processes. The science behind the work of employees at a biotech organization is extremely purpose driven. The ability to combine inclusivity of thought and purpose-driven work creates an extremely supportive employee ecosystem.

Interconnectedness of Experience, Engagement, and Ecosystem

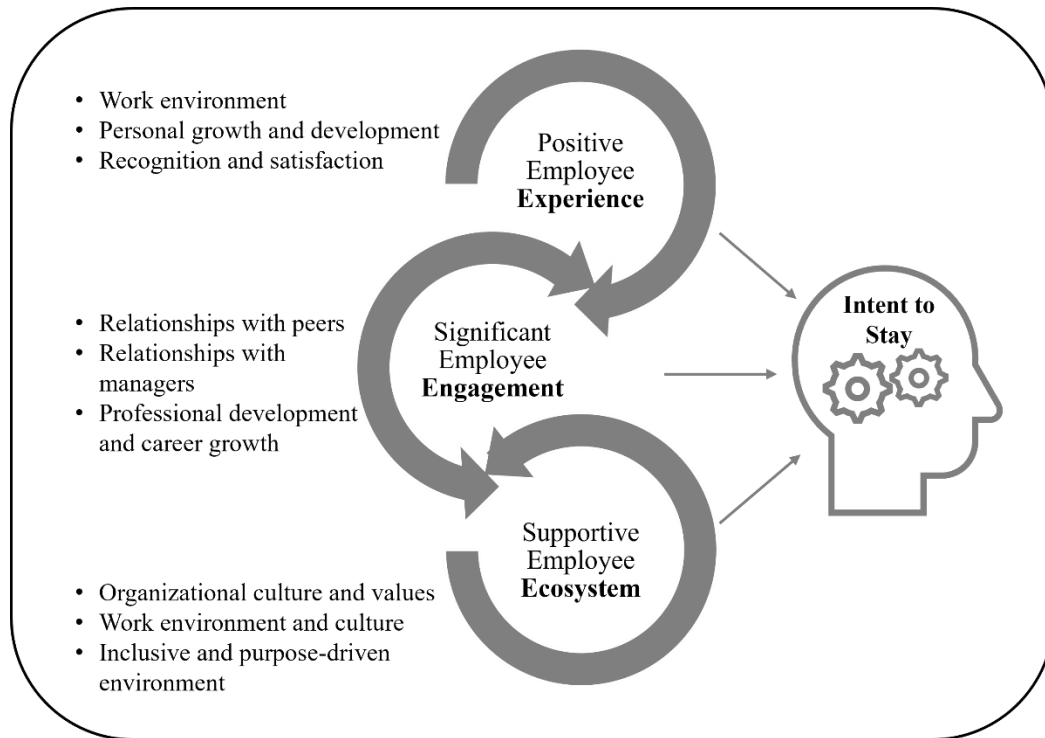
The three overarching factors that support employee intent to stay—positive employee experience, significant employee engagement, and a supportive employee ecosystem—are distinct and yet strongly interconnected (see Figure 2). These factors are critical when considering what drives employee intent to stay within an organization and are even stronger when interconnected. As an example, a supportive employee ecosystem contributes to significant employee engagement, which then results in a positive employee experience. Alternatively, significant

employee engagement supports both a positive employee experience and a supportive employee ecosystem. To maximize intent to stay throughout an organization, all three factors should be prioritized as they are intrinsically linked.

A positive employee experience ensures that employees feel valued and have meaningful interactions throughout their journey within the organization, from the time they are hired into the organization until the time they leave. Significant employee engagement reflects the emotional connection and investment that employees have in their work, with their colleagues, and to the organization's mission and goals. A supportive employee ecosystem fosters an inclusive culture that reinforces employees' sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization. All three factors increase loyalty to the organization, promote a sense of individual value, increase satisfaction and commitment to the organization, and increase performance and productivity. By focusing on the interconnectedness of all three factors, organizations can significantly increase employees' intent to stay, leading to greater stability, productivity, and performance. When there is greater productivity, performance, and success, employees are more motivated to stay with the organization. Not only do these factors promote employee intent to stay, they also support the strengthening of an organization's retention metrics, which saves substantial time and financial resources overall.

Figure 2

Synthesized Themes That Contribute to Factors That Drive Employee Intent to Stay



Limitations of the Study

As limitations are part of every study, five limitations to this research were identified: a singular industry, a small sampling of participants, inaccessibility to internal retention metrics, no identification of or separation of types of leadership development programs, and geographical limitations as participants were all from one country.

