

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
TURNOVER: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by

Andrew Kim

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2024

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
TURNOVER: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by Andrew Kim

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2024

APPROVED BY:

Abiodun Oguntuase, Ph.D., Committee Chair

Jimmie Johnson, Ph.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

A high frequency of voluntary turnover within a law enforcement organization is problematic due to the potential for an increase in expenditures, a reduction in public safety levels, and an increase in liability. However, research has indicated explicitly that criminal justice professions have a high turnover rate, with many organizations having an annual turnover rate of 10 percent or higher. Investigating employee turnover rates and potential solutions to increase employee retention are significant areas of focus that can reduce expenditures, maintain or improve public safety levels by keeping experienced employees, and create a better working environment. A high employee turnover rate can lead to negative impacts on organizational morale. This qualitative case study investigated the most significant contributor to turnover intentions among law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. Prior research has indicated that salary, benefits, lack of career opportunities, poor organizational support, under-recognition, poor organizational morale, and poor supervision may impact turnover rates within law enforcement organizations. The theory that guided this study was Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). This qualitative multiple case study utilized semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document analysis as the data collection tools. The sample of this study were current or former law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma recruited via snowball sampling. The findings were five themes: salary and benefits, poor morale, political climate and public support, leadership and management, and limited opportunities. Additionally, it was found that all former employees followed the same path as defined by Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Molding Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover when they conducted a job search and then quit the organization. Additional findings and implications will be discussed at length within this study.

Keywords: Turnover, unfolding model, law enforcement officers, law enforcement

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my brothers and sisters in law enforcement who continually put their lives at risk to protect total strangers with whom they may have never crossed paths otherwise. Additionally, this study was dedicated to the law enforcement officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep society safe.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my wife, Sophia, and my family for their support throughout this doctoral process and for understanding why I had to take time away from routine family activities and personal time to complete coursework and this dissertation project.

I also want to thank my Committee Chair, Professor Abiodun Oguntuase, and my Committee Member, Dr. Jimmie Johnson, who provided guidance, feedback, and mentoring throughout this dissertation project.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	3
Dedication.....	4
Acknowledgments	5
List of Tables	14
List of Figures.....	15
List of Abbreviations	16
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	17
Overview	17
Background.....	20
Introduction	20
Historical Context.....	21
Social Context	22
Theoretical Context	24
Situation to Self	25
Problem Statement.....	28
Purpose Statement	30
Significance of the Study.....	30
Research Questions	32
Research Question 1	32
Research Question 2	32
Research Question 3	33
Definitions	34

Summary..... 34

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 36

 Overview 36

 Theoretical Framework 37

 Related Literature 42

 Introduction 42

 Types of Employee Turnover 43

 Voluntary Employee Turnover 44

 Involuntary Employee Turnover 45

 Employee Turnover in Law Enforcement 45

 Causes of Law Enforcement Turnover 48

 Salary and Benefits 49

 Supervision, Management, and Organizational Management..... 50

 Stress and Working Environment..... 53

 Political Climate 56

 Gender in Law Enforcement 59

 Other Causes of Turnover in Law Enforcement..... 60

 Impacts Associated with Turnover in Law Enforcement 61

 Potential Mitigating Factors to Turnover 66

 Limitations in Prior Literature 67

 Perception of Law Enforcement Turnover 70

 Summary..... 71

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS..... 73

Overview 73

Design..... 73

Research Questions 78

Setting..... 78

Participants 79

Procedures 83

The Researcher's Role 86

Data Collection 87

 Document Analysis 90

 Interviews 92

 Participant Observation 98

Data Analysis..... 99

 Interviews 100

 Participant Observation 101

 Document Analysis 102

 Data Triangulation..... 103

Trustworthiness 104

 Credibility 105

 Dependability and Confirmability 106

 Transferability 108

Ethical Considerations..... 109

Summary..... 111

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS 113

Overview	113
Participants	113
Participant 1	114
Participant 2	115
Participant 3	115
Participant 4	115
Participant 5	115
Participant 6	116
Participant 7	116
Participant 8	116
Participant 9	117
Participant 10	117
Participant 11	117
Participant 12	117
Participant 13	118
Results	118
Document Analysis	118
Introduction	118
History of the City of La Palma and its Law Enforcement Organization	119
Law Enforcement Turnover within the City of La Palma	121
Salary and Benefits Offered to La Palma’s Law Enforcement Officers .	123
Interviews	131
Participant 1	131

Participant 2.....	134
Participant 3.....	138
Participant 4.....	140
Participant 5.....	142
Participant 6.....	148
Participant 7.....	151
Participant 8.....	154
Participant 9.....	160
Participant 10.....	163
Participant 11.....	168
Participant 12.....	171
Participant 13.....	175
Participant Observations.....	178
Participant 1.....	179
Participant 2.....	179
Participant 3.....	180
Participant 4.....	181
Participant 5.....	182
Participant 6.....	182
Participant 7.....	183
Participant 8.....	184
Participant 9.....	184
Participant 10.....	185

Participant 11	185
Participant 12	186
Participant 13	186
Research Question Response	187
Research Question 1	187
Research Question 2	189
Research Question 3	200
Theme Development	208
Salary and Benefits	211
2.0 Percent at 57	212
PEPRA vs. Classic	214
Unlivable Wages	217
Poor Morale	220
Burnout	220
Work-Life Balance	222
Lack of Communication	224
Political Climate / Public Support	226
Defund the Police Movement / George Floyd Protests	226
Lack of City Council Support	228
Demographics of Citizens	230
Leadership & Management	232
Lack of Experience Among Supervisors	232
Us vs. Them Mentality	235

Management Issues	237
Limited Opportunities	240
Special Assignments.....	240
Promotional Opportunities	243
Summary.....	244
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	246
Overview	246
Summary of Findings	246
Research Question 1	248
Research Question 2	250
Research Question 3	251
Discussion.....	253
Theoretical Literature	253
Empirical Literature.....	256
Implications	258
Theoretical Implications	259
Empirical Implications	260
Practical Implications	262
Delimitations and Limitations	264
Recommendations for Future Research.....	268
Summary.....	272
REFERENCES	274
APPENDIX A	286

APPENDIX B.....	287
APPENDIX C.....	288
APPENDIX D	290
APPENDIX E.....	291

List of Tables

Table 1: Decision Path for the Unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover.....	38
Table 2: Participant Demographics.....	114
Table 3: Ranking of Police Officer Monthly Total Compensation (5 Years of Experience).....	125
Table 4: Ranking of Police Officer Monthly Total Compensation (25 Years of Experience)...	127
Table 5: Themes and Sub-Themes.....	210
Table 6: Number of Different Participants Who Mentioned the Themes and Sub-Themes.....	211

List of Figures

Figure 1: Decision Path for the Unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover.....	39
Figure 2: Graph of Police Officer Monthly Total Compensation (5 Years of Experience).....	125
Figure 3: Graph of Police Officer Monthly Total Compensation (25 Years of Experience).....	127

List of Abbreviations

Administrative Support Bureau (ASB)

California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS)

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

General Strain Theory (GST)

La Palma Police Association (LPPA)

La Palma Police Department (LPPD)

Law Enforcement Officer (LEO)

Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA)

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The employees of an organization are typically both one of the most important and one of the most expensive parts of an organization. Therefore, retaining qualified and experienced employees is an important human resource goal all organizations strive to achieve. The field of law enforcement is no exception. It can even be argued that reducing turnover is more important in law enforcement than in other sectors due to the potential liability of officers making mistakes that could cost public sector organizations millions of dollars in lawsuits (Kiebusch et al., 2003). Law enforcement officers can face both push and pull factors from law enforcement organizations. Certain negative factors push officers away from their current organization, and positive factors pull them toward other organizations (Hilal & Litsey, 2019). Some examples of push factors are the perception of poor line-level supervision or management, lack of career opportunities, and low morale at an officer's current law enforcement organization, which can lead to current employees seeking employment opportunities at other organizations (Hayes, 2020; Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Kiebusch et al., 2003; Li et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2015).

A few examples of pull factors are higher pay and better benefits, the perception of a better working environment, and more special assignments or opportunities at a different law enforcement organization. Unlike many other professions, law enforcement requires a specialized certification that consists of specific training in various topics (Yun et al., 2015). As a result, law enforcement officers cannot be hired directly from the general population (Yun et al., 2015). In addition to this, there is a limited applicant pool with the required training and experience to be hired as an officer, which can slow down the recruitment and hiring process (Yun et al., 2015). Shim et al. (2015) emphasized that the premature turnover of employees

within a law enforcement organization can have detrimental impacts since there can be costly and disruptive effects on operations. In many cases, unlike anticipated employee turnover, such as service retirements, premature turnover is not planned through over-hiring practices or succession planning, leaving gaps in operations.

For this study, two types of employee turnover were discussed: voluntary employee turnover and involuntary employee turnover. This study mainly focused on the concept of voluntary employee turnover since this form of turnover is concerning for organizations. Voluntary employee turnover can be defined as when an employee voluntarily leaves their employment organization (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Some examples of voluntary employee turnover are when an employee chooses to seek employment at another organization, chooses to leave the career field for a whole new career, or through retirement. On the other hand, involuntary employee turnover is when an employee involuntarily leaves the organization (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). In many situations, involuntary turnover occurs at the employer's request due to instances of misconduct, underperformance, or not passing a probationary period (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Especially in smaller organizations, voluntary employee turnover can decrease organizational morale and have significant impacts (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Voluntary employee turnover can also lead to existing employees facing burnout due to additional assignments, mandatory overtime, and increased workload (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Allisey et al. (2014) argued that once an organization has selected an individual for a law enforcement officer position, it typically takes approximately five to ten years until the organization sees a return on its investment after the recruiting, hiring, and training costs. This finding indicates that organizations that have a frequent turnover rate and are failing to retain employees are losing both time and money with the hiring process.

Statistics indicate that the amount of law enforcement officer positions in the United States is expected to increase by approximately seven percent over the next five years (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Additionally, the projected growth rate of law enforcement officer positions in the United States between 2019 and 2029 exceeds the average growth rate of all occupations in the United States during this period (Andreescu & Vito, 2021). This finding can pose a severe problem for law enforcement organizations that are already struggling to retain qualified employees, especially since potentially, there may be fewer individuals interested in this profession due to the current political climate (Thomas, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2021; Mourtgos et al., 2022; Skaggs et al., 2022). Skaggs et al. (2022) emphasized that with a growing anti-police movement in the United States attempting to defund law enforcement, in conjunction with a declining applicant pool for law enforcement officer positions, many law enforcement organizations have begun to experience staffing concerns. Mourtgos et al. (2022) argued that “several of the largest U.S. police departments reported a sharp increase in officer resignations following massive public protests directed at policing in the summer of 2020” (p. 9). Mourtgos et al. (2022) examined a large law enforcement organization in the western United States and found a 279 percent increase in instances of voluntary resignations within that organization. It should be noted that in the same study, instances of involuntary separations and retirements were not significantly different during the period (Mourtgos et al., 2022).

Since the City of La Palma has a small municipal law enforcement agency, any instances of employee turnover could significantly impact the organization’s day-to-day operations through staffing shortages (City of La Palma, 2015). In addition to this, employee turnover can also lead to long-term problems due to the potential of employee burnout and the promotion of unqualified supervisors (Barthauer et al., 2019; Charman & Bennett, 2022). This qualitative

study specifically recruited current and former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma via snowball sampling to examine law enforcement officer turnover and to identify and determine the most significant contributor to turnover intentions. This chapter provides a thorough background into the concept of employee turnover, various contexts that influence and define the problem of turnover, and the ultimate purpose of this study. Additionally, this paper discusses potential factors that could influence turnover among employees and the significance of this area of study.

Background

Introduction

One of the largest and most significant expenditures of any level of government is often law enforcement services offered within a jurisdiction. This is often true regardless of whether the law enforcement services are for a federal government, state government, or local government. As such, the management of law enforcement organizations often becomes a significant issue within the field of public administration since crime and safety levels are often sensitive topics for community members, which impacts politics within the jurisdiction as well as the elected and appointed officials. As such, the phenomenon of law enforcement officer turnover plays a significant role in public administration since the loss of law enforcement officers can directly impact public safety (Kieckbusch et al., 2003). This section will discuss the historical context, social context, and theoretical context of voluntary employee turnover as it relates to the field of law enforcement.

Historical Context

Voluntary employee turnover in the field of law enforcement has been likely around since the start of the profession. This is because employee turnover is often based on human nature and not specific to just one profession (Morrell et al., 2008). In fact, the study by Hom et al. (2017) titled *One Hundred Years of Employee Turnover Theory and Research* summarized and discussed the various milestones of a century of data regarding the pursuit of knowledge regarding employee turnover. It was argued that six significant periods of development within the last century have defined turnover research (Hom et al., 2017). Hom et al. (2017) emphasized that the birth of turnover research occurred in 1917 when the *Journal of Applied Psychology* published the first paper referencing the concept of turnover. It was then argued that the 1920s through the 1960s could be considered the formative years where basic turnover research started, patterns began to be examined, and exit interviews began to be implemented (Hom et al., 2017). The 1970s consisted of foundational models being established, while the 1980s consisted of theory testing (Hom et al., 2017). Hom et al. (2017) emphasized that the 1990s focused on the Unfolding Model theory, which is the theoretical model deployed within this qualitative research study. After the 1990s, it was classified as 21st century research, where additional turnover research continued (Hom et al., 2017). Some of this research included studies that utilized the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover, which has been occurring until the present (Hom et al., 2017).

It has been argued that even with general turnover research increasing over the last several decades, inadequate attention has been paid to specific research involving law enforcement officers (Charman & Bennett, 2022). Law enforcement officer turnover has been a significant issue for law enforcement organizations, especially with the recent negative publicity

involving the profession (Hoffman et al., 2021). With the recent difficulties of recruiting law enforcement officers and the high frequency of voluntary employee turnover, law enforcement organizations have been experiencing extreme staff shortages that have been shown to impact public safety levels (Kiekbusch et al., 2003). Additionally, Hilal and Litsey (2020) indicated that over the next five years, the number of law enforcement officer positions is expected to increase within the United States by seven percent. This combination of recruiting difficulties, employees leaving the profession or moving organizations through turnover, and an increase in the number of jobs poses difficulties for public administrators. Public administrators are tasked with managing various aspects within their jurisdiction, with public safety being one of the most significant and visible areas. While several aspects of the law enforcement profession are similar to general employees, law enforcement officers are often placed in critical situations, exposed to more extreme stressors, and often heavily critiqued by the public, especially depending on the public support they receive (AlHashmi et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021). As such, general turnover research may not be completely applicable to the field of law enforcement. This reasoning has prompted many of the previous studies listed later in Chapter Two to examine law enforcement officer turnover specifically.

Social Context

The last decade has been tough on the profession of law enforcement. Following the strong public support for law enforcement and other first responders that emanated during and after the September 11th terrorist attacks that occurred in 2001, the last decade has seen law enforcement being faced with a shift to intense scrutiny (Deuchar et al., 2019). This high level of scrutiny can be attributed to numerous factors, including high-profile law enforcement incidents, protests and riots over law enforcement use of force incidents, the increased prevalence of social

media and technology, and negative and biased media coverage (Marrow et al., 2020). In many cases, individuals who do not have a direct nexus to the profession of law enforcement or the criminal justice system base their limited knowledge and assumptions of this field on incidents they see or hear about (Nix & Pickett, 2017). In many cases, this occurs through either social media platforms or other forms of media, such as news media or print media. As such, media portrayal, the prevalence of social media coverage, and potential media bias can significantly impact the perceptions of and confidence in law enforcement among the general public, which can have consequences on law enforcement officers who feel distrusted, not respected, and looked down upon (Nix & Pickett, 2017).

Jones (2021) argued that within the United States, confidence in law enforcement has declined between 2010 and 2020, especially with a steep decline among Black adults. In the study, White adults declined from 60 percent to 56 percent, whereas Black adults declined from 36 percent to 19 percent in regard to having a great deal of confidence in United States law enforcement (Jones, 2021). It could be argued that being a law enforcement officer in contemporary society is more challenging now than it has ever been. As such, social factors, including the societal perception of the profession, can be a significant influencer of the diminishing number of individuals being attracted and recruited to the profession of law enforcement as well as retaining current members of the profession (Morrow et al., 2020).

Deuchar (2019) argued that many law enforcement officers "expressed concern for declining public cooperation and perceived there to have been a general diminution of police authority and enforcement tactics" as well as officers "increasingly begun to experience a sense of disempowerment" (p. 47). In addition to this, Shjarback et al. (2019) mentioned that data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted

(LEOKA) reports indicated that assaults against law enforcement officers have increased when comparing the "Ferguson Effect" after the death of Michael Brown in 2014. Hoffman et al. (2021) quoted Wolfe (2016), who stated that the Ferguson Effect "suggests that officers are conscious of the negative publicity surrounding their profession, understand that their actions could be recorded by the public at any given time, and become less willing to do their job as a way to avoid being accused of racial profiling or excessive force" (p. 2).

Theoretical Context

General Strain Theory, or GST, is a common theory that has been utilized in explaining employee stress and workplace stressors as they apply in turnover research involving law enforcement turnover (Alhashmi et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2014). General Strain Theory states that employees may react to various stressors in different ways, resulting in an employee having turnover intentions (AlHashmi et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021). A different theory that Hilal and Litsey (2020) utilized was Two Factor Theory, which states that there are independent factors in a workplace that separately create both job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. Much of the literature that has previously examined law enforcement officer turnover has had a narrow focus. For instance, many studies examined a particular factor to determine if that factor had influenced turnover rates in the population examined. As an example, AlHashmi et al. (2018) utilized General Strain Theory to specifically examine the impacts of both an employee's perceived organizational support and the impacts of the relationships between leaders and members within an organization. On the other hand, Hayes (2020) specifically examined the role of salary and benefits regarding employee turnover. Another example is Brunetto et al. (2014), which specifically examined the impacts of individual and organizational support on law enforcement officer stress and turnover. Numerous pieces of prior

literature have emphasized the importance of obtaining a greater understanding of law enforcement turnover, but these studies have been limited (Kieckbusch, 2003). In many cases, this can be attributed to the specific and limited nature of many of these studies as well as the utilization of certain types of research methodology (Kieckbusch, 2003).

Situation to Self

The researcher's goal for conducting this study was to analyze reasoning and better understand the thought process that results in voluntary employee turnover within law enforcement. At the start of this research process, the researcher was a full-time law enforcement officer, but midway through this process, the researcher experienced turnover intentions. As a result of this, the researcher ultimately decided to resign as a full-time law enforcement officer, start a new career in the private sector, and become a part-time reserve officer. While working full-time as a law enforcement officer, the researcher was personally impacted by push and pull factors between my employer and other prospective law enforcement organizations looking to recruit qualified candidates. Furthermore, while the researcher has an opinion of what pushed them away from their organization and pulled them towards another organization, this would likely not be the same reasoning that other law enforcement officers would have in a similar situation. As such, law enforcement organizations offering better salaries, benefits, and benefits such as more special assignments and advancement opportunities might be more appealing. This could ultimately lead to an employee contemplating voluntary turnover by seeking other employment opportunities at a different law enforcement organization.

The researcher felt that with their background, resume, education, training, and on-the-job experience, they could have been able to get hired by the law enforcement organization of their choosing. As such, unlike other potential candidates for employment, they believed they

could have been more selective and judicious when examining potential options for seeking other employment opportunities. During this dissertation process, the researcher became comfortable in their law enforcement organization and began experiencing turnover intentions. The researcher began considering other law enforcement organizations offering better career advancement opportunities and benefits such as compensation and retirement income.

Additionally, other factors caused the researcher to start pondering the concept of leaving the law enforcement profession altogether. As such, the researcher began considering another career in public administration or a position in the private sector. Some of these factors included the current political climate, where an anti-law enforcement sentiment had become a mainstream trend, along with numerous recently passed laws in California that decriminalized or reduced the criminal penalty for specific crimes.

The researcher's motivation for this study was to investigate and contribute to the area of knowledge of turnover intentions by conducting a qualitative study to examine how other law enforcement officers viewed their organization's retention activities. This study also investigated what participants viewed as the primary contributor to employee turnover. Another goal of this study was to obtain recommendations or suggestions from these officers for reducing employee turnover at the City of La Palma. Additionally, the researcher felt that this was an important area to understand and study due to their future aspirations of becoming a supervisor and then an administrator within an employment organization. The researcher believes that the findings from this study could be implemented to improve employee retention and reduce voluntary employee turnover among law enforcement officers. During the researcher's time in law enforcement, they witnessed a large amount of turnover. The researcher had also been negatively impacted by the turnover. In many cases, due to understaffing and vacancies, the researcher was mandated to

work numerous additional 12-hour overtime shifts to fill vacant shifts, which led them to experience fatigue and burnout.

Creswell (2013) described and explained multiple philosophical assumptions that are typically utilized in qualitative research. The four types of philosophical assumptions discussed by Creswell (2013) were ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological. Creswell (2013) described an ontological assumption as there being more than a single reality and that these various forms of reality can be viewed through multiple perceptions. On the other hand, Creswell (2013) describes an epistemological assumption as "subjective evidence from participants...[where a] researcher attempts to lessen distance between himself or herself and that being researched" (p. 21). Essentially, through this assumption, knowledge is obtained "through the subjective experiences of people" when the researchers observe participants within their own home or work environment (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). An axiological assumption emphasizes that all studies possess biases and that research is value-laden, which shapes how the research study is conducted (Creswell, 2013). The final assumption is methodological, where a "researcher uses inductive logic, studies the topic within its context, and uses an emerging design" (Creswell, 2013, p. 21).

Upon examining the various forms of philosophical assumptions, the type of philosophical assumption that is the most relevant for this study was an epistemological approach. Since data was collected through participant interviews, observations, and document analysis, the findings of this study were utilized to make sense of the various viewpoints and perspectives regarding law enforcement officer turnover. This study utilized an epistemological approach to utilize both a pragmatic and a social constructivist framework. Creswell (2013) described a pragmatic framework as using both inductive and deductive reasoning when

attempting to understand what exists and what is perceived as the truth in reality. This is significant to this study since participants were interviewed thoroughly. Then, the participant's perspectives regarding employee turnover within the law enforcement profession were obtained and investigated to better understand how different individuals view, interpret, and respond to workplace situations and circumstances.

Creswell (2013) emphasized that social constructivism is a concept where individuals attempt to understand their own world in their own way. Specifically, individuals attempt to understand their existence and reality through experiences they gain while living their lives and working in their professions. Additionally, it was mentioned that individuals "develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meaning into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). In the case of this study, both the participants and the researcher have experienced unique circumstances in their lives, which may have impacted their perspectives and viewpoints regarding turnover intentions within law enforcement organizations. These experiences potentially allowed the researcher to extract and obtain a greater understanding of this matter through various accounts. This was also beneficial for the study since it may have prevented researcher bias because the study's findings relied on data obtained through interviews with participants based on their personal beliefs and understandings of the world.

Problem Statement

For some time now, voluntary employee turnover has been a significant issue for law enforcement organizations throughout the globe (Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Orrick, 2018; Yun et al., 2015; Charman & Bennett, 2022). The annual national average for

employee turnover among law enforcement officers within the United States exceeds 10 percent (Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2018; Orrick, 2018). In general, law enforcement organizations have continually had difficulties retaining officers and preventing turnover within their respective organizations (Mourtgos et al., 2022; Orrick, 2018). Charman and Bennett (2022) also emphasized that even though there has been a rapid increase in turnover among law enforcement officers recently, there has been inadequate attention paid to the phenomenon by both the academic community and organizations themselves.

Numerous studies, such as those conducted by AlHashmi et al. (2019), Allisey et al. (2014), Bright (2020), and Cambareri et al. (2018) have examined the concept of law enforcement officer turnover through a quantitative research methodology. On the other hand, Kiekbusch (2003) argued that utilizing a quantitative research methodology for this area of study can limit the study's findings and results. This is due to the research design having a rigid structure where questions through surveys or questionnaires are inflexible and do not provide the option for the participant to provide a further explanation (Kiekbusch, 2003). Prior research has indicated that various factors may impact turnover rates among law enforcement officers. For instance, studies have indicated that aspects such as salary and benefits, lack of organizational support, lack of career opportunities, poor organizational morale, under-recognition of employees by the organization, and poor supervision could be potential contributors to turnover (Hayes, 2020; Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Kiekbusch et al., 2003; Li et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2015). Although research studies that utilize a quantitative research methodology typically contain a larger sample size, qualitative research studies can provide greater background and more in-depth information on a particular topic, benefiting the general area of knowledge (Kiekbusch, 2003). Additionally, the existing literature and research on this topic provide inconsistent

findings on the causes and main influencing factors leading to law enforcement officer turnover (Allisey et al., 2014; Charman & Bennett, 2022; Hilal & Litsey, 2020).

Purpose Statement

This study utilized a qualitative case study design with document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations to uncover a deeper understanding of existing factors contributing to turnover among law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. Specifically, this study utilized a snowball sampling technique to recruit current and former law enforcement officers hired by the City of La Palma. This study specifically examined voluntary turnover since this form of turnover is the most concerning for an organization (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). This research study defined voluntary employee turnover as employees who voluntarily leave their employment organization (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). This study utilized Lee and Mitchell's (1991) Unfolding Model Theory of Employee Turnover to examine possible paths leading to turnover among law enforcement officers. Overall, this research study attempted to fill some of the gaps of prior research by obtaining detailed responses from law enforcement officers regarding turnover intentions. As employee turnover is an individualistic decision, this study obtained detailed responses from line-level personnel regarding their perception of possible changes that could be implemented to combat turnover in their organization.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative research case study provides a supplemental perspective to the existing studies that have previously investigated the concept of employee turnover among law enforcement officers. Administrators of law enforcement organizations, local government officials, first responders, other researchers, and taxpayers may find this qualitative research

study informative and valuable due to the potential public safety impacts and financial costs such as recruiting, training, and overtime costs associated with employee turnover in law enforcement organizations. There is currently a limited and insufficient amount of relevant and profession-specific research studies examining employee turnover in law enforcement organizations (Kieckbusch et al., 2003). Suboch et al. (2017) also argued that, in general, there is currently a lack of information and very little understanding of law enforcement turnover rates.

Additionally, it was mentioned that law enforcement organizations are currently making many decisions that could potentially impact turnover rates without statistical or research backing, which is concerning (Kieckbusch et al., 2003). This study may be considered a significant step in the right direction for research in the field since it allowed law enforcement officers to share their thoughts and perceptions of employee turnover and retention activities within the City of La Palma through detailed responses.

This study provided helpful insight into influential factors that could lead to or cause law enforcement officers to consider leaving their law enforcement organization. This study also provided insight into the mindset of law enforcement officers regarding retention and turnover. The findings of this study also assisted in filling some of the gaps that currently exist in research and literature. This study can be considered specifically beneficial to the City of La Palma since the organization's administration can obtain a detailed understanding of the turnover and retention problems within that organization. Additionally, the research findings may be significant in assisting organizations with examining potential solutions to future employee turnover in law enforcement. The guiding theory utilized in this study was the Unfolding Model Theory of employee turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1991).

Research Questions

This qualitative research study focused on investigating the current vital factors that impact employee turnover and retention of law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. Efforts were made to investigate turnover intentions through a qualitative study and obtain the perspective of current and former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. This was completed by recruiting potential participants via snowball sampling. This study specifically targeted the officers' perceptions, understandings, and reasoning behind turnover and retention within the City of La Palma. Additionally, for the participants who were former employees of the City of La Palma who voluntarily left the organization, this was especially significant since it provided specific reasoning for what leads to employee turnover.

Research Question 1

How do the participants view employee retention activities of the City of La Palma?

Rabinovich and Kacen (2013) argued that an individual's perspective and previous experiences can shape how they respond to specific questions. Additionally, prior studies have focused specifically on what drives employees away from organizations rather than focusing on both positive and negative aspects of retention activities (Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Skaggs et al., 2022). As such, this research question focused on shining a light on the perspectives of both current and former law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma regarding the efforts that the City of La Palma partakes in, which potentially impacts employee turnover and retention.

Research Question 2

What do the participants view as the main factor influencing voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma?

This research question focused on obtaining the participants' perspectives regarding what they view as the single main or top few contributing factors that lead to voluntary turnover occurring within the City of La Palma. Hilal and Litsey (2020) argued that voluntary employee turnover occurs for various reasons, such as retirement, selecting a new career outside of the current field, or accepting a new position at a different employment organization. Allisey et al. (2014) argued that many factors that influence law enforcement turnover are unknown. As such, this study was particularly interesting since participants included current and former law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma to determine the major influencing factors that led to considering employee turnover. This allowed for the opportunity to investigate influential turnover factors from two different perspectives: current employees facing factors that may influence turnover intentions and former employees who left the organization due to potential factors. This was especially significant since turnover intentions are a strong indicator of employees following through with turnover (Charman & Bennett, 2022). Ultimately, law enforcement officers make the individual choice to voluntarily leave a law enforcement organization, so attempting to understand factors that are perceived as influential in leading to employee turnover can be a significant finding.

