**Exploring How Flexible Working Arrangements Could Affect Employee Retention in Small Nonprofits in Scranton Pennsylvania**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment for the Requirements

of the Master of Public Administration

Marywood University

2020

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Statement of the Problem**

Nonprofit organizations, especially those that fall under the category of social work organizations, require a high level of skill from their workers (Kang, Huh, Cho, & Auh, 2014). With these high skill demands, one would expect to be compensated with high financial incentives. Unfortunately, nonprofit organizations are often unable to accommodate employees with high paying salaries due to the nature of their work and how nonprofits are structured (Ben-Ner, Ren, & Paulson, 2011). As a result of this low pay, employees can often find themselves contemplating leaving their organization and entering a different sector of work for the potential of higher paying salaries (Kang et al., 2014). The low wages they are receiving, when coupled with the stresses that these employees go through on a frequent basis, can lead to both high turnover intent and employee burnout.

When an organization is experiencing restricted funds and cannot increase the pay of their employees, they may want to look at alternatives to improve employee retention. One method for increasing employee retention is the use of flexible working arrangements. Flexible working arrangements are alternative working conditions for employees (Berkery, Morley, Tiernan, Purtill, & Parry, 2017). These can come in the form of alternative working hours, alternative working agreements (contract, part time, annual hours), or alternative working locations such as working from home (Van Steenbergen, Van Der Ven, Peeters, & Taris, 2017). These alternative working arrangements have shown to be a benefit to both the employee and the organization by reducing employee absenteeism, improved commitment and dedication to the organization, and improvements in the employees work (McNamar, Pitt-Catsouphes, Brown, & Matz-Costa, 2012).

**Research Questions**

The following questions have guided this research proposal:

1. How do United Way employees perceive flexible working arrangements in a professional setting?
2. How does flexible working arrangements alter employee perception of the work environment at United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties?
3. What impact, if any, do flexible working arrangements have on employee retention in the non-profit sector?

**Purpose of the Study**

The problem is that nonprofit organizations, especially social work organizations such as United Way, are required to have employees who are highly skilled that they can rely on to achieve the mission of the organization. These organizations are also unable to pay higher wages to these employees because of constricted funds. This is not a factor that they can alter in their organization because of the nature of nonprofit organizations.

Employees that work in the field of nonprofit organizations often find the job fulfilling and rewarding, yet there still is a high level of turnover amongst employees in the nonprofit sector (Kang et al., 2014). Some potential reasons for leaving the nonprofit sector can relate to low wages and burnout. Employees in the nonprofit sector are typically paid less than their for-profit counterpart (Lewis, 2018). These low wages, on top of a demanding job can lead to a condition called burnout. There is research showing that burnout and low wages contribute to high turnover rates in the nonprofit sector (Chieh Lu & Gursoy 2013).

Flexible working arrangements have shown to potentially reduce employee turnover in both the nonprofit and for-profit sector (Berkery et al., 2017). Flexible working arrangements can also provide benefits to not just the employee, but to the organization as a whole (Berkery et al., 2017; McNamar et al., 2012; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018; Kotey & Sharma, 2018). While this information has been displayed in several works of literature in the past across the both the for-profit and nonprofit sector, little to no research has been conducted in nonprofits in Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania. This lack of research leaves a gap of knowledge within the organizations that exist in this area. This study aims to find if implementing flexible working arrangements in United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties could help improve employee retention and reduce employee turnover.

**Background**

The researcher of this LEAD assignment is an employee of United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties. United Way is looked upon heavily for collaboration efforts amongst the Lackawanna County nonprofit organizations and government entities. This United Way has been servicing the local residents for over 99 years and 2021 will be their 100th anniversary. Generating over 3 million dollars’ worth of funds annually, United Way has become a staple organization to the local community.

United Ways have historically been viewed as just funding agencies. In the past they would run campaigns across the county in any company that would participate in the campaign to generate funds. They would then distribute these funds to nonprofit agencies that fall within their jurisdiction. Over time they revamped their distribution process to now involve community members to help designate millions of dollars. The United Way involved in this study has also adopted and established several direct service programs that they now run with an expert team backing them up.

Over the past 15 years of United Way’s work, there has been very little turnover amongst the staff members. However, within the past 24 months, three employees have left the United Way for other employment opportunities. It is unclear as to why these employees made the decision to resign and take employment elsewhere, but one possibility is for an increase in pay. Like many other nonprofits, United Way is restricted with the funds that they can spend on financial incentives due to the nature of their work. Implementing a flexible working arrangement policy may help to reduce turnover intention in these employees and improve employee retention.

**Significance of the Study**

This research is important and crucial to not just United Way, but to all nonprofits in the Lackawanna County area. Research has shown that turnover within nonprofit and social work organizations is high. These skilled employees are leaving their organization for potentially better pay in the for-profit sector (Kang et al., 2014). Research shows that turnover harms the organization and its employees with new costs to training and loss of employee knowledge (Posthuma, Campion, Masimova, & Campion, 2013).

Finding different way to entice employees to stay at the United Way is crucial due to the nature of nonprofits and their lack of ability to increase salaries of their employees. Flexible working arrangements could serve as an answer to this problem. Interviewing employees at United Way on the topic of flexible working arrangements could provide insight on the theory that these alternative arrangements could reduce turnover intention.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Introduction to Chapter Two**

The field of social work is one that requires highly skilled individuals to help serve the needs of the organization that they work for. Working in nonprofit and social work organizations often service a mission that employees feel is worthwhile and fulfilling. An article generated by Stater and Stater (2019) shows that nonprofit employees are happier than their for-profit counterparts. Despite employees being happier in the nonprofit sector, there is still a high turnover rate. GuideStar and Nonprofit HR. both reported that there was a turnover of 19% (2017). A Korean study looked at turnover and retention of Korean graduates in the nonprofit sector, and the results yielded that 44% of their participants shifted from the nonprofit sector to the for-profit sector (Kang et al., 2014).

An increase in pay is surely a desired outcome by nonprofit employees. The problem is that these nonprofit organizations are often restricted with how they can spend their funds due to the fiscal setup of the organization. This leaves the organization unable to provide increased financial compensation and incentives to its employees (Ben-Ner, Ren, & Paulson, 2011). Research conducted in a 2014 study showed that a key factor for employees shifting to the for-profit sector from the nonprofit sector was an increase in pay (Kang et al.).

