Examining Employee Retention and Motivation Trends in Research Administration

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Abstract: *The current study examined retention and voluntary turnover intention trends among university research administrators, as well as motivational factors contributing to both retention and voluntary turnover intentions using a mixed-methods survey. The online survey was administered to research administrators using a national listserv and included both qualitative and quantitative questions to explore participants' intent to remain or leave their current place of employment, the motivational factors impacting the decision, and key demographic information. Descriptive statistics and thematic analyses were utilized to analyze the data and to draw both convergences and divergences in participant responses. The study found that retention is high among university research administrators and that perceived supervisor and upper management support were key motivational factors attributed to both retention and voluntary turnover intentions.*

Keywords: *Retention, voluntary turnover intentions, motivation factors*

Introduction

The field of research administration is plagued with understaffed offices and employees that need to perform multiple job roles to increase research capacity within their organizations, while federal regulations cause more oversight in operational practices (Hicks & Monroy-Paz, 2015). Due to ever-evolving research policies and political climates, research administrators face constant change and numerous challenges within their jobs. Employees in research administration may fulfill the roles of business manager, legal counsel, financial administrator, and quasi-researcher all in the same day (Tauginienė, 2009). Given the specialized skill set and need for employees to be nimble, retention is key to retaining institutional knowledge. It is important for managers and directors to understand what factors contribute to employee retention and voluntary turnover intentions to ensure that talented research administrators will continue to stay in the profession. The present study seeks to answer the following research questions: What are the retention and voluntary turnover intention trends among research administrators at universities? What are the top motivation factors for retention identified by those who are not looking for a new place of employment? What are the top motivation factors for voluntary turnover intentions identified by those who are looking for a new place of employment?

Literature Review

The present study seeks to examine retention and voluntary turnover intention trends within research administration, including the associated motivation factors for each. The subsequent literature review will provide an overview of previous research on employee retention, voluntary employee turnover, and motivation factors in the workplace. Literature that heavily focused on the social contract, improving retention, decreasing turnover, and strategies to increase retention were excluded from review. The literature selected for this review focused on retention and voluntary turnover intention as separate phenomena, as well as the underlying factors for each.

Research Administration

Research administration is a fairly recent field and there is a dearth of general social scientific literature on the profession (Hicks & Monroy-Paz, 2015; Huang & Huang, 2018). The field emerged after World War II around 1945 after the United States created federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the Office of Naval Research to fund basic research (Beasley, 2006). By definition, research administration is the administrative support required to manage and apply for external funding, including but not limited to "the oversight and compliance of the sponsor's management and fiscal requirements as stated in the grant or contract" (Beasley, 2006, p. 9). To date, there is little literature that examines retention and voluntary turnover intention trends within the profession. In a review of the literature, one study was found that examined the psychological contract perceptions of organizational loyalty and commitment among research administrators and focused on generational differences and perceptions of the psychological contract (Hicks & Monroy-Paz, 2015), but not on employment trends.

Landen and McCallister (2006) suggested that formal training and education for a career in research administration is almost nonexistent. A recent survey of research administrators found that roughly 60% of those surveyed chose "skill alignment" as an important factor when entering the profession, while 20% of respondents rated "interest in the field" as an important factor. In addition, roughly 50% of those surveyed responded that a job was available, and they applied without prior experience in research administration. This factor was rated as a high importance factor for entering the field (Kerridge & Scott, 2018). Since research administration is a profession that many find by chance, understanding the underlying motivational factors for both retention and voluntary turnover is of utmost importance to senior leadership.