Research Question 3

What are the participants' suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention at the City of La Palma?

This research question focused on attempting to obtain suggestions from participants to combat law enforcement officer turnover and improve employee retention within the City of La Palma. This question was utilized as a practical way to see how participants view the issues of turnover and retention within their organization. Additionally, this question showed how the

participants believe that this problem can be addressed within the City of La Palma. Prior research conducted by Mansell et al. (2006) indicated that specific changes made within an organization could result in higher job satisfaction, thus reducing law enforcement officer turnover rates. As such, by asking the participants for suggestions, this study hypothetically places the participants in the role of an administrator at the organization who has the authority to implement changes. This could then provide a line-level perspective of the perceived issues as well as how the participants view the problems could be reduced or solved within the organization. Overall, this qualitative study of the City of La Palma through semi-structured interviews with current and former law enforcement officers recruited via snowball sampling could provide a much-needed insight into the factors influencing organizational turnover rates.

Definitions

1. *Involuntary Employee Turnover* – Involuntary employee turnover is when an employee does not leave their employment organization voluntarily, typically due to the request of the employer (Hilal & Litsey, 2019).
2. *Voluntary Employee Turnover* - Voluntary employee turnover is when an employee voluntarily leaves their employment organization (Hilal & Litsey, 2020).

Summary

Voluntary employee turnover is a significant problem that spans all employment fields. In the case of law enforcement organizations, employee turnover can significantly impact risk management for the organization and the public safety of the jurisdiction. Hilal and Litsey (2020) described voluntary employee turnover as when an employee voluntarily leaves their employment organization on their own accord. In the case of law enforcement officers, this can include seeking other law enforcement jobs at other law enforcement organizations, seeking

employment opportunities outside of law enforcement, or retirement. Kieckbusch et al. (2003) emphasized that law enforcement organizations that experience high turnover rates may be exposed to more potential liability. It was further elaborated that less experienced officers may be more prone to making mistakes due to less knowledge of state law, case law, and agency policy (Kieckbusch et al., 2003). These factors could subsequently lead to multi-million-dollar lawsuits or settlements, which emphasizes the importance of finding a solution to reducing employee turnover. Besides the financial costs associated with liability, other economic costs, such as recruiting, hiring, and training a new employee to fill a vacancy due to employee turnover, can strain the organization (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Hilal and Litsey (2020) also argued that organizations that face retention issues due to a high rate of law enforcement turnover face both direct and indirect costs, which can negatively impact the organization, especially in a smaller law enforcement organization.

Throughout a law enforcement officer's career, an officer can typically face both push and pull factors that may push them away from their current organization and pull them towards another employment organization. Schuck and Rabe-Hemp (2018) emphasized that data indicates that the national average for employee turnover among law enforcement officers in the United States exceeds 10 percent annually, which is a significant problem for organizational staffing and public safety levels. This study focused on conducting a qualitative case study to investigate how current and former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma perceive the concepts of turnover and retention at the City of La Palma, which could lead to relevant findings and possible solutions. This study was guided by the Unfolding Model Theory of Employee Turnover since it examined the push and pull factors influencing law enforcement officer retention at the City of La Palma (Lee & Mitchell, 1991).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The concept of employee turnover and retention is not only a significant concern specific to the profession of law enforcement, but it also exists for essentially all professions. Additionally, voluntary employee turnover is a major human resources problem that most organizations hope to minimize due to the potential impacts on operations and additional financial costs (Mourtgos et al., 2022). While this concept is not specific to the law enforcement profession, prior literature and research have indicated that voluntary employee turnover within law enforcement has been a significant issue (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). It has been argued that employee turnover in law enforcement can impact organizational finance, organizational effectiveness, employee morale, an increase in potential liability, as well as several other problems (Hayes, 2020; Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Kieckbusch et al., 2003; Li et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2015).

The Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover was utilized in this study to investigate the possible reasons behind law enforcement officer turnover and retention within law enforcement organizations (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). This study analyzed a variety of relevant sources specific to turnover theories and law enforcement officer turnover, as well as examining studies that involved turnover in other professions with relevant findings. Utilizing this combination of resources provided a detailed account of both the general area of knowledge regarding employee turnover as well as the specific information available regarding law enforcement officer turnover. This literature review is organized with a topic-based approach rather than a chronological approach so that various areas can be examined in depth. In this literature review, the researcher explored the different types of turnover, employee turnover in

law enforcement, multiple causes of law enforcement turnover, the costs associated with law enforcement turnover, and limitations in prior literature. Overall, the concept of law enforcement turnover was discussed in this literature review, as well as the negative impacts, issues associated with employee turnover, previous research findings in law enforcement turnover studies, problems with or limitations in prior literature, and the need for additional research in this area of study.

Theoretical Framework

Morrell et al. (2008) argued that the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover, which Lee and Mitchell developed in 1994, "is a retrospective, classificatory account of voluntary turnover that treats quitting as a decision process" (p. 129). Lee and Mitchell (1994) had three purposes in their research study: present their Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Turnover, consider empirical issues with their model, and propose directions and suggestions for future research. This theory ties together multiple concepts from prior literature that previously examined concepts separately (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Turnover now attempts to make sense of voluntary employee turnover through the individual's perspective, influential external situational factors, and different paths the individual takes after being impacted by their outlooks and external factors (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover involves three parts (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The three parts include image theory, which incorporates rational choice theory, the concept of "script" and "shock," as well as how employees choose to leave their organization through distinct and different decision paths (Skaggs et al., 2022, p. 3).

Lee and Mitchell's (1994) study has been highly regarded in the academic community as a significant theory in turnover research, and according to Google Scholar, it has been referenced

in over 2,200 subsequent studies. In one piece of literature, Donnelly and Quirin (2006) utilized and tested Lee and Mitchell's (1994) Unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover and emphasized that the "model does an excellent job of capturing employee decision process-data" (p. 59). Literature as current as 2022, such as Skaggs et al. (2022), has continued to reference and utilize Lee and Mitchell's (1994) Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover. Skaggs et al. (2022) described the theory and indicated that the initial study was only able to classify approximately 75 percent of participants into the different paths set forth by this theory. Skaggs et al. (2022) mentioned that Lee et al. (1999) conducted a replication and an extension of their original research after examining the participants who did not fit into one of the paths outlined in the theory. See Figure 1 below for a depiction of the Unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover from Lee et al. (1999).

Table 1

Decision Paths for the Unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover

	Decision Path 1	Decision Path 2	Decision Path 3	Decision Path 4a	Decision Path 4b
Shock	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Matching Script	Yes	No	No	No	No
Image Violation	N/A ^a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Disaffection	N/A ^a	N/A ^a	Yes	Yes	Yes
Job Search	No	No	Yes ^b	No ^c	Yes
Evaluation of Alternatives	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Offers in Hand	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

^a“N/A” indicates it is not applicable to the decision path and may or may not occur.

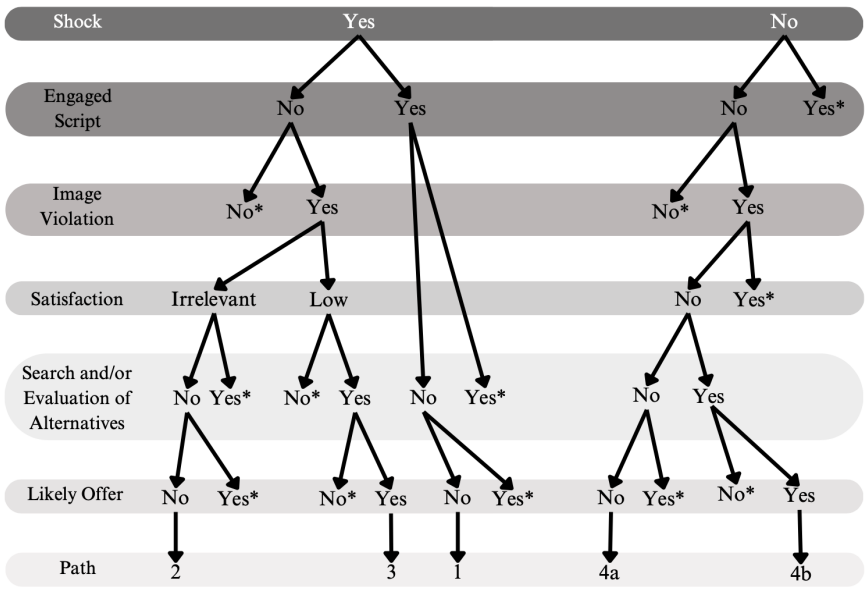
^bIf the shock is an unsolicited job offer or feeler, job search does not technically occur.

^cNo job search occurs before quitting: a job search may occur after quitting.

Note. Adapted from “An Alternative Approach: The Unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover” by T. Lee and T. Mitchell, 1994, *Academy of Management Review*, 19(1), pp. 51-89 (<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1994.9410122008>)

Figure 1

Decision Paths for the Unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover



^aThis figure includes the changes to the unfolding model added for the present study.
^bAn asterisk (*) indicates that the route is not classifiable and that it represents a theory falsification—a way in which an individual could leave an organization that would not be part of one of the model's paths.

Note. Adapted from “The Unfolding Model of Voluntary Turnover: A Replication and Extension” by T. Lee, T. Mitchell, B. Holtom, L. McDaniel, and J. Hill, 1999, *Academy of Management Journal*, 42(5), p. 451(<https://doi.org/10.5465/257015>)

Morrell et al. (2008) and Skaggs et al. (2022) discussed various components of this theory and how they work together to make a working model to evaluate voluntary employee turnover. For image theory, employees would base their decision-making on their "values (the decision-maker's principles), trajectories (desired goals), and strategies (how to achieve these goals)" (Morrell et al., 2008, p. 130). These individualistic aspects can be significant factors influencing the strengths of push and pull factors that employees experience, which could ultimately shift the balance from retention to voluntary turnover within an organization. This theory also indicated that an employee's turnover intention could be impacted through what was known as "shock" and "script" (Skaggs et al., 2022). Shock has been described as a specific

occurrence that prompts an employee to consider leaving, whereas the concept of a script has been described as a preplanned action (Skaggs et al., 2022). These two concepts are essential to examine in cases of voluntary employee turnover since these possible explanations of event-motivated situational factors can explain why some instances of employee turnover have occurred. Additionally, Skaggs et al. (2022) mentioned that the third aspect of Lee and Mitchell's theory was five different paths that may occur when an employee chooses to leave their organization voluntarily. These five paths were summarized as a script-driven decision, a push decision, a pull decision, an employee quitting their job impulsively, or conducting a job search, then quitting (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). In conjunction with the other aspects of the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover, these different paths can assist in explaining the decision-making process and influential internal and external factors in cases of voluntary employee turnover in this study.

The first decision path was a script-driven decision, which has been described as an employee who already has a script or a pre-existing plan, and upon being exposed to a shock, the employee then enacts the script (Skaggs et al., 2022). Skaggs et al. (2022) mentioned that the second path was where an employee was exposed to a shock, which violates the employee's values, strategic images, and trajectory. The third path has the same foundation as the second path, but because of the shock, the employee has job disaffection (Skaggs et al., 2022). This job disaffection prompts a job search, and ultimately, the employee evaluates the alternatives with potential job offers (Skaggs et al., 2022). Unlike the first three paths, the last path, which was subsequently divided into two sub-paths, has one distinguishing feature: the employee not being exposed to a shock (Skaggs et al., 2022). The two sub-paths both experience image violation and

disaffection but differ since the second sub-path results in the employee engaging in a job search, evaluating potential job opportunities, and having job offers (Skaggs et al., 2022).

This theory emphasized that the ultimate decision to leave an organization was an individualistic decision-making process that relies on various internal or external factors. Like numerous prior studies, Lee and Mitchell (1994) emphasized the significance of studying voluntary turnover since "over time, organizations invest substantial resources in their employees. The corresponding costs to the firm regarding employees' quitting the organization and the subsequent hiring of replacement employees can be significant in terms of personal, work-unit, and organizational readjustments" (Lee & Mitchell, 1994, p. 51). Lee and Mitchell (1994) mentioned that prior to their study, preliminary studies conducted by other researchers took a rather basic approach to investigating voluntary employee turnover, such as only examining one aspect. For example, Lee and Mitchell (1994) argued that prior researchers used various models, such as attempting to understand the causes that prompt turnover, pull theories, and later push theories. Still, all of these concepts were independently investigated. This study focused on examining how this theory potentially explained the possible decision pathways and experiences, as well as the participant's perceptions regarding turnover and related concepts. This theory was utilized to determine possible decision pathways for individuals experiencing turnover intentions. Additionally, examining employee turnover indicators using different pathway criteria was helpful since various experiences an employee encounters could result in voluntary turnover. As such, this theory was beneficial for explaining the reasoning behind some of the participant's responses collected during the data collection and data analysis phases.

Additionally, in this study, attempts were made to see how this theory explains the participant's decision-making process since this model examines both decision-making and the

individual's response to various stimuli. Law enforcement officers are human beings, just like everyone else, who can be influenced by emotions as well as internal and external stimuli. Like any other profession, law enforcement officers may feel underpaid or underappreciated by their employer or experience workplace dissatisfaction due to other factors. As such, the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover was utilized to understand a law enforcement officer's mental framework, which consisted of their values, goals, and how they hope to achieve these goals (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Additionally, this theory considers the presence of any factors that may influence or prompt voluntary turnover and various paths of how turnover can occur (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

By using a qualitative research methodology, the participants were asked various semi-structured open-ended interview questions regarding their employment history and experience with employee turnover. The participants were also asked if they had experienced turnover intentions. If they have, follow-up questions were asked about their perspective of what caused their turnover intentions. This line of questioning was used in conjunction with the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover to find patterns among participants or general findings. Additionally, this research study attempted to link the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover to law enforcement officers to determine if this theory was consistent with the findings of this qualitative research study.

Related Literature

Introduction

Law enforcement officer turnover research has recently gained popularity due to the high rates of turnover experienced within the profession (Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2018; Orrick, 2018). However, prior studies have had certain methodological limitations as well as come to various

findings that did not have a general consensus on the main influencing factors (Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Kiekbusch et al., 2003; Li et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2015). This literature review will discuss the various types of employee turnover, such as voluntary and involuntary employee turnover, the presence and impacts of employee turnover in the law enforcement profession, and potential causes of employee turnover. Some potential causes discussed are salary and benefits, supervision, management, and organizational management, stress and working environment, the political climate, gender in law enforcement, and other causes not listed. Additionally, impacts associated with turnover in law enforcement, potential mitigating factors to turnover, limitations in prior literature, and the perception of law enforcement turnover will be discussed.

Types of Employee Turnover

It can be argued that "turnover is considered a multidimensional construct representing voluntary and involuntary separation from the organization" (Allisey et al., 2014, p. 753). Charman and Bennett (2022) agreed with this concept and argued that employee turnover was an elaborate and sometimes convoluted process. The same research emphasized that employee turnover was far more complex than a simplistic cause and effect that resulted in an employee leaving an organization. Additionally, upon examining the concept of employee turnover within an organization, the idea could be classified into two different forms: voluntary turnover and involuntary turnover (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). In some cases, turnover within an organization can be expected or anticipated, which can be considered normal and include occurrences such as retirements or promotions (Shim et al., 2015). The same study argued that other instances of turnover within a law enforcement organization could be considered premature. Shim et al. (2015) emphasized that premature turnover can be a significant concern and have detrimental consequences for the organization. These researchers further mentioned that unlike service

retirements, which are often anticipated and planned for through succession planning, premature employee departures are typically unexpected and can lead to disruptive and costly impacts. Another study argued that while some instances of turnover are avoidable, a few cases of turnover are unavoidable (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017).

Voluntary Employee Turnover

Many attempts have been made to define voluntary turnover. Voluntary employee turnover can be described as including instances where an employee separates from an organization of their own accord (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Based on this study, examples of voluntary employee turnover consist of service or medical retirements, employees selecting a new career outside of the current field, or accepting a similar position or promotion at a different organization. Voluntary turnover can potentially be influenced by "not having job satisfaction, job stress, as well as getting a better job at another organization, a conflict with a manager, or personal matter[s] such as "work-life balance issues" (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017, p. 65). Charman and Bennett (2022) argued that voluntary turnover is avoidable, whereas involuntary turnover is unavoidable. Other efforts have been made to define the terms-avoidable and unavoidable turnover. Avoidable turnover can be prevented through "recruiting, assessing and motivating employees more efficiently and effectively" (Charman & Bennett, 2022, p. 65). Another study found that nearly 80 percent of employee turnover is due to recruiting mistakes and that carefully evaluating and selecting prospective employees can reduce and prevent employee turnover from occurring (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017). Based on the above, instances of voluntary turnover involve the employee ultimately deciding to leave the organization on their own. As such, this study argued that organizations should strive to find solutions to aspects that are key influencers of turnover intentions to prevent this problem.

Involuntary Employee Turnover

On the other hand, involuntary turnover involves "an employer's decision to terminate the employment relationship," which could include dismissal or death (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017, p. 65). Additionally, instances of involuntary employee turnover can include situations such as the employee being terminated for underperformance or misconduct (Hital & Litsey, 2020). For instance, this study also listed other scenarios, such as the employee's inability to meet satisfactory standards to complete the required probationary status within the organization or failure to perform part of the position's duties due to an injury or other medical conditions. Unlike voluntary turnover, during instances of involuntary turnover, the organization typically makes the ultimate decision to terminate the employee due to a specific factor. While this is the case in most instances, it should be noted that a small portion of turnover instances are unavoidable, which are factors and life decisions that extend beyond the organization's control (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017). As previously mentioned by this researcher, involuntary employee turnover can be considered unavoidable turnover, whereas voluntary employee turnover can be considered avoidable turnover. As such, these researchers emphasized that the reasoning behind this assertion is that involuntary employee turnover is often reactive in nature, whether it be in response to underperformance, misconduct, or employee injury or death.

Employee Turnover in Law Enforcement

While employee retention and turnover rates are essential topics in all fields of employment, these topics are critical in public sector organizations, especially law enforcement organizations. Employee turnover rates within law enforcement organizations can constitute a significant issue due to the complications of hiring a law enforcement officer (Yun et al., 2015). Unlike other types of occupations, extensive state certifications and testing, rigorous background

checks, and departmental training are required for an organization to hire a law enforcement officer (Yun et al., 2015). As a result, unlike other professions, law enforcement organizations typically cannot find pre-trained and qualified law enforcement officers directly from the general public (Yun et al., 2015). The author also noted that the recruitment, hiring, and academy training process could take approximately one year until a law enforcement officer is ready to be deployed to the field. This delay in the hiring process can place financial and operational strain on the organization due to the time and resources it takes to fill a vacancy (Yun et al., 2015).

Liability is a significant concern among public sector organizations, especially law enforcement organizations, due to the nature of these organizations' activities. As such, attempts to limit liability are significant actions often sought after due to the costs associated with lawsuits. Kiekbusch et al. (2003) found that law enforcement organizations that could reduce turnover rates within their organization could potentially reduce the costs associated with screening and hiring qualified candidates and lead to a reduction in potential organizational liability. This study also emphasized that experienced and qualified law enforcement officers are less likely to make mistakes than less experienced officers. As such, more experienced law enforcement officers will typically be more knowledgeable of the laws and procedures they are subjected to, which could ultimately reduce the risk of lawsuits (Kiekbusch et al., 2003). Statistics indicated that a 10.8 percent annual turnover rate exists among law enforcement officers from municipal, county, and state law enforcement organizations (Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2018). Orrick (2018) referenced numerous prior studies that indicated a wide range of turnover rates in law enforcement organizations, which varied between 15 and 20 percent and even went as high as 35 percent. Due to these significant figures, emphasis has been placed on

researchers studying employee turnover and attempting to find solutions to this problem (Hital & Litsey, 2020).

Another profession in the criminal justice system that is significantly impacted by employee turnover is the correctional system. In many cases, correctional officers, jailers, or sheriff deputies are considered sworn law enforcement officers within a county jail. For example, sheriff deputies typically receive the same training as regular law enforcement officers but instead, start their career in a correctional facility and then move to a patrol division. In one study, statistics indicated that turnover rates in correctional facilities were much higher than in traditional law enforcement organizations (Leip & Stinchomb, 2013). In this study, the turnover rates for correctional facilities ranged from approximately 16 to 20 percent. Another study indicated that law enforcement officer turnover rates vary from state to state and that one state with high turnover rates was North Carolina (Matz et al., 2014). This study indicated that North Carolina had an approximate 14 percent statewide turnover rate within their law enforcement organizations and approximately 20 percent statewide turnover rate within their correctional facilities.

A survey conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum (2019) examined voluntary resignations that occurred in 12 months between 2017 and 2018. This study specifically investigated the employee's length of service at the time of resignation. The survey indicated that 29 percent of the total resignations occurred within the first year of employment as a law enforcement officer (Police Executive Research Forum, 2019). The study further mentioned that 40 percent of the total resignations of law enforcement officers occurred within the first five years of employment, and 15 percent of resignations occurred between 6 and 10 years. These survey results are significant since the data indicates that 69 percent of voluntary resignations

occurred within the first five years as a law enforcement officer, and 84 percent occurred within the first ten years of employment. In most cases, five to ten years is not enough time to complete a career, so this poses the question of why law enforcement officers are leaving their careers prematurely, what is causing this phenomenon, and where are they going for employment?

Causes of Law Enforcement Turnover

Prior research has come to conflicting conclusions as to the causes of employee turnover among law enforcement officers. Research has indicated that an employee's reason for deciding to leave their organization has not always been the exact reason for them staying with their organization (Hital & Litsey, 2020). Various research and literature have indicated that multiple factors influence or impact turnover rates within law enforcement organizations (Hital & Litsey, 2020; Skaggs et al., 2022). For instance, managerial factors, working environment, pay, fringe benefits, career promotion, and overall job fit have been influential factors and causes of employee turnover (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017). Additionally, the researchers mentioned that other factors, such as clear job expectations, perceived alternative employment opportunities, and the influence of co-workers, can also impact employee turnover. Similarly, Skaggs et al. (2022) argued that some factors that have been attributed to influencing turnover rates among law enforcement officers are salary and benefits, poor leadership, unmet job expectations, and lack of growth or promotional opportunities. The same study also mentioned that insufficient recognition from supervisors and the organization, inadequate feedback, and inadequate training have also influenced turnover intentions in law enforcement.

Employee turnover generally occurs due to changes in an employee's working conditions, and these changes could typically impact the employee's attitudes and perception of the organization (Charman & Bennett, 2022). This study mentioned that, in general, turnover

intentions have been "a reliable indicator of actual turnover," which can be influenced by organizational variables, external variables, and demographics (p. 161). Variables can include salary and benefits that employees receive, supervision or management issues within the organization, the current political climate involving law enforcement, and other variables that impact workplace stress. Additionally, this study emphasized the importance of fully understanding the antecedents and the mediating factors of turnover, which could be used to prevent avoidable employee turnover. As such, the proceeding sections of this paper examined literature that analyzed the potential causes of turnover, the impacts of turnover, and the potential mitigating factors of turnover.

Salary and Benefits

Historically, the career field of law enforcement has been considered a blue-collar occupation where officers have received relatively low compensation for the job they perform (Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2018). Studies and literature reviewed indicate that salary and benefits impact an employee's decision to leave an organization. However, there has been a shift within the last several decades because of an increase in the salaries of law enforcement officers (Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2018). The researchers attributed this shift mainly to the presence of labor unions during contract negotiations. Mourtgos et al. (2022) argued that increasing monetary compensation could effectively reduce turnover, and law enforcement organizations offering higher compensation are less likely to experience involuntary and voluntary turnover. Schuck and Rabe-Hemp (2018) concurred with this assertion and found that "higher salaries were significantly associated with lower voluntary and involuntary turnover rates" among law enforcement officers (p. 113). The researchers also argued that salary could strongly influence an employee's effort, job performance, job satisfaction, and morale.

In his study, Hayes (2020) found that salary was a significant indicator of turnover intentions, which subsequently impacted turnover rates when he studied New Jersey Superintendents. While this natural experiment did not focus on law enforcement officers, the findings of this study were significant since it was concluded that a salary reduction led to an approximate 16 percent increase in employees having turnover intentions. This finding is relevant since, between 2011 and 2014, law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma forewent pay raises and began paying more into their retirement, which is essentially a pay reduction (City of La Palma, 2013). Even as recently as 2022, law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma forewent salary increases again, which during times of heavy inflation can be considered a pay reduction (City of La Palma, 2021). Hayes (2020) argued that salary increases might be less expensive than the alternative of employee turnover since it may be an effective tool for reducing the significant costs associated with recruiting, hiring, and training a completely new employee. Another study concurred with this concept and argued that organizations that invest upfront with higher compensation could save the organization money in the long run by reducing employee turnover (Mourtgos et al., 2022).

Supervision, Management, and Organizational Management

Most prior research examining the relationship between employee turnover and organizational performance has been unidirectional by focusing on a single topic (Wang & Sun, 2020). For instance, previous research focused on how employee turnover impacted organizational performance, not vice versa. The researchers ultimately argued that organizational performance could be a reason that leads to employee turnover within an organization. On the other hand, a different study argued that work engagement could mediate both turnover intentions and inter-role conflicts among law enforcement officers (Islam et al., 2019).

Additionally, the study noted that organizational factors could play a significant role in mitigating law enforcement officer turnover.

Mansell et al. (2006) argued that "high levels of supervisor support in association with improved job satisfaction reduced turnover intentions over time among police officers" (p. 86). Conversely, issues between employees and their immediate supervisors have been found to be a major cause of employee attrition, eventually leading to employee turnover (Orrick, 2018). It has also been concluded that leader-member exchange has a negative correlation with law enforcement turnover intentions, which indicates the significance of an organization having qualified and experienced supervisors and administrators (AlHashmi et al., 2019). Additionally, law enforcement officers who perceive their supervisors as organizationally fair tend to have higher job satisfaction (Wolfe et al., 2018). As such, this study emphasized that these officers are more likely to utilize procedural justice and are more confident in their authority. Further, this study mentioned that fair supervisor treatment could lead to numerous benefits, including increasing productivity, increasing organizational commitment, and reducing turnover intentions.

While issues with supervisors and management may cause some instances of turnover among line-level officers, it is also essential to understand what causes turnover among the managers and administrators of law enforcement organizations. Andreescu and Vito (2021) found that among law enforcement managers and administrators, "58.2% of those interviewed felt 'used up at the end of the day,' about 32% felt 'emotionally drained from work,' 29% felt burned out and 28% were frustrated with their jobs at least once a week" (p. 975). Additionally, with many chief executives of law enforcement organizations being elected or at-will positions, frequent changes in leadership styles, including organizational justice, can cause organizational-wide changes that can impact every employee's working environment (Wolfe et al., 2018). This

study also argued that significant paradigm shifts exist within law enforcement organizations, often attributed to the chief executives in law enforcement organizations having high turnover rates. Chief executives in law enforcement organizations can include the Chiefs of Police, Assistant Chiefs, Sheriffs, Assistant Sheriffs, Captains, and other administrative-level employees (Wolfe et al., 2018). These ranks are often at-will positions where a City Council, Board of Supervisors, or oversight board can remove and replace an employee in these positions with no cause, which can lead to quick, drastic shifts in leadership styles.

Based upon a study, British law enforcement who voluntarily left their organization highly valued the nature of work and occupation they joined (Charman & Bennett, 2022). In addition, this study indicated that law enforcement officers enjoyed their ability to fulfill their ambitions working in the public service sector and were satisfied working with colleagues in this career field. This satisfaction indicates that these former law enforcement officers did not leave their organization because of the profession itself, but instead, some other factor must have led to their eventual turnover. Ultimately, this study concluded by arguing that law enforcement officers were "ultimately frustrated by the perceived inability of the organization to manage the demands upon them and by a sense of organizational 'injustice' emanating from perceptions of a lack of 'voice,' leadership, autonomy, and support" (p. 159). This quotation emphasizes that this type of occurrence harms the working relationship between line-level officers and managers within law enforcement organizations, which could cause a decline in organizational commitment. Charman and Bennett (2022) argued that an employee's perception of their organization providing a lack of promotional opportunities could significantly increase the employee's dissatisfaction with the organization and influence the employee's turnover intentions. This study clarified that this phenomenon is not specific to any rank in law

enforcement, and this can impact law enforcement officers at all levels of their careers.

Additionally, the researchers mentioned that the perception of a lack of promotional opportunities could be connected to a lack of autonomy or a feeling of lacking a voice within an organization.