Due to the organization being unable to provide increased financial incentives (Stater & Stater, 2019), employees may seek alternative reasons for staying within the nonprofit sector. Flexible working arrangements may be the answer to high employee turnover. In theory, flexible working arrangements could result in less absenteeism and reduction in tardiness (Berkery et al., 2017). Flexible working arrangements can provide an employee with the flexibility that they may be looking for such as an alternative working environment, schedule, or non-traditional working arrangements (Berkery et al., 2017). Providing only meaningful work and socially valuable work in a nonprofit organization is not enough to retain employees and reduce turnover (Kang et al., 2014). Therefore, alternative incentives could prove useful for employee retention.

The literature will be organized into two streams of literature. The first stream is going to address employee turnover and how low pay is contributing to turnover in the nonprofit sector. The second stream of literature will be focused around flexible working arrangements and their effect on employees. This stream of literature will focus on the benefits and barriers to organizations, how alternative working arrangements allow for more flexibility for employees, and how they affect turnover rates and turnover intentions in an organization.

**Stream 1: Employee Turnover**

Employee turnover is the permanent shift from one place of employment to another. This can be an involuntary or voluntary shift of employment. (Pugh, 2016; Kang et al., 2014). Voluntary turnover is often known as resignation, where the employee willingly chooses to leave a place of employment. This decision can come from many factors such as requiring maternity leave, dissatisfaction with place of employment, or for alternative or better employment opportunities (Kang et al., 2014).

Employee turnover is associated with negative effects from the perspective of the organization. Organizations need to find replacements for their highly skilled workers, and in doing so are accumulating high costs. The replacing of an employee can also harm the morale of the organization and damage its image. Having to replace a highly skilled employee and train a new employee can hinder the development of expertise amongst the organization and negatively affect the organizations productivity (Kang et al., 2014; Hamama, 2012). Employee turnover is even more detrimental when the employees of the organization are considered experts in their respective field (Kang et al., 2014).

When looking at the rate of turnover for employees working in the nonprofit sector, there is a high percentage that leave their employer and shift to another place of employment. In a study that spanned the course of three years and consisted of 26,544 individuals, only 36% stayed within the nonprofit sector. Within this same population, nine percent moved to educational or research institutions, 11% moved into the government sector, and a total of 44% shifted from the nonprofit sector to the for-profit sector (Kang et al., 2014).

***Low Wages.*** One reason for turnover in a nonprofit or social work organization is low wages. According to Kang et al., “turnover has the positive function of providing them with opportunities for better compensation and working conditions” (2014, p.644). Stater and Stater (2019) make the recommendation for nonprofit organizations to provide competitive compensation instead of relying on positive factors such as helpful work relationships and feeling commitment to the mission of the organization. However, nonprofit organization are typically restricted with their funds and are unable to provide financial incentives to their employees (Ben-Ner, Ren, & Paulson, 2011). When a nonprofit organization is experiencing compensation constraints, it can cause the employees to feel dissatisfied with the work they are performing, and as a result leave the organization (Stater & Stater, 2019).

Employees that fall under the social work category have a strong desire to fulfill this role in society that they are willing to accept pay penalties as a result. According to donative labor hypothesis, “nonprofit workers accept below-market wages as a way of donating labor to nonprofits” (Lewis, 2018, p. 289). The results of the research conducted by Lewis (2018) showed that social workers made 25% less money than comparable occupations in the years 2010-2014 (Lewis, 2018). Kang et al., (2014) expresses that studies have shown that individuals who are being paid low wages have a higher likelihood of leaving their current employer for another.

A solution to lower wages is to simply increase the minimum wage across the country. However, when there is an increase in wages there are economic ramifications that could hurt the economy. Romich (2017) was a part of a team that researched the implementation of $15 minimum wage in a major city. Through her research they discovered that while some will benefit from the increased in wages, others will not. When there are more individuals earning increased wages, those that were making more than minimum wage will likely experience a decrease in pay. Romich also suggests that an increase in minimum wage will result in job loss amounting to one or two percent (2017).

***Burnout.*** Burnout was first coined by American psychologist Herbert Freudenberger (National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2017; Hamama, 2012). Burnout is defined as “a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward” (Freudenberger, 1980, p.13). Evidence indicates that burnout can have negative effects for an organization as a whole. Employees that are experiencing burnout are more likely to suffer from absenteeism and display higher turnover rates (Otto, Hoefsmit, Ruysseveldt, & Dam, 2019).

According to ­­Chieh Lu and Gursoy, “burnout has been correlated with a variety of negative responses to the job, including job dissatisfaction, low organizational commitment, and high job turnover intention” (2013, p. 211). This shows that burnout in an employee can lead them to increased feelings of leaving their position for another. According to Chieh Lu and Gursoy, burnout is one of the biggest predictors of job satisfaction and turnover intent (2013).

Employees that are experiencing burnout are more likely to experience health related issues. According to Van Steenburgen et al. (2018), burnout can lead to health problems that can keep an employee from going to work and they can experience “sickness absenteeism” (p.738). Not only can absenteeism be experienced, but burnout can also lead to cardiovascular problems as well (Van Steenbergen et al., 2018).

**Stream 2: Flexible Working Arrangements**

Flexible working arrangements is a term that is used interchangeably to describe flexibility in the workplace. This flexibility can come in many forms such as flexibility in the work environment, schedules, or non-traditional working arrangements (Berkery et al., 2017; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018). Berkery et al. (2017) stated that flexible working arrangement’s “refer to patterns of work including weekend work, shift-work, overtime, annual hours contracts, part-time work, job sharing, flexi-time, temporary/casual work, fixed-term contracts, homebased work, teleworking and compressed working weeks” (p.166).

Flexible working arrangements from a broad organizational perspective come in two forms. The first form identified by Menezes and Kelliher (2017) are formal arrangements. A formal flexible working arrangement is one that exists in the organizations policy. This means that the organization has created a policy and implemented alternative working arrangements for their employees to take advantage of. The second is an informal arrangement between the employer and the employee. These types of arrangements “are those that have not gone through this process, but rather emerge from a discussion or negotiation between the employee and his or her line manager” (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017, p. 1053).