Research administration can be a demanding and stressful field. Shambrook (2012) compared the 2007 and 2010 Research Administrator Stress Perception Surveys (RASPerS) and found that perceived work stress, number of hours worked, work/family conflict, and sickness presenteeism stress factors were significantly higher in the 2010 survey than the 2007 survey. Data also showed that overall a higher percentage of research administrators perceived high levels of workplace stress in 2010 than 2007. Additionally, Shambrook found that more respondents reported extremely high stress levels than those reporting extremely low stress levels in both survey years. Although the percentage of those who felt appreciated in the workplace increased from 2007 to 2010, 38.2% of those surveyed in 2010 indicated that they did not feel appreciated in the

workplace. Although the present research study did not analyze perceived stress as a motivation factor for retention and voluntary turnover, it is necessary to understand perceived stress and extenuating factors within the field to understand the current climate within the profession.

Retention and Voluntary Turnover

Retaining existing talent is a key concern for most organizations. Literature has indicated that employees no longer stay within an organization for a prolonged period (Acikgoz et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2018), thus making identifying the underlying causes of voluntary turnover extremely important. Lee et al. (2018) puts forward the claim that the traditional view of assuming employees will stay with an organization if they are happy is no longer sufficient. In fact, the researchers identified voluntary employee turnover as the most difficult type of turnover to manage, as opposed to layoffs or company downsizing. It is important to note that intention for turnover does not necessarily lead to voluntary turnover, but that the intention and subsequent behavior are highly correlated (Ertas, 2015).

Motivation Factors

Understanding what motivates employees is crucial for long-term success. A plethora of motivational factors for employee retention and voluntary turnover are mentioned in current literature and a select few of these recurring factors are subsequently outlined. Research has indicated that poor job satisfaction is a major factor for voluntary turnover (Acikgoz et al., 2016; Ertas, 2015; Lee et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2018). While adequate pay and other financial incentives can act as motivational factors to retain employees, studies have found that employee behavioral attitudes within the workplace can prove to be more important (Aguenza & Som, 2012; Ann & Blum, 2020; Honore, 2009; Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). In instances where an employee's pay is fair for their line of work, other factors such as workplace culture can be more powerful in influencing an employee's decision to remain at an organization (Aguenza & Som, 2012; George, 2015). In fact, Honore's (2009) work demonstrates that as an employee's salary increases, financial incentives become less effective as motivating factors.

Studies have also shown that higher-skilled employees are more likely to stay at an organization if their job includes new challenges and opportunities to learn (Aguenza & Som, 2012; Ann & Blum, 2020; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). Additionally, considerable research has shown opportunities for career growth and professional development are crucial motivating factors for employee retention (Aguenza & Som, 2012; Cardy & Lengnick-Hall, 2011; Ertas, 2015; George, 2015; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Hicks & Monroy-Paz, 2015; Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). Maintaining an adequate work-life balance, including flexible work schedules, is a key motivational factor shown to influence employee retention (Aguenza & Som, 2012; George, 2015; Hausknecht et al., 2009) and voluntary turnover (Ann & Blum, 2020; Ertas, 2015; Lee et al., 2018). In fact, maintaining a proper work-life balance means that some employees will sacrifice success within their careers or quit in order to allow for more time in the other areas of life outside of work (George, 2015; Lee et al., 2018).

There is growing literature showing that organizational commitment can reduce voluntary

turnover intentions (Acikgoz et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2018), as well as perceived organizational support, or the extent to which an employee feels valued by the organization or supervisors (Acikgoz et al., 2016; Ertas, 2015; Dawley et al., 2010). In other words, the more invested an employee is with an organization, the more valued they feel, and the less likely they will leave. Surprisingly, Ann and Blum (2020) found that relationships with coworkers had no effect on job dissatisfaction and voluntary turnover intentions.

While there is little literature focused specifically on retention and voluntary turnover intentions within research administration, the literature reviewed provides a foundation for the topic. The present study aims to contribute to the research administration community by focusing on the profession as a field of study; borrowing from both educational and human resource research to explore employee retention and voluntary turnover intentions within research administration. A brief overview of the methodology follows.