Stress and Working Environment

Numerous pieces of prior literature have indicated that law enforcement as a career field "may be one of the most stressful occupations in the world" (Bishopp et al., 2018, p. 635). As such, two prominent contributors that lead to an increase in turnover intentions among law enforcement officers include the amount of stress the law enforcement officer is subjected to and their level of job satisfaction (Siu et al., 2014). When examining the topic of stress, Brunetto et al. (2017) argued that law enforcement officers can be subjected to two forms of stress: operational stressors and organizational stressors. This study further mentioned that operational stressors could stem from the potential danger of being a law enforcement officer. In contrast, organizational stressors can result from law enforcement officers lacking support or resources from their organization (Brunetto et al., 2017). Leip and Stinchcomb (2013) found that for sheriff deputies and other correctional officers who work inside a jail facility, one of the main factors that resulted in turnover intentions among the employees was their work environment and level of job satisfaction. A study conducted by Jabeen et al. (2020) concluded that work-family conflict and job autonomy were two major influencers that positively and significantly correlated to turnover rates within law enforcement organizations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, both work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts led to increased work stress and turnover intentions among law enforcement officers (Li et al., 2021). With many studies indicating that a law

enforcement officer's working environment and aspects of their jobs are key indicators that can influence turnover rates, it is emphasized that external factors should be more closely studied.

It can be argued that a career in law enforcement, in general, can be inherently stressful. This can be attributed to the nature of the tasks and duties that an officer performs, as well as the types of potentially traumatic events that a law enforcement officer responds to (Brunetto et al., 2017). With that being mentioned, law enforcement organizations with a higher propensity for encounters that may be dangerous or end in adverse outcomes were more likely to experience a higher rate of law enforcement officer turnover (Mourtgos et al., 2022). One study argued that law enforcement officers could become vulnerable to physical and mental disorders because of their stress during their employment (Lees et al., 2019). This study further noted that some of these disorders include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), cardiovascular disease, fatigue, sleep-related disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, and anxiety. Additionally, this study argued that these disorders could lead to officers electing to leave the profession prematurely, through early medical retirements, or potentially death. Charman and Bennett (2022) concurred and emphasized that recent research has indicated that law enforcement officers are exposed to high stress levels. This study further noted that law enforcement officers were found to have high rates of mental health problems such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression. The profession of law enforcement was found to have more than twice the rate of PTSD, anxiety, and depression compared to the general population (Charman & Bennett, 2022). These medical conditions can potentially result in law enforcement officers prematurely leaving the profession, either willingly or unwillingly. As such, these instances are forms of turnover typically not expected and planned for through succession planning, which can place financial and staffing strains on the organization.

Bishopp et al. (2018) mentioned that most of the stress law enforcement officers are exposed to is from organizational and environmental stressors. It was further argued that organizational stress was found to be significantly related to depression, anger, and burnout among law enforcement officers. This study also mentioned that employee burnout in law enforcement could lead to cynicism, depression, absenteeism, and, eventually, employee turnover. Charman and Bennett (2022) emphasized that "job stress has been closely linked with intentions to leave the policing organization" (p. 164). They also argued that law enforcement officers with "weak organizational commitment, low levels of job satisfaction and who suffer from high levels of stress, strain and low morale...are the most likely to voluntarily leave the organization or express an intention to leave" (p. 163). While it was mentioned that organizational commitment had been shown to increase with rank, line-level law enforcement officers have been shown to have low levels of organizational commitment (Charman & Bennett, 2022). Additionally, these researchers emphasized that line-level officers are heavily influenced by their perception of how they are supported and managed. This study also mentioned that, unlike other professions, organizational commitment among law enforcement officers did not increase as the length of service increased but instead decreased over time.

Andreescu and Vito (2021) found that while 61 percent of the law enforcement managers in their study did not disclose current turnover intentions, 27 percent of the officers expressed concerns about job safety, and 54 percent agreed that their job had negatively affected their personal relationships. It was further argued that the law enforcement managers who disclosed turnover intentions had elevated levels of emotional distress. The researchers further elaborated by mentioning that occupational stressors, such as the dangers associated with the job position, were not the dominant reason for the negative emotions or turnover intentions among law

enforcement managers. The findings may have to do with law enforcement managers possessing an administrative role within the organization rather than dealing with encounters like line-level law enforcement personnel. The data indicated that the turnover intentions of law enforcement managers appear to be influenced by the employee's perception of organizational injustice, work-life imbalances, and unsupportive supervisors (Andreescu & Vito, 2021).

Political Climate

Even prior to the George Floyd protests and riots in 2020, a major workforce crisis existed within the law enforcement profession (Mourtgos et al., 2022). This study further mentioned that "policing has been dealing with decreased applicants, increased resignations, increased agency competition in recruitment and transfers, and a pending retirement bubble for at least a decade" (p. 10). These factors, coupled with the current anti-law enforcement political climate, have caused hiring and retention issues within law enforcement organizations. For instance, a quantitative study of 16 law enforcement organizations in Alabama found that "45 percent of police officers would change jobs if reasonable opportunities surfaced" (Carlan, 2007, p. 75). This study also concluded that "even though 80 percent intended to remain in policing, only 58 percent were satisfied with their police departments and 26 percent were fully dissatisfied with their policing careers" (p. 75). This research was conducted over a decade ago, before much of the current mainstream anti-police sentiment that occurred after the Ferguson effect. As such, this strong willingness for law enforcement officers to abandon their law enforcement careers during the time of that study is concerning and poses a significant challenge for law enforcement organizations in contemporary society due to the profession becoming much more undesirable from the current political climate.

The perception of law enforcement and the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement officers have changed drastically during the last couple of decades (Brunetto et al., 2012). This study was conducted in 2012, but significant changes have occurred in the current political climate since then. In contemporary society, law enforcement has faced a media creating a divide between the public and law enforcement, and high-profile incidents sparking riots and protests throughout the United States (Nix & Pickett, 2017). Additionally, this study emphasized that the "Ferguson Effect," the "Defund the Police" movement, and the "Black Lives Matter" movement have changed how law enforcement officers are perceived in society, as well as how officers perceive their roles in society. Nowadays, law enforcement officers have been thrown into the spotlight and are expected to behave in a particular manner (Brunetto et al., 2012). Additionally, it was mentioned that "policing is a form of emotional labor, and the effort involved in protecting the community, while being in a 'client-focused' manner but restrained by fiscal constraints...has shown to have a negative impact upon police officer engagement and job outcomes" (pp. 428-429). Andreescu and Vito (2021) attributed the recent anti-police protests and violent clashes between law enforcement and the public as a reason for it becoming difficult for law enforcement organizations to retain both highly productive and experienced law enforcement officers.

Nix and Pickett (2017) mentioned that law enforcement has recently undergone intense scrutiny in the United States due to high-profile use of force incidents. As a result of the scrutiny, the researchers noted that law enforcement officers have probably "become more distrustful of civilians, fearful of scandal, and are de-policing" (p. 24). In addition to this, law enforcement officers perceive that civilian attitudes and behavior toward them have worsened (Nix & Pickett, 2017). Also, the researchers stated that "seemingly constant negative publicity in the news

regarding questionable police practices has fueled a legitimacy crisis, such that a growing segment of the population has become less trusting of the police and less willing to accept their decisions" (p. 24). As a result, the researchers argued that law enforcement officers have begun de-policing or reducing proactive policing, which has caused some criminals to become emboldened, and crime has started to rise. Mourtgos et al. (2022) argued that "fewer officers per capita have been linked to higher crime rates" (p. 10). Additionally, research has indicated that law enforcement officers might not use the appropriate force needed due to fear of being accused of wrongdoing, which could put the officer in danger (Nix & Pickett, 2017). All the reasons mentioned could potentially lead to a law enforcement officer deciding to leave the profession of law enforcement. This outcome may be due to officers not wanting to be under intense scrutiny, be in a profession with a negative perspective, or put themselves in danger due to fear of prosecution or accusations of wrongdoing (Mourtgos et al., 2022; Nix & Pickett, 2017).

Bright (2020) concluded that an employee's perception of their organizational prestige could mediate the relationships of their job satisfaction, public service motivation, and turnover intentions. The perception of organizational prestige is a significant area for law enforcement officers since high-profile law enforcement incidents such as officer-involved shootings can tarnish the reputation of a law enforcement organization. As such, perception can significantly impact the morale of law enforcement officers working within that particular organization during or after the incident (Bright, 2020). For instance, after the George Floyd protests, there was a 100 percent increase in officers leaving the Minneapolis Police Department than the prior year (Mourtgos et al., 2022). The George Floyd protests occurred throughout the United States and focused on a fatal civilian use-of-force incident that involved a Minneapolis Police Department officer and George Floyd. While there was an enormous impact on the Minneapolis Police

Department because it was the epicenter of the incident, law enforcement organizations across the nation felt the impact and began experiencing significant increases in voluntary turnover (Mourtgos et al., 2022). For instance, this study emphasized that numerous large law enforcement organizations within the United States have seen a significant increase in law enforcement officers resigning after the large public protests in 2020.

Gender in Law Enforcement

A specific issue of law enforcement turnover and retention rates involves hiring and ultimately retaining female law enforcement officers. Prior research has indicated that, in general, female employees have a higher turnover rate than males (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017). The researchers attributed this finding to females leaving the workforce when they give birth and raise their families. The recruitment, hiring, and retention of female law enforcement officers within the United States have been challenging (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). The same study attributed this challenge to law enforcement being a male-dominated profession, organizational culture typically being male-dominated, and fewer females being interested in this career path. Based on this study, females leave law enforcement careers after entering motherhood since this profession typically does not have family-friendly and flexible policies due to the 24 hours a day, seven days a week, nature of the operations. Chu (2017) indicated that females typically had lower career aspirations than males in the past, but this has begun to change with females more frequently entering male-dominated career paths. Currently, statistics indicate that within the United States, only approximately 12 percent of law enforcement officers are females (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018). This study concluded that it is common for female law enforcement officers to have a higher turnover rate, especially voluntary turnover, than male law enforcement officers.

Other Causes of Turnover in Law Enforcement

Prior law enforcement service can be a significant factor that influences an employee's commitment to an organization (Boag-Munroe, 2018). This study found that individuals with prior law enforcement service have been found to have a higher level of commitment to their organization. This could potentially reduce employee turnover because of a longer stay in service, and having been predisposed to the career field could increase the likelihood that the employee will be satisfied with this type of career. For instance, prior law enforcement service could be described as working in a non-sworn capacity or in a part-time role at a law enforcement organization prior to becoming a sworn law enforcement officer (Boag-Munroe, 2018). Other studies have reviewed the relationship between education and employee turnover. In one study, highly educated law enforcement managers and administrators were less likely to experience work-related frustration or burnout and, as a result, were less likely to have turnover intentions (Andreescu & Vito, 2021). This study also found that law enforcement frontline managers, such as sergeants, had the highest risk of employee turnover within law enforcement organizations. Not only this, but the researchers also argued that frontline managers have significantly less organizational commitment than other managers and administrators in law enforcement organizations. The researchers' reasoning behind this was that "police sergeants experience the highest level of stress because employees in this position are engaged in both frontline police duties and frontline supervision and management" (p. 979). Due to the nature of a police sergeant's role involving both law enforcement duties and frontline supervision, having less organizational commitment could lead to higher turnover rates among this particular rank.

Impacts Associated with Turnover in Law Enforcement

Recruiting, hiring, and ultimately retaining qualified and experienced employees is a major concern that all organizations strive to achieve through their human resources department. While this may be a sought-after goal, this task can often become difficult for organizations to accomplish due to both internal and external factors. Ultimately, law enforcement officer turnover is a significant issue because of the various negative impacts caused, such as financial costs, organizational aspects, and operational aspects (Mourtgos et al., 2022). Mourtgos et al. (2022), quoting Wilson (2012), described the negative impacts of law enforcement turnover as follows:

Police employee success is a function of officer experience and ability to make sensible decisions with little supervision or oversight. By reducing the number of officers with experience, turnover inhibits effective decision making. It diminishes the strength and cohesion a department gains from experienced staff. Agencies with higher turnover and less experienced officers suffer reduced productivity and more frequent complaints. The cost of training sworn police officers is substantial, particularly in comparison with other fields. The high level of organizational and job specific knowledge required of police officers also means that high turnover can impair organizational performance and service delivery while replacement personnel are selected and trained. (p. 11)

Essentially, this quotation emphasizes that successful law enforcement organizations are comprised of experienced law enforcement officers who can operate with little oversight and supervision (Mourtgos et al., 2022). Furthermore, employee turnover leads an organization to lose experienced officers, which could lead to less productivity, more complaints, and poor performance and service delivery (Mourtgos et al., 2022). Similarly, Jabeen et al. (2020)

“reported that high employee turnover weakens organizations and undermines their efficiency and productivity” (p. 1). Hilal and Litsey (2020) argued in favor of understanding the concept of employee turnover and how it impacts law enforcement organizations.

When examining an organization's expenditures, personnel expenses can typically be one of the costliest aspects of an organization's expenses (Mourtgos et al., 2022). Every organization strives to limit costly and unnecessary expenditures, especially public sector organizations such as law enforcement organizations, which must answer to taxpayers and elected and appointed officials (Allisey et al., 2014). As such, this study emphasizes that premature employee turnover is a significant concern among employers due to the expenses associated with hiring and backfilling employees. Another study indicated that this concern is typically due to the various one-time expenditures and ongoing personnel costs (Mourtgos et al., 2022). These researchers elaborated that those costs can include the initial recruiting and hiring of personnel as well as the ongoing costs associated with training and retaining employees. This study indicated that the associated expenditures could include the cost to train for the position, which consists of the trainer and the trainee, and the overtime costs associated with filling the vacant position with an existing employee until the position is filled. Furthermore, this study added that other associated costs are the employee's salary and benefits, which include retirement pension costs, medical insurance, other forms of insurance, and paid vacation or sick leave. All of these costs could continue to cost the organization even after an employee's employment is terminated. The financial costs associated with a high employee turnover rate can place an extreme amount of pressure on employment organizations (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). As such, researching the causes of voluntary employee turnover and attempting to find solutions to increase retention and reduce turnover are significant concepts.

The premature and unexpected turnover of a law enforcement officer from a law enforcement organization can cause both additional and unneeded financial, staffing, and resource strain on the organization. It is estimated to take between five to ten years until the investment of hiring a law enforcement officer breaks even due to the associated costs (Allisey et al., 2014). Similarly, Mourtgos et al. (2022) estimated that the cost of turnover per officer "ranges from one to five times the salary of that officer" (p. 11). This researcher described some of the associated costs as including opening recruitment, selecting a candidate, and completing the hiring process, consisting of a background investigation, psychological examination, polygraph examination, and medical examination. This study also mentioned that the newly hired officer would need to complete a training process, which includes an approximate six-month academy and multiple-month field training program. Therefore, in cases where law enforcement organizations fail to retain employees for at least the amount of time to break even on their investment, the organization is losing both time and money. With each instance of employee turnover, law enforcement organizations must hire and train new law enforcement officers to fill each vacancy (Mourtgos et al., 2022).

In addition, vacancies within law enforcement organizations can result in several other problems, which can be especially harmful to smaller organizations (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Brunetto et al. (2017) argued that unexpected employee turnover could negatively impact various areas, such as staff shortages, decreased employee morale, and additional mandatory overtime. Additionally, this study indicated that turnover might cause additional duties and tasks to be assigned to existing employees, and employees' stress levels may increase, which could lead to additional turnover. Statistics indicate that by the year 2026, there will likely be an increase of approximately seven percent in the number of sworn law enforcement officer positions within

the United States (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). By the year 2029, there will be an estimated addition of 40,600 law enforcement officer positions in the United States, which outpaces the average growth rate of all occupations (Andreescu & Vito, 2021). This increase in job positions could present a significant challenge for law enforcement organizations that are already experiencing vacancies due to high turnover rates and the current political climate, resulting in fewer individuals becoming interested in the career field of law enforcement (Skaggs et al., 2022; Hilal & Litsey, 2020).

Hilal and Litsey (2020) argued that employee turnover within law enforcement organizations could result in direct and indirect costs. For instance, the researchers stated that direct costs due to employee turnover could include "expenses related to things like background checks, uniforms and equipment, psychological assessments, overtime, training and administrative costs" (p. 73). The researchers reiterated the significance of fully understanding the concept of employee turnover within the field of law enforcement since replacing a law enforcement officer can be both expensive and time-consuming. Furthermore, this study stated that the "indirect costs [of law enforcement officer turnover] can include quality of services, productivity, as well as accumulated institutional and professional knowledge and skills" (p. 73). Another study emphasized that "the consequences of dissatisfaction observed in ...[law enforcement officers] also include problems with their mental and physical health...as well as low morale...other areas influenced by low job satisfaction include absenteeism, performance, and organizational commitment, as well as burnout" (Tomažević et al., 2013, p. 1338). As such, high turnover rates within law enforcement organizations pose a significant challenge since employee burnout is a serious issue that can impact the existing employees as well as several other operational aspects of the organization.

According to a study, organizations with low levels of employee turnover experience an increase in labor productivity, whereas higher levels of employee turnover can result in less productivity (De Winne et al., 2018). Employee productivity is significant in any organization since it measures the effectiveness and success of the organization in fulfilling its goals. Additionally, this study suggested that law enforcement organizations often find it very difficult to combat frequent and strong shifts in turnover over time and that turnover volatility could decrease labor productivity. Turnover volatility within law enforcement organizations is a significant problem due to the potential adverse impacts on an organization's labor productivity for remaining employees. The remaining employees or newly hired employees may be less experienced and may experience burnout due to covering extra shifts or taking on extra responsibilities.

Similarly, Orrick (2018) argued that "over time, agencies with higher turnover and less experienced officers will suffer a reduction in productivity and lower quality of service delivery" (p. 7). Service delivery in law enforcement can include response times, customer service to members of the public, and different services or programs offered. Other researchers argued that high levels of voluntary turnover within a law enforcement organization could harm the organization's knowledge base, organizational performance, and overall effectiveness (Charman & Bennett, 2022). Similarly, another research mentioned that "increased rates of voluntary officer turnover are associated with increased rates of violent and property crime" (Mourtgos et al., 2022, p. 10). This associated increase in crime rates can be attributed to organizational performance and the decrease in the organization's knowledge base with instances of law enforcement turnover.

Potential Mitigating Factors to Turnover

As with any area of study, examining potential mitigating factors to a problem is a significant step to finding a solution. Jolicoeur and Grant (2017) noted that improving salary and benefits, recognizing an employee's achievement, and implementing merit-based promotional systems might promote retention and reduce turnover among law enforcement officers. The researchers also argued that some other tools were to create job flexibility, have effective and qualified supervisors, and focus on personnel development within the organization. On the other hand, Hilal and Litsey (2020) emphasized that "leadership training, clear and transparent processes, permanent light-duty assignments, shift flexibility, improved morale, and more focus on personal wellness" are changes that an organization could implement to potentially reduce turnover rates (p. 73).

A different study emphasized the importance of employers understanding the leading causes of turnover and implementing various strategies to reduce or prevent employee turnover (Abdullah Al Mamun & Nazmul Hasan, 2017). Specifically, this study highlighted recruiting suitable employees, retaining valuable employees, effective leadership, and training and developing employees as possible steps that employers can take to reduce turnover. Orrick (2018) argued that compensation is crucial to initially attracting and ultimately retaining qualified employees. This study reiterated that law enforcement organizations should provide "competitive salaries that match or exceed the market average" to prevent turnover (p. 10). Additionally, this study emphasized that compensation does not just encompass salary but also includes various other benefits such as retirement, health insurance, and other forms of leave. Orrick (2018) also mentioned that the priorities of employees change regarding benefits when they mature, especially since younger employees tend to focus solely on salary. In contrast, the

researchers argued that older employees tend to focus on retirement benefits rather than salary. As such, this study promoted the concept of organizations examining the demographics of their employees since some aspects may be more important to some employees than others.

Limitations in Prior Literature

Upon examining many of the studies referenced above, it was discovered that many had reached various conclusions. Many of these conclusions had overlapping findings that attributed different factors to what may influence law enforcement officers to leave their organization (Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Kiekbusch et al., 2003; Li et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2015). Due to several of these studies not having generalizable results and having various findings, there is a need for additional research to be conducted so the data can be analyzed and additional findings can be reported. Suboch et al. (2017) mentioned that the "examination of formal and informal retention initiatives" is a significant area since, without this type of information, law enforcement organizations are making decisions without knowing the extent of the problem or what the impact could be (p. 102). These findings indicate that there is still uncertainty in this area and that administrators in law enforcement organizations may base their policies and procedures on incorrect data or data that is not applicable or generalizable to their organization. Additionally, it has been argued that the mounting issues and challenges associated with staffing and the current rate of law enforcement officer turnover has placed pressure on these organizations, as well as researchers to attempt to fully understand and find solutions to these problems (Jolicoeur & Grant, 2017).

A study argued that one of the most prominent issues with prior literature that examined law enforcement turnover rates is that the findings of these studies have often not been generalizable to most law enforcement organizations (Mukwevho & Bussin, 2021). It was further

mentioned that this major limitation is often due to the type of methodology utilized in the research design process, the collection method, sample size, and various other influencing factors. In addition to this, Allisey et al. (2014) emphasized that currently, there is a "lack of information on the organizational...and attitudinal...variables that are involved in the turnover process" among law enforcement officers (p. 752). This is an important factor since, typically, public safety is funded through tax revenue and other forms of government resources.

Determining influential factors that lead to law enforcement turnover and subsequently implementing changes to prevent employee turnover are significant concepts that should be studied and addressed so taxpayer funds can be allocated to other public safety areas. In a study conducted by Suboch et al. (2017), the initial contact method of participants and the total number of participants were identified as limitations. This particular study examined the responses of minority and female law enforcement officers regarding turnover. Limitations such as these are important to review since these issues should be avoided during the creation of future studies. Additionally, these limitations should be considered when reviewing the findings and conclusions of the study to determine if the findings should be accepted and or generalized.

Various other studies in this literature review also had other limitations. One limitation involved the participant's demographics, such as education or gender, not being a representative sample of the entire population (Tomaževič et al., 2013). Another limitation identified in one of the studies reviewed was that the research design did not distinguish between voluntary and involuntary turnover (Hayes, 2020). This limitation may have led to inaccurate conclusions or skewed data within this study. This limitation is extremely relevant because the data can become skewed if a law enforcement organization terminates law enforcement officers and does not differentiate the type of turnover. This is especially true since terminating an employee for

underperformance or misconduct is not the same as an employee leaving on their own accord. For instance, if data is skewed, it can appear that many law enforcement officers willingly resigned from the law enforcement organization when, instead, the organization ultimately decided to terminate the employee.

Additionally, another common limitation within the studies referenced above, such as in Cordner and Cordner (2011), was that the study was not generalizable to the larger population. This study argued that the results were not generalizable to a larger population due to the small sample size from which the data was collected. The researchers indicated that even though there was no indication that the study's participants were atypical, the findings were still not generalizable due to the sample size. However, the conclusions drawn can still be significant to the overall knowledge available on law enforcement turnover rates. Eventually, these studies could be replicated with a larger sample size to obtain generalizability and further the area of knowledge.

All research studies conducted, regardless of the focus area or topic of examination, will have limitations. This is because all studies suffer from various constraints from the selected research methodology. In all cases, there are limitations to the available resources to the researchers, as well as time constraints. Regardless of the limitations, each study will contribute to the overall understanding and knowledge of the particular area studied. Each research study discussed in this literature review, regardless of the methodology utilized or the study's potential limitations, contributed to the underlying knowledge regarding turnover and will continue to assist future researchers who examine this topic. Although some of the studies discussed in this literature review have not been generalizable to all law enforcement organizations, the findings have assisted in providing a clear and detailed understanding of how certain aspects and factors

impact and influence law enforcement officer turnover within a specific sample. The concept of law enforcement officer turnover, including what aspects lead to employee turnover and the impacts of turnover, is an important topic that should continue to be studied and examined.

Perception of Law Enforcement Turnover

The perception of law enforcement and the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement officers have changed drastically during the last couple of decades (Brunetto et al., 2012). While a dramatic shift in the public's perception of law enforcement has occurred, research has indicated that law enforcement officers' perceptions of the public have stayed consistent over time (Mourtgos et al., 2022). This study argued that prior research by Niederhoffer (1967) indicated that for decades, "a substantial portion of officers generally harbored negative feelings towards the public, media, and politicians" (p. 13). Similarly, contemporary research has indicated that law enforcement officers perceive that they are not trusted and are disliked by entities outside their profession (Mourtgos et al., 2022). Another study emphasized the importance of perceptions regarding significant decisions made in a workplace, especially with employees' perception of their role and status in the organization (Lima & Canbarro, 2015). As such, a law enforcement officer's negative perception of society, along with experiencing a negative shift in the public's perception of their profession, could make them perceive their career as insignificant or no longer worth it and ultimately result in turnover (Mourtgos et al., 2022; Nix & Pickett, 2017). In most cases, Lima and Canbarro (2015) argued that decision-making within employment organizations has "been a result of the interaction between the eco system and the social system as to consider the perceptions and their interpretation by the employee groups in that organization" (p. 14). These researchers also emphasized that many internal and external factors can impact an employee's perception of their employment

organization, which could lead to turnover intentions and, ultimately, turnover. Additionally, this study argued that most of the decisions made by employees are based on the individual employee's perceptions and conclusions drawn about their time of employment. Based on this study, turnover is an individual choice that an employee chooses to make, and certain factors or aspects may influence some individuals more than others. As such, the perceptions of law enforcement officers working at the City of La Palma are essential areas to examine since perceptions can provide insight into potential turnover intentions among current employees as well as provide an explanation for turnover that occurred among former employees.

Summary

Overall, numerous studies have examined the concept of law enforcement officer turnover and retention, but there is still much more to study regarding this topic (Allisey et al., 2014). Numerous studies have indicated the significant problems associated with law enforcement officer turnover within law enforcement organizations (Allisey et al., 2014; Bishopp et al., 2019; Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Some of the issues include lower employee morale and the addition of more stress among employees (Bishopp et al., 2019). These problems can lead to additional law enforcement officers deciding to prematurely separate from their organizations, which can further lead to a repetitive cycle of turnover (Bishopp et al., 2019). Additionally, there have been numerous findings proposed by various researchers that have indicated different causes of law enforcement officer turnover, which suggests that further research needs to be conducted to further examine this topic (Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Kiekbusch et al., 2003; Li et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2015).

Future research should attempt to determine if there are general causes that lead to law enforcement officer turnover or if organizational-specific internal and external causes impact the

amount of turnover that occurs. Many of the previous studies conducted on law enforcement officer turnover were quantitative studies (Mukwevho & Bussin, 2021). While this methodology may have provided some findings, a quantitative methodology was not conducive to delivering detailed responses from participants to explain their reasoning for turnover (Mukwevho & Bussin, 2021). Due to the City of La Palma struggling with law enforcement officer turnover throughout the last decade, this organization should follow the recommendations of Suboch et al. (2017) and fully understand the root causes of turnover within the agency before implementing potential changes. This study conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews of current and former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma who were recruited via snowball sampling. Additionally, this study utilized the Unfolding Model Theory of Employee Turnover as a theoretical framework to guide this study. Ultimately, this study aimed to obtain detailed information and responses from current and former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma regarding factors that lead to employee retention or turnover.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This study focused on examining and obtaining a greater understanding of factors leading to employee turnover within the law enforcement profession. Specifically, this qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, which uncovered a deeper understanding of existing factors contributing to instances of turnover at the City of La Palma. As such, utilizing semi-structured interviews and participant observations led to this research being a multiple case study where the individual participants were considered a separate unit of analysis. Additionally, document analysis was utilized to provide additional insight into the history of the City of La Palma, information about the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization, turnover at this organization, and compensation offered at this organization. This study also utilized Lee and Mitchell's (1991) Unfolding Model Theory of Employee Turnover to examine possible paths to turnover at the City of La Palma. Accordingly, the research methodology of this study was designed to elicit the perceptions of current and former City of La Palma law enforcement officers recruited via snowball sampling regarding influential factors that impacted employee turnover and retention within the City of La Palma. This chapter discusses and analyzes the research design of this study, participants and setting, procedures, interview questions, and data collection and analysis procedures.

Design

This qualitative study examined push and pull factors that influence and impact law enforcement officer turnover and retention within law enforcement organizations. Creswell (2013) argued that using a qualitative research methodology was appropriate when specific variables were not apparent and when themes must be extracted during the study's data

collection and analysis segment. This researcher mentioned that qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). Creswell (2013) also mentioned that throughout the past, qualitative inquiries shifted focus from “social construction, to interpretivism, and on to social justice in the world” (p. 43). While focuses have shifted over time, qualitative studies have remained a primary method for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013).

Law enforcement officer turnover has been a significant problem that affects many law enforcement organizations worldwide (Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Orrick, 2018; Yun et al., 2015; Charman & Bennett, 2022). This multiple-case study conducted semi-structured interviews, which included participant observations, with current and former City of La Palma law enforcement officers who were recruited via snowball sampling. Each participant was considered a separate unit of analysis, and as such, there was a detailed analysis of the various topics discussed by each participant. Additionally, document analysis was utilized from various official reports to provide additional context on the organization’s history, turnover at the organization, and compensation offered to the City of La Palma’s law enforcement officers. Larger law enforcement organizations may experience little to no impact with several instances of employee turnover, but every single instance of employee turnover at the City of La Palma

results in a significant effect. With the City of La Palma having a small municipal law enforcement organization, every instance of employee turnover is detrimental to staffing levels, employee morale, and the institutional knowledge of the organization's policies and procedures (City of La Palma, 2015).