Flexible working arrangements have proven that they provide many benefits to organizations such as reduction in employee turnover intentions, reduction in employee absenteeism, and greater commitment to the organization as a whole (Berkery et al., 2017; Kotey & Sharma, 2018; McNamar et al., 2012). Flexible working arrangements allow for greater flexibility amongst employees because they can alter their work schedule to fit their personal needs (Kotey & Sharma, 2018). These alternative working arrangements have also shown to help employee retention and lower employee turnover intentions (Berkery et al., 2017).

While these flexible working arrangements prove to be useful to both the employee and the organization, they are not without flaws. Flexible working arrangements are difficult to implement in smaller organizations due to fewer staff, and when they are implemented some employees may not have access to these alternative arrangements (Berkery et al., 2017; McNamar et al , 2012). Finding effective methods to implement these alternative working arrangements is crucial for the benefit of the employees and the organization.

***Benefits to Organization.*** It is not just important for the employee to experience the benefits of flexible working arrangements, but also the organization as a whole. The employer will only implement a flexible working arrangement if the perceived benefits will outweigh the costs associated. An article written by Kotey and Sharma (2018) states that there is a positive association between flexible working arrangement availability and outcomes. Employees with greater access to flexible working arrangements are more likely to feel as though they are fortunate and as a result are more likely to stay loyal to the organization (Berkery et al., 2017).

In theory, flexible working arrangements could result in less absenteeism and a reduction in tardiness (Berkery et al., 2017; Kotey & Sharma, 2018). Evidence also suggests that employees will be more engaged, committed, and attached through a decrease in absenteeism (McNamar et al., 2012; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018). To further back up this claim, Van Steenbergen et al. (2018) says that employees who are more engaged are less frequently ill and are more likely to perform better at their jobs.

When an employee leaves an organization they take with them all of the knowledge that they learned. Employers must now undertake the task of finding a replacement and then training that replacement to perform adequate work. Turnover, while it can be reduced with the use of flexible working arrangements, is still inevitably going to occur in an organization. An example of unavoidable turnover is retirement of an employee. Posthuma et al. (2013) found that flexible working arrangements can help to improve organizational learning. Although there may still be a loss of knowledge from turnover that needs to be replaced, these alternative working arrangements can help facilitate an improved learning environment.

From a managerial standpoint, flexible working arrangements can also help with employee retention. According to Kotey & Sharma (2018), a manager is less likely to leave the organizations they work for if there is a positive relationship between the employer and the employee’s family. In other words, when upper management responds positively with few consequences to employees expressing concerns regarding time with their family, they are less likely to leave the organizations (Kotey & Sharma, 2018)

***Barriers to Organization.*** The decision to adopt flexible working arrangements is left up to management of an organizations. While it is management’s decision, there are still other factors that alter the adoption of flexible working arrangements. The size of an organization may alter the adoption of a flexible working arrangement. According to Berkey et al. (2017), it is more difficult for a small organization to adopt flexible working arrangements due to the cost associated with them.

Not only is it difficult for small organizations to implement flexible working arrangements, but it can be difficult to properly implement these policies in larger organizations as well. According to McNamara et al. (2012), in some cases only a small number of employees will have access to these arrangements, meaning that while some employees will have easy access to these flexible working arrangements, other employees will not. This separation can create a divide between employees and hinder the organizational workforce.

Not only does an organization need to implement these flexible working arrangements, but they also need to help promote and ensure employees are taking advantage of these opportunities. If an employer does not take the time to properly implement a flexible working arrangement policy, then the policy will only exist on paper and not be properly utilized. The result of McNamara et al. (2012) study was that employers who were not supportive of flexible working arrangements resulted in less utilization of the alternative working arrangements.

Employees often do not take advantage of and utilize these alternative arrangements because they believe that it could hinder their career. These same workers also may experience fear of negative repercussions in the workplace, as well as fear of fellow employees viewing them as less committed to the job due to requesting an alternative working schedule (McNamar et al., 2012).

***Improved Flexibility.*** While it is true that turnover rate is high in nonprofit employees, a study conducted by Stater and Stater (2019) aimed to look at determining the intent of an employee to look for a new job. The results showed that there was no difference between nonprofit and for-profit or government employees in their intent to look for another job. Stater and Stater (2019) went on to say, “This suggests that turnover intent may be more responsive to personal factors, such as family like or location preferences, as opposed to work rewards” (p. 505). This research suggests that the turnover intent of a nonprofit employee may be linked to a need related to personal factors that can include family obligations or work preference.

According to Kotey & Sharma (2018), employees attempting to balance their increasing workload with their family and social obligations is leading for a push for flexible working arrangement. This push is because flexible working arrangements can help with the reduction of the negative effects associated with stressful work and health and wellbeing (Kotey & Sharma, 2018). These benefits can come from any form of flexible working arrangement such as alternative start and end times, reduction in working hours, or potentially working from a different location (Kotey & Sharma, 2018).

Flexible working arrangements can be facilitated through a wide variety of methods to help improve the employee experience. One example of a flexible working arrangement that could benefit an employee is the use of time arrangements. This would allow the employee to choose times that best fit their schedule and could allow them to feel more dedicated to their work as other obligations are not getting in their way. Allowing an employee the freedom of working from any location, rather than a designated working location will allow them more freedom for work. All flexible working arrangements, regardless of location that the employee is located can be conducted through the use of technology such as e-mail, online videoconferencing, and smartphones (Van Steenbergen et al., 2018).

***Reduction of employee turnover.*** When an organization adopts and implements flexible working arrangements they are making a stronger case for employees to stay with their employer. In a 2017 study conducted by Berkery et al., they examined the differences in flexible working arrangement bundles offered to employees. There was a strong association between an organization that offered more traditional working hours to employees and turnover. When an organization offers a less traditional working arrangement and instead offers a high uptake of flexi-time, it signals to employees that their employer cares about them which leads to greater psychological commitment. This psychological commitment reduces the likelihood of quitting (Berkery et al., 2017).