Methods

The present study utilized a mixed-methods online survey and collected primarily quantitative data. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) indicated that mixed-methods research is advantageous because it counteracts the weakness of using either qualitative or quantitative research alone by incorporating the strengths of both methods into one design. The survey employed a convergent design, focused primarily on quantitative questions about the participants' desire to stay or leave their current place of employment, the factors that motivated participants to leave or remain in their current positions, and demographic questions. Categorical methods of analysis are best suited for the quantitative data because the data uncovered what kinds of motivational factors for retention and turnover were cited, the frequency of the motivation factors cited for retention and voluntary turnover, and participants' intentions to remain with or leave their current employer (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Emergent coding was used to analyze, reduce, and construct themes based on open-ended survey responses (Charmaz, 2008).

Population and Sample

The target population of this study were university research administrators. Cluster random sampling using the RESADM-L listserv was employed first, obtaining 189 responses. Fraenkel et al. (2019) indicated that cluster random sampling may be advantageous when a listing of the total population cannot be obtained, as is the case in the present study. Purposive sampling was then used to analyze responses from only the self-identified research administrators working in higher education, narrowing the sample size to 154 respondents. Once partially completed responses were removed from the data, the total sample size consisted of 143 respondents.

Instrumentation

Borrowing from similarly designed studies by Ertas (2015), George (2015), and Hicks and Monroy-Paz (2015), the present study used an electronic survey developed in Qualtrics to collect data. Motivation factors identified by previous literature for retention and voluntary turnover intentions were selected and participants were asked to rate each factor using a Likert scale. In

addition, motivation factors identified by previous literature were used as answer choices when participants were asked about motivation factors that influenced them to leave or stay with their current employer. The survey consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions regarding retention and turnover intentions, motivating factors for retention and voluntary turnover intentions, and demographic information including age and position level. To ensure valid and reliable data collection methods, a pilot test of the instrument was conducted with graduate students enrolled in a research course. The present instrument differs from prior research in that both quantitative and qualitative questions were used to obtain a more holistic view of retention and voluntary turnover trends in research administration. Two sample survey questions are included below:

1. Out of the following, please select the top four factors that motivate you to leave your current place of employment:

   Lack of Professional Development Opportunities

   Lack of Support from Supervisor and Upper Management

   Negative Relationship with Coworkers

   Inadequate Compensation and Benefits

   Lack of Intellectual Stimulation with Work Assignments

   Lack of Career Advancement Opportunities

   Disinterest in the Research Administration

   Feeling Undervalued

   Poor Work/Life Balance

   Can Easily Find Another Place of Employment

   Disinterest in Work Assignments

   Other _____

2. Please add any additional information about what has motivated you to leave your current place of employment that may not have already been covered.

Data Collection Procedures

In February 2020, an email invitation to participate in the study was sent to the membership of the RESADM-L listserv. The email described the details of the research study, the risks and benefits of participating in the anonymous survey and sought informed consent. A link to the Qualtrics survey was included at the very end of the email after the informed consent language. Structuring the email and survey this way ensured participants provided their consent before being able to proceed with the survey. Administering the survey online allowed participants to take the survey at a time and location where it is most convenient for them and expand the

geography of the possible participants. To ensure the survey received an adequate response rate the survey remained open for two weeks. Unfortunately, a reminder email was not sent to the listserv due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive analysis which were appropriate because the study aims to describe the data collected, but not infer or reach conclusions that extend beyond the immediate data. The analysis relied on measures of central tendency, or averages such as the mean and mode of responses and was best suited because the data uncovered what kinds of motivational factors for retention and voluntary turnover intentions were cited by respondents, the frequency of the motivation factors cited for retention and voluntary turnover intentions, and participants' intentions to remain with or leave their current employer. Therefore, analyses tailored to categorical data such as percentages and frequencies are best suited to make sense of the data collected. The open-ended responses were coded into emerging themes and compared to the quantitative data obtained on motivation factors for retention and voluntary turnover.