First, the study was conducted with employees from one industry, the biotechnology industry. As most industries and organizations offer leadership development programming, it would be interesting to expand this study beyond the biotech industry. Future research could be conducted to gain more of a cross industry viewpoint on factors that contribute to employee intent to stay.

Second, this bounded case study was formulated from a small sampling of employees. Although the results are significant based on the saturation and depth of the interviews, additional interviews could be conducted across a larger sampling of employees to reinforce the finding. The essence of the bounded case study

comparing employees who had participated in leadership development programs and employees who had not participated in leadership development programs validated the intent of this study. Interviewing a larger number of employees in these categories would further validate this study's findings.

A third limitation to this study was the inability to incorporate specific employee data to measure participation and retention metrics for those employees in leadership development programs against retention metrics of employees not participating in leadership development programs. A restriction of the study was that the employer and the participants could not be identified, thus identifying company metrics could not be used. As a result, being able to quantify retention of high-potential participants of leadership development programs was a limitation. Comparing the results of this study against retention metrics to determine whether intent to stay factors relate to retention metrics could be a future study.

A fourth limitation of this study was that the types of leadership development programs available within the organization were not analyzed or made a qualifying criterion for the participants. The only qualifying factor for this study was if the participant was involved in a nomination-based leadership development program created by the learning and development team within HR. Further analysis of the factors for intent to stay could be correlated to the different types of leadership development programs, which incorporate varying program lengths, level and role of employee participant, and if the overall intent of the program is for development or succession purposes. Finally, this study was conducted with employees who reside in the United States, creating a geographical limitation on the full scope of factors that drive employee intent to stay with an organization.

Recommendations for Future Research

Employee intent to stay with an organization may be influenced differently by different organizations and different geographical locations. An analysis of the type of leadership development program the participants were involved in may provide additional information. A comparison study to examine intent to stay as

aligned with retention metrics would be of value for employers looking to strengthen the length of tenure for high-potential employees.

Global Input

With the focus of this study revolving around employees working in the biotechnology industry within the United States, there is an opportunity to implement a global study to determine factors that apply to a broader audience. Biotech companies operate around the world. Cultural differences and provisions within countries differ greatly when it relates to the overall employee experience. Factors for intent to stay for employees in the United States may differ from factors for intent to stay for employees in other countries. Expanding this study to explore findings beyond one country would be beneficial.

Alignment with Organizational Retention Metrics

Organizations often measure retention and relate it to internal programming to gauge ability to retain employees and identify new programming to develop that may strengthen retention. It would be interesting to explore whether the retention metrics within an organization map to the factors that drive overall intent to stay. In this study, the factors of employee experience, engagement, and ecosystem were shown to increase employee intent to stay. Extrinsic drivers such as employee rewards, incentives, benefits, and bonuses are often used by companies to promote retention. As this study revealed intrinsic drivers that influence an employee's intent to stay, a future study could be conducted to explore whether a company aligns retention incentives with factors to promote intent to stay and whether that would ultimately create a stronger and more productive workforce dedicated to staying with the organization. It would also be interesting to capture an organization's current retention metrics, implement the factors of intent to stay as identified in this study, and then re-assess the same company's retention metrics three to five years later to compare the results of how the factors of intent to stay impact retention.

Type of Leadership Development Program Alignment

Numerous types of leadership development programs exist within organizations. Leadership development programs can have many different focus

areas and may range in duration from one week to twelve months. Some leadership development programs focus on specific skill development while others are dedicated to ‘pipeline’ programming with the goal of preparing high-potential employees for leader or manager level roles. There are immersive programs, virtual programs, hybrid programs, in-person programs, self-paced, instructor-led, and rotational programs. Does the type of program make a difference in impacting overall factors for intent to stay for program participants? Does a program that is longer in duration have more impact over a shorter duration program? Does a succession planning program promote greater intent to stay than a developmental program? Does a structured university based executive education program have greater results than an internally created corporate program?

In this study, the programs the participants had experienced within the organization were not differentiated, as the focus was on whether participation in any type of leadership development program influenced intent to stay. Future researchers could identify the various types of leadership development programs to analyze whether any one type does impact employee intent to stay.