There were various reasons why the researcher had chosen to implement a qualitative research methodology and, more specifically, a multiple-case study as the research design. In the case of law enforcement officer turnover and retention rates, prior studies have been conducted that utilized either a qualitative or a quantitative research methodology. Previous literature utilizing a quantitative research methodology provided limited insight into some areas regarding employee turnover rates within law enforcement (Kiekbusch et al., 2003). On the other hand, studies that utilized a qualitative research methodology provided more evidence and attributed more detail to an employee's reasoning for voluntarily leaving their law enforcement organization (Kiekbusch et al., 2003). In qualitative studies, researchers were able to dive into specific turnover rate issues and obtain detailed accounts of reasoning for law enforcement organizations either retaining or losing employees through turnover.

In some cases, quantitative methods such as surveys or other forms of mass data collection could provide insight into an overall trend due to data indicating a significant finding (Kiekbusch et al., 2003). However, a qualitative method such as interviews with fewer participants could provide detailed insight into the reasoning behind participants' actions, motives, perceptions, or beliefs, which can be more beneficial than basic generalized findings (Kiekbusch et al., 2003). Additionally, quantitative studies were more geared towards larger sample sizes, whereas qualitative studies tend to work better with smaller sample sizes (Kiekbusch et al., 2003). As such, because of the more detailed information arising from prior

qualitative studies, as well as the small population size of the La Palma Police Department, this study chose to implement a qualitative research methodology to study each participant in-depth and collect more detailed information.

This study utilized a multiple case study design to examine law enforcement turnover rates among law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma. Yin (2009) argued that “the evidence from multiple cases was often considered more compelling and the overall study was therefore regarded as being more robust” (p. 53). Yin (2009) also mentioned that multiple case studies typically take more effort to complete and that the findings were often more generalizable due to having multiple units of analysis. Initially, the researcher used document analysis to lay a foundation for information regarding the setting. Then, this study conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with current and former law enforcement officers who prematurely left the City of La Palma and sought employment at different law enforcement organizations. During the interview, the researcher noted any relevant participant observations. Potential participants for this study were screened to ensure that they met the eligibility requirements and recruited via snowball sampling.

The researcher ensured that the semi-structured interviews were designed to get comprehensive information and a deeper understanding of the participants’ views regarding the retention activities of the City of La Palma. The researcher selected a multiple case study design so each participant could be viewed as a separate case rather than the organization as a whole. The reason for this was to ensure that small details would not be overlooked or viewed as irrelevant since each participant might have been exposed to different factors, which could have led to potential turnover intentions. Analyzing the data collected from each participant separately allowed for an in-depth understanding of the various topics and themes discussed during the

interviews. This included both information relayed during the interviews and any relevant observations that were observed. Additionally, the researcher used document analysis to lay a foundation for information regarding the setting, information about special assignments and other opportunities at the City of La Palma, turnover within the organization, and compensation offered to City of La Palma law enforcement officers.

Using semi-structured interviews rather than structured interviews allowed for in-depth data to be collected based on how the interview progressed, revealing additional relevant information. Young et al. (2018) described interviews as being "flexible, allowing in-depth analysis from a relatively small sample size and place the focus of research on the views of participants" (p. 10). Additionally, structured interviews have been described as being similar to surveys or questionnaires, where verbatim questions typically elicit a simple or easily analyzed response (Galletta & Cross, 2013). In contrast, semi-structured interviews have been shown to be more flexible and adaptable based on how the discussion unfolds. For instance, in the case of this study, when a participant brought up a particular topic of interest, the semi-structured interview design allowed the researcher to deviate from the standard questions of a structured interview to obtain additional relevant information. This style of questioning enabled the researcher to ask other questions that could clarify responses or obtain further information on a subject. During the interview process, the researcher noted any relevant observations to add meaning to the participant's words. Ultimately, this study utilized a semi-structured interview as the data collection method to examine law enforcement officer turnover and retention due to the various benefits of a qualitative research methodology.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do the participants view employee retention activities of the City of La Palma?

Research Question 2: What do the participants view as the main influencing factor of voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma?

Research Question 3: What are the participants' suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention at the City of La Palma?

Setting

The setting of this study was the City of La Palma. The City of La Palma is a small municipality in Orange County, California, that is approximately 1.8 square miles large and has just under 16,000 residents (City of La Palma, 2014). The La Palma Police Department, a division of the City of La Palma, exclusively provides municipal law enforcement services for the City of La Palma. The La Palma Police Department is the smallest municipal law enforcement agency in Orange County, California, with only 22 sworn law enforcement officers (City of La Palma, 2015). The La Palma Police Department has a quasi-military command structure consisting of various ranks and line-level officers that make up a hierarchy. The 22 sworn law enforcement officers consist of one Police Chief, two Police Captains, five Police Sergeants, two Detectives, one School Resource Officer, and 11 Police Officers, with a maximum of four of those Police Officers being assigned as Corporal (City of La Palma, 2015). A Corporal is an assignment where a police officer acts in a quasi-supervisor role in the absence of a Police Sergeant (City of La Palma, 2015).

Each participant was assigned a generic number for confidentiality purposes. In all areas

of the study, the participants were referred to by their number, so their names or other personal identifying information were not found anywhere in this study. This setting was an excellent choice for a qualitative research study due to the small population size, which had the potential to allow the researcher to continue to utilize the snowball sampling technique until all potential participants had been exhausted. Also, if all potentially eligible participants consented to participate, this qualitative study could accommodate this participation level, strengthening the results since data from a large segment of the population would be collected.

Ultimately, after completing the snowball sampling technique, when all the referred potential participants were exhausted, a total of 13 potential participants were willing to participate in this study. As such, the researcher interviewed 13 consenting participants, which included six current law enforcement officers and seven former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. Although this participation level was lower than initially expected, the detailed data was sufficient for this study, given the sample size. Some of the limitations that potentially impacted participation in this study were listed later in Chapter 5. Additionally, this setting was chosen for this study because this organization had experienced significant prior issues with law enforcement officer turnover. Examining prior incidents of turnover was an interesting phenomenon due to attempting to understand what caused turnover among former employees, which could potentially be applied to current employees.

Participants

The researcher obtained a purposive sample where the participants consisted of current and former law enforcement officers of the City of La Palma. Specifically, a snowball sampling methodology was utilized to obtain interested voluntary participants for this study. Krysik and Finn (2018) noted that purposive sampling had been found to be a popular sampling method that

consisted of the “intentional selection of elements to be included in the sample” (p. 163). As such, purposive sampling sought specific individuals for a study due to their special knowledge of a particular area rather than formal education or training (Krysiak & Finn, 2018). In this case, all of the participants had been employed by the City of La Palma between 2014 and 2022 and experienced the organization’s culture, salary and benefits, leadership, morale, and other situational factors during the same period.

The researcher started the snowball sampling with two participants: one current law enforcement officer and one former law enforcement officer from the City of La Palma. The researcher had prior knowledge of some individuals currently employed as law enforcement officers at the City of La Palma, as well as some former employees who met the criteria to participate. The researcher began the snowball sampling technique by sending both potential participants a recruitment letter. The researcher then waited for responses from these potential participants. Both individuals indicated their willingness to participate, so they were provided with consent forms. Upon obtaining written consent, the interviews were conducted. These participants were informed that their interview was not authorized or sanctioned by their current or former organization and that they chose to participate in this study. At the end of each interview, the researcher concluded the questioning by asking the participants if they could recommend one to three current or former law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma who might be interested in participating and who met the eligibility requirements. If the participant had someone or multiple individuals to refer, the researcher obtained contact information for the potential participants, preferably an email address. The researcher then sent recruitment letters to these individuals to see if they were willing to participate in this study. The cycle then continued until all potential participants were exhausted. The snowball sampling

technique concluded when the final referred participant could only refer individuals who previously declined to participate or the researcher had already interviewed.

In general, this sampling technique was effective in identifying potential participants for this study but may not have been as effective as possible due to a possible limitation. During a few of the interviews, it was discovered that the organization's administration was essentially discouraging participation in this study, which might have caused numerous participants to choose not to participate in this study. This limitation was discussed in depth in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. The identities of all the participants in this study had and will remain confidential; only demographics such as the participant's age range, years of experience, and employment status were listed. Additionally, participants were advised in writing and verbally that their consent to participate in this study could be withdrawn at any time. Participants were also informed that their interview would not be included in this study if they chose to withdraw their consent. The participants' true identities were only known to the researcher and have not and will not be disclosed for any reason.

To be eligible to participate in this study, a participant must have been a current or former law enforcement officer employed by the City of La Palma between 2014 and 2022. Participants were limited to the time frame of employment between 2014 and 2022 because a mass exodus of employees occurred during this period, which included many officers leaving and many new officers being hired. In the case of former law enforcement officers, to qualify to participate in this study, they had to voluntarily leave the City of La Palma for a different employment opportunity. As such, former law enforcement officers who left the profession due to an injury, illness, or through a normal retirement were eligible to participate in this study. Additionally, this study did not include former employees who resigned in lieu of termination or an administrative

finding since these individuals might have been biased toward the organization and could have provided an inaccurate account of their experiences during their employment.

The City of La Palma was budgeted for only 22 sworn law enforcement officers, including two Captains and one Chief (Nunez, 2014). These numbers constantly fluctuated based on vacancies within the organization. The Chief and Captains were not interviewed for this study since they were in an at-will administrative position. Also, these three employees were in a different bargaining group than the other sworn law enforcement officers and received different salaries and benefits. Additionally, law enforcement officers who were still on probationary status were not selected as participants in this study. The employee's initial probationary period for the City of La Palma was the first 18 months of employment. Subsequent probationary periods for promotions would not impact potential participants' ability to participate. As such, at any point, there was a maximum potential pool of up to 19 sworn law enforcement officers with the title of Police Officer, Detective, or Sergeant to interview. This pool of potential participants was even smaller at the time of the study due to multiple vacancies within the City of La Palma, as well as numerous current employees being on their initial probationary period. This information was obtained through a pre-questionnaire provided to prospective participants before the interview to confirm that they met the eligibility requirements. The reasoning behind excluding these employees was that they would likely not be ready to leave the organization and would likely not be experiencing turnover intentions yet. Additionally, these employees might not have had enough time at the organization to form an opinion or have enough experiences that would be beneficial when questioning these employees regarding turnover intentions. As such, this study attempted to uncover if current employees were experiencing similar factors that might lead to future incidents of law enforcement turnover.

Procedures

Before any research was conducted and data was collected or recorded, approval was sought through the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Then, a thorough document analysis of relevant files occurred to reveal background information about the City of La Palma and the La Palma Police Department, salary information, and turnover rates specific to the City of La Palma. The primary source of data collection for this study was obtained using the semi-structured interview technique to elicit data from current and former law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma who met the criteria. The researcher also took notes of relevant participant observations during the interviews. As such, this study utilized purposive sampling to examine a particular group regarding employee turnover (Krysik & Finn, 2018). The requirements for participation included current employees who had passed their initial probationary status and former law enforcement officers between 2014 and 2022 who had voluntarily left the organization for another employment position. An additional criterion for former employees was that they could not have been terminated or resigned in lieu of termination upon leaving the City of La Palma. The reasoning behind this was to prevent potential outliers with significant biases toward the organization.

The researcher utilized a snowball sampling technique and started with two participants, a current law enforcement officer and a former law enforcement officer from the City of La Palma. This contact information was then kept confidential and was not and will not be released in the future. Potential participants were then contacted to determine their willingness to participate. All participants were informed that this interview was not authorized or sanctioned by their organization and that they chose to participate in this study. The emails sent to prospective participants included a recruitment letter and a consent form to review and sign if

they consented to participate in the study. The prospective participants had the researcher's email address from the initial recruitment email. As such, the recruitment letter requested that willing participants reply to the email within one week and inform the researcher of their willingness to participate. If the potential participant had not responded within one week of receiving the recruitment letter, the researcher followed up with an additional email or phone call to see if they were willing to participate. The participants were informed that the interviews would take approximately 30 minutes and that they would not be compensated for participating in this study.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions, allowing participants to share their beliefs, perspectives, and experiences in detailed responses. An interview could be described as "a face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expression of opinion or belief from another person or persons" (Brinkman, 2018, p. 578). This qualitative study was able to obtain and extract detailed data from participants' responses as well as some visual observations, unlike quantitative studies that were limited to obtaining data by selecting pre-established responses (Kieckbusch et al., 2003). Galletta and Cross (2013) described semi-structured interviews as partially structured interviews that guide the study to cover certain topics. However, this interview style could leave the discussions open for the participant to offer their own answers and insight (Galletta & Cross, 2013). The interviews consisted of this style of questioning because it allowed participants to express their opinions and perceptions of turnover intentions while simultaneously keeping the participants focused on certain topics. The interview questions, listed later in this chapter, were designed to elicit detailed responses regarding the participant's career in law enforcement, their experiences with employee turnover, and their perception of employee turnover. Additionally, the participants were asked what they believed was the leading cause or multiple causes of employee

turnover and what could be done to reduce it.

The interviews were scheduled based on dates, times, and locations convenient for the participants. Interviews with current law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma were conducted while they were not representing their department. The interviews were conducted in a private setting so that the participants would not be seen or heard by others. Additionally, one participant was allowed to participate via video conference since they were no longer located in close geographic proximity for an in-person interview.

At the start of each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study. Additionally, the researcher described the measures of confidentiality that would be taken to protect the participant's identity and responses. The researcher then asked the participants to confirm that they had read the consent form and asked if they had questions about the study's purpose, procedures, or confidentiality. The researcher then requested to be provided with a signed consent form to participate in this study. If the participant consented to the in-person interview or video conference being audio recorded, the interview would be recorded with a Sony ICD-UX560 digital audio recorder. If a participant requested that the interview not be recorded, the researcher would not record the interview and instead took notes of their responses and any observations. Ultimately, every participant in this study declined to have the interview recorded, so the researcher took notes of the participants' responses. The possible reasoning behind all the participants declining to have their interviews audio recorded, the possible implications, and future recommendations were discussed in the following two chapters.

This study utilized strict confidentiality measures to protect the participants' identities. As such, a hard copy document that contained the list of participant names and the corresponding participant numbers was kept in a securely locked drawer in a secure location, which had been

and will only be accessible by the researcher. Once all the interviews were completed, any and all audio files or scanned notes were transferred and stored on a locked, password-protected computer. The researcher was the only individual who had access to this computer. The list of participants' identities was kept securely for confidentiality purposes.

The Researcher's Role

The researcher first became involved in law enforcement in 2011 as a volunteer Police Explorer. In 2014, the researcher was hired part-time by the City of La Palma for a non-sworn civilian position, and in 2017, the researcher was promoted to a full-time non-sworn civilian position. In 2019, the researcher was sent to a law enforcement academy, and by the end of 2019, the researcher was a full-time sworn law enforcement officer for the City of La Palma. In early 2022, the researcher began experiencing turnover intentions due to various factors. Ultimately, in March 2022, the researcher resigned as a full-time law enforcement officer so they could accept a position in the private sector unrelated to law enforcement. At this time, the researcher requested to stay on with the organization as a reserve police officer, which was approved. At the time of submitting this study, the researcher was still a reserve police officer with the City of La Palma. While the researcher was familiar with all the participants in this study, they were more familiar with some than others and had only worked directly with some of the participants. During their time at the City of La Palma, the researcher had both positive and negative experiences, so they understood that the organization had both push and pull factors that impacted turnover and retention. While specific factors caused the turnover intentions that the researcher experienced, the researcher understood that these factors might have been specific to them and might not have impacted other law enforcement officers in the same way.

During this study, the researcher ensured that their preconceived notion of the employees and the organization did not affect their data collection or analysis. The researcher attempted to prevent researcher bias through this method by ensuring that any prior knowledge of the participant or the organization would not impact the outcome of the study (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, the researcher ensured that participants would not be asked leading questions to reduce potential bias in this study. The questions were standardized and written in a neutral tone, and the researcher read the questions in a neutral tone to prevent potential bias (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, the researcher attempted to reduce participant bias by making the interviews as neutral as possible, not putting pressure on the participants, and making the participants feel comfortable with being honest when providing their opinions (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, the questions were phrased to ensure that participants could answer questions in various ways, including from both positive and negative perspectives. The researcher also ensured that any previous professional relationships that the researcher had with participants would not impact how the interview proceeded or the tone of the interview. Specifically, the researcher did not discuss the turnover intentions they experienced at the organization when they were a full-time law enforcement officer or what factors ultimately led to the researcher leaving the organization.

Data Collection

Stout (2013) argued that research studies that utilized a qualitative research methodology had become extraordinarily beneficial and had facilitated several instances of significant results within the field of public administration. The success of this methodology has been attributed to the large amount of raw data available for analysis after it was collected during the data collection process (Stout, 2013). Specifically, this study collected data through data analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. This exploratory multiple-case study

utilized a snowball sampling technique to recruit potential participants who were either current or former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. Upon the recommendation of potential participants at the end of each interview, the researcher screened potential participants to ensure that they met the criteria of this study. This was conducted through a prequalifying survey that participants had to complete and sign prior to participating in this study. Upon potential participants being identified as eligible to participate, consent was obtained from participants.

The researcher then scheduled in-person interviews with participants to begin the data collection process. This study obtained data by conducting semi-structured interviews with participants. Yin (2009) emphasized the importance of interviews as a data collection method and mentioned that interviews in case studies should be similar to guided conversations rather than rigid questioning. Additionally, the researcher took notes of observations from the expressions and other physical cues that the participants exhibited during the interviews. Yin (2009) argued that combining formal observations and other methods, such as interviews, was a strategic method to produce qualitative data for a case study. The potential notation of participants' physical cues and expressions could lead to greater findings regarding how they truly felt about what they disclosed. This data could also lead to a better understanding of how passionately the participant felt about their perspective or opinion. The semi-structured interviews focused on factors that the participants believed were conducive to law enforcement turnover rates and specific factors present within the City of La Palma.

The participants who were current law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma were asked questions regarding their perceptions of the organization, if they had ever considered leaving the organization, and, if so, what caused them to consider leaving. These

participants were also asked what they believed was the main factor causing employees to leave the organization, what could be implemented to increase employee retention, and if they believed they would still be with the organization in five years. Additionally, the participants who were former law enforcement officers with the City of La Palma would be asked questions regarding the factors that led them to decide to leave the organization, as well as what factors could have prevented them from seeking employment elsewhere. For this study, voluntary turnover was defined as the premature and unexpected departure of a law enforcement officer from their organization, so retirements and employees terminated by their employer were not considered voluntary turnover in this study. Each interview was considered a separate unit of analysis, and overall, this study analyzed multiple units of analysis.

Each semi-structured interview for this study requested consent to audio-record the interview for documentation and accuracy purposes. The established procedures for this study regarding audio files were to transcribe the audio file through a transcription software and double-check the transcript by hand. The next established procedure was to transfer the audio file and store it on a secure device for three years until all files were permanently deleted. Originally, this study planned to conduct analysis both manually and through the data analysis software MaxQDA, which focused on coding the data for themes, concepts, and outlier statements that may indicate relevance. Unexpectedly, when carrying out the data collection process, no participants granted permission to have their interview audio recorded. As a result, the researcher only took notes during the interviews about the participant's statements and topics discussed, as well as any relevant observations of the participants.

A potential benefit of this type of research methodology was that data, which consisted of statements made during the semi-structured interviews, could provide insight into an employee's

perspective regarding turnover and retention within their organization. Additionally, Rabinovich and Kacen (2013) mentioned that an individual's previous and current life experiences or events could impact their perspective and how they respond to specific questions. As such, participants in this study could have based their responses on their current attitude or perspective of their organization, prior experiences with other employers in relation to how it was similar or different to their current organization, and their perspective of or information they possessed about other law enforcement organizations. During the data collection process, the researcher attempted to gauge responses to questions and utilized the semi-structured interview methodology to follow up on responses or redirect questioning if necessary. One issue related to this research methodology was that, unlike a statistical analysis based on structured questions and answers, analysis of interview transcripts could become subjective, the information had to be articulated, and the data could not stand alone, unlike other data styles. To combat this, the researcher took advantage of utilizing semi-structured interviews to clarify topics with the participants, ensuring that a clear and accurate understanding was obtained. Overall, this research study conducted semi-structured interviews with former and current law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma recruited via snowball sampling to examine law enforcement officer turnover among employees.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a significant qualitative research methodology that allows the researcher to examine several sources to obtain detailed information that can provide context for the topic of the study (Sankofa, 2022). Specifically, this methodology is the in-depth analysis of various documents to provide additional context and understanding. For this study, the researcher analyzed various public records and a confidential compensation study conducted for the La

Palma Police Department to gain a better understanding of the history of the City of La Palma, the history of the La Palma Police Department, compensation offered to La Palma police officers, and turnover at the City of La Palma.

The researcher began by conducting an internet search of the City of La Palma, the La Palma Police Department, and any mention of employee turnover at the City of La Palma. Keywords such as City of La Palma, La Palma Police Department, LPPD, employee turnover, law enforcement turnover, police officer, compensation, and history were used in different variations and combinations to attempt to locate relevant sources. Additionally, these keywords were searched on the City of La Palma's official website, as well as the researcher going through the city's various web pages. Some of the pages included the transparency page, which included compensation data, the generic police department's website information, and city council meeting minutes and agendas. Ultimately, the sources utilized for this document analysis were all official documents located on the City of La Palma's official website, as well as a copy of the official compensation guide that was utilized for the LPPA's most recent labor negotiation. Some of the items utilized from the City of La Palma's website included staff reports, compensation reports, the City of La Palma's General Plan, official documents, and City Council meeting agenda documents. The researcher reviewed a variety of these reports, annotated and made notes of relevant findings, and then synthesized the findings in Chapter Four to provide context to this research. The researcher began by skimming documents for relevance, and upon determining the document was relevant to this study, the researcher thoroughly read and analyzed the information. Ultimately, the data obtained through document analysis was used for data triangulation along with the findings from the interviews and participant observations identified in this study.

Interviews

Forms of interviews could vary, and “the degree of structure within an interview may vary, ranging from unstructured to semi-structured, depending on the nature of” the research question (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p. 22). Galletta and Cross (2013) argued that semi-structured interviews were very underutilized in research studies, but this methodology had a large potential for obtaining detailed and significant information. For instance, a “semi-structured interview provides a repertoire of possibilities. It is sufficiently structured to address specific topics related to the phenomenon of study while leaving space for participants to offer new meaning to the study focus” (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p. 24). Essentially, a semi-structured interview guides the focus of the interview through a line of questioning. However, using open-ended questions allowed participants to provide detailed responses that could lead the interview in other directions and provide details that might not have occurred with structured interviews with closed-end questions. The use of semi-structured interviews was an appropriate choice for this research study due to the small population size of current and former law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma. All three research questions were answered using a series of semi-structured interview questions. The three research questions guided the focus of this study by focusing on the participants’ perspectives on employee turnover within the City of La Palma. The participants were not directly asked the three research questions of the study. However, they were instead asked a series of questions that attempted to elicit their perspectives, experiences, feelings, and thoughts regarding a variety of topics related to employee turnover. Follow-up questions followed the structure of the standardized open-ended interview questions. Below are the questions that participants were asked during their interviews:

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another.
2. Please go into details regarding your law enforcement career, including details about the City of La Palma and any other prior or subsequent employment at a different law enforcement organization.
3. How has your experience been working in law enforcement?
4. What is your understanding of employee turnover?
5. Have you witnessed employee turnover within law enforcement organizations?
6. If you have witnessed employee turnover, have you felt any impact, positive or negative, from the turnover of other employees?
7. Do you believe that voluntary employee turnover is consistent among different law enforcement organizations, or do you think that different organizations have different levels of voluntary employee turnover?
8. Do you believe the amount of turnover at the City of La Palma has been higher or lower than other law enforcement organizations? Why do you think this?
9. How do you view the employee retention activities of the City of La Palma?
10. What are the working conditions like in the law enforcement profession? How is the employee morale at the City of La Palma? Please discuss topics such as salary and benefits, supervision, work-life balance, work-related stressors, society's view of the law enforcement profession, or other topics.
11. Have you specifically experienced turnover intentions while working in law enforcement? If so, can you describe what you felt or thought at the time?

12. What or who do you believe is responsible for causing the turnover intentions that exist within law enforcement organizations? Please describe any push and pull factors that you believe influence turnover intentions?
13. Do you believe there is a root cause of voluntary employee turnover within law enforcement organizations, or do you believe employees have different reasons when they decide to leave their organization? Please explain.
14. Do you believe that some instances of employee turnover within an organization can be considered normal? Please explain.
15. Do you have any suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention? Please elaborate.
16. If you experienced turnover intentions, what could have been done to reduce or eliminate your turnover intentions?
17. Do you believe there is a single or a few changes that could be implemented to reduce voluntary turnover significantly, or do you believe many aspects go into an employee's decision to leave an organization? Please explain.
18. For former employees only: Do you regret leaving the City of La Palma? Why or why not? Is the factor or factors that you left the City of La Palma due to present at your current organization?
19. For current employees only: Do you see yourself still employed at the same law enforcement organization five years from now?
20. We have discussed many topics through the last few questions, and I appreciate the time you have given to this. What else do you think would be important for me to know about voluntary employee turnover in law enforcement?

21. Can you please recommend one to three current or former law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma that would be interested in participating in this study that would meet the eligibility requirements?

Castillo-Montoya (2016) noted that “interviews provide researchers with rich and detailed qualitative data for understanding participants’ experiences, how they described those experiences, and the meaning they make of those experiences” (p. 811). As such, this series of open-ended questions attempted to lead to a greater understanding of voluntary employee turnover within the City of La Palma. The first three questions were intended to begin the interview, obtain background information on the participant, and establish a rapport with the participant (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) argued that when establishing rapport through lines of questioning, the researcher should do so in a way that maintains neutrality in the relationship between the participant and the researcher. It was further mentioned that “rapport is built on the ability to convey empathy and understanding without judgment,” and the first three questions focused on achieving this goal (Patton, 2015, p. 366). These questions allowed the participants to introduce themselves and provide background information. As a result, the researcher attempted to create rapport by showing that the researcher cared about what the participants were saying. This was in conjunction with the researcher’s body language and nonverbal cues, which also attempted to create an encouraging environment.

Questions four through six were designed to elicit the participants’ responses regarding their understanding, experiences, and worldview of employee turnover. Sire (2015) argued that “a worldview is the fundamental perspective from which one addresses every issue of life” (p. 24). It was further emphasized that an individual’s worldview could be either unconsciously or consciously held, which made it imperative for the researcher during a qualitative study to ask

various questions to elicit deep thought and reflection from the participant (Sire, 2015). Additionally, Sire (2015) emphasized that this reflection through questioning could bring awareness of the participants' own worldview and the presence of the research topic. Depending on the participant's response to question four, which asked for their understanding of employee turnover, the concept of voluntary employee turnover was explained and discussed to ensure that the participant understood the concept to continue the discussion consistently, similar to other participants. Patton (2015) argued that "providing context for a series of questions can help the interviewee hone in on relevant responses. A helpful context provides cues about the level at which a response is expected" (p. 367). Question six specifically asked the participants if they had felt any impact and inquired about both positive and negative experiences. Inquiring about all types of experiences could maintain the researcher's neutral position on the matter.

Questions seven and eight had to do with the participant's perception of generalized law enforcement turnover compared to the employee turnover that occurred at the City of La Palma. Sire (2015) argued that "what a person perceives is primarily dependent on the mind of the perceiver" (p. 26). These two questions were used to see if the participants viewed law enforcement employee turnover as a profession-wide problem or if they believed it was organization-specific. Suppose the participant answered question seven and stated that they believed turnover at the City of La Palma was consistent with other organizations. In that case, question eight may not need to be asked. Question nine allowed participants to describe their perception of employee retention activities of the City of La Palma. This was significant since it allowed participants to explain their perception of what the City of La Palma was doing to retain employees and prevent turnover.

Questions 10 and 11 were relatively personal questions related to the participant's work experience. These questions were asked towards the last half of the interview to allow the participants to become more comfortable with answering questions and establish a good rapport with the participants (Patton, 2015). Question 10 provided a good indicator of what participants viewed as significant regarding working conditions at the City of La Palma. Ultimately, this could have led to identifying major trends that potentially lead to employee turnover. Question 11 directly asked the participants if they had experienced turnover intentions while working at the City of La Palma. Charman and Bennett (2022) argued that turnover intentions could be a good indicator of eventual employee turnover, so answers from former employees were especially beneficial to determine if they had turnover intentions prior to leaving the organization. Additionally, potential instances of current employees who experienced turnover intentions but ultimately stayed with the organization could also be a significant finding since various factors could have led to employee retention.