Having flexible working arrangements implemented in the workplace can help alter the opinions of employees in a positive way. According to Gian, Wang, and Ooi, turnover intentions are reduced when employees have access to flexible working arrangements (2014). This is because a work environment that has flexible working arrangements is more favorable. When the work environment is more positive, employees feel obligated to return the positive behavior with greater commitment to the organization. These same employees that view a work environment more favorably are less likely to have high turnover intentions (Gian et al. 2014).

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Theory**

The Social exchange theory was developed in the year 1958 by George Homans. It was developed to help create a framework based upon behaviorism and basic economics. The concept of social exchange theory states that a relationship between two people is developed from a concept known as cost-benefit analysis. Cost-benefit analysis measures the positives and negatives of a relationship to determine if the relationship will continue or be terminated (Tulane University, 2018).

When social exchange theory is considered with the information from the literature review complied in chapter two, this theory can transfer over to the employee-employer relationship. From the employee perspective, if the relationship between the employer and the employee is positive, the employee is more likely to stay in the relationship (Berkery et al., 2017). In other words, if the positives of working for an employer outweigh the negatives of working for the same employer, the employee is less likely to consider leaving the organization. The negatives of working in nonprofit that this study will explore are low wages and the feeling of burnout, while the positives would be flexible working arrangements (Lewis, 2018; Otto et al., 2019; Berkery et al., 2017). This research applies social exchange theory to its analytical approach of the data.

**Conceptual Model**

The conceptual model of this research is named NPO. This model consists of two flows stemming off of the nonprofit organization in question. You can see on the left side of the chart a flow that consists of low wages and burnout and ends with the result of these two which is employee turnover. On the right of the chart you can see a stream that consists of flexible working arrangements and ends with the result of employee retention.

A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated

Figure 1. Conceptual Model NPO

As you can see, Figure 1 shows the relation that low wages and burnout has on employees. The result of these two factors is employee turnover. You can also see in the same figure the relation that flexible working arrangement has on employee retention, which studies show could help improve employee retention. Overall, this conceptual model shows the relation of two different employee outcomes that can be found in nonprofit sector of business, one leading to the employee leaving the organization, and the other resulting in the employee staying at the organization.

**Research Design**

A Qualitative research design was utilized for this study in order to explore the impacts of flexible working arrangements in employee turnover intention. Qualitative design was chosen for this research project because the topic is focused around obtaining results related to opinions and feelings of employee turnover intent. The strength of this research design is the use of semi structured interviews. Participants were engaged in a formal interview and answered questions that were asked to them. The research in this methodology has the freedom to follow along with different information

The design consists of a population of employees that work in the nonprofit sector in Northeastern Pennsylvania. This specific study was conducted at United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties, and the participants from this organization were full-time staff participants. Participants of this study verbally consented to having worked in the nonprofit sector of business for a minimum of three years.

The weakness of this research design is that there was only a set number of questions that were asked in the interview. The researcher developed a total of 10 questions that served as a guide for participants to respond to. As mentioned, this type of interview was semi structured, so interviewees could insert any information that they wish to discuss. The downside is that there was nothing to prompt further discussion of other topics limiting the data that was collected. This potential lack of data can leave holes in the results.

**Target Population**

The population this study targeted was nonprofit employees working at United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties. United Way has been of service to Lackawanna County for nearly 100 years. This organization is classified as a social work organization with a total of 12 staff members. These staff members are a mix of Caucasian males and females and ages range from mid 20s to mid 70s. Majority of the staff currently employed there have worked here for a minimum of 10 years.

**Sample**

This research utilizes purposive sampling strategy. It does so by selecting participants that have been working in the nonprofit sector for a minimum of 3 years. Purposive sampling was utilized to select United Way employees who have worked in the nonprofit sector for a minimum of 3 years. This allows for the employees to have some experience in the nonprofit sector and are more capable of taking a stance on the questions being asked.

Research participants were contacted through the use of emails to request their participation in this study. The email was be obtained by contacting upper administration and requesting this information. There was a total of 8 participants involved in this study. The interviews were semi structured interviews.

**Example of Questionnaires**

1. What, if any, flexible working arrangements have you experienced in the past?
2. What are your feelings on flexible working arrangements?
3. What benefits does a flexible working arrangement provide to yourself?
4. To what degree would you say a flexible working arrangement could incentive’s you to stay with your employer/nonprofit sector?
5. How does having flexibility in the workplace alter your perception of the work environment?
6. What would you say are the downsides of working in nonprofit organizations?
7. What would you say are the upsides of working in a nonprofit organization?
8. Have you ever considered leaving the nonprofit sector for the for-profit sector?
   1. For what reasons?
9. Do you believe there are downsides to flexible working arrangements?
10. Do you believe that an employee who takes advantage of a flexible working arrangement is at a disadvantage in the workplace?

**Codebook/Concepts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Concept** | **Definition** |
| Absenteeism | When an employee frequently doesn’t go to work |
| Burnout | “A state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward” (Freudenberger, 1980, p.13) |
| Career Hinderance | A variable that could prevent someone from moving up in their career |
| Commitment | The state of feeling obligated to a cause |
| Costs | An expenditure related to achieving an objective |
| Dissatisfaction | The state of feeling dissatisfied |
| Employee | A company or organization that employs individuals to work for them |
| Employee Happiness | State of an employee feeling happy and satisfied with their job |
| Employee Knowledge | The knowledge that an employee has gained through their time working for their employer |
| Employer | An organizations that the employee works for |
| Favorable | A desirable outcome |
| Financial Incentives | Incentives offered to employees that involve monetary gain |
| Flexibility | Ability of an individual or entity to adjust to a new working condition |
| Flexible Working Arrangements | Alternative working arrangements that allow for greater employee flexibility |
| For-Profit Sector | A sector of business that focuses on making a profit |
| Formal Arrangements | An arrangement that has officially been implemented by upper management |
| Informal Arrangements | An arrangement that has not been officially implemented by upper management |
| Low Wages | When the wages an employee makes are lower than others |
| Loyalty | The quality or state or an instance of being loyal (Webster Dictionary, 2020) |
| Nonprofit Sector | A sector of business where the organization is not conducted for the purpose of making a profit |
| Personal Factors | Any factor an employee experiences that falls under their personal life |
| Policy | An official statement or method an organization implements than employees must adhere to |
| Quitting | When an employee leaves a company or organization |
| Retention | An employer’s ability to retain and maintain staff members |
| Turnover | When an employee leaves their job for any reason |
| Turnover Intentions | The likelihood an employee is to leave their place of employment |
| Working from Home | When an employee is conducting their normal daily work from their home |
| Turnover Rate | The rate at which employees are leaving a company or organization |
| Voluntary Turnover | When an employee leaves their place of employment through their own decision |