Concluding Reflections

The intent of this study was to explore, understand, and identify the factors that drive employees’ intent to stay within the biotechnology industry, specifically for high-potential employees. Companies spend significant financial resources on leadership development programs for a select audience of employees. The significant cost of these leadership development programs, provided to a very small number of employees within the organization, often results in a lack of offerings for the larger employee population due to financial limitations. Although these programs are important, especially when planning for the next round of leaders within the organization, companies are missing an opportunity to create a culture that drives the intent to stay for *all* employees. If all employees were motivated to stay with the organization, turnover costs would decrease significantly, and productivity would increase substantially.

The interviews with the participants were inspiring as the employees were all passionate about working within an organization that is making a difference for people. The biotech industry provides lifesaving therapies for patients in need around the world. As a result, employees are dedicated and passionate about their work and feel a sense of personal commitment to the patients. The employees who participated in interviews for this study shared what they felt would strengthen the culture and promote intent to stay within the organization, outside of and in partnership with specific leadership development programming.

The resulting factors that drive intent to stay, employee experience, engagement and a supportive ecosystem, do not depend on significant financial investment. Actions that do not cost anything can be taken to support these factors. A leader taking time to connect with an employee and who has a natural curiosity in a conversation to understand goals and a willingness to work together can lift others to reach their highest potential. It is about building relationships through communication and connections that help employees to feel valued and connected to others within the organization. People matter. Developing a strong culture supporting a positive employee experience, increasing employee engagement, and strengthening the employee ecosystem truly will drive employee intent to stay overall.

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Appendix A

Interview Invitation to Participants

Hello <name>,

The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in research I am conducting as I pursue my PhD in Organizational Leadership from Southeastern University, FL.

The goal of my research is to identify factors that contribute to an employee's intent to stay with their organization.

If you are willing to participate, all that would be required is one hour of your time via a Microsoft Teams virtual meeting scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. Your identity will be completely confidential and your replies to the interview questions will not be shared with your manager or employer. If you are interested, a copy of the final findings can be provided so that you can learn about the results of the study.

Please let me know by _____, 2023, if you are willing to participate and I will follow up with a consent form that will require your signature and a date and time for our meeting.

Thank you,

Glenna Griffin

Appendix B

Interview Consent Form for Leadership Development Program Participants

You are invited to take part in a research interview on _____, 2023.

You were chosen for the interview because of your participation in a leadership development program within the organization. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the interview.

This interview is being conducted by a researcher named Glenna Griffin, who is a doctoral student at Southeastern University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this interview is to learn about the participant's experiences with participation in a leadership development program and how that participation relates to intent to stay at the organization.

Procedures:

If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview, lasting approximately 60 minutes.

Voluntary Nature of the Interview:

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the interview. No one at Southeastern University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the interview. If you decide to join the interview now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Interview:

There is a minimal risk of psychological stress during this interview. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. There are no benefits to you from participating in this interview.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for participating in this interview.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this interview project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the interview.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is Glenna Griffin. The researcher's dissertation advisor is Dr. Joshua Henson. You may ask any questions by contacting the researcher via email at gmgriffin@seu.edu or the advisor at jdhenon@seu.edu. If you want to communicate privately about your rights as a participant, you can contact Dr. Joshua Henson, the Chair of the Southeastern University PhD/DSL programs, at jdhenon@seu.edu

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the interview.

Printed Name of
Participant

Participant's Written
Signature

Researcher's Written
Signature

Appendix C

Interview Consent Form for Participants with at Least One Year Tenure in Organization

You are invited to take part in a research interview on _____, 2023.

You were chosen for the interview because of your tenure of at least one year in your current organization. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the interview.

This interview is being conducted by a researcher named Glenna Griffin, who is a doctoral student at Southeastern University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this interview is to learn about the participant's experiences with participation in a leadership development program and how that participation relates to intent to stay at the organization.

Procedures:

If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview, lasting approximately 60 minutes.

Voluntary Nature of the Interview:

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the interview. No one at Southeastern University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the interview. If you decide to join the interview now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Interview:

There is a minimal risk of psychological stress during this interview. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. There are no benefits to you from participating in this interview.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for participating in this interview.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this interview project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the interview.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is Glenna Griffin. The researcher's dissertation advisor is Dr. Joshua Henson. You may ask any questions by contacting the researcher via email at gmgriffin@seu.edu or the advisor at jdhenon@seu.edu. If you want to communicate privately about your rights as a participant, you can contact Dr. Joshua Henson, the Chair of the Southeastern University PhD/DSL programs, at jdhenon@seu.edu

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the interview.

Printed Name of
Participant

Participant's Written
Signature

Researcher's Written
Signature