Questions 12 through 14 asked the participants to reflect on their perspective and knowledge of the area to form opinions regarding the causes of turnover intentions, whether there was a root cause of turnover or multiple causes, and whether some turnover could be considered normal in law enforcement organizations. These questions sought the opinion of participants, which was based on their perspective, prior knowledge in the area, and worldview (Sire, 2015). Questions 15 through 17 expanded on the previous questions and began to conclude the interview by asking the participants for potential solutions to the problem of employee turnover. These questions transitioned from the participants providing their own knowledge or perception of turnover at the City of La Palma to placing them in a role and asking for suggestions and possible changes that could be made to reduce or prevent employee turnover

(Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Question 18 was a specific question for former employees that inquired if the participant regretted leaving the City of La Palma. In contrast, Question 19 asked current employees if they believed they would still be employed by the City of La Palma in five years. These two questions sought to obtain the participants' perspectives regarding their time at the City of La Palma by reflecting on their current situation. Question 20 could be considered a one-shot question, where the participant was provided one final opportunity to add valuable information and insight (Patton, 2015). This question allowed the participants to expand on areas that were already addressed, address something that the participant felt was not covered during the interview, or provide any other relevant information regarding employee turnover (Patton, 2015). Question 21 was utilized for the snowball sampling methodology to obtain additional prospective participants for this study.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was another qualitative research methodology deployed during this study's data collection portion. Shin and Miller (2022) described participant observation as a data collection method utilized in case studies where the researcher interacts with participants in a setting and notes various behaviors. This research methodology ran concurrently with this study's interview portion, described above. While the researcher conducted interviews, they kept a keen eye out for any relevant observations involving the participant. This data collection method has often been characterized "by its reflexive and fluid nature" due to this occurring at the same time as collecting other data (Shin & Miller, 2022, p. 123). While the researcher was conducting the interviews, they attempted to create and maintain a calm tone and mood for the overall interview. While most of the interviews had a consistently calm mood and tone, some of

the responses by participants stood out to the researcher. The researcher used the calm mood of the interview as a baseline and noted any observations that differed from this baseline.

While the researcher was taking notes of the content discussed during the different interview questions, the researcher also took attentive and detailed-oriented handwritten notes of any relevant observations that were observed during the interview. Due to all of the participants declining to audio record their interviews, the researcher took notes since they could not reference audio recordings again to examine the tone or mood of the interview. Additionally, immediately after each interview, the researcher reviewed the notes to ensure they were accurate based on the interview context. As such, findings through participant observations included variations in participants' tone, facial expression, how they emphasized what they were saying, their posture, and the presence or lack of emotion. For instance, if a participant's facial expression emphasized what they were saying during the interview, it was noted by the researcher and discussed during the results section of this study. Additionally, the researcher noted the participants' willingness to share information or if information had to be extracted through follow-up questions.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) described data analysis as challenging for researchers since it involves numerous tasks. For instance, it was mentioned that data analysis could include “organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them” (p. 179). Stancanelli (2014) argued that researchers must be well-versed in all aspects of data collection, especially the concept of coding data and extracting themes when using a qualitative research methodology. Additionally, Vaughn and Turner (2015) argued that “in order to effectively analyze qualitative data one must

use a systematic process to organize and highlight [meaning],” which could include aspects such as theme extraction and data coding. The process suggested by these authors was applied in the data analysis section of this study. The data analysis portion of this exploratory multiple-case study consisted of examining and analyzing various documents during document analysis, notes from the interviews with participants, and notes during participant observations. Ultimately, this study aimed to determine the main factors that caused former law enforcement officers to leave the City of La Palma and what were the main factors driving current law enforcement officers to consider leaving the organization.

Interviews

It should be noted that all participants in this study declined to consent to audio record the interviews. Initially, the researcher planned on audio recording all interviews, using a transcription software, and uploading the transcripts to a data analysis software. However, due to this unexpected occurrence, the researcher needed to improvise and adapt the study. As such, the data from the semi-structured interviews was collected through hand-taken notes by the researcher at the time of the interview. After the data collection process was completed, for accuracy purposes, the researcher typed all of the relevant notes into a Microsoft Word document to ensure that all information was legible and accurate based on what was reported during the interview. The hard copy interview notes were kept secure in a locked drawer that was only accessible by the researcher, and the electronic files were kept on a password-protected computer that was only accessible by the researcher.

Galletta and Cross (2013) argued that coding information into various categories related to the research questions was an excellent way to build upon theory. Additionally, coding assisted with gaining a better understanding of a topic since general themes would emerge from

data, which could lead to various findings (Galletta & Cross, 2013). The responses of the interviews were then coded manually for major concepts, unique and interesting statements from participants, and major themes or concepts present throughout the various interviews. The coding process was performed numerous times to ensure that relevant information was not missed. Creswell (2013) described coding as aggregating the information into “small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code..., and then assigning a label to the code” (p. 184). The coding process began with identifying codes, classifying the codes into various relevant themes, and then identifying the main themes for this study. Relevant themes were selected through patterns that emerged during the interviews, as well as answers to the study’s research questions and information consistent with prior literature. Creswell (2013) described themes as “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 186).

Participant Observation

Participant observation was another qualitative research methodology deployed during this study’s data collection portion. During each interview, the researcher took notes of any relevant and significant participant observations that were noticed or identified regarding the participant. During the interviews, the researcher was attentive and took detailed and rich handwritten notes that would contain any relevant findings. Immediately after each interview, the researcher reviewed the notes to ensure they were accurate based on the interview context. The researcher then typed the notes into a Microsoft Word document, which was stored on a password-protected computer, and analyzed the notes multiple times by hand. The researcher utilized manual coding of the notes to determine if any relevant themes or patterns emerged. Additionally, since many of these results were physical cues, tone, emotion levels, or other

observable traits, this information was utilized in conjunction with the participant responses during the interviews to place emphasis and meaning on specific themes and subthemes that emerged. This was best described by Creswell (2013) as being a “holistic analysis,” which included an analysis of the entire case, which in the case of this study would be both the interview and participant observation of each individual participant (p. 101).

Document Analysis

Document analysis in this study consisted of examining and analyzing various official sources that could provide insight into law enforcement turnover at the City of La Palma. The researcher initially superficially read and skimmed the documents, and then the documents were read and examined thoroughly to examine possible links to the research topic (Bowen, 2009). The documents identified as relevant for this study were printed and annotated by hand. This included highlighting relevant information and noting relevant information or findings on the side of the document. As such, after thoroughly examining each document, the documents were then manually coded for relevant information and findings similar to those of previous research. The research then examined the findings individually from each document and then examined the findings in the context of the other documents to obtain a greater understanding.

It should be noted that due to the variety of documents available, only specific documents were examined that pertained to the history of the City of La Palma’s law enforcement organization, salary and benefits of City of La Palma law enforcement officers, turnover within the City of La Palma, and special assignments within the organization. Relevant information was identified from these documents and was later highlighted in Chapter Four to provide additional information to examine with the other data analyzed in this study. The information described in this section acted as providing background information regarding the City of La Palma and its

law enforcement organization. Sankofa (2022) argued that document analysis can use documents “as secondary data for triangulation” (p. 746).

Data Triangulation

The data from this study was reviewed constantly when new cases were examined to ensure accuracy and to note any new themes or findings that emerged. Yin (2009) argued that “in a multiple-case study, one goal was to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details” (p. 121). Yin (2009) described this type of data analysis as explanation building, an analytic technique that focuses on pattern matching to explain the individual case. Although the interviews with the participants varied in content, the data analysis of extracting themes and other commonalities led to generalized findings. This study focused on combining the research questions and the main constructs of the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover with the themes that emerged from the participant interviews. The emerging themes from the data collection process were analyzed and compared with the various models of the Unfolding Model Theory to examine if this theory had any relevance to turnover or not. The data collection results established different themes and sub-themes, which were then used to discuss various aspects of voluntary employee turnover in law enforcement.

Creswell (2013) argued that interviews are often supplemented with other methods, such as participant observations and document analysis. This researcher mentioned that the goal was to “gather enough information to fully develop (or saturate) the model” (Creswell, 2013, p. 89). For instance, analysis of any observed physical cues and expressions made by the participants during the interviews could lead to additional findings or provide emphasis on how the participants felt about what they were disclosing. This convergence of evidence helped provide a

better understanding of the participant's perspectives and opinions as well as how they felt about what they were saying. Similarly, information obtained through document analysis was another form of data that provides "corroborating evidence" through data triangulation (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). The use of data triangulation in this multiple case study with numerous participants, as well as with observations and interview notes, allowed for in-depth data analysis. Ultimately, the researcher synthesized their findings by using participant observations to emphasize and enhance the information provided by participants during interviews and the document analysis information to support and reinforce the findings.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a qualitative research study is significant, and without it, the study's results and findings are meaningless. Unlike quantitative studies, Creswell (2013) emphasized that qualitative studies do not rely on statistics to justify findings, so qualitative studies need to be viewed as trustworthy, credible, and reliable. In qualitative case studies, "trustworthiness stems from the co-construction and interpersonal contact with participants and the subsequent data" (Stewart et al., 2017, p. 9). Stewart et al. (2017) argued that the trustworthiness of these types of studies was established through researchers complying with transparency, research methodologies, and the evidence obtained through the data collection process. It was further argued that "creating trustworthiness and credibility through multiple views is not about validation but about creating an alternative that encompasses the depth, complexities and rigor sought for qualitative research" (Stewart et al., 2017, p. 9).

The researcher of this study deployed numerous safeguards to promote trustworthiness in this study. For instance, this study followed strict ethical standards such as obtaining written informed consent and maintaining confidentiality by protecting the data and participants'

identities. Additionally, the entire study was documented thoroughly, including describing and analyzing all steps of the data collection and analysis processes. Using a multiple case study design and following these procedures also established credibility since numerous cases were examined separately. Also, the data was thoroughly examined to ensure accuracy when establishing themes and relevant findings. The researcher also focused on ensuring that participants felt safe and comfortable throughout their time participating in the study to promote participants sharing their accurate perspectives. Stewart et al. (2017) argued that trustworthiness was often displayed as being dependable, authentic, conformable to various situations, and similar to being credible. In general, trustworthiness comprises of multiple aspects, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, all of which are discussed below. Carminati (2018) briefly described each topic as credibility being prior truth value, dependability as prior consistency, confirmability as prior neutrality, and transferability as prior applicability. This qualitative research study strived to be trustworthy by obtaining credibility, being dependable and confirmable, and examining transferability.

Credibility

Thomas and Magilvy (2011) argued that credibility “is the element that allows others to recognize the experiences contained within the study through the interpretation of participants’ experiences” (p. 152). This study provided detailed accounts from the various participants so that readers could clearly understand the content discussed, the various themes and sub-themes, and their attitudes toward specific topics. Additionally, it has been argued that researchers could achieve credibility within a qualitative research study by ensuring that the data presented was a true and accurate representation of all the collected data (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Stewart et al. (2017) argued that there were numerous methods for establishing credibility within a study

and that a major way had been through a proper chain of evidence. In a qualitative study that utilizes semi-structured interviews, the chain of evidence includes everything from the collection of evidence to the interpretation of evidence utilizing a systematic approach (Stewart et al. (2017).

This study followed strict ethical standards and upheld a chain of evidence to ensure that data was collected accurately and that a thorough analysis was conducted. The strict chain of evidence also ensured that the data was not tampered with and that the raw data remained confidential. The researcher took detailed notes of the participant's responses to the interview questions and even noted specific quotations during memorable statements. Additionally, "the credibility of the research is also achieved by following the process of data analysis and being as close and grounded to the data as possible, by giving an authentic picture of the real experience of the participants" (Gupta & Awasthy, 2015, p. 79). Thomas and Magilvy (2011) argued that qualitative research studies could establish credibility through researchers reviewing the content of each interview to identify similarities between participants. This concept was integrated into this study since the methodology was a multiple-case study, which examined various cases and compared the findings to the multiple participants.

Dependability and Confirmability

Thomas and Magilvy (2011) emphasized that dependability was similar to reliability. Additionally, dependability could be described as when a third-party researcher could understand and follow another study's methodology and thought process (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). A researcher should thoroughly describe in detail every aspect of the study, including the study's purpose, the reasoning and selection method for participants, the data collection method, the data analysis process, and the presentation of findings (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). As such, to

establish dependability in this study, the researcher described thoroughly every process to ensure that readers understand the research methodology and the reasoning behind the decisions made for this study. Additionally, the researcher followed specific sampling guidelines to ensure that only participants who met certain criteria would be allowed to participate in this study. For instance, potential participants must have been former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma between 2014 and 2022 or current law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. Additionally, not yet passing the initial 18-month probationary period and not achieving the rank of command staff were additional restrictions that made potential participants ineligible to participate. The reason behind implementing these restrictions was to ensure that the participants had worked at the organization during a similar period, had at least 18 months to experience the organization's culture, and were not in a different employee bargaining group, such as the command staff, who had a significantly different job function and salary level. Ensuring that the participants had a similar background and exposure within the City of La Palma allowed the researcher to minimize the potential for outliers. Additionally, implementing guidelines like these in this study increased the overall dependability of this exploratory multiple-case study.

Confirmability “occurs when credibility, transferability, and dependability have been established” (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 154). Thomas and Magilvy (2011) argued that “the qualitative research must be reflective, maintaining a sense of awareness and openness to the study and unfolding results” (p. 154). This research study strived to have confirmability by establishing the other aspects of trustworthiness and taking an unbiased approach to data collection and analysis. The data analysis and findings were clearly discussed later in this paper to ensure that readers were able to understand how the researcher came to the findings listed.

This study utilized semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to ensure participants could disclose their accurate thoughts, feelings, and beliefs when responding to questions. By utilizing semi-structured interviews, the researcher read each participant the questions in a neutral tone, which prevented bias or influencing the participant's response to the questions. Every aspect of this exploratory multiple case study, including the justification for the study, the background information, and the literature review, were all described in detail. The reasoning was to ensure that readers fully understand the context of the research, the place this research had with prior research, and the goals of this study.

Due to the use of a multiple case study methodology, the theoretical underpinnings of the study would converge for each particular case, which could be replicated in other cases (Yin, 2009). Each case within this multiple-case study was an in-depth examination of a particular case, meaning there were more data points to examine. For instance, by examining various cases, the results of this study were not solely based on one case, which could have perhaps been an outlier or not a representative sample of the population. As such, by using a multiple-case study, a pattern could begin to emerge among the various cases, which could lead to significant findings and attempt to answer the study's research questions. Utilizing this type of research methodology assisted with establishing both dependability and confirmability, which increased the trustworthiness of the findings and the overall research.

Transferability

Polit and Beck (2010) argued that transferability was a type of generalizability that had often been referred to as case-to-case translation, "which involves the use of findings from an inquiry to a completely different group of people or setting" (p. 1453). Generalizability was significant since if the findings of a study were applicable to areas outside of the observed

sample, the study would provide more meaning. Additionally, Polit and Beck (2010) emphasized that researchers should include detailed information and descriptions in their study regarding the data collected so that readers could evaluate the findings and determine if the research could apply to populations outside the study. The data collection and analysis procedures within this study were described in-depth to ensure readers could fully understand the research methodology process to promote transferability in this study. By describing in detail various aspects of this study, the readers were in a position to analyze the study's validity and fully understand the study's application to other samples outside of the participants in this study. Polit and Beck (2010) argued that "thick descriptions" were essential within a qualitative research study to establish transferability (p. 1453). Additionally, this study provided detailed descriptions of the study's participants and the research study, so the readers had a good understanding of the type of law enforcement organization being studied and the law enforcement officers interviewed. In qualitative research studies, thick descriptions refer "to rich, thorough descriptive information about the research setting, study participants, and observed transactions and processes. Readers could make good judgments about the proximal similarity of study contexts and their own environments only if researchers provided high-quality descriptive information" (Polit & Beck, 2010, p. 1453). In this study, efforts were made to provide detailed information about the study, as well as a thick description of the data collection and analysis processes to earn transferability and generalizability to other research situations and contexts.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting any aspects of this study or collecting any data, the researcher obtained approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). There were many ethical considerations for this study. Firstly, there were concerns about confidentiality with

private information and interactions with human participants. One of this study's most significant ethical considerations was a potential breach of confidentiality (Creswell, 2013). Regardless, due to the various countermeasures in place, there was minimal risk of such a concern for the participants. For instance, before each participant engaged in this study, informed consent was obtained, which included the participant being provided with a description of the study's topic, purpose, goals, and possible negative impacts related to participating in this study (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) argued that informing participants of the general purpose of the study and obtaining appropriate consent addressed several ethical issues that are often present prior to conducting the study.

Initially, potential participants were contacted via recruitment letters, containing a consent form to review and sign before participating. Before engaging in the interview and participant observation, the researcher informed the participants that this study was purely academic and that their identities and responses were strictly confidential. All participants were informed that this interview was not authorized or sanctioned by their organization and that the participants chose to participate in this study of their own accord. Additionally, the researcher requested that the responses from the participants be precise, formal, and authentic and that any previous relationship as co-workers, if any, with the researcher should not impact their responses. During the data collection process, trust was built, leading questions were avoided, the researcher remained neutral to ensure that their impressions were not impacting results, and no rewards were provided for participating (Creswell, 2013). During the data analysis phase, this research strengthened the findings since the researcher avoided siding with participants by reporting multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

Each participant was assigned a random generic number for confidentiality purposes, and these numbers did not correlate to the order in which they volunteered to participate or any other aspect (Creswell, 2013). In all areas of the study, the participants were referred to by their number, so their names or other personal identifying information would not be found anywhere in this study. A hard copy document that contained the list of participant names and the corresponding numbers was kept in a securely locked drawer in a secure location to ensure confidentiality. The list of participants' identities will never be disclosed to anyone, and the only individuals with knowledge of this information were the researcher and the participants themselves. There were minimal ethical considerations when interacting with human participants in this qualitative research study. The only parts of this study that consisted of human participants were individual interviews and participant observations. Additionally, this study did not subject the participants to any physically or mentally straining activities.

Summary

This exploratory multiple case study was proposed to obtain a greater understanding of voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma. The researcher obtained data through document analysis and from selected current and former law enforcement officers who were selected via snowball sampling. These participants participated in semi-structured interviews, and the researcher noted any relevant observations during the interviews. The researcher obtained informed consent from the participants prior to the data collection process. The methodology of this study followed strict ethical standards to ensure that confidentiality was upheld, that participants were not put at risk, and that participants felt comfortable participating in this study. This chapter provided a guideline and foundation for this qualitative research study

by describing the procedures used, ethical considerations, participants, setting, and the data analysis process.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the most significant contributor to turnover intentions among law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. This chapter specifically and solely focused on the findings from the research process. In contrast, the following chapter interpreted the data, discussed the implications, and made recommendations for future research studies. The following three research questions guided this research study:

Research Question 1: How do the participants view employee retention activities of the City of La Palma?

Research Question 2: What do the participants view as the main influencing factor of voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma?

Research Question 3: What are the participants' suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention at the City of La Palma?

This chapter contains detailed descriptions of each participant's demographics to depict the various participants. However, the researcher grouped together the demographics to ensure confidentiality among the various participants. After the demographics and descriptions of the participants, this chapter introduces the various themes developed during the different interviews. This chapter concludes by addressing the three research questions through the participant's responses during the semi-structured interviews.

Participants

A total of thirteen participants were interviewed and included in this research study. Of the thirteen participants, seven were former City of La Palma employees, while six were current employees. This study did not disclose the participants' exact ages to ensure confidentiality.

Instead, the participants were separated into those under 30 years old, 30-39 years old, and 40+ years old. Additionally, the participants' years of experience were divided into 1-5 years, 6-9 years, and 10+ years. The most common demographics in this study were males, those between the ages of 31 and 39, and those with six to nine years of experience in law enforcement. See the following table for participant demographics (Table 2).

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age Range	Years of Experience in Law Enforcement	Employment Status
1	40+ Years	10+ Years	Current Employee
2	30-39 Years	6-9 Years	Current Employee
3	30-39 Years	6-9 Years	Current Employee
4	30-39 Years	6-9 Years	Current Employee
5	40+ Years	10+ Years	Former Employee
6	31-39 Years	6-9 Years	Former Employee
7	40+ Years	6-9 Years	Former Employee
8	Under 30 Years	1-5 Years	Former Employee
9	40+ Years	6-9 Years	Former Employee
10	31-39 Years	6-9 Years	Current Employee
11	31-39 Years	1-5 Years	Former Employee
12	40+ Years	10+ Years	Current Employee
13	31-39 Years	6-9 Years	Former Employee

Participant 1

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 1 was 40+ years old and was a current law enforcement officer employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 1 had been in law enforcement for 10+ years and had been employed by the City of La Palma for 10+ years. Participant 1 enjoyed working in patrol and making arrests.

Participant 2

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 2 was between the ages of 31 and 39 and was a current law enforcement officer employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 2 had been in law enforcement for between six and nine years and had been employed by the City of La Palma for between six and nine years. Participant 2 enjoyed working in patrol and training new officers.

Participant 3

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 3 was between the ages of 31 and 39 and was currently a law enforcement officer employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 3 had been in law enforcement for between six and nine years and had been employed by the City of La Palma for between six and nine years. Participant 3 enjoyed conducting investigations and working on solving cases.

Participant 4

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 4 was between the ages of 31 and 39 and was currently a law enforcement officer employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 4 had been in law enforcement for between six and nine years and had been employed by the City of La Palma for between six and nine years. Participant 4 enjoyed continual learning and putting this knowledge to use.

Participant 5

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 5 was 40+ years old and was a law enforcement officer formally employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 5 voluntarily left the City of La Palma for a different law enforcement organization after approximately 10+ years of service at the City of La Palma. Participant 5 was

the head of their organization's patrol division and focused on training and scheduling patrol officers for shifts. Participant 5 enjoyed working patrol and trying to pass on their knowledge to newer officers.

Participant 6

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 6 was between the ages of 31 and 39 and was a law enforcement officer formally employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 6 went on to work at another law enforcement organization. Participant 6 had been in law enforcement for between six and nine years and had been employed by the City of La Palma for between one and five years. Participant 6 enjoyed working in patrol and making arrests.

Participant 7

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 7 was 40+ years old and was a law enforcement officer formally employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 7 went on to work at another law enforcement organization. Participant 7 had been in law enforcement for between six and nine years and was employed by the City of La Palma for between one and five years. Participant 7 enjoyed participating in community policing.

Participant 8

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 8 was under the age of 30 and was a law enforcement officer formally employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 8 had been in law enforcement for between one and five years and was employed by the City of La Palma for between one and five years. Participant 8 enjoyed working in patrol, making arrests, and trying to make a difference in the community.

Participant 9

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 9 was 40+ years old and was a law enforcement officer formally employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 9 went on to work at another law enforcement organization. Participant 9 had been in law enforcement for between six and nine years and was employed by the City of La Palma for between one and five years. Participant 9 enjoyed talking to members of the community while working.

Participant 10

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 10 was between the ages of 31 and 39 and was a current law enforcement officer employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 10 had been in law enforcement for between six and nine years and had been employed by the City of La Palma for between six and nine years. Participant 10 enjoyed participating in community policing and being a part of the community.

Participant 11

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 11 was between the ages of 31 and 39 and was a law enforcement officer formally employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 11 went on to work at another law enforcement organization. Participant 11 had been in law enforcement for between one and five years and was employed by the City of La Palma for between one and five years. Participant 11 enjoyed participating in community events.

Participant 12

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 12 was 40+ years old and was a current law enforcement officer employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 12 had been in law enforcement for 10+ years and had been employed by the

City of La Palma for 10+ years. Participant 12 enjoyed becoming friends with co-workers.

Participant 13

The following information was obtained from interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Participant 13 was 40+ years old and was a law enforcement officer formally employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 13 went on to work at another law enforcement organization. Participant 13 had been in law enforcement for between six and nine years and was employed by the City of La Palma for between six and nine years. Participant 13 enjoyed making arrests and responding to calls for service.

Results

The source of data for this research study was through document analysis, participant observations, and semi-structured open-ended interviews with current and former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. The research questions were answered through thorough data analysis, and the significant and recurring concepts discussed by participants were consolidated into five themes. The five themes identified regarding voluntary law enforcement officer turnover were discussed in detail throughout this chapter. The identified themes were salary and benefits, poor morale, political climate/public support, leadership and management, and limited opportunities.

Document Analysis

Introduction

As part of this study's research design, a thorough document analysis was conducted that contained various relevant sources. These sources were annotated and analyzed to uncover and provide background information regarding the City of La Palma and its law enforcement organization, turnover at the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization, and salary and

benefits offered to the City of La Palma's law enforcement officers. The following information provides historical context to the setting as well as background information that will allow the information obtained through the semi-structured interviews to provide more meaning due to having a greater understanding.

History of the City of La Palma and its Law Enforcement Organization

The City of La Palma, a small municipality located in the northwest region of Orange County, California, was initially incorporated in 1955 as the City of Dairyland (City of La Palma, 2014). Approximately a decade later, the City's name was changed to the City of La Palma when the demographics and physical makeup of the City shifted due to industrialization and urbanization (City of La Palma, 2014). This name change occurred because the City's main thoroughfare was named La Palma Avenue, and the entire region had a Spanish heritage (City of La Palma, 2014). The City of La Palma is approximately 1.8 square miles large and has just under 16,000 residents. Much of the City's physical makeup consists of single-family residential homes, but there is a small commercial and industrial district in the northern part of the jurisdiction.

From the City's incorporation as Dairyland in 1955 until 1961, the law enforcement services for the jurisdiction were outsourced to the Dairy City Police Department, the municipality at the southern border, which later became known as the City of Cypress (Nunez, 2014). Starting in July 1961, the Dairyland Police Department was established to provide the City of Dairyland with exclusive law enforcement services (Nunez, 2014). Nunez (2014) mentioned that there were less than ten officers within this organization at its formation. At the time, the Dairyland Police Department did not provide 24 hours a day, seven days a week service level since the organization closed its station at 5:00 pm daily (Nunez, 2014). Nunez (2014)

stated that "in 1965, the City of Dairyland changed their name to La Palma and by early 1970 the [La Palma] Police Department had grown to nearly 20 officers and support staff to perform around the clock police services" (p. 1). Since then, law enforcement services have been exclusively provided to the City of La Palma through its municipal law enforcement organization, the La Palma Police Department. Over the next 50 years, staffing levels and the allocation of funds for budgeted law enforcement positions fluctuated due to the addition and reduction of grants (Nunez, 2014). Additionally, in the last decade, the City of La Palma has faced issues with financial sustainability, which caused changes in the number of and, in some cases, the reduction of special assignments (Nunez, 2014).

At its peak, the La Palma Police Department had 26 sworn law enforcement officers in the fiscal year 2000-2001 (Nunez, 2014). During this time, the La Palma Police Department had special assignments such as two motor officers, one K-9 handler officer, an Administrative Support Bureau (ASB) Sergeant, and two ASB officers (Nunez, 2014). As of 2022, all of these special assignments present during the highest staffing level of the organization's history have been suspended due to budgetary constraints (City of La Palma, 2020). More recently, there has been an addition of a new special assignment, a School Resource Officer (City of La Palma, 2020). However, the continual presence of the assignment within the organization is contingent on a state grant funding the future of the assignment (City of La Palma, 2018). This reduction in special assignments within the law enforcement organization potentially creates more competition for the few special assignments still available. It also creates fewer promotional opportunities since one supervisory position within this small organization was reduced. Compared to larger law enforcement organizations, the lack of special assignments and fewer

promotional opportunities may be a driving factor that could lead to employee turnover within the La Palma Police Department.

The La Palma Police Department is the smallest municipal law enforcement agency in Orange County, California, with only 22 sworn law enforcement officers (City of La Palma, 2015). The 22 sworn law enforcement officers consist of one Police Chief, two Police Captains, five Police Sergeants, two Detectives, one School Resource Officer, and 11 Police Officers, with a maximum of four of those Police Officers being assigned as Corporal (City of La Palma, 2015). A Corporal is an assignment where a police officer acts in a quasi-supervisor role in the absence of a Police Sergeant (City of La Palma, 2015). As such, a majority of the employees within this organization work in the patrol bureau and there are limited opportunities for employees to participate in roles outside of patrol.

Law Enforcement Turnover within the City of La Palma

Historical records of any employee turnover patterns at the City of La Palma were not readily available from the organization for this study. However, annual compensation reports published by the City of La Palma include a list of positions, salaries, and whether the employee was hired mid-year or separated from the organization mid-year. Additionally, a law enforcement employee who had been with the City of La Palma for nearly three decades was able to provide his recollection of employee turnover at the organization. Based on this employee's recollection, employee turnover occurred periodically throughout the last three decades. Additionally, it was mentioned that most employees who left the City of La Palma did so to seek employment at different organizations or through medical or service retirements. It was then indicated that a high frequency of employee turnover occurred within the last five to ten

years when a majority of the law enforcement officers left the organization during a short period (City of La Palma, 2015).