**Confidentiality**

This research follows IRB and federal guidelines in establishing confidentiality, protecting human subjects, assures the voluntary nature of participation, and establishes a procedure in the data collection and storing that adheres to strict confidentiality guidelines as outlined by IRB and the federal government. In order to comply with these guidelines, all identifiable items will be removed to protect the confidentiality of the participants. When analyzing the data, the researcher utilized pseudonyms to help ensure the confidentiality of all participants. When the participants were contacted to be involved with the research, the researcher will ensure they know what this data is going to be used for and that all participants information will be kept confidential.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DATA PRESENTATION**

Chapter Four of this research proposal covers the different themes that arose throughout all 8 of the interviews with participants. The data presented in the sections below comes from the participants and is unaltered information. Throughout the research there were a total of 8 themes that arose: Low pay in nonprofits, Turnover, Fulfilling Job, Home Life, Work Environment, Loyalty, Productivity, and Downsides to Flexible Working Arrangements. These themes are described as presented by participants in the proceeding sections.

Themes

Low Wages in Nonprofits

Turnover

Fulfilling Job

Home Life

Loyalty

Productivity

Downsides to Flexible Working Arrangements

**Theme One: Low Pay in Nonprofits**

All 8 participants involved within this research brought up the topic of wages within the nonprofit sector in their work experience. Participants said that one of the major drawbacks to working within the nonprofit sector is pay that employees receive. When Participant 3 was asked what the downsides of working in the nonprofit sector were, they responded that “I think it starts out with some of the pay” and then followed up by stating that they did not get into the field of non-profits to make money. A similar parallel statement was made by Participant 1 who said “Things would definitely give me a lot more to think about if it was very structured, straight nine to five with no leeway, because of... You could be structured like that and making a lot more money” which makes mention of how flexible working arrangements could affect employment in non-profit sector.

Several participants made mention that the reason that nonprofits are unable to pay as much as for profits is because of the structure of nonprofits. This can be seen in Participant 2’s response:

…because nonprofits generally can't afford to pay people higher rates. It's difficult to do because they're so transparent and have to be transparent. So when you're showing potential givers, spreadsheets, or showing the United Ways operation, and you're showing that the salaries, if that was extremely high... You're just not gonna get the reaction that you would like.

This participant expresses that higher pay for employees is not something that can be considered because of the work that United Way does. A similar sentiment can be seen in a response from Participant 4 who said, “We're paying less, unfortunately, because the funds aren't there for salaries”.

Some of the participants made comparisons between the for-profit and non-profit sectors of employment. Participant 6 aid that the non-profit field from their perspective does not pay people what they are worth and then continued on to say that these individuals are never going to be paid what they are worth, in his opinion. Participant 8 made stated that “there's not necessarily that ability to move up the ladder very quickly and have a high rate of pay, because it's just what the industry dictates”. This sentiment was directly echoed in Participant 5’s response which stated:

We would start off with the pay and the benefits probably or not. Depending on what your organization you are, probably not as good as in other organizations, and I don't think that there's a tiered program for promoting people who really need to be promoted, I don't think, or be financially compensated.

Another participant, Participant 4, said that the salaries within the non-profit sector of work is not comparable to the for-profit sector and that the employees are not paid the worth of their expertise.

**Theme Two: Turnover**

A few of the participants made both direct and indirect mentions of employee turnover in the non-profit sector. When Participant 5 was asked the question if there was any reason as to why they would consider leaving the non-profit sector they said “Well, it probably would have been financial when I was younger”. Participant 6 made mention that they actually did leave the non-profit sector for the for-profit sector for two and a half years but later on returned to the United Way to take a higher paying position.

Other participants also made mention of turnover in the non-profit sector, not just for reasons such as low wages, but because of the lack of flexibility some jobs offered. Participant 7 when asked how flexibility alters their perception of the work environment said:

It would be a huge factor. And I will tell you that at some point when I left my former employer, it was a short time where something personal happened to me and I... Somebody had taken over the management of that non-profit, and I asked for flexibility. I needed flexibility, and they were not willing to meet it, and I had to leave.

The lack of flexibility offered caused this participant to leave their position to take another that offered more flexibility. When discussing how the flexibility in the workplace could help retain individuals they said “I think it helps develop more retention long-term” which is very similar to what Participant 2 said “And so, yeah, I think it retains people because of the environment that they're in”. Participant 1 expressed that from their perspective they “really look down on those organizations that didn't care at all about the employees and wanted them in” which was referring to the lack of flexibility being offered to employees.

**Theme Three: Fulfilling Job**

Across all interviews, participants made mention of how the work they are doing is fulfilling to them. When Participant 7 was talking about the upsides of working in the nonprofit sector they said “I like what most non-profit stand for. I like their mission. I agree with their mission. I'm fortunate to be in the situation where I can look at things other than salary”. This sentiment was similarly displayed from Participant 8 who said they feel it’s rewarding to them to be able to help other individuals and that they enjoy what they do. When asked about the upsides of working in the non-profit sector Participant 3 said “I like to work to improve the lives of people” and then made the comparison between non-profit and for-profit saying that “the non-profit where it tends to be a little bit more caring than the corporate world”.

Other participants were asked the same question as to what the upsides of working in the nonprofit field are and Participant 4 said “I think that's one of the best parts with United way. You know that what you are doing is really helping people out there who are in need. And I think everybody feels that way here”. More emphasis on this was given from Participant 2 who said:

“It never amazed me, even when I was a volunteer, I walked out feeling better about myself, because I felt as though I'm doing something for my community. And now that I'm here working directly for it, that's even more so. Like I said, there's no reason why not... There's not one employee in this facility right now that should not sleep well at night, because they're doing good for their community”

The employees of United Way time and time again repeat similar sentiments that the field of non-profits is worth more than the money. As Participant 3 said “I didn't get into this field to make money, I got into the field to help the community” and Participant 1 said “You apply for a non-profit job because you like the description of the job”. The last noteworthy statement coming from Participant 6 who recalled a quote from their father saying that there is worth more to life than Zeros at the end of a paycheck.