Protection of Human Subjects

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained on February 3, 2020 before any human subject research was conducted (protocol number 20-1661), thus securing ethical protections for the participants. Content was obtained from participants by way of the cover letter included in the body of the email soliciting participation. The cover letter also described both risks and benefits of participating in the survey so that participants could make an informed decision to take the survey or not.

Results

One hundred eighty-nine people responded to the survey out of a possible 5,736 responses, generating a 3.3% response rate overall. Of the 189 responses, 178 responses were complete. The responses to the survey were further narrowed to 143 when examining only responses from university research administrators (this included colleges, research intensive universities, and predominately undergraduate universities) for the purpose of this survey. Although the response rate for the survey is lower than anticipated, this is a common disadvantage of using online survey research methods (Fan & Yan, 2010; Fraenkel et al., 2019). In addition, the survey was only open for two weeks and reminders were not sent to the listserv due to the early COVID-19 pandemic developments which could have also contributed to the low response rate.

Demographics

Respondents were asked several demographic questions concerning gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, and questions concerning their current place employment. A total of 143 responses were obtained for the demographic questions pertaining to age, level of education, classification of their place of employment, length of time with their current employer, and current position type while 142 responses were obtained for demographic questions relating to gender and ethnicity.

Table 1 summarizes the demographic information.

Research Question 1: What are the retention and voluntary turnover intention trends among research administrators at universities?

Out of the 143 responses, 24 participants, or 17%, indicated that they were looking for a new place of employment and 119 participants, or 83%, indicated that they were not. Out of the 24 participants who indicated they were looking for a new place of employment, 22 participants, or 92% of participants, indicated they were looking for a job within the field of research administration while 2 participants, or 8% of participants, indicated that they were not.

Table 1. Demographics

Characteristic	n	Percent
Gender		
Male	18	13%
Female	122	86%
Nonbinary	2	1%
Age		
25-34	25	17%
35-44	43	30%
45-54	42	30%
55 and Up	29	20%
Prefer Not to Answer	5	3%
Race/Ethnicity		
Asian	4	3%
African American	3	2%
Biracial (text field responses: Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Caucasian, and no text)	3	2%
Caucasian	118	83%
Hispanic	7	5%
Native American or Alaskan Native	1	1%
Prefer not to Answer	6	4%
Level of Education		
High School	1	1%
Some College	5	3%
Associate Degree	2	1%
Bachelor's Degree	40	30%
Master's Degree	84	58%

Table 1. Demographics Continued

Characteristic	n	Percent
Ph.D.	11	7%
Classification of Current Place of Employment		
Private College	25	17.5%
Predominately Undergraduate University	25	17.5%
Research University	93	65%
Length of Time with Current Employer		
Less than 1 Year	12	9%
1-3 Years	39	27%
4-9 Years	40	28%
10+ Years	52	36%

Participants were then directed to three questions, two quantitative and one qualitative pertaining to voluntary turnover intentions or retention based on their above response.

Research Question 2: What are the top motivation factors for retention identified by those who are not looking for a new place of employment?

Participants were asked to rate a list of motivation factors that most aligned with their motivation to remain with their current employer using a Likert scale with answers ranging from Extremely Important (1) to Not at all Important (5). Support from Supervisor/Upper Management was ranked as either Extremely Important or Very Important by 95% of respondents. Other write-in factors ranked included treatment by institution, employer accountability for inadequate managers, the organization valuing employee input, engagement with the mission of the organization, working in an office setting, and the length of time within the current position. Table 2 provides the mean ranking and standard deviation for each motivation factor. The majority of the standard deviations for each motivation factor were under one, meaning that there was not much variance in ranking for each factor from the mean and that there was some consensus among respondents for the ranking.