Recent available data indicates that the City of La Palma has been recovering from a mass exodus of law enforcement employees that occurred between 2014 and 2017 (City of La Palma, 2015). At the beginning of this period, the City of La Palma was budgeted for 24 sworn law enforcement officers but only had 23 sworn law enforcement officers actively employed (Nunez, 2014). During this next four-year period, 15 of these 23 sworn law enforcement officers left the organization voluntarily (City of La Palma, 2015). Most of the departing employees obtained jobs at other law enforcement agencies, while a few employees sought employment in a separate field, and two employees medically retired (City of La Palma, 2015). With approximately 62.5 percent of the entire sworn law enforcement officers leaving the organization during this short period, all the employees who remained at the organization during this time were promoted to supervisory and management positions (City of La Palma, 2015). In some cases, the remaining employees were promoted as soon as they were eligible, even if they were potentially underqualified or not ready for a leadership role (McCrary, 2016). This occurred due to staffing demands and the need for the organization to promote the few existing employees to supervisor roles to fill vacancies (McCrary, 2016). While the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization successfully reached full staffing by approximately 2017, the organization has continued to experience law enforcement turnover (City of La Palma, 2017; City of La Palma, 2019; City of La Palma, 2020). On a yearly basis, after reaching full staffing, there have been multiple instances of employees leaving the organization for other employment opportunities (City of La Palma, 2017; City of La Palma, 2019; City of La Palma, 2020).

Salary and Benefits Offered to La Palma's Law Enforcement Officers

A potential cause for future continual employee turnover and an explanation for the recent turnover within the City of La Palma is the salary and benefits offered to its law enforcement officers. Salaries, benefits, and other working conditions are negotiated between the La Palma Police Association (LPPA) and the City of La Palma, which are ultimately established in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The La Palma Police Association is the official employee organization and bargaining unit for the Police Officers, Sergeants, and full-time non-sworn civilian law enforcement employees employed by the City of La Palma (City of La Palma, 2021). Non-sworn civilian employees include four Police Dispatchers, one Police Records Clerk, and one Civilian Investigator (City of La Palma, 2021). In total, with five Police Sergeants, 14 Police Officers, and six non-sworn civilian employees, there are 25 La Palma Police Association members. The LPPA MOU was implemented in June 2021 and acted as a one-year extension of the 2018 through 2021 LPPA MOU, which expired in June 2022. In July 2022, the City of La Palma and the La Palma Police Association went to an impasse during labor negotiations, so a new MOU was not implemented until the end of 2022. Since this study focuses on employees employed between 2014 and 2022, it only examined MOUs and salary agreements prior to the MOU established at the end of 2022. The City of La Palma utilized seven other comparable organizations to compare the salary, benefits, total compensation calculations, and other work stipulations of the La Palma Police Association members with other nearby comparably sized law enforcement organizations (Rains et al., 2022). The seven cities used as comparable organizations are the City of Seal Beach, City of Laguna Beach, City of Fountain Valley, City of La Habra, City of Buena Park, City of Cypress, and the City of Los Alamitos (Rains et al., 2022).

Upon examining the salary and benefits provided to law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma, it has become evident that they are severely under-compensated compared to all of their comparable organizations (Rains et al., 2022). Rains et al. (2022) was a comprehensive total compensation report that the La Palma Police Association requested in 2022. This report was conducted and completed by RLS (Rains, Lucia, Stern, St. Phalle, and Silver, PC), a private law firm specializing in law enforcement and labor negotiations. The La Palma Police Association ranked the lowest of eight organizations when the total compensation for a Police Officer at the top salary step with five years of experience was compared (Rains et al., 2022). Total compensation includes the highest step-level salary, benefits, and the inclusion of other forms of incentive pay (Rains et al., 2022). When the La Palma Police Association was compared to the Los Alamitos Police Department, the law enforcement organization that ranked seventh out of the eight organizations, a La Palma Police Officer was compensated approximately eight percent less than a Los Alamitos Police Officer (Rains et al., 2022). Upon comparing a La Palma Police Officer to the average of the comparable organizations, a La Palma Police Officer was compensated almost 15 percent lower than the average (Rains et al., 2022). On the other hand, when compared to the Seal Beach Police Department, the law enforcement organization that ranked number one out of the eight organizations, a La Palma Police Officer was compensated approximately 24 percent less than a Seal Beach Police Officer (Rains et al., 2022). See Table 3 and Figure 2 below for a breakdown of the total compensation of a Police Officer employed by the eight different organizations at the five-year mark with maximum compensation.

Table 3

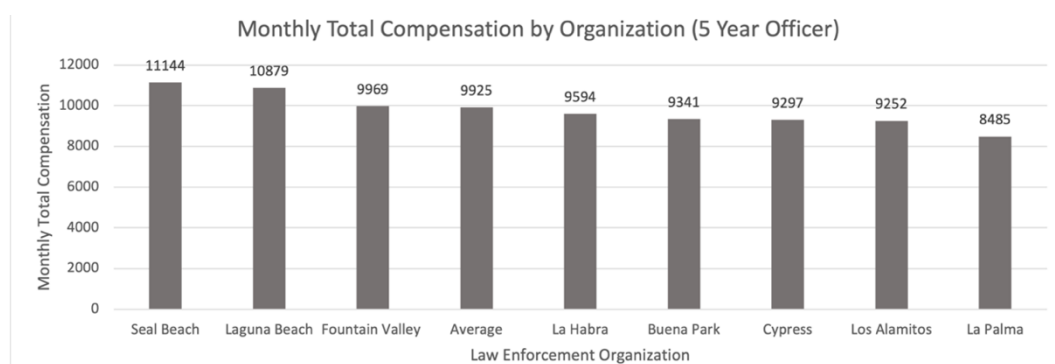
Ranking of Police Officer Monthly Total Compensation (Five-Years of Experience)

Organization	Monthly Total Compensation*	Rank
Seal Beach	\$11,144	1
Laguna Beach	\$10,879	2
Fountain Valley	\$9,969	3
Average	\$9,925	-
La Habra	\$9,594	4
Buena Park	\$9,341	5
Cypress	\$9,297	6
Los Alamitos	\$9,252	7
La Palma	\$8,485	8

Note. Total compensation includes top step salary, benefits, and incentive pay. Adapted from “La Palma Police Association Total Compensation Survey Police Officer” (p. 9) by RLS, 2022, Rains Lucia Stern St. Phalle & Silver, PC

Figure 2

Graph of Police Officer Monthly Total Compensation (5 Years of Experience) by Organization



Note. Total compensation includes top step salary, benefits, and incentive pay. Adapted from “La Palma Police Association Total Compensation Survey Police Officer” (p. 10) by RLS, 2022, Rains Lucia Stern St. Phalle & Silver, PC

It should also be noted that, in most cases, benefits increase over time (Rains et al., 2022). This includes aspects such as the rate of benefit accrual, which can include vacation time accrual, sick time accrual, increasing longevity pay, and other benefits such as obtaining lifetime medical insurance after reaching a specific time of service. When examining the monthly total compensation for a police officer with 25 years of service, the first three organizations and the average remained in the same ranking order (Rains et al., 2022). However, the fourth through seventh comparable cities slightly changed (Rains et al., 2022). A La Palma Police Officer with 25 years of experience still has the lowest total monthly compensation out of their comparable law enforcement organizations (Rains et al., 2022). Additionally, when comparing each organization, a La Palma Police Officer had only an increase of 3.6 percent, which was the lowest increase in monthly total compensation between an Officer with five years of experience and an Officer with 25 years of experience. On the other hand, the average percentage increase was approximately 11 percent, and a Seal Beach Police Officer had the highest increase, approximately 17.9 percent. See Table 4 and Figure 3 below for a breakdown of the monthly total compensation for a Police Officer employed by the eight different organizations at the 25-year mark with maximum compensation.

Table 4

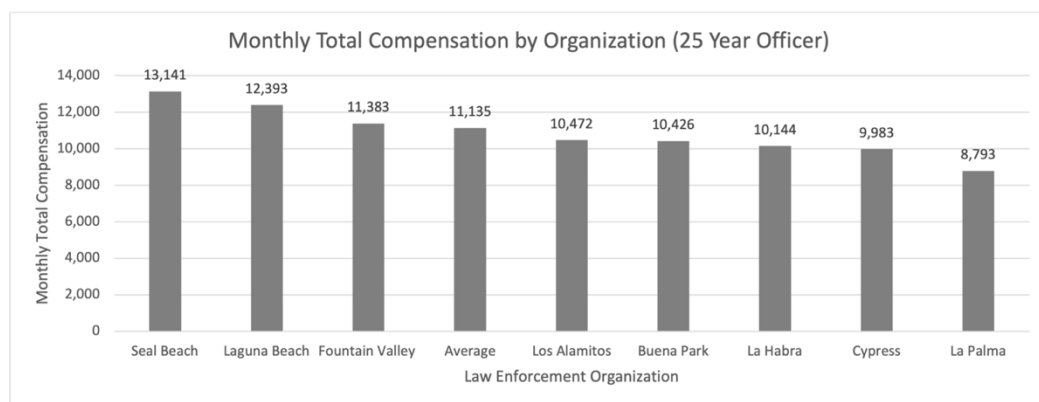
Ranking of Police Officer Monthly Total Compensation (25 Years of Experience)

Organization	Monthly Total Compensation	Rank
Seal Beach	\$13,141	1
Laguna Beach	\$12,393	2
Fountain Valley	\$11,383	3
Average	\$11,135	-
Los Alamitos	\$10,472	4
Buena Park	\$10,426	5
La Habra	\$10,144	6
Cypress	\$9,983	7
La Palma	\$8,793	8

Note. Total compensation includes top step salary, benefits, and incentive pay. Adapted from “La Palma Police Association Total Compensation Survey Police Officer” (p. 25) by RLS, 2022, Rains Lucia Stern St. Phalle & Silver, PC

Figure 3

Graph of Police Officer Monthly Total Compensation (25 Years of Experience) by Agency



Note. Total compensation includes top step salary, benefits, and incentive pay. Adapted from “La Palma Police Association Total Compensation Survey Police Officer” (p. 26) by RLS, 2022, Rains Lucia Stern St. Phalle & Silver, PC

A profound difference in the retirement pension formula was discovered when comparing the salary and benefits of the law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma to comparable organizations (Rains et al., 2022). Retirement and pensions for many public employees are contracted and managed through CalPERS, or California Public Employees' Retirement System. This state organization manages health and pension benefits for over 1.5 million current and retired public sector employees in California. California State Association of Counties (2012) mentioned that effective January 1, 2013, the State of California enacted PEPRAs, or the Public Employees' Pension Reform Act, through Assembly Bill 340 and Assembly Bill 197. Before this legislation was enacted, many law enforcement agencies offered a retirement formula, often referred to as 3.0 percent at 50 (California State Association of Counties, 2012). This retirement formula allowed an employee to retire at the age of 50, and the employee would earn three percent of their pay per year of service based on the salary of their highest year (California State Association of Counties, 2012). PEPRAs changed the available retirement formulas that public sector organizations could offer to new employees hired on or after January 1, 2013, which lowered the percentage rate and raised the retirement age (California State Association of Counties, 2012). The changes made to safety employees (sworn law enforcement officers) under PEPRAs created three new formulas: 2.7 percent at 57, 2.5 percent at 57, and 2.0 percent at 57 (California State Association of Counties, 2012). Additionally, unlike the previous retirement formulas, instead of basing the final salary on the highest year salary, PEPRAs now utilize the average salary of the final 36 months of employment to calculate the final compensation used to base the retirement pension formula (California State Association of Counties, 2012).

All comparable organizations currently offer employees hired after 2013 with the formula of 2.7 percent at 57, but law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma are provided with the formula of 2.0 percent at 57 (Rains et al., 2022). A vast majority of public safety organizations under PEPRRA are provided with the formula of 2.7 percent at 57. However, the City of La Palma decided in 2011 to preemptively lower the retirement formula to 2.0 percent at 55 due to budgetary constraints (City of La Palma, 2013). Later, in 2013, the retirement formula was further lowered to 2.0 percent at 57 with the implementation of PEPRRA at the state level (City of La Palma, 2013).

For instance, if a sworn law enforcement officer is hired under PEPRRA at the age of 21, this officer must work for 36 years until they can retire at the age of 57 to receive their pension benefit. Under most law enforcement organizations that offer the PEPRRA formula, 2.7 percent at 57, this employee would receive approximately 97.2 percent of the average of the 36 months of their final compensation. In contrast, a La Palma Police Officer hired under PEPRRA at the same age and who worked until age 57 will only receive 72 percent of their final compensation due to only receiving 2.0 percent per year of service. Using the average salary of all the comparable organizations, which was a yearly salary of \$106,500.00, a La Palma Police Officer will receive approximately \$26,838.00 less in an annual retirement pension (\$76,680.00) than all other police officers at comparable organizations (\$103,518.00) due to the lower percentage formula. As time goes by with inflation and the cost of living increases, this amount will likely be much larger by the time these new PEPRRA members are ready to retire. Additionally, it should be noted that for this example, a static salary (the average of all comparable organizations) was used for comparison.

In contrast, law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma currently receive the lowest salary out of all of the comparable organizations, which is approximately 15 percent below the average. When using a La Palma Police Officer's top salary of \$90,525.00 for comparison, an employee who worked 36 years would receive a retirement pension of \$65,178.00. This pension is approximately \$3,195.00 a month or \$38,340.00 per year less than a police officer being compensated at the average salary of comparable organizations. When comparing this to the highest-paid law enforcement agency, the Seal Beach Police Department, which currently has a top step annual salary of \$124,080.00, a Seal Beach Police Officer who works for 36 years would receive \$120,605.00 in annual retirement pension benefits. A Seal Beach Police Officer would receive approximately \$55,427.76 more in annual retirement pension benefits, or \$4,618.98 more monthly than a La Palma Police Officer due to the salary and PEPRA formula difference. Overall, the vast differences in pay and retirement could be a critical factor influencing employee turnover intentions among law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma.

This variance will result in law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma having a significant disadvantage after retirement since this will result in these officers receiving a much lower pension. In addition to this, PEPRA employees now must work seven years longer to the age of 57 to receive their maximum pension benefit, compared to classic CalPERS members who can retire earlier. As of 2022, PEPRA continues to be the presiding legislation that controls retirement formulas for most law enforcement organizations in California (Rains et al., 2022). As such, the retirement formulas implemented in 2013 are the same as what is currently offered to the law enforcement organizations mentioned in this study.

Interviews

The following information consists of a breakdown of each participant's interview and discusses a highlight of what was brought up and discussed by the participant. It should be noted that more detailed information from this participant, including detailed accounts or specific examples provided by the participant, might be referenced in subsequent sections, such as theme development or the research question response. This prevents repetitive information from being found in multiple places within this study. This section covers the major topics discussed and relevant information that arose during the interviews. It should also be noted that the participant numbers were randomized and do not reference the order in which interviews occurred. Also, each section below lists the participant number of those they referred to be part of the snowball sampling technique. It should be noted that for confidentiality purposes, the researcher only listed the participant number of those they referred if that individual was a participant in this study. The researcher did not disclose whether the referred participant participated as a result of this referral or if they had already participated in this study for a prior referral. This was to prevent a potential confidentiality breach by readers familiar with this study site who could possibly backtrace the order of participants to learn the identity of other participants through the order of referrals.

Participant 1

Participant 1 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 1 declined to have their interview audio recorded. Participant 1 revealed during interview question 3 that they enjoyed working in law enforcement and being a proactive officer fighting crime. In response to interview question 4, they explained that employee turnover can occur from organizational problems or employee problems,

ultimately resulting in an employee leaving the organization. In response to interview questions 5, 6, and 7, Participant 1 mentioned that they had seen many employees come and go over the years and that the City of La Palma was not adequately retaining employees. Participant 1 further elaborated during interview question 6 that they believed the overall quality of employees was currently increasing due to changes in personnel due to recent terminations and resignations. It was emphasized that some employees who were not meeting their perception of the organization's standards had recently left the organization through various methods. Participant 1 was hopeful that some of the newly hired employees would improve productivity within the organization.

Participant 1 indicated they did not know the answer to interview question 8 since they spent most of their time working for the City of La Palma. However, they suggested that the City of La Palma turnover was probably consistent with other organizations since some employees are always looking around for new opportunities. This participant mentioned that the City of La Palma was "late in the game" for retention when answering interview question 9 and used the example of other organizations that had offered hiring bonuses for years. During interview question 10, Participant 1 discussed various topics, including the retirement formula offered to newer employees, the low salary offered to employees, and issues with management in the organization. Participant 1 expressed dissatisfaction with the current wages provided to employees. On the other hand, Participant 1 indicated that they were grateful for their career since it allowed them to purchase their home and support their family. Participant 1 also touched upon issues with the current management but did not want to provide specifics, so they just indicated there were problems.

In response to interview question 11, Participant 1 indicated that while they had become frustrated numerous times at the City of La Palma, they had never seriously considered leaving the organization. When answering interview question 12, Participant 1 believed that the current retirement formula provided to most officers significantly influenced officers seeking employment at other law enforcement organizations. When answering interview question 13, Participant 1 believed various factors impacted voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma. They elaborated that different employees have different priorities, which can lead to different perceptions. For instance, the City of La Palma could be viewed as great due to the small-town feel and supportive community. However, the pay and benefits can be viewed as a significant problem that could lead to many employees leaving the organization. This answer transitioned well into interview question 14, where Participant 1 agreed that some instances of turnover could be considered normal and even went on to indicate that fresh ideas and motivation brought by new employees can be an asset to an organization.

Ultimately, Participant 1 indicated in their response to interview question 15 that the City of La Palma needed to fix the retirement formula but did not offer a specific means of doing so. Interview question 16 did not apply to this participant due to their response to interview question 11. For interview question 17, Participant 1 argued that multiple factors influence turnover and that although this could reduce turnover, other issues also significantly impact employee well-being and happiness. Participant 1 elaborated that the retirement formula offered to new officers at the City of La Palma is sub-standard compared to other organizations. Interview question 18 did not apply to Participant 1. When answering interview question 19, Participant 1 still saw themselves employed by the City of La Palma in five years. It was emphasized that it was easier for them to ride out their career at the City of La Palma than to start over somewhere new.

Participant 1 had no additional information to add to interview question 20. For the snowball sampling technique, Participant 1 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 12 and two other individuals who ultimately declined to participate in this study.

Participant 2

Participant 2 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 2 declined to have their interview audio recorded and provided context that all of their contacts in law enforcement were recorded, so they wanted to keep this conversation off the record. This interview was one of the more detailed interviews, and it went into great depth on numerous topics. Participant 2 was not shy and revealed controversial and negative information regarding the City of La Palma. Additionally, Participant 2's facial expressions and tone throughout the interview emphasized their perspectives and true feelings about what they were reporting. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. Participant 2 answered interview question 4 by describing employee turnover as employees either resigning or being fired by the organization. In response to interview questions 5 and 6, Participant 2 indicated that organizational morale had fluctuated over the years while working for the City of La Palma and that there were both good and bad times. It was further mentioned that the organization was fun to work for when the morale was good, but it became miserable when it was bad.

Upon being asked interview questions 7 and 8, Participant 2 believed that different organizations have different levels of voluntary employee turnover since organizations have different resources, communities, and leaders. Specifically, in response to interview question 8, Participant 2 believed that the City of La Palma had a higher turnover than other organizations due to various problems within the organization. For instance, when answering interview

question 9, Participant 2 described the retention activities of the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization as "unethical" and revealed the organization utilized retaliation and created hardships for employees to overcome, such as giving employees poor performance evaluations to prevent them from leaving the organization.

Participant 2 provided an extensive response to interview question 10 and discussed various topics. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, clarification was obtained, and in many cases, the discussion was redirected since they were willing to share their thoughts and perspectives freely. Some topics discussed included the retirement formula, salary, experiencing burnout, poor work-life balance, lack of communication, the current political climate, not being provided body cameras, management and supervision issues, promotional opportunities, and lack of elected official support. Participant 2 discussed the 2.0 percent at 57 retirement formula at length and provided detailed background context so the researcher understood what was being discussed. They indicated that this formula was much lower than all other law enforcement organizations in the area and believed it was a major factor in high turnover rates at the City of La Palma. Participant 2 also mentioned significant differences between the PEPRAs and Classic employees, which referred to employees' different types of retirement formulas. They argued that the different retirement formulas created a sense of unfairness among employees since the PEPRAs felt they were being rewarded less than classic employees for doing the same job.

Continuing with the response to interview question 10, Participant 2 also emphasized that the differences in the retirement formula created problems during labor negotiations. Participant 2 also argued that the salary provided by the City of La Palma was also a factor in employee turnover and why the City continues to have difficulty attracting quality candidates. Participant 2

also extensively discussed the concepts of burnout and work-life balance during the interview. Participant 2 also described other issues with supervisors, which included significant micromanagement and management being stuck in their ways and unwilling to adapt to modern methods and procedures. Participant 2 argued that the promotional opportunities at the City of La Palma were “rigged” and that if the current promotional process continued, all qualified candidates would leave for better opportunities, only leaving unqualified individuals to be promoted.

In response to answering interview questions 11 and 12, Participant 2 indicated that they were experiencing burnout and had experienced this for the last few years. They stated that “the burnout is real here” and emphasized that most City of La Palma employees had experienced it. Participant 2 argued that employees felt burnt out from staffing issues, the large amount of overtime forced on employees, and supervision and management issues. Additionally, this participant emphasized that they felt like they got the “short end of the stick” by working for this organization. They indicated that they would not want to work for the City of La Palma if they had to do it all over again. Participant 2 answered interview question 13 by indicating that they believed that various reasons lead to turnover and explained that the various problems that they previously explained during the interview could impact some employees more than others. This participant answered interview question 14 by stating that there should not be since employees should have a good working environment, but that is not always the case. Participant 2 answered interview questions 15 and 16 by suggesting improving the retirement formula and hiring more officers to improve employee retention at the City of La Palma. It was argued that increasing the retirement formula to a consistent level with other organizations would prevent those from

leaving just due to the lower formula, and hiring more officers would lead to less overtime and improve work-life balance.

Regarding interview question 17, Participant 2 believed that it could go both ways. However, it was argued that various aspects often go into an employee's decision to leave an organization. It was mentioned that in some cases, there is a significant factor, such as a scandal or high-profile event, that could be the sole reason for employees wanting to leave the organization. However, in most cases, various factors could play a role in causing an employee to seek other employment. Interview question 18 did not apply to Participant 2. For interview question 19, when asked, this participant indicated that they really hoped they would not be employed by the City of La Palma in five years and mentioned that they hoped to become employed by a new organization soon. For interview question 20, Participant 2 emphasized they forgot to mention a lack of communication in this organization that caused frustration among employees. For instance, it was mentioned that during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was confusion among employees due to different proactive expectations among supervisors. It was also noted that the management employees did not provide clear expectations during the pandemic and kept changing their stance on productivity levels, which caused stress among employees. Additionally, for this interview question, this participant concluded that morale fluctuated, and there were both good and bad times during their employment at the City of La Palma. It was further mentioned that working for the City of La Palma was fun when the morale was good, but the same cycle seemed to happen a few years after new employees got hired and their "eyes opened." For the snowball sampling technique, Participant 2 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 9, Participant 11, and Participant 13.

Participant 3

Participant 3 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 3 declined to have their interview audio recorded. This interview was very to the point and provided valuable information. Yet, the participant did not go into many specific details or share their personal feelings, possibly because the City of La Palma still employed them. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. Interview question 4 was answered by not necessarily defining employee turnover but instead indicating that it is part of the law enforcement profession and culture. Participant 3 answered interview questions 5 and 6 by suggesting that they had witnessed employee turnover and were negatively impacted by poor morale within the organization. Participant 3 was unsure of their answers to interview questions 7 and 8 since they did not have much experience or knowledge of other organizations to compare the City of La Palma. When answering interview question 9, Participant 3 emphasized that they were not impressed with the City of La Palma's retention activities and felt that the organization could do much better.

Participant 3 discussed various topics during their response to interview question 10, including salary and benefits, a lack of communication, the defund the police movement, supervisors lacking experience, management issues, and special assignments. When discussing the City of La Palma's 2.0 percent at 57 retirement formula, they stated that a higher retirement formula, such as 2.7 percent at 57, was "looming over their head." They indicated that all they had to do was work for another organization to receive the higher retirement formula. Participant 3 shared that they were frustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the lack of communication regarding what was expected of employees. It was further emphasized that

Participant 3 believed supervisors lacked experience and there were issues with the organization's management. Participant 3 indicated that good supervisors should know when to recognize employees and make them feel valued. They indicated this was not their experience with supervisors at the City of La Palma. Additionally, it was mentioned that the organization's management undervalued and underappreciated employees. Participant 3 indicated that this was difficult since, due to the current political climate against law enforcement officers, they felt their career was less desirable than before and more negatively perceived by the community.

Participant 3 mentioned that with the organization not valuing employees and the public not valuing law enforcement officers, this outlook negatively impacted their career.

For interview question 11, Participant 3 admitted to having turnover intentions but did not want to go into specific details about how they felt. Regarding interview question 12, this participant referenced their response to interview question 10 and indicated that these factors were significant factors prompting employee turnover within the City of La Palma. In response to interview question 13, Participant 3 believed that many factors lead to employee turnover. As for interview question 14, Participant 3 was unsure of their response, and upon thinking further, they indicated that turnover involving retirements is a regular occurrence. This participant provided three solutions to improve retention at the City of La Palma when answering interview question 15. These potential solutions were improving the compensation provided to officers, hiring more officers, and adding more special assignments. Like interview question 11, Participant 3 wanted to avoid going into personal details about their turnover intentions. As for interview question 17, this participant believed that multiple factors influence an employee's decision to leave since everyone has their own motivations for choosing an employer. Interview question 18 did not apply to Participant 3. Regarding interview question 19,

this participant did not see themselves still employed by the City of La Palma in five years.

Participant 3 did not have anything to add to interview question 20, and they answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 4, Participant 11, and a participant who declined to participate in this study.

Participant 4

Participant 4 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 4 declined to have their interview audio recorded. This interview was very to the point and discussed generalized topics. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. In response to interview question 4, this participant described employee turnover as employees “quitting” the organization. For interview questions 5 and 6, Participant 4 mentioned that they had witnessed several instances of employee turnover during their time at the City of La Palma and emphasized that while there were negative aspects like morale, a positive aspect was that there would be improved opportunities for them since they stayed with the organization. Participant 4 did not want to clarify what opportunities would be available for them or what they hoped to obtain. In response to interview questions 7 and 8, this participant believed that turnover among most law enforcement organizations is likely consistent. In contrast, they thought that the turnover at the City of La Palma was higher than other organizations due to the size and compensation. Participant 4 did not want to get into details about interview question 9 but just mentioned that they believed the City of La Palma was not doing everything they could to retain employees.

In response to interview question 10, Participant 4 discussed various topics, including the retirement formula, low wages and high cost of living, lack of communication, the political

climate involving law enforcement, and limited promotional opportunities. This participant indicated that the current retirement formula, 2.0 percent at 57, was a significant issue impacting employee turnover and retention at the City of La Palma. Participant 4 did not go into more detail but emphasized that this was the most significant driving factor for voluntary employee turnover. Participant 4 also discussed the low salaries offered to officers by the City of La Palma and the high cost of living in Orange County, California. This participant discussed their high housing costs and mentioned that some other organizations have financial incentives for their law enforcement officers to reside within their organization's jurisdiction. However, they mentioned that the City of La Palma did not offer such a program. Participant 4 also indicated that they believed that a lack of communication between officers and management was perpetuating the poor morale that was currently present within the organization since officers did not know what was happening in the organization. This participant indicated that promotional opportunities came around infrequently due to the organization's size and that promoting at the City of La Palma was often difficult. Participant 4 revealed that when they initially applied for jobs, they were unaware of compensation differences between the City of La Palma and other law enforcement organizations. They indicated they were just happy to have a job then.

Participant 4 asked to skip over interview question 11 since it was personal in nature and did not answer the question. For interview question 12, this participant believed that compensation, including salary and benefits, work-life balance, and communication with management, were significant factors impacting turnover at the City of La Palma. Participant 4 answered interview question 13 by indicating that they believed there were numerous reasons why an employee leaves an organization. They backed up this assertion with the example of various other employees leaving during their time at the City of La Palma, but them ultimately

staying at the organization. In response to interview question 14, this participant believed that some instances of turnover could be normal since the law enforcement profession is not for everyone, and some individuals quit shortly after joining the profession once they found out it was not for them.