**Theme Four: Home Life**

Another theme that arouse throughout the interview process was the effect that flexibility in the workplace has on the participants home/personal life. Several participants expressed that having some form of flexibility in the work environment is critical in their work life. This can be seen by Participant 2, who when asked how flexibility alters their perception of the work environment, said “Oh, definitely in this day and age, flexibility is critical, especially if you're talking about two-parent incomes with children”. Participant 1 said that having the flexibility is important because it “helps me balance that work-family life”. Participant 1 also said they feel as though these flexible working arrangements are smart because they take a “humanistic approach” from managements perspective and stated that it feels less corporate because they do not need to be in a designated location for a strict 9-5.

Many participants when asked about how flexibility helps them in their life, family was a big factor among many participants. Participant 5, when thinking back to when she had young children said, “You could get kids off to school, you could get kids home, you might have to run and pick them up”. A similar stance on children and having flexibility was taken by Participant 7, who also thought about when they had younger children, who said that if their children had something going on they could go to attend the event without any issues. Participant 5 feels as though there is a lot of flexibility in their organization in terms of when you could come and leave, and stated that “you could do what you had to and take care of your family, or take care of your own needs, etcetera, as long as the job was done”

Continuing with how flexibility can assist a family, Participant 7 said “Well, I like flexible, I like the flexibility. For me, it's been... It's allowed me to be a parent and be an employee”. Participant 6 when talking about flexibility and how it related to their work life and their home life said:

It allows me to take care of my household, something's going on with my daughter, let's say they just bought a new house, if they needed help at the house, I'm able to move my hours or my time around so I can help them and get my work done at the same time, my office work done at the same time.

When it came to growing a new family, Participant 8 said “my husband works very long hours, so in order for us to raise a family, one of us needed to have employment that was more flexible than the other”.

For Participant 5, flexibility in the workplace would “be a priority, but I could still take care of my job and I could still contribute through my job. I don't believe that everybody has to be sitting at a desk 9 to 5 to be able to finish... To do their job adequately”. Participant 5 also made the claim that if they were still in school and pursuing a higher education degree, being able to leave work earlier to get to a class later would act as an incentive to them.

**Theme Five: Work Environment**

Many of the participants of this research made mention in one way or another of how having flexibility in the work environment can affect their perception of the work environment. Participant 4 said that they are flexible at United Way because of “the fact that you’re expected to work on demand 24/7” and then had said that flexibility is offered because “You're paid as an employee to do your job, not to be at a desk during certain timeframes”. Being on demand and adapting to other people’s schedules was echoed by Participant 5 who said that “we really rely on the volunteer's schedule, so we have a lot of earlier meetings or evening meetings, and then we do have comp time here”. In an interview with Participant 3 they said that they think non-profits are really undervalued in the community and that the community doesn’t see all the great work done around the clock.

Flexibility was an important aspect to Participant 1 saying that “having the flexibility of the workplace has really improved how I look at the work environment” because of his wife and child. According to Participant 2, when they were younger they had flexibility in their work, and it allowed them to attend events that pertained to their children such as “dental appointments” and said that it is flexibility that they think is important. For Participant 4, they said “You work hours, mornings, evenings, whatever it might be, but then you could restructure yourself to get additional time off, paid time off” which allows them to have their level of flexibility.

Several participants believe that as salaried individuals they are paid to get their work done and not to be in an office for a set amount of time. As said by Participant 5:

I think as a salaried individual who is paid to do a job, you have your goals, you have your objectives, you know what you're supposed to do, and you do it in the best way you can. And again, some people might wanna come in at 5:00 or 6:00, 7:00 in the morning cause it's better for them, and then leave at 2:00 in the afternoon, or other people will come in and work the normal 9-5. It doesn't matter. Just as long as you're doing the job you have to do, the time means nothing.

Similar thoughts were mentioned by Participant 8 who said that when their employer allows them to get their job done on the employee’s time it gives them “the sense of that you as an employee can be trusted to do your work and get the job done regardless of the specific work hours”. This participants then said that it the work hours are not what is important in their eyes and getting the work done and meeting criteria is what is actually important.

Participant 5 mentioned that they as employees could come and leave as long as the work was getting done properly by the employee and that it “allows the employee to set their own time and get the work done”. Participant 6 mentioned that this level of flexibility places a lot of responsibility on the employees themselves to ensure the work is getting done. They also say that it allows the employees to act more creatively relating to flexibility in their work schedule. Referring back to family and flexibility, Participant 7 said “my husband works very long hours, so in order for us to raise a family, one of us needed to have employment that was more flexible than the other” placing an emphasis on flexibility.

**Theme Six: Loyalty**

Participants made both direct and indirect correlations between an organizations ability to be flexible with working arrangements and the employees’ loyalty to that organization. As said by Participant 2 “When you’re given that flexibility , when you’re allowed to do things like that, there’s loyalty that’s built up in there, and that makes a big difference in your work environment”. When participant 7 made the statement that “regardless of whether I'm home doing the work or somewhere else, it's my job, it's my work, so regardless of where it occurs” which shows an emphasis that there is loyalty from this person’s perspective. A very similar answer was given from Participant 4 who said they get done what they need to get done and they structure their times around that. Participant 3 mentioned that from a leadership point of view if the organization takes action that is good for the employees it is good for everyone. When participant 8 was asked what flexibility provides to them they said, “the sense that you as an employee can be trusted to do your work and get the job done regardless of the specific hours”.

**Theme Seven: Productivity**

Several participants brought up their feeling on how having a flexible working arrangement could alter employee productivity. When interviewing with Participant 2 they said that plenty of employees are more productive when working from home because “there’s no distractions”. This participant gave examples of how there could be interruptions at work with conversations in “pod row” and that an employee can be “unfettered” whilst they are working away from other employees. Participant 3 echoed a very similar response saying that “I think we’re finding out now that some people are more productive at home, more productive outside of the office”.