Table 2. Motivation Factor Ranking for Retention

Motivation Factor	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Years Committed to the Organization	118	3.01	1.16
Individualized Work Assignments	119	2.48	0.93
Flexible Work Schedule	119	2.13	1.04
Career Advancement Opportunities	119	2.07	0.95
Flexibility in Workload Decisions	119	2.05	0.74
Professional Development Opportunities	119	1.96	0.86
Intellectual Stimulation with Work Assignments	119	1.81	0.70
Adequate Compensation and Benefits	119	1.65	0.63
Positive Relationship with Coworkers	119	1.64	0.64
Good Work/Life Balance	118	1.63	0.77
Support from Supervisor and Upper Management	119	1.31	0.60
Other	8	1.25	0.43

When asked to select the top four factors that best aligned with their own motivation for remaining with their current employer, *support from supervisor and upper management, adequate compensation and benefits, good work/life balance,* and *positive relationship with coworkers* emerged as the most frequent of the top four factors selected by participants, whereas other, *individualized work assignments, flexibility in workload decisions,* and *career advancement opportunities* were selected the least.

Participants were asked to provide additional information about what has motivated them to remain at their current place of employment that had not already been covered. Twenty participants chose to leave qualitative feedback. Each response was analyzed and categorized into several themes. Some of the themes from the qualitative feedback were similar to the motivation factors listed within the quantitative questions. Table 3 shows the emerging themes, the frequency each theme occurred, and supporting excerpts from the qualitative analysis.

Table 3. Emerging Themes Cited for Retention

Theme	Frequency	Supporting Excerpts
Location	6	"Distance to work;" "Easy commute;" "Changing employers would require moving which would have a disruption on other family members."
Good Supervisor	4	"I really like my supervisor and feel that she supports me."
Age	3	"Age has not been an issue yet;" "Close to retirement."
Benefits	3	"…tuition benefits for my high school aged child;" "Retirement benefits…"
Allegiance to Institution	2	"Institutional knowledge can be important… we should keep those folks with institutional knowledge around;" "Allegiance to institution."
Recognition	1	"Appreciation or recognition for a job well done…"
Workload	1	"Workload in general."

Research Question 3: What are the top motivation factors for voluntary turnover intentions identified by those who are looking for a new place of employment?

Participants were asked to rate a list of motivation factors that most aligned with their motivation to leave their current employer using a Likert scale with answers ranging from *Extremely Important* (1) to *Not at all Important* (5). *Lack of support from supervisor and upper management* was ranked as *Extremely Important* by 54% of respondents and *feeling undervalued* was ranked as *Extremely Important* by 48% of respondents. Other write-in factors ranked included relocation costs, heavy workload, toxic work environment, and inept leadership. Table 4 outlines the response size, mean, and standard deviation for each motivation factor. The standard deviations from the mean listed in Table 4 for each motivation factor are higher than the standard deviations found for retention, due to one outlier who consistently rated the motivation factors for voluntary turnover intentions as *Slightly Important* or *Not At All Important*. This individual also left qualitative feedback indicating their desire to leave the field of research administration and work in the private sector doing something completely different. Their responses were inconsistent with the other responses received overall concerning voluntary turnover intentions.

Table 4. Motivation Factor Ranking for Voluntary Turnover Intentions

Motivation Factor	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Disinterest in Research Administration	23	4.39	1.17
Disinterest in Work Assignments	23	3.65	1.09
Negative Relationship with Coworkers	23	3.24	1.35
Can Easily Find Another Place of Employment	23	3.17	1.13
Poor Work/Life Balance	23	2.91	1.38
Lack of Professional Development Opportunities	23	2.61	1.37
Lack of Intellectual Stimulation with Work Assignments	23	2.61	1.31
Inadequate Compensation and Benefits	24	2.42	1.29
Lack of Career Advancement Opportunities	23	2.09	1.10
Feeling Undervalued	23	2.09	1.35
Lack of Support from Supervisor and Upper Management	24	1.88	1.24
Other	4	1.00	0.00

Participants were asked to select the top four factors that best aligned with their own motivation for leaving their current employer. Out of the twelve motivation factors presented, including the other option, *lack of career advancement opportunities, lack of support from supervisor and upper management, inadequate compensation and benefits,* and *feeling undervalued* emerged as the most frequent of the top four factors selected by participants that best aligned with their own motivation for wanting to leave their current employers. *Disinterest in work assignments, disinterest in research administration, ease in finding a new place of employment,* and *negative relationship with coworkers* were selected as top motivation factors for voluntary turnover intentions the least.