Participant 4 offered the following recommendations in response to interview question 15 to improve retention among employees: create a supplemental retirement account for employees to offset the difference in retirement offered and hire more officers to reduce mandated overtime, which could improve work-life balance. Interview question 16 did not apply to Participant 4 since they did not admit to having turnover intentions. Participant 4 answered interview question 17 by indicating that multiple aspects impact a decision to leave the organization. They also mentioned that their prior response to interview question 15 could significantly reduce turnover at the City of La Palma. Interview question 18 did not apply to Participant 4. Ultimately, for interview question 19, Participant 4 saw themselves still employed by the City of La Palma and attributed this to possible future opportunities for the participant, but they did not elaborate. Participant 4 did not volunteer any additional information for interview question 20, and they answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 2, Participant 6, and two others who declined to participate in this study.

Participant 5

Participant 5 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 5 declined to have their interview audio recorded. Participant 5's interview was one of the longer interviews, and they shared various details and specific stories from when they worked at the City of La Palma. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter.

Participant 5 provided a very detailed explanation for interview question 5. In their response to this question, they explained that turnover can be either voluntary or involuntary and that various factors influence turnover. Participant 5 further elaborated that organizations should attempt to limit voluntary employee turnover, while the amount of involuntary turnover often is not controllable.

When answering interview questions 5 and 6, Participant 5 indicated that they had witnessed employee turnover within law enforcement organizations and argued that turnover has both positive and negative aspects. It was elaborated that some negative aspects are increased workload, additional overtime, and fewer resources. On the other hand, Participant 5 indicated that sometimes turnover removes problem employees, which can improve organizational morale. In response to interview questions 7 and 8, this participant believed that most law enforcement organizations have a similar turnover rate but mentioned that they thought that the City of La Palma and their current law enforcement organization had higher than average turnover rates due to the size and resources of these organizations. Interview question 9 was briefly answered as the City of La Palma doing a poor job at employee retention activities and quickly shifted to some of the issues, so the participant was read question 10 to continue obtaining detailed information about the working conditions and morale at the City of La Palma.

During interview question 10, Participant 5 discussed various concepts, including the differences between the retirement formulas, the low compensation, the political climate, City Council support, labor negotiations, inexperienced supervisors, a divisive management team, special assignments, and promotional opportunities. It should be noted that interview question 20 also helped supplement and add additional details to some of these topics. Participant 5 emphasized that the 2.0 percent at 57 retirement formula was significant for newer officers

wanting to leave the City of La Palma. This participant provided detailed background about the state legislation that changed pensions in California and the labor negotiations that ultimately led to La Palma law enforcement officers having the lowest possible retirement formula. Another in-depth topic covered was the unaffordability of housing and the inadequate compensation offered to officers.

Participant 5 also emphasized that the Defund the Police movement and other anti-law enforcement movements had caused the profession to be less desirable. They noticed this trend in their current organization since there was a struggle to recruit qualified candidates. Similarly, this participant mentioned how certain city administrators and the City Council members had not supported the La Palma Police Association. For instance, it was mentioned that law enforcement was a unique profession since labor negotiations were not truly negotiations. It was argued that the City and City Council held all the power since law enforcement was prohibited from striking. Participant 5 shared that during their time, the labor union sued City Hall multiple times, leading to a breakdown in relations between the labor union and the City's administrators.

Another significant topic discussed was the inexperienced supervisors and the divide between officers and supervisors. This participant emphasized that tension existed between line-level officers and supervisors and that there was even tension between management and officers. Participant 5 argued that the management undervalued and underappreciated employees. Additionally, they argued that management was "small-minded and easily threatened" when it was revealed that a former Chief of Police degraded this employee for having advanced degrees prior to coming to this organization. Participant 5 revealed that he was told by a former chief that their education did not mean anything and that the Chief could "train a monkey to be a sergeant." It was mentioned that all of the law enforcement organization's administrators had obtained

degrees from an online degree mill to be promoted. Participant 5 emphasized that these online degrees substituted many classes for “life experience” and should not be considered actual degrees since they were fairly easy to obtain. It was emphasized that historically, this organization has looked down on those with formal education and only promoted those with little or no education. Participant 5 had also experienced a former Chief of Police degrading and talking down to employees as if they were “stupid.” This participant indicated that they had lost respect for this leader and believed that many other employees at the time did as well. Participant 5 had a disgusted look when mentioning this, emphasizing that this experience had severely impacted their experience at the City of La Palma. Participant 5 noted that the lack of special assignments was also a significant factor contributing to employee turnover at the City of La Palma. This participant argued that serving in a special assignment was an excellent way to break up the career by shifting roles for a few years, which allows time to go by quickly. Participant 5 also indicated that being placed in a new role can create excitement and motivation to learn new things.

It was also revealed that this participant had taken the sergeant’s exam four times and ranked the highest each time. Yet each instance resulted in a less qualified candidate being promoted instead. Participant 5’s tone and facial expression emphasized that they were upset with how they were treated at the City of La Palma. This was when this participant knew there was no future at the City of La Palma for them, and they would have to go somewhere else to find a place that would value their education and leadership abilities. Participant 5 indicated that if they had been treated better and promoted by management, they would still have been employed by the City of La Palma. Unfortunately, Participant 5 emphasized that the promotional process at the City of La Palma was biased and involved favoritism instead of experience and

testing scores. This participant argued that there were enough promotional positions at the City of La Palma but that due to few lateral movements of supervisors outside of La Palma, very few opportunities arose except for retirements and admin-level promotions.

When answering interview question 11, they claimed that the salary and benefits, management issues, and limited opportunities ultimately drove them to leave the City of La Palma. Participant 5 mentioned that when deciding they were ready to leave the City of La Palma, they reached out to some of their contacts and found an open job position. This participant indicated that they then decided on a job, received a job offer from their new employer, and ultimately resigned from La Palma with a job in hand. For interview question 12, Participant 5 argued that the City's administration and the law enforcement management team were aware of all the issues, perhaps beside the management issues that they did not want to recognize or accept. They also argued that as long as all the other local comparable law enforcement organizations offered a better retirement formula, the City of La Palma would continue to experience employee turnover. Ultimately, Participant 5 believed that the City of La Palma administrators and the salary and benefits were significant push and pull factors influencing turnover intentions. In response to interview question 13, Participant 5 argued that employees have different reasons to leave their employer ultimately. Participant 5 referenced their response in interview question 10 and indicated that their experience with being looked down upon for their higher education would likely not have impacted other officers the same way since it was an individual situation.

When answering interview question 14, this participant indicated that they believed that some instances of turnover should be considered normal. It was elaborated that both at their current organization and at the City of La Palma, they have seen the need for some employees to

leave the organization so that the organization can move forward and improve. It was emphasized that some employees, whether in leadership or line-level roles, create problems for the organization, and once these problem employees leave, the organization can try to fix itself. For interview question 15, Participant 5 provided two suggestions for improving retention and reducing turnover. These suggestions included adding more special assignments and possibly getting a clause in the MOU to automatically adjust the salary to a specific level among comparable organizations. In response to interview question 16, they responded that it ultimately came down to financially supporting their family, which was one of the reasons why they sought other employment. Additionally, they mentioned that the management at the City of La Palma did not value them as an employee, which drove them away. Participant 5 answered interview question 17 by indicating that every employee has different opinions and values. It was mentioned that everyone wanted something different when they participated in labor negotiations and that no matter how hard you tried, someone would not be happy with the outcome. This response was similar to their response to interview question 13 mentioned above.

In response to interview question 18, Participant 5 expressed that they were happy with their decision to seek employment at a different organization and did not regret leaving. Participant 5 emphasized that while a few of the same issues are present at their new organization, they mentioned it was a good change of environment. Due to Participant 5 being a former employee, interview question 19 did not apply to Participant 5. This participant used interview question 20 to provide additional information on various areas discussed, particularly in adding more information to the areas addressed in interview question 10. Also, during their response, Participant 5 revealed they always wanted to be a La Palma resident while working for the City of La Palma. Still, even over a decade ago, the houses in the City of La Palma were

unaffordable on a La Palma officer's salary. This participant emphasized that housing prices had increased much more than before, so becoming a resident nowadays would be even more unattainable. Participant 5 concluded that the City of La Palma would be a nice place to work if multiple issues were solved. Participant 5 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 1, Participant 12, and another individual who declined to participate in this study.

Participant 6

Participant 6 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 6 declined to have their interview audio recorded. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. Participant 6 answered interview question 4 by defining employee turnover as the replacement of employees who left the organization. At this point, the researcher stepped in and clarified that for this study, turnover was considered the act of an employee leaving the organization. After the clarification, this participant responded to interview questions 5 and 6, answering that they had witnessed employee turnover. It was further mentioned that there were primarily negative impacts from turnover at the City of La Palma. In contrast, turnover has led to positive effects at their new organization. Participant 6 revealed that at the City of La Palma, employee turnover often led to additional shifts due to vacancies; however, at their current organization, due to the larger size, there has been little to no impact on overtime, and if anything, they had more advancement opportunity due to gaining more seniority. In response to interview questions 7 and 8, Participant 6 believed that there are inconsistencies between law enforcement organizations and that the City of La Palma had higher turnover than other organizations. The reasoning for this was the organization's size, which would cause officers to want to go to larger organizations for more opportunities.

As for interview question 9, this participant compared aspects of the City of La Palma to their new law enforcement organization. Participant 6 discussed low compensation, including salary and benefits, their outlook on their career due to the anti-police culture, and lack of special assignments. Participant 6 ultimately emphasized that the City of La Palma did not effectively retain employees. In response to interview question 10, this participant explained that the retirement formula of 2.0 percent at 57 was a significant factor for them leaving the City of La Palma. They disclosed that they received a higher retirement formula at the law enforcement organization they joined after leaving the City of La Palma. In addition, Participant 6 discussed the low salary offered by the City of La Palma. Participant 6 believed that the City of La Palma law enforcement officers were underpaid compared to nearby law enforcement organizations. They revealed that salary was also a significant factor influencing why they left the City of La Palma and that, ultimately, their new organization offered a higher salary.

Participant 6 mentioned that the current political climate and anti-police culture impacted their outlook on this career field. It was indicated that there was a major shift in their outlook right after the George Floyd protests in 2020. Additionally, this participant emphasized that the lack of special assignments at the City of La Palma was potentially a significant factor contributing to employee turnover. Participant 6 emphasized that while working at the City of La Palma, they were jealous of other law enforcement organizations that offered more special assignments, such as traditional law enforcement assignments and participation in various task forces. This participant indicated that their current law enforcement organization offered numerous assignments, ultimately giving the participant a better chance of obtaining a special assignment. Participant 6 emphasized that while it might be possible that they might not end up

with their desired assignment in the future, there would be a "zero percent chance" if they stayed at the City of La Palma since their desired position was not offered there.

Participant 6 answered interview question 11 by describing their turnover process as starting with not being satisfied at the City of La Palma. The process continued with conducting a job search, locating an organization they would want to work for, submitting an application, receiving a job offer, and resigning from the City of La Palma. For interview question 12, this participant believed that the organization's administration is primarily responsible since they control various aspects of its operations. Participant 6 then referenced various topics, including special assignments, the political climate, and salary and benefits previously discussed in interview question 10 to describe the push and pull factors that influence turnover intentions. Participant 6 answered interview question 13 by emphasizing that every organization is different in size and culture, so different organizations may experience turnover for different reasons. In response to interview question 14, the participant believed that no instances of turnover should be considered normal. They argued that organizations should strive to keep their employees until retirement.

For interview question 15, this participant suggested improving the retirement formula and adding more special assignments as a potential way to reduce turnover and improve employee retention. Participant 6 answered interview question 16 by indicating that the organization is somewhat limited due to the actual size of the city. It was explained that the small size of the city results in the law enforcement organization having fewer personnel and fewer special assignments. It was mentioned that while the retirement formula would have improved the working conditions, special assignments may have been more difficult for the organization's size. Since they were unsure, this participant was initially hesitant to answer interview question

17 regarding whether there was a root cause of voluntary employee turnover or various causes that impact turnover at the City of La Palma. However, Participant 6 ultimately indicated there were various causes and nodded their head to reinforce this belief.

As for interview question 18, Participant 6 indicated they would not be interested in returning to work for the City of La Palma. They emphasized that the City of La Palma was too small, and the opportunities were too limited. Participant 6 was happy with their choice to leave the City of La Palma and believed they made the right choice regarding salary and benefits for their future. Interview question 19 did not apply to Participant 6 since they were not a current employee. This participant did not have any additional information to add to interview question 20 and felt that they provided all the information they could think of at the time. Participant 6 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 7, Participant 12, and Participant 13 for this study.

Participant 7

Participant 7 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 7 declined to have their interview audio recorded. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. Participant 7 emphasized that they enjoyed the size of the city and the size of the organization in terms of the number of personnel but indicated that compensation was a significant factor in them ultimately leaving the organization. Participant 7 indicated they always want to keep their doors open with the City of La Palma if something happens at their current employer. Because of this, Participant 7 appeared very to the point and only mentioned vague topics, primarily related to compensation. In response to interview question 4, this participant emphasized that employee turnover is a significant problem for the entire law enforcement

profession, especially for the last few years. Participant 7 revealed that right now, it is very easy to get hired by law enforcement organizations due to the shortage of officers throughout the United States.

For interview questions 5 and 6, Participant 7 indicated that they had witnessed employee turnover while working in law enforcement but stated that they had not felt an impact. However, they noted that they were aware of problems with burnout occurring at the organization but revealed that they did not experience it during their time at the City of La Palma. In response to interview questions 7 and 8, this participant suggested that all organizations experience employee turnover, but some may experience more than others. Participant 7 emphasized that they believed that the City of La Palma had a higher turnover rate than other organizations due to the much lower retirement formula than other organizations. For interview question 9, this participant indicated that the City of La Palma was not effectively retaining employees and that, at a minimum, compensation needs to be addressed to be consistent with other organizations. Participant 7 discussed the retirement formula, the low salary offered to police officers, citizen support, and promotional opportunities when answering interview question 10. Participant 7 emphasized that the retirement formula of 2.0 percent at 57 was much lower than what other law enforcement organizations provide to their officers. Participant 7 believed that the current retirement formula was a major factor leading to good officers leaving the organization and seeking employment at other organizations offering better retirement formulas. Additionally, this participant revealed that they solely left the City of La Palma because of the compensation and specifically mentioned the retirement formula as the leading factor. Participant 7 also believed the salary offered by the City of La Palma was lower than desired. It was emphasized that both

the retirement and the salary created an inadequate total compensation, which caused them to seek employment elsewhere.

Continuing with the response to interview question 10, Participant 7 revealed that, in general, most of the citizens of La Palma supported law enforcement, specifically the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. This participant said they enjoyed working for the City of La Palma due to the supportive residents. Participant 7 also emphasized that residents even passed a sales tax measure to prevent the City of La Palma from contracting out law enforcement services to an outside organization. Another topic discussed by Participant 7 was the limited availability of promotional opportunities. It was mentioned that only eight out of 21 positions were considered promotional opportunities. Participant 7 emphasized that promoting at the City of La Palma was difficult for various reasons. This participant noted that timing was one of the most significant factors since, with limited positions, a newly promoted individual might stay in that role for years, limiting future promotions. For interview question 11, Participant 7 described their turnover process as a business transaction. They described conducting a job search, locating an organization they wanted to work for, applying, receiving a job offer, and then resigning from the City of La Palma. In response to interview questions 12 and 13, this participant believed that various reasons impact turnover intentions. Participant 7 believed that compensation and the political climate were significant factors influencing turnover intentions and ultimately resulting in employee turnover. Participant 7 answered interview question 14 by indicating that they thought some turnover instances could be considered normal. It was mentioned that with the current negative political climate for law enforcement, some officers may seek a different career.

For interview question 15, Participant 7 only provided one suggestion to improve retention and reduce employee turnover: improving the retirement formula. Participant 7

emphasized that even if the retirement formula was 2.5 percent, they would have likely stayed at the City of La Palma even though the norm was 2.7 percent since they mentioned that 2.0 percent was too low. This participant indicated in their response to interview question 16 that their turnover intentions could have been eliminated entirely if the City of La Palma had offered higher compensation, including salary and a retirement formula. While answering interview question 17, Participant 7 indicated that even though compensation was their single driving factor, they believed that many aspects go into an employee's decision to leave an organization. It was further elaborated that during their time at the City of La Palma, several employees left the organization for various reasons other than compensation. In response to interview question 18, this participant emphasized that they ultimately chose to support their family financially. They did not regret leaving the City of La Palma and emphasized they would have done it again if they were in the same situation. Participant 7 revealed that their new organization offered a much higher compensation, including a better retirement formula and a much higher salary. Interview question 19 did not apply to Participant 7 since they were not a current employee. This participant did not have anything to add to interview question 20 and just emphasized that compensation was the main factor that made them leave the City of La Palma. Participant 7 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 2, Participant 3, and two other participants who declined to participate in this study.

Participant 8

Participant 8 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 8 declined to have their interview audio recorded. This was a longer interview covering numerous topics and anecdotes about their time at the City of La Palma. Many of these topics were related to their turnover intentions as a law enforcement

officer. Participant 8 provided significant background and context into several topics, which allowed for a greater understanding of the occurrences within the organization. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. Participant 8 answered interview question 4 by discussing how employees leaving seriously impacts the quality and effectiveness of the organization. It was further elaborated that constantly having newer employees can help motivate staff. However, at the same time, their lack of experience can lead to issues where an organization is continuously in a training cycle.

As for interview questions 5 and 6, Participant 8 disclosed that they had witnessed employee turnover and had felt negative impacts from the turnover of other employees, particularly involving additional mandated overtime. In response to interview questions 7 and 8, this participant believed that different organizations have different turnover levels and that the City of La Palma had a significantly higher than average turnover rate, especially for the last ten years, based on the history of numerous employees leaving the organization. Participant 8 answered interview question 9 by emphasizing that they felt that the City of La Palma was doing a very poor job at employee retention and that the efforts were essentially nonexistent.

Interview question 10 took up most of the interview, and due to the semi-structured nature of the questions, the researcher could continue to expand on various topics to obtain a greater explanation. Some topics discussed were the retirement formula, salary, labor negotiations, experiencing burnout, and poor work-life balance. Other topics mentioned were the political climate, issues with the City Council, supervisors and administrators without experience, and promotional opportunities and special assignments within the organization. This participant revealed that retirement formulas were a significant topic among employees during the last labor negotiation. It was revealed that the City was unwilling to do anything about the

retirement formula, which was set in stone because of prior state legislation. Additionally, Participant 8 believed officers were grossly underpaid and indicated that during the previous labor negotiation, a salary comparison study showed that the City of La Palma paid their officers the lowest compared to comparable cities. The last labor contract included three years of cost-of-living increases, which attempted to address the numerous police officer vacancies. It was revealed that despite these increases, the City of La Palma still failed to attract quality candidates. This participant emphasized that it was upsetting to see the pay disparity and noted that the City, City Manager, and City Council knew there was a salary problem, but up until recently, they had not acted on it.

Burnout and poor work-life balance were also significant topics discussed by this participant. Participant 8 emphasized that they regularly experienced burnout for the last year of their employment at the City of La Palma. This participant believed that the poor work-life balance at the City of La Palma contributed to the burnout they experienced. Participant 8 revealed that the poor work-life balance was one of the main reasons they left the City of La Palma. This participant shared anecdotes about being called into work on short notice, which the participant described as seeming like a weekly basis. They shared how this impacted their family life since this often interrupted plans, which placed stress on their family.

The political climate and lack of City Council support were also discussed during this interview. Participant 8 revealed that the City of La Palma did not issue body cameras and only had patrol vehicle dash cameras. It was mentioned that these dash cameras sometimes cut out when the officer got past a certain distance from their vehicle. This participant emphasized that this was dangerous because of the current political climate if a use of force or another high-profile incident occurred and was not captured on video. Participant 8 emphasized that the prior

labor contract did not meet their expectations and that they blamed the City Manager and City Council for this poor contract. They revealed that during the last two labor contracts, the City had tried to shove a contract “down the union’s throat” since the City waited until the last minute to submit offers. Participant 8 further emphasized that labor negotiations in law enforcement were not truly negotiations since law enforcement officers could not strike, which gave the City all the power.

Participant 8 also went into depth with issues regarding supervisors and managers. This participant provided various stories and situations that occurred to them during their time at the City of La Palma. They believed that after the mass exodus of employees between 2014 and 2017, the officers who did not leave the City of La Palma got promoted out of necessity, even if they were not ready and unqualified. Participant 8 went into detail about a specific former supervisor who had major issues with micromanagement. It was revealed that this supervisor always felt the need to assert their ideas into situations and often blew situations out of proportion, which often became embarrassing for officers. Participant 8 indicated that officers repeatedly tried to avoid this supervisor’s shift so only newer officers would be assigned to this supervisor’s shift due to low seniority. In addition to this, Participant 8 indicated that they felt that many supervisors were not confident in their role. It was revealed that these supervisors often had difficulty making decisions or feared making them independently.

Participant 8 emphasized that “it’s an uphill battle” when dealing with supervisors and management. It was indicated that the City of La Palma had a culture of avoiding change and maintaining the status quo. Participant 8 argued that the organization promoted mediocracy and discouraged officers from overachieving. Additionally, this participant indicated that a former Chief of Police was out of touch with contemporary policing since he did not believe body-worn

cameras were necessary in 2019. Participant 8 also revealed that a management employee shamed them for pursuing higher education, and ultimately, their schedule was not accommodated for their schooling. Participant 8 indicated that the lack of special assignments available at the City of La Palma could potentially contribute to employee turnover. On the other hand, they believed there were adequate promotional opportunities for the organization's size but argued that the promotions were often biased and involved favoritism.

Participant 8 answered interview question 11 by describing feeling burnt out and going through the turnover process. They described burnout as feeling unmotivated, unhappy when coming to work, and less willing to sign up for overtime shifts. Additionally, they described their turnover process as becoming increasingly dissatisfied working at the City of La Palma, conducting a job search, locating an organization, obtaining an open position, and then resigning from the City of La Palma. For interview question 12, Participant 8 strongly believed that the City Manager and City Council were responsible for many turnover intentions at the City of La Palma. This participant emphasized that they ultimately sought other employment because of the salary and benefits, poor work-life balance, and frustration with supervision and management. It was elaborated that the City Manager and City Council control the salary and benefits, the staffing levels which impact the work-life balance, and choose the Police Chief who sets the management and leadership of the organization. For interview questions 13 and 14, Participant 8 believed that employees have different to follow through with turnover and that some instances of turnover can be considered normal. It was argued that not everyone will be happy in an organization, and some cases of employee turnover can be expected over time.

For interview question 15, Participant 8 suggested that the City of La Palma increase the salary and benefits, hire more police officers to reduce mandated overtime and call-ins on their

days off, and add more special assignments to improve employee retention. Participant 8 responded to interview question 16 by indicating that there were so many issues at the City of La Palma that it would have been improbable to eliminate their turnover intentions. This participant referenced the various areas discussed earlier in the interview and indicated that leadership would have had to be one of the first areas fixed. Without strong and competent leadership, they believed the organization would be doomed to fail. Additionally, Participant 8 said that improving the work-life balance would help relieve some of the stress and tension employees felt from being overworked. Regarding interview question 17, Participant 8 emphasized that numerous factors influence an employee's decision to seek other employment. For instance, this participant brought up the organization's management, salary, and work-life balance as a few of the previously mentioned examples.

For interview question 18, Participant 8 revealed they were unhappy working at the City of La Palma before leaving the organization and dreaded going to work every day. It was revealed that initially, they were happy working for the City of La Palma when they got hired, but after a few years, that had changed. Ultimately, Participant 8 did not regret leaving the City of La Palma and mentioned that several factors that drove them away were not at their current organization. Interview question 19 did not apply to Participant 8 since they were not a current employee. For interview question 20, Participant 8 revealed that they would have been okay with having a lower salary if their retirement rate was consistent with other organizations. However, they were unhappy about having the lowest retirement and salary around. Participant 8 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 5, Participant 10, and another participant who declined to participate.

Participant 9

Participant 9 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 9 declined to have their interview audio recorded. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. Participant 9 answered interview question 4 by mentioning that turnover was employees leaving the organization through resignations or being terminated. As for interview questions 5 and 6, Participant 9 mentioned that they had witnessed employee turnover and that one of the main negative aspects was the additional mandated overtime that resulted from vacancies. Participant 9 responded to interview questions 7 and 8 by mentioning that different organizations have different levels of voluntary employee turnover and that the City of La Palma has a higher than average turnover compared to other organizations. This participant attributed the size and available opportunities at the City of La Palma to having a higher turnover rate. As for interview question 9, Participant 9 believed that the City of La Palma's employee retention activities were nonexistent. It was elaborated that while they were at the City of La Palma, they did not feel or see an effort by the City to retain employees.

Throughout interview question 10, Participant 9 compared their experience at the City of La Palma to their current law enforcement organization. For instance, Participant 9 argued that the retirement formula of 2.0 percent at 57 was a significant reason they left the City of La Palma. It was revealed that Participant 9 went on to get a better retirement formula at their new organization. In addition to the retirement formula offered, Participant 9 indicated they were unsatisfied with the compensation they previously received at the City of La Palma. This participant perceived the salary as lower than that of other law enforcement organizations of similar size in the general area, and they revealed that their current salary was higher than what

they received at the City of La Palma. Participant 9 revealed a work-life balance problem at the City of La Palma and attributed the organization's size as the main contributor to the problem. Additionally, this participant mentioned a lack of communication at the City of La Palma between the administration and the officers. They indicated this was different than their current law enforcement organization since they expressed that communication through oral and written means kept employees informed of news and upcoming events.

Participant 9 also discussed the Defund the Police Movement and the political climate involving law enforcement during interview question 10. This participant emphasized that they felt officers were now negatively perceived by the community and that the profession was less desirable than before. This participant argued that "nobody wants to be a cop nowadays" when discussing the George Floyd protests a few years ago, and they argued that this political climate was leading to the hiring difficulties seen throughout the profession. One positive aspect mentioned was that many residents of the City of La Palma supported the City's law enforcement organization.

Also, during interview question 10, Participant 9 mentioned that the lack of special assignments at the City of La Palma was not a significant factor like compensation. Still, they believed this had caused employee turnover among some employees. They revealed that officers could experience burnout working 12-hour shifts in the same two-square-mile city for years and that special assignments were an excellent way to shift roles for a few years. Unfortunately, Participant 9 emphasized that there were not enough of these assignments, so some officers would be stuck working patrol, which reportedly had driven some officers to leave the City of La Palma in the past. Similarly, Participant 9 discussed how the City of La Palma only had a few promotional opportunities compared to other organizations, limiting potential future growth.

Participant 9 described their turnover process when answering interview question 11. This process for included conducting a job search to see other options, applying for an open position, and then accepting the other position and resigning from the City of La Palma. When answering interview questions 12 and 13, Participant 9 indicated that they did not believe that one person or thing was responsible for causing turnover within the organization. Ultimately, this participant thought that the employee's perception of events significantly influenced turnover intentions. Participant 9 provided the example of compensation and argued that while this is relatively easy to measure, some employees are doing the job for the compensation, while some employees are in this profession for fulfilling reasons. As for interview question 14, this participant was conflicted since they mentioned that no instances of turnover should be acceptable, but on the other hand, employees are complex individuals and may hide their thoughts of turnover.

Participant 9 provided two suggestions to impact retention when answering interview question 15. The two suggestions were increasing compensation, including salary and benefits, and adding more special assignments, such as participating in county-wide task forces. It was argued that this would benefit the organization by opening up other resources and providing officers with more exciting opportunities. Interview question 16 was answered by Participant 9 by indicating that if the suggestions to interview question 15 were implemented, they would have likely stayed at the organization. Participant 9 answered interview question 17 by stating that they believed multiple aspects impact an employee's decision to leave the organization. They emphasized that in their situation as an employee at the City of La Palma, multiple factors led to them leaving the organization. For interview question 18, this participant indicated that they enjoyed certain aspects of the City of La Palma but, at the same time, were happy that they

ultimately decided to leave the organization. Participant 9 emphasized that their new organization is essentially the opposite of the City of La Palma in every way and most of the issues there are not present. Interview question 19 did not apply to Participant 9 since they were not a current employee at the City of La Palma. This participant had no additional information to add to interview question 20. Participant 9 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 2, Participant 13, and two other participants who declined to participate.

Participant 10

Participant 10 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 10 declined to have their interview audio recorded. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. As for interview question 4, this participant mentioned that they had seen numerous articles about law enforcement turnover in the media, specifically a law enforcement news website, and they believed it was a significant problem for many organizations. In response to interview questions 5 and 6, Participant 10 indicated that they had witnessed employee turnover and felt a negative impact. They admitted they were disappointed and jealous of all former officers' benefits when they left the City of La Palma. They emphasized that most former employees received 2.7 percent at 57, while some received 3.0 percent at 50 at their new organizations. In addition to this, Participant 10 mentioned that the vacancies that arise from turnover have negatively impacted their personal life due to frequent mandated overtime shifts being assigned to the remaining employees.