Participant 5 said that while working from someplace other than the office “I could still take care of my job and I could still contribute through my job. I don’t believe that everybody has to be sitting at a desk 9 to 5 to be able to finish, to do their job adequately”. Similar stance was taken by Participant 3 who said, “I think that you get a lot more work out of people for the time that you have them” when talking about individuals working around what time is best for them and that you could “get more work from people if they’re home”. Participant 8 spoke similarly to Participant 5 when they said, “because some people are not fitting into that exactly 9-5 model because they might be more productive at noon versus early in the morning or that kind of thing”.

**Theme Eight: Downsides to Flexible Working Arrangements**

The final theme that arose throughout interviews with participants was the downsides to having flexible working arrangements in the workplace. When asked about these downsides, Participant 3 said:

I think it could get a little tough. Having... When you're at the office, everything is within your reach, meaning, if you need files, if you need things around you, you have it. It's also important for people to be able to go into an office, just to have that separation of home and work.

A similar answer was given by Participant 4 who said that “it's much more difficult because we don't have the opportunity to actually be in person with the people that we're trying to get money from. And I think that's a difficult challenge”. Participant 8 mentioned a similar issue to Participant 3 and Participant 6 stating that it is more difficult to work on a project with someone who is not in the office with you at the same time.

Some other downsides were mentioned by Participant 1 who stated that if there is more flexibility in the work environment you could see others “making up doctor's appointments just to get out of work” but then later mentioned that they believe management would resolve that issue. In the same portion of the interview Participant 1 said that if someone takes advantage of the flexibility than the employee is “probably not gonna care too much about your work”. When asked Participant 5 said that “I do think that you have to be careful in a virtual world and working from home, that you respect the employee's time piece, so that you're not constantly emailing and we're trying to get in touch with them in what I would call off hours” calling on issues of separation of work and home life. This was also stated by Participant 8 who said, “it's more or less understood that you're going to be accessible at any time”.

Other issues were noted by Participant 6 who said that to have the ability to work remotely and not in the office you need to “have somebody that's very disciplined and very dedicated to their job”. The same participant said that it is more difficult and time consuming to get answers from others when working remotely or not on the same schedule. Participant 5 said that another potential problem is the capabilities of the employees such as having a stable working internet connection and how that can be an issue in some areas. Similar thoughts were spoken by Participant 8 who mentioned it might be difficult for some as they “maybe possibly they don't have a designated work area that they can be uninterrupted, and it's their own private area that there's no other disruptions or distractions”.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**DATA ANALYSIS**

This section provides a discussion on the findings of this research that made an effort to discover the effects that flexible working arrangements could have on employee retention in the non-profit industry. The research aimed to capture the feelings of the 8 participants based on their experiences working in the nonprofit field for a time span longer than 3 years. The researchers removed any bias and opinions that they had to ensure that data was represented accurately and without bias.

When analyzing the data several themes arose and are detailed in Chapter 4 which consisted of data presentation. The results that come about through this analysis come from the researcher’s interpretation of these themes that came from participants that have been in the non-profit sector for at least 3 years. The following are the results the researcher has discovered based on these themes.

**Result one: Despite participants identifying low pay as negative aspect of working in the nonprofit sector participants feel major benefits come from the fulfilling work and the flexibility.** The findings of this research reveal that all of the participants identified that low wages and inability pay higher salaries were a downside to working in the non-profit sector. As stated by State & Stater (2019), when organizations are experiencing compensation constraints it can cause the employees to feel dissatisfied with their work and as a result leave the organization they are currently with. However, these employees despite the lower wages find their job to be fulfilling to themselves.

As mentioned by Kang et at., the field of nonprofit organizations often aid the employees to feel as though they are experiencing a more fulfilling job (2014). As shown by several of the participants of this study, working in the non-profit industry does have some level of effect on an employee’s perception. Across all of the participants, each of them mentioned in one way or another that the work they do at United Way does in fact make them feel as though their job is worthwhile and that they feel it is fulfilling. This aligns with both Kang et al. (2014) and Stater & Stater (2019) findings that the non-profit field provides a fulfilling experience.

While all of the employees did mention that low wages was a problem in their field of work, and some even expressing that if they were going to switch to a different field it would be because of money, many of them did make mention of how flexibility is a big factor in their current work. As proposed by Stater and Stater, there is the suggestion that intention for seeking a different job could be responsive to personal factors that related to personal life and family life. Many of the individuals made the mention that the flexible working arrangements that are experienced at United Way allow them to take care of at home situations. Some of these situations can include their own personal events as well as appointments. Another facet as to why flexibility with this group is so important is family. Many of the participants made mention that the flexible working arrangements offer them the ability to attend to their family, weather that be children or relatives.

**Result Two: Despite participants expressing potential downsides to flexible working arrangements, several participants expressed that there are many positives to having flexible working arrangements such as increased productivity.** When looking to implement flexible working arrangements into a small non-profit organization, similar to United Way, there are many difficulties and downsides that come along with this level of flexibility (McNamar et al., 2012)(Berkey et al., 2017). Participants did express multiple way in which having flexibility in the work environment could be a downside. Participants felt as though collaboration could be a potential downside as differing work schedules or differing work locations could pose potential problems.

Another concern is that this level of flexibility could pose a problem when it comes to communication issues, expressing that these differing work hours and locations could pose as a hinderance. Some participants also mentioned that their at home situation could alter their ability to work effectively. Some factors that were mentioned were the home life environment. It was also mentioned that there are technological barrier to overcome such as having a workstation with good internet connectivity.

While the participants did list many potential downsides of, there were several positives mentioned in the findings as well and a major key finding was the impact flexibility could have on productivity. Several participants mentioned that having a different work schedule could improve productivity as different people work best at different hours of the day. It was also mentioned that working from home allows certain individuals to get more work done than if they were in the office. As some employees mentioned, there is the potential for less distractions to occur in the home environment. While employees can do the work in the office, there is the potential to be pulled into both work and non-work-related conversations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

**Summary**

Literature pointed to the idea that having flexible working arrangements, otherwise stated as flexibility in the workplace, could lead to improved employee retention in the non-profit industry. Data shows that in the non-profit industry there is a high employee turnover rate that could be a result of factors such as low wages and burnout of social service workers. According to the literature, there are also difficulties that come along with the implementation and application of flexible working arrangements in the workplace that relate to factors such as size of organization, improper implementation methods, and promotion of said flexible working arrangements (Berkey et al., 2017)(McNamar et al., 2012).