Eight participants provided additional feedback about what has motivated them to look for another place of employment that had not already been covered. As with the feedback left for retention, some of the emerging themes from the feedback for voluntary turnover were similar to the motivation factors provided within the quantitative questions. Table 5 organizes the qualitative data to show the emerging themes, the frequency each theme occurred within the feedback, and sample excerpts for each theme.

Table 5. Emerging Themes Cited for Voluntary Turnover Intentions

Theme	Frequency	Supporting Excerpts
Lack of Career Advancement Opportunities	4	"…I'm ready for a new more senior role, but no one helps me get there or promotes from within." "The job was what I needed at the time and now I'm ready to look for something else."
Feeling Undervalued	2	"…creates tension among existing RAs and feeling undervalued when new hires come in at higher levels than existing RAs fighting for promotions…" "…staff are not seen here as professionals (i.e. – second-class citizens to faculty)…"
Inadequate Compensation	2	"The cost of living and commuting expense… is incredibly high. I do not wish to leave my employer but if I want a home of my own I need to look elsewhere..." "...I plan on leaving to go to private industry, where I can make 40% more in compensation…"
Lack of Strong Leadership	2	"Questionable business ethics." "I have had leadership changes 3 times in the last 18 months."
Demanding Workload	1	"Staffing is minimal, coverage for vacations, sick days, etc. is non-existent so you never really get a break."

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine retention and voluntary turnover intention trends and motivation factors among university research administrators by answering the following research questions: What are the retention and voluntary turnover intention trends among research administrators at universities? What are the top motivation factors for retention identified by those who are not looking for a new place of employment? What are the top motivation factors for voluntary turnover intentions identified by those who are looking for a new place of employment? It is promising to see that retention among the field is high and that there is some consensus among the motivation factors for both retention and voluntary turnover intentions identified within this study.

Overview of Results

The key findings from this survey indicated that retention among university research administrators is high, and the majority of those with intentions for voluntary turnover still wish

to remain within the field. In addition, disinterest in research administration and disinterest in work assignments were selected as a top factor for voluntary turnover intentions the least (2% respectively), showing that those who are leaving their employer are not doing so because they dislike the field. This is reassuring data, since the field of research administration is one in which the majority entering the field find it by chance (Kerridge & Scott, 2018).

In terms of motivation factors for retention and voluntary turnover intentions, there were several overlapping factors cited that were uncovered by the present study. Top motivation factors for retention identified by university research administrators include supportive supervisors or upper management, positive relationships with coworkers, adequate compensation, a good work/life balance, and benefits. Top motivation factors for voluntary turnover intentions among university research administrators include lack of support from supervisor or upper management, feeling undervalued, lack of career advancement opportunities, and inadequate pay/benefits.

One overlapping factor included perceived support from supervisor or upper management, perceived support being associated with retention and perceived lack of support associated with voluntary turnover, which is in alignment with previous literature (Ertas, 2015; George, 2015) and was and chosen as a top four factor more than the other choices for both retention and voluntary turnover intentions. Compensation and benefits emerged as another top motivation factor for both retention (adequate compensation and benefits) and voluntary turnover intentions (inadequate compensation and benefits). For retention, benefits were a key theme that occurred within the open-ended feedback question, whereas inadequate compensation was mentioned twice for voluntary turnover intentions.