For interview question 7, they indicated they were unsure since they had not worked at other law enforcement organizations. Nevertheless, they once again referenced that they had read numerous articles about employee turnover across the United States. As such, Participant 10

believed that employee turnover is a problem for many organizations but was not sure if it is consistent among all organizations or just some organizations. Again, Participant 10 was cautious in answering interview question 8 since they had not worked at other law enforcement organizations. Ultimately, they believed that the City of La Palma may have a higher turnover rate than other law enforcement organizations, just based on their experience of losing numerous officers in a short period. Additionally, due to the organization's size, it was mentioned that each instance of turnover would have a greater impact and increase the rate. In response to interview question 9, Participant 10 believed that the City of La Palma was not doing enough to increase employee retention since the organization had constant turnover.

Throughout the discussion during interview question 10, Participant 10 discussed the retirement formula, salary, work-life balance, burnout, the political climate involving law enforcement, the citizens of La Palma, the experience level of supervisors, and the lack of special assignments. Participant 10 argued that no other organization in Orange County offered 2.0 percent at 57, and they believed that this was a major factor leading to good officers leaving the organization and seeking other employment. Participant 10 revealed that when they initially applied for organizations, they were unaware that the City of La Palma offered the lowest retirement plan. Similarly, this participant expressed dissatisfaction with the compensation the City of La Palma offered them. It was revealed that several current employees have had to buy their homes or rent their apartments around 50 miles away from the City of La Palma just to be able to afford the living expenses on a City of La Palma salary. Participant 10 emphasized that work-life balance issues were present within the City of La Palma and mentioned that it often led to employee burnout. They mentioned that they based their personal schedule on their regular work schedule. It was revealed that issues arose when they had to change their personal plans

because they were mandated to come to work on their day off at the last minute to cover a vacant shift.

The political climate and citizens of the City of La Palma were also discussed in detail during this question. Participant 10 indicated that seeing and reading about the prosecutions of law enforcement officers throughout the United States had been a nerve-racking concept and caused them to be fearful of that happening to them. This participant mentioned that the City of La Palma did not issue their officers body-worn cameras, unlike many other jurisdictions, which caused many day-to-day interactions with the public not to be captured on video. It was revealed that they had the current political climate at the back of their mind when responding to calls. It was even mentioned that during and after the George Floyd Protests, they limited their proactive policing and reduced the number of nonessential contacts because of the fear that the contacted person would not comply. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic during that time, this participant significantly lowered their activity levels because of the health risks as well as the political climate. Participant 10 argued that this negative perception of law enforcement was likely causing the difficulty in hiring law enforcement officers across the United States. While the City of La Palma did not have a specific Defund the Police Movement, they argued that all law enforcement officers felt the anti-police sentiment as a profession.

Participant 10 further mentioned that, in general, the residents of La Palma mostly supported the city's law enforcement organization. They revealed that during the 2020 anti-police riots, many La Palma residents displayed signs in the front of their homes indicating that they supported the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. This participant stated that the City of La Palma had a large portion of older residents and that, from their experience, many of them seemed more supportive of and friendly towards law enforcement. Participant 10 also

mentioned that the lack of experience among supervisors was an issue currently within the organization, but this participant did not elaborate or want to provide any specific details. This participant also indicated that the lack of special assignments available at the City of La Palma could contribute to officer turnover. They argued that with only three special assignments, ten officers would be stuck working patrol until a position opened, which could be three to four years since that's the maximum time an assignment could be held.

For interview question 11, this participant emphasized that employee burnout caused by a poor work-life balance was a major factor in their turnover intentions. They admitted that they were currently experiencing burnout. This participant explained that the burnout stemmed from the forced overtime regularly on a weekly basis because of the current multiple police officer vacancies. It was further mentioned that it often took months to hire a new officer and fill the vacancy, so during that time, the existing officers were subjected to a large amount of overtime. In response to interview question 12, Participant 10 stressed that they believed the retirement formula would be the most likely reason they would eventually leave the City of La Palma. They mentioned that this does not apply to other law enforcement organizations since they should have a consistent retirement formula, unlike the City of La Palma. Participant 12 believed that the political climate impacts the entire law enforcement profession and that work-life balance issues are significant issues present within most organizations and could influence turnover. For interview questions 13 and 14, this participant believed there are various reasons why an employee decides to leave law enforcement and that some turnover is expected within an organization due to different organizational cultures. Participant 10 believed that everyone prefers a different culture or is looking for something different in an employer, so ultimately, they may leave an organization for various reasons.

In response to interview question 15, Participant 10 provided three suggestions for improving employee retention. The first suggestion was adding a secondary retirement account to compensate officers for the lower retirement formula offered at the City of La Palma. The second suggestion was to improve the salary provided to City of La Palma law enforcement officers. This participant indicated they understood that the City of La Palma would never be the highest-paid organization. Still, it was mentioned that the salary should be somewhere near the average of the other nearby organizations to retain and attract new employees. The final suggestion was adding more special assignments so that the organization would feel like other law enforcement organizations. Participant 10 referenced interview question 15 when they answered interview question 16. They believed that implementing these three suggestions would significantly reduce the turnover intentions they had felt in the past due to their under-compensation and the lack of opportunities available at the City of La Palma.

Participant 10 responded to interview question 17 by indicating that many aspects affect an employee's decision to leave an organization. They elaborated that, personally, they were conflicted by numerous shortfalls of the organization, and they believed that this impacted other officers similarly. Interview question 18 did not apply to Participant 10 since they were not a former employee. As for interview question 19, Participant 10 was unsure if they would still be employed by the City of La Palma in five years. They were conflicted between the low benefits and having to start over again. This participant stated that they believed they covered everything when responding to interview question 20. Participant 10 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 8 and two other participants who declined to participate in this study.

Participant 11

Participant 11 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 11 declined to have their interview audio recorded. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. In response to interview question 4, Participant 11 described turnover as the result of failing to retain employees. They also emphasized that they had witnessed employee turnover within law enforcement and that they experienced negative impacts as a result of it when answering interview questions 5 and 6. In response to interview questions 7 and 8, Participant 11 believed that organizations have different levels of voluntary employee turnover since each organization has something different to offer employees, and no two organizations are alike. Additionally, they believed that the City of La Palma had a higher turnover rate than other organizations due to the size, compensation, and assignments available through the organization. Participant 11 answered interview question 9 by stating that while the City of La Palma tried to retain employees, several areas worked against them. They briefly mentioned the supervisors making employees want to leave and the limited opportunities available as areas that make it difficult to retain officers.

For interview question 10, Participant 11 emphasized that the 2.0 percent at 57 retirement formula was a significant factor in why they ultimately decided to leave the City of La Palma and seek other employment. Additionally, they expressed dissatisfaction with the City of La Palma's compensation when they were formally employed. This participant revealed they were initially unaware that the City of La Palma paid their officers the lowest salary in this geographic area. However, they mentioned that they initially believed the City of La Palma was on the lower side.

Additionally, Participant 11 mentioned that supervisor and management issues influenced turnover. They indicated that one former supervisor whom the City of La Palma no longer employed was a significant problem, decreasing morale and creating a hostile working environment. This participant elaborated that this former supervisor did not trust officers to do their jobs independently, which meant that the supervisor required their officers to run everything by the supervisor to ensure the supervisor had the final say in nearly every decision. Participant 11 revealed that during their time at the City of La Palma, most of the officers tried to avoid working with this supervisor, which caused only those with the lowest seniority to be stuck on a shift with that supervisor. They also believed that supervisors were not confident in their role as a sergeant, which caused them to make mistakes, overcompensate their leadership, and create a poor working environment, which led to some instances of employee turnover.

While this participant went into depth regarding micromanagement issues involving supervisors, they simply mentioned that issues involving management existed. However, they were purposely vague and did not provide personal anecdotes related to supervision or management from their time at the City of La Palma. Towards the end of their response to this question, Participant 11 indicated that issues involving management within the organization were significant factors influencing voluntary turnover and emphasized that this was just as important and had just as much impact on turnover as compensation did. It seemed like this participant wanted to elaborate, but at the same time, it was evident to the researcher that the participant did not want to go into sensitive details or any personal situations. Participant 11 also indicated that the lack of special assignments available at the City of La Palma contributed to some instances of employee turnover. This participant stated that there were only three special assignment

positions at the organization and that they eventually wanted to be assigned to a specific assignment during their career, but the City of La Palma did not currently offer that position.

For interview question 11, this participant described their turnover process as waiting for their desired organization to post a job listing, applying for the position, accepting the other position, and resigning from the City of La Palma. Participant 11 answered interview question 12 by indicating that management and the City were responsible for turnover intentions since they control how the organization is structured and operated. Additionally, Participant 11 mentioned that major push and pull factors include the retirement formula and compensation, burnout and work-life balance, micromanagement issues with supervisors, management issues, and the lack of special assignments. For interview questions 13 and 14, this participant believed that employees have different reasons to leave an organization and that some instances of turnover can be considered normal. It was elaborated that some employees transfer from organization to organization to find the right fit for them, so organizations may experience some turnover due to this.

Participant 11 offered two potential suggestions for improving retention when answering interview question 15. The two suggestions were increasing the retirement formula and adding more special assignments. For interview question 16, it was emphasized that salary and benefits played a major role in seeking other employment. Participant 11 also disclosed that they experienced burnout while working at the City of La Palma. Additionally, they also believed that the actual size of the organization was a significant contributor to the issues involving work-life balance. Ultimately, they emphasized that while financial compensation and issues with leadership within the organization were significant issues that drove them away, they might have stayed if the specific assignment they desired had been offered.

In response to interview question 17, this participant believed that various aspects influence an employee's decision to leave an organization. They mentioned that they ultimately left the City of La Palma for specific reasons, whereas they were aware of other former employees who left for different reasons. For interview question 18, they emphasized their happiness with their decision to leave the City of La Palma. Additionally, they indicated that their compensation and work-life balance were much better at their new organization. Interview question 19 did not apply to Participant 11 since the City of La Palma no longer employed them. This participant answered interview question 20 by emphasizing that they foresaw continued work-life balance issues at the City of La Palma in the future due to the constant turnover of employees. It was argued that this would lead to staffing issues, prompting additional mandated overtime and ultimately resulting in additional turnover. Participant 11 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 2, Participant 8, and another participant who declined to participate.

Participant 12

Participant 12 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 12 declined to have their interview audio recorded. This participant shared their thoughts in detail and discussed various topics. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. Participant 12 answered interview question 4 by saying that employee turnover is one of the greatest threats to law enforcement right now since organizations cannot retain employees. In response to interview questions 5 and 6, they responded that they had witnessed employee turnover at the City of La Palma, and there have been both positive and negative impacts for them. Participant 12 elaborated that over the years, they have gotten into their fair share of

disagreements with employees, so some turnover was a positive change, whereas, on the other hand, they had to deal with an increased workload from vacancies. For interview questions 7 and 8, they believed that all organizations have different turnover levels and that the City of La Palma had a fairly consistent turnover rate compared to other organizations. The reasoning was that hiring and retaining officers right now is very difficult, and many organizations offer tens of thousands of dollars in hiring bonuses. In response to interview question 9, Participant 12 believed that the organization's retention ability was limited because of the few available opportunities and the salary and benefits offered to the employees.

In response to interview question 10, they discussed the retirement formula provided to newer officers, the low salary, experiencing burnout, lack of communication within the organization, the political climate, lack of support from the City Council and City Hall, the citizens of La Palma, and the division between management, supervisors, and officers. Participant 12 indicated that the retirement formula offered to newer officers hindered recruitment and prompted numerous instances of law enforcement officer turnover. It was revealed that this was a hot topic during the last labor negotiation, and until it is fixed, they foresaw continuous turnover at the City of La Palma. Participant 12 indicated that they were aware of the wage gap between the City of La Palma and other local law enforcement organizations and that this could also potentially prompt some officers to leave the organization. On the other hand, they mentioned that while the salary was not the greatest, they were grateful for their career since they could purchase a home for their family.

Participant 12 also discussed how lack of communication within the City of La Palma and the current political climate were major issues. They revealed that they often did not know what was happening within the organization and attributed this to the lack of communication

from its former management. This participant emphasized that they believed that many of the officers at the organization felt similarly about how information was communicated from the top down. Participant 12 stressed that the current anti-law enforcement sentiment and the Defund the Police movement significantly impacted their outlook on their career. It was revealed that some of the televised prosecutions of law enforcement officers made them nervous during the commission of their job. They mentioned that this anti-law enforcement movement was somewhat disheartening since they tried their best to serve their community, but they had noticed increasing hostility from citizens during interactions. This participant mentioned that they could see older officers retiring earlier than usual and some younger officers leaving their jobs for another profession if the career continued to be undesirable. Participant 12 emphasized that they contemplated the political climate when responding to calls and mentioned that they did not want to be villainized by the media, so they reduced their proactive policing.

Another significant topic during interview question 10 was the discussion regarding the City Council and the City of La Palma residents. Participant 12 revealed that many recent City Council members had greatly supported the City's law enforcement organization. However, in some instances, several candidates were hypocritical and only ran on the platform of supporting law enforcement to get elected. It was mentioned that these political candidates ran on supporting local law enforcement because a majority of residents supported the City's law enforcement organization. It was further mentioned that the residents even passed "Measure JJ," a sales tax measure to ensure that the City would not outsource law enforcement services. Participant 12 believed that as younger generations begin replacing the older generations, the desire for the City to have their municipal law enforcement organization might diminish. They

emphasized that this would likely not affect their career, but the younger officers starting their careers now might see this in the future.

For interview question 11, Participant 12 indicated that when they previously experienced turnover intentions, they also experienced burnout. Participant 12 revealed that they had experienced burnout throughout their career and suggested that poor morale "comes and goes" over the years. Essentially, this participant linked the feeling of burnout to resulting in turnover intentions. Participant 12 answered interview question 12 by emphasizing that various main factors influenced voluntary turnover at the City of La Palma, including salary and benefits, low morale being "contagious" and spreading throughout the organization, and isolation between the different employee classifications. For interview questions 13 and 14, Participant 12 believed that employees have different reasons when contemplating turnover and that some instances of employee turnover can be considered normal. It was explained that they had various reasons for turnover intentions over the years, so it was likely that employees who left the organization also had different reasons. Additionally, Participant 12 believed that some instances of turnover are normal since some people outgrow organizations and need to seek other challenges.

During interview question 15, this participant's single suggestion for improving the retention among law enforcement officers was to improve the salary and benefits since it was argued that this would be the easiest and most effective method. For interview question 16, it was revealed that they had not experienced burnout for about the last year, and they possibly attributed this to their current assignment within the organization. Participant 12 answered interview question 17 by indicating that many aspects affect an employee's decision to leave an organization. This participant revealed that the multiple times they had turnover intentions

included various aspects. However, they ultimately made a decision based on several areas and decided to stay at the City of La Palma.

Interview question 18 did not apply to Participant 12 since the City of La Palma still employed them. As for interview question 19, when asked if the City of La Palma would still employ them in five years, this participant was unsure and did not elaborate on their reasoning. In response to interview question 20, the participant revealed that the division between the organization's different positions was a major cause of voluntary employee turnover. Participant 12 mentioned that the various roles, such as the management, the supervisors, and the officers, often did not share information well and had significant divisions. It was argued that this caused individuals to make assumptions about what was happening within the organization. They emphasized that the supervisors acted as middlemen to share provided information, which furthered the divide among the different classifications. Participant 12 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 1, Participant 5, and two others who declined to participate in this study.

Participant 13

Participant 13 met all the prescreening qualifications to participate in this study and consented to participate. Participant 13 declined to have their interview audio recorded. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 were used to write the participant demographics section at the beginning of this chapter. Participant 13 answered interview question 4 by describing employee turnover as the inverse of employee retention. When answering interview questions 5 and 6, this participant indicated that they had witnessed employee turnover and felt a negative impact from turnover through poor organizational morale and loss of motivation. Participant 13 answered interview question 8 when responding to interview question 7. They indicated that there are

different employee turnover levels and that their current law enforcement organization has a much lower turnover rate than the City of La Palma. For interview question 9, Participant 13 believed that the City of La Palma was not retaining employees since this participant left the organization after numerous others had also left during the same time.

Throughout interview question 10, Participant 13 discussed salary and benefits, employee burnout, work-life balance, the political climate, and special assignments. When talking about the concept of salary and benefits, Participant 13 emphasized that the retirement formula of 2.0 percent at 57 was not offered to any other organization in the area and that all other local organizations were much higher. They indicated that this retirement formula was a significant factor driving good officers to leave the City of La Palma and move to other organizations offering the standard retirement formula. This participant emphasized that looking back now, they would not return to work for the City of La Palma due to the compensation, which included salary and benefits. Participant 13 also indicated that the salary of the City of La Palma was much lower than what other organizations provide. It was revealed they work little to no overtime at their new organization and have the same paycheck as when they worked excessively mandated overtime at the City of La Palma. They emphasized that they now had to do much less work for the same paycheck, and if they wanted to work as much as they did at the City of La Palma, their paycheck would be significantly larger. Participant 13 argued that at the end of the day, their career came down to being able to support their family financially and put a roof over their head.

Participant 13 revealed they had experienced burnout while working for the City of La Palma. It was mentioned that their burnout came from a poor work-life balance. They emphasized that they were constantly forced to go to work to cover empty shifts. It was

mentioned that other, larger organizations could have operated this way since they typically had enough officers working each shift to cover for officers on leave. Participant 13 revealed that their current organization was like this, and they had yet to be called into work. This participant believed that the small size of the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization was the problem since the organization typically ran on minimum staffing, so each time one employee took leave, someone else got forced to come to work on their day off. Regarding the current political climate, Participant 13 mentioned that the recent prosecution of law enforcement officers had made them somewhat uneasy doing their job. They expressed that in today's society, the general public would not believe a law enforcement officer's word if it was not captured on video. Participant 13 also mentioned that the lack of special assignments available at the City of La Palma could contribute to some instances of employee turnover.

In response to interview question 11, Participant 13 confirmed they had experienced turnover intentions. They described their turnover process as researching potential organizations, applying for the position, accepting the other position, and resigning from the City of La Palma. For interview question 12, Participant 13 mentioned that the political climate, compensation, and work-life balance were all responsible for their turnover intentions, and they believed that this was consistent for a large portion of law enforcement officers. For interview questions 13 and 14, Participant 13 thought that a minimal amount of turnover can be considered normal and that the decision to leave an organization typically is for different reasons. They explained that 100 percent retention is nearly impossible, that some turnover should be expected, and that not every employee is the same, which can lead to various reasons for turnover.

They provided multiple suggestions for improving retention at the City of La Palma when answering interview question 15. Some of the suggestions were improving the retirement

formula, hiring more officers to reduce the amount of mandated overtime, and adding more special assignments. Additionally, this participant suggested utilizing the Corporal program to cover shifts for officers and supervisors and creating a new solution for assigning overtime shifts. Participant 13 indicated that sergeants would typically ask the same few officers over and over to cover shifts because they knew they would say yes, which accelerated the burnout in a few employees. It was suggested that the organization utilize a list to cycle through employees so overtime would be assigned fairly. In response to interview question 16, Participant 13 referenced their previous response to interview question 15. Participant 13 indicated that improving work-life balance and compensation would have significantly impacted their turnover intentions.

For interview question 17, Participant 13 believed that numerous elements impact an employee's decision to leave and indicated that they did not take their decision to leave lightly. For interview question 18, Participant 13 was happy with their choice of leaving the City of La Palma and did not regret their decision. They expressed that their new organization is very different from the City of La Palma and that many reasons why they left were not present at their new organization. Interview question 19 did not apply to Participant 13 since they were not a current City of La Palma employee. Participant 13 did not have anything additional to add to interview question 20. Participant 13 answered interview question 21 by referring Participant 3, Participant 4, and another participant who declined to participate.

Participant Observations

During the interview process, the researcher noted any relevant and noticeable participant observations that were identified. As an effort to not duplicate and report similar information from the interview section above, the researcher will only briefly describe what was being

discussed and what was observed. Additionally, specific observations may have also been previously discussed above in the individual sections for the participant's interview to provide context to what the participant was indicating. Potential observations that were identified included the participant's tone, facial expression, reactions, level of emotion, their willingness to answer questions, and their level of specificity.

Participant 1

Participant 1 remained very calm and held a very neutral stance while discussing most topics during the interview. While answering the questions, this participant was very straightforward and factual during the interview. This participant displayed very little emotion while speaking and seemed as if they wanted to keep their personal information and opinions closely guarded. However, they appeared optimistic when emphasizing that the newly hired employees would improve the organization's productivity. Additionally, Participant 1 squinted their face and seemed displeased when they were discussing their disapproval of the current compensation offered by the City of La Palma. Participant 1 seemed to not want to share their personal thoughts about the organization's management. When this participant emphasized that they would likely still be at the City of La Palma in five years, they had an unmotivated tone and seemed to have given up when they emphasized that it was easier to stay than start over somewhere new. This participant inquired with the researcher about the demographics that will be displayed for participants as well as the confidentiality procedures in this study. This participant seemed to be fearful of the organization discovering their involvement in the study.

Participant 2

Participant 2 was very detailed in their responses and seemed very confident while discussing their thoughts and opinions. Additionally, Participant 2 was willing to share

information, and due to the semi-structured interview methodology, the researcher could follow up on questions and gain additional insight. This participant was not shy, and their tone and facial expressions changed throughout the interview, emphasizing what they told the researcher. For instance, when Participant 2 revealed that they had experienced both good and bad times while working at the City of La Palma, their tone changed from positive to negative. Participant 2 emphasized that they felt like they got the “short end of the stick” by working for the City of La Palma. This participant was somewhat hunched over, and their body language helped emphasize how they were disappointed with how things turned out.

When they discussed the City of la Palma having “unethical” retention practices, such as creating hardships for employees to overcome to prevent them from leaving, they had a very serious tone and facial expression. Additionally, Participant 2 was shaking his head, emphasizing their disapproval and disappointment with this practice. Participant 2 also seemed dissatisfied when they stated that the promotional opportunities at the City of La Palma were “rigged.” While saying this, they had a very frustrated and annoyed facial expression. When Participant 2 revealed that they had been experiencing burnout at the City of La Palma for the last few years, their facial expression of shaking their head and somber tone gave the researcher the impression that they had given up. Participant 2 seemed optimistic when they revealed they did not see themselves still at the City of La Palma in five years. They seemed very sure of themselves when they mentioned that they hoped to join a new organization soon.

Participant 3

Participant 3 was very to the point, yet they shared valuable information during their interview. They maintained a delicate balance of sharing information about the organization but did not share much about themselves. This participant redirected many questions by responding

to their views of the organization as a whole rather than about themselves. Participant 3 took their response to the questions seriously and took a few seconds to think about their response before responding. For instance, after taking a short pause for interview questions 7 and 8, they emphasized that they were unsure of their answer and referenced that they had limited knowledge regarding other organizations. After admitting they had turnover intentions, they stressed that they did not want to go into personal details regarding it. Participant 3 had a serious facial expression and confident body language when they responded that they did not still see themselves employed by the City of La Palma in five years. Their facial expression and body language indicated that this was a strong belief and that they believed they would be working at a different organization soon.

Participant 4

Participant 4 discussed generalized topics and was rather to the point, and they did not freely share additional information when they were given the opportunity. It seemed like Participant 4 was holding back information during the interview and just wanted to provide vague responses. For instance, Participant 4 generically mentioned that by staying at the organization while others leave the organization, potential opportunities would improve for the participant. When the researcher asked clarifying questions about this, Participant 4 did not want to respond. Again, for interview question 9, this participant vaguely answered that the City of La Palma was not doing everything that could be done for employee retention but did not want to go into details besides the vague statement. When Participant 4 spoke, they seemed exceptionally cautious and did not want to reveal too much specific or personal information. Additionally, this participant asked to skip interview question 11 due to it being personal in nature and not wanting

to answer the question. Participant 4 showed no emotion and had a very neutral tone during the interview.

Participant 5

Participant 5 was very open to sharing personal details and anecdotes throughout this interview. This participant emphasized that by being a former employee, they had no loyalties or obligations to protect the organization from sharing the truth. While responding to the various questions, they remained in a very factual and serious tone. Participant 5 provided logical responses and often provided examples to support what they were saying. When Participant 5 began talking about the management and supervision at the City of La Palma, some emotion began to show. It was evident that they had some personal experiences at the City of La Palma that left a bad impression of the organization. When they emphasized that management at the City of La Palma was “small-minded and easily threatened,” Participant 5 had a passionate tone, emphasizing that they felt strongly about this. Additionally, when they shared that a former Chief of Police talked down to employees as if they were “stupid,” Participant 5 had a disgusted look on their face while describing this. Participant 5 also had an upset tone and facial expression when they discussed their treatment at the organization and the biased promotional process. Towards the end of the interview, Participant 5 had a positive tone and happy facial expression when they emphasized that they were ultimately satisfied with leaving the City of La Palma.

Participant 6

In general, this interview covered numerous topics, and Participant 6 stayed very neutral when discussing most topics. However, Participant 6’s tone and facial expressions during a few parts of the interview indicated that they seemed to enjoy their time at the City of La Palma. While Participant 6 indicated that they were happier at their new organization, they enjoyed

some aspects of the City of La Palma, which was visible from some happy facial expressions. Early in the interview, the researcher had to step in and clarify the definition of turnover for this study, which may have caused Participant 6 to second guess themselves a few times throughout the interview. For instance, a few times during the interview, they were hesitant to answer questions because they were unsure what they believed was the correct answer. Participant 6 referenced their new employer throughout the interview to compare aspects they experienced at the City of La Palma.

Participant 7

Participant 7 remained very neutral during the interview. This participant indicated that even though they were now employed at a different law enforcement organization, they wanted to keep their doors open with the City of La Palma. As such, this appeared to be the reason for their vague responses as well as only bringing up the compensation provided by the City of La Palma. Participant 7 had a positive tone and smiling facial expression when they mentioned that they enjoyed the size of the City of La Palma and its law enforcement organization. Additionally, Participant 7 mentioned they genuinely enjoyed working for the City of La Palma because of the supportive residents. Participant 7's smiling expression emphasized how much they cared about and enjoyed serving the residents. This participant mentioned that they ultimately chose to leave the City of La Palma to support their family financially. Participant 7 nodded their head, which was interpreted as being confident in their decision to leave the City of La Palma for financial reasons. This participant articulated their thoughts well and spoke very clearly and confidently. While this participant did not appear to withhold information, they focused their responses on compensation instead of branching out to other topics.

Participant 8

Participant 8 was willing to discuss various topics, provide personal experiences, and answer clarifying questions. Participant 8 did not hold back their information and went into detail regarding several issues impacting turnover and retention at the City of La Palma. While Participant 8 remained neutral throughout most of the interview, emotion slipped through a few times when providing personal examples of what they experienced. For instance, when Participant 8 emphasized that the City of La Palma grossly underpaid officers, they had a look of disapproval on their face and an upset and serious tone. They further stressed that it was upsetting that city management and elected officials were aware of the problem, yet they did nothing about it. When saying this, they had a tone of disappointment and being annoyed. Additionally, Participant 8 was very serious when discussing burnout and had a rigid posture and body language, which emphasized that this was a very important topic for them. Participant 8 seemed to have given up on the ability of supervisors and management at the City of La Palma. This was noticed with a large sigh when they described dealing with management as “it’s an uphill battle.” Participant 8 emphasized that one supervisor did not effectively do their job and shifted the organization’s culture to hands-off, significantly impacting the hardworking employees’ motivation and morale. When Participant 8 described this, their facial expressions indicated they disapproved of it and were upset with the organizational culture change.

Participant 9

Participant 9 took a less serious approach to this interview and made a few irrelevant jokes both during and after the interview. However, they did not shy away from questions and provided a decent amount of information in response to the questions. This participant had a neutral tone during most of the interview, except for the few outbursts with irrelevant jokes.

During those few instances, the researcher refocused the participant and got the interview back on track. When Participant 9 emphasized that the City of La Palma's employee retention activities were nonexistent, they had a smiling facial expression and shook their head in disapproval. This response made it seem as if the participant was in disbelief since the City of La Palma did not care about the amount of turnover occurring.

Participant 10

Participant 10 maintained a consistent, calm tone throughout the interview as they answered the various questions. At times during this interview, Participant 10 was very forthcoming and provided many details regarding their experience of their time at the City of La Palma. When admitting that they were disappointed and jealous of former employees going to receive better compensation after leaving the City of La Palma, Participant 10 had a disappointed facial expression and a slightly depressing tone. For interview questions 7 and 8, Participant 10 had an unsure tone and emphasized that they were uncertain of the answer since they were unfamiliar with other law enforcement organizations. When discussing the work-life balance issues present at the City of La Palma, it became apparent to the researcher that this participant was irritated and annoyed by this ongoing issue. Overall, for this interview, far more information was gathered from the verbal interview than from the participant observations since the participant remained fairly consistent.

Participant 11

Participant 11 maintained a neutral tone throughout the interview but shared both positive and negative aspects they experienced at the City of La Palma. This participant went into detail on certain aspects but, at the same time, purposely remained vague regarding issues such as those involving management. For this topic, Participant 11 only alluded that management issues