While there are difficulties, the research points to positives when it comes to flexibility in the work environment. According to research, flexibility in the workplace can show reductions in the employee turnover intentions, reduction in absenteeism, and increase greater commitment to the organization (Berkery et al., 2017; Kotey & Sharma, 2018; McNamar et al., 2012). If the organization can retain the employees there is also less knowledge lost within the organization. The research shows that the pros associated with implementing flexible working arrangements outweighs the cons.

The issue that this research targeted was the high rate of turnover in the non-profit industry. The research sought to understand how flexible working arrangements could improve employee retention in small non-profit industries such as United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties in Scranton Pennsylvania. There is the existence of data on what flexible working arrangements could provide to employees from differing areas of work, but there is a gap in knowledge of how these alternative working arrangements could affect small non-profit organization. This qualitative research study aimed at filling that gap in knowledge.

**Conclusion**

This conclusion section provides answers to the research questions posed at the beginning of the research paper. These research questions were used to guide and focus the research, as well as capture information related to how flexibility in the work environment can affect employees in the non-profit sector. These questions were tailored to help fill a gap in literature on this topic.

**Research Question 1: How do United Way employees perceive flexible working arrangements in a professional setting?**

The findings of this research conclude that United Way employees perceive flexible working arrangements in a positive manner. While participants did list some of the possible downsides and drawbacks of flexible working arrangements, all participants made mention of the positives that flexibility can have in the work environment. Participants said that having the flexibility at work allows them to maintain their personal life, especially those with children, as well as their work life. One participant even went so far to say that the flexibility offered at United Way allowed them to find higher joy in the work that they do.

Allowing the flexibility for employees to alter their schedule to fit their personal needs can also improve their productivity. Participants emphasized that an alternative work schedule, or even an alternative work environment, would help them boost productivity as a result of less distractions at home. Not only can this boost productivity but it can also alter employee turnover as a result of feeling more loyal to their organization.

**Research Question 2: How does flexible working arrangements alter employee perception of the work environment at United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties.**

The findings of this research show that the United Way employees that participated in this research view organizations that offer more flexibility in their work schedule in a positive light. Employees are able to alter, to some extent, their timing of when they come in to work and leave, as well as their preferred location. This can help employees to boost their productivity as mentioned in the previous section. Participants noted across the board that, in one way or another, they appreciate the flexibility that is offered to them.

The research showed that there are identifiable downsides to working in the non-profit sector in the social service industry. The most prominently identified downside noted by all participants is the lack of financial compensation. Despite this, the participants showed more loyalty to the organization because they felt that the flexibility allows them to attend to other areas of life that are note work related. As a result of this, participants felt more appreciative towards their organization compared to previous jobs that did not offer that flexibility.

**Research Question 3: What impact, if any, do flexible working arrangements have on employee retention in the non-profit sector?**

The final question this research targeted was how could flexible working arrangements effect employee retention. Participants of this research felt very strongly that flexibility in the work environment does alter their feelings in a positive way towards their employer. Participants expressed that a lack of flexibility in the workplace could lead to higher turnover because of the personal needs of the employees. A participant noted that they left a position at another organization because mew management would not allow them the flexibility they needed.

Another participant in particular noted they actually look down upon organizations and companies that do not offer flexibility to employees. When flexibility is not offered to the employees, participants felt that it was a lack of caring on the employer’s part. As a result of United Way offering flexible working arrangements, they have been able to make their employees feel as though they are being treated better than an organization or company that does not offer that level of flexibility.

**Recommendations**

**Employers adapt flexible working arrangements.**

Based on the results of this research, there is the recommendation for more employers to take a look at possible implementation of flexible working arrangements into their organizations. The results of the research show that there is a positive effect on employees that flexibility can have within an organization. Employees seem to appreciate the flexibility as it can allow them to attend to their personal life events, whilst still achieving the work that is requested of them. As the literature shows, there are difficulties when it comes to the implementation and execution of flexible working arrangements so employers should take caution when first implementing.

Employers should survey those that would utilize the flexible working arrangement first to understand what the utilization might be. The employer should then look over the results and set parameters for what can and cannot be done by employees. Afterwards it is recommended that promotion of these arrangements are available to employees to ensure all are aware. Following this it is recommended that it be reassured that it is ok to utilize these alternative arrangements so that employees are not deterred from taking advantage of what is offered to them. Employers should also conduct a follow up with employees to ensure that their implementation and execution was a success, and to identify how it could be improved.

**Challenges to the Research**

Some challenges that were experienced began with the literature review. The seemed to be a great lacking of data that the research was looking for. When conducting the literature review portion of the paper there was mixed data being found that could potentially skew the results of the literature review. When looking for articles on wages being paid to “non-profit employees” it would show wages for non-profits such as higher education institutions and hospitals where employees are possibly paid more than for-profit counterparts.

Another struggle of this research was the timing of IRB submission and Corona virus. It is highly likely that employees working from home as a result of the need to according with Governor Wolf’s stay at home orders could have potentially skewed the results of the data. This could be done by a possible rush to work from home and the difficulties and complications that could have come along with this. The collection of the data was also a challenge related to Coronavirus because of having to use telecommunication with participants to interview and gather research.

**Suggestion for Future Research**

**Future researchers recreate this research post COVID-19 pandemic.**

The Corona virus has altered the world as we know it in the year of 2020. This research topic and literature was gathered prior to the shutdown that occurred within Pennsylvania. It is believed that the sudden shift of employees being required to work from home could have had a significant impact on how this organization (United Way) implemented their working from home routine. Participants did seem to think as though it was working well and that they can work efficiently from home, but as time goes on they will adapt more to a virtual work environment.

It is recommended that this research be reconducted in a similar manner once the pandemic has less of a grasp on everything that we do. Researchers looking to replicate this research should also not that it is recommended to conduct this research in a small organizations, as the literature has provided that it is more difficult to implement flexible working arrangements in smaller nonprofits. It is recommended that the research be conducted within a year’s time similar to this research to hold resemble as close to this research as possible.

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