Prior literature indicated that work/life balance is a key motivating factor for both retention and voluntary turnover intentions (Ann & Blum, 2020; Aguenza & Som, 2012; Ertas, 2015; George, 2015; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2018) where the present study found that an adequate work/life balance was a key factor for retention only among university research administrators. A prominent motivation factor for voluntary turnover intentions uncovered by this study was feeling undervalued. Previous literature has also uncovered the notion that the degree in which an employee feels supported or valued by the organization is a factor for voluntary turnover (Acikgoz et al., 2016; Ertas, 2015; Dawley et al., 2010). While one open-ended feedback on retention factors specifically mentioned recognition, the study can attribute the factor of feeling undervalued uniquely to voluntary turnover intentions.

Opportunities for advancement and professional development were mentioned in previous literature as extremely important in employee retention (Aguenza & Som, 2012; Cardy & Lengnick-Hall, 2011; Ertas, 2015; George, 2015; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Hicks & Monroy-Paz, 2015; Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). Interestingly, career advancement opportunities was only selected as a top four motivation factor for retention 4% of the time. Lack of career advancement opportunities was an important motivating factor for voluntary turnover intentions among university research administrators, cited as a top motivation factor 18% of the time and averaged a rating of Very Important on a Likert scale. The results from the survey indicated that professional development opportunities did not weigh as high among university research administrators for both retention and voluntary turnover intentions.

Limitations

There are several identified threats and limitations of this study. A major limitation was the low sample size and response rate. Because of the lower than expected samples, the results obtained may not be representative of the entire population. Mortality occurred due to participants neglecting to answer some survey questions and completely skipping over sections of the survey. This study also contained location threat to validity as participants were provided with a survey link for them to take at their convenience. The time and location in which each participant takes the survey may have been completely different. In addition, subject characteristics threat could have arisen from the cluster sampling method, where the participants who subscribe to the listserv may differ in attitudes, motivation, position level, age, and ability than university research administrators who do not subscribe to the listserv.

Implications

The results from the present research have multiple implications for the field of research administration. Organizational leadership in research administration positions can use the findings from this study in making policy decisions within their office concerning hiring from within, publicizing a clear path for advancement, and supporting recognition incentives or programs for current employees. Although some factors may be out of the supervisor's control as they may be more organizational, factors for retention and turnover within their control should be given weight and appropriate steps taken to alleviate any factors for voluntary turnover within their department and strengthen those cited for retention. Given the weight that supervisor support has on retention and voluntary turnover, those in supervisory roles can use the findings from this study to improve their leadership style and create professional development opportunities to cultivate a supportive environment.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present study can be used as a basis for further research in several ways. Within the field of research administration, additional research should compare the retention and voluntary turnover trends and motivation factors among the differing employer types (colleges, predominately undergraduate universities, research-intensive universities, non-profits/foundations, hospitals, etc.) to determine if there are industry specific factors that can contribute to each phenomenon. Determining unique experiences for each employer type can aid the field as a whole and enhance retention efforts among research administrators. Case studies of the different employer types would be especially helpful to obtain preliminary or baseline data and further expand efforts to establish research administration as a science.

While retention and voluntary turnover intentions should be treated as two separate phenomena, it is evident that among university research administrators, there is overlap among some motivation factors relating to both retention and voluntary turnover intentions. Additional research should be conducted to determine the extent of the overlap of motivation factors for retention and voluntary turnover intentions and if voluntary turnover intentions decrease when

overlapping factors for retention and voluntary turnover intention are addressed. The findings of this study can serve as a foundation for future research on retention and voluntary turnover intentions within the field of research administration, as well as contribute to the vast research on both retention and voluntary turnover.

Author's Note

Loralin Welch is a Research Administrator in the Department of Internal Medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University and previously worked as a Grants Specialist at James Madison University. The research presented in this article was conducted in fulfillment for a Master of Science in Education degree under the direction of Dr. Brantmeier. Questions about the research can be directed to Loralin at loralin.welch@vcuhealth.org.

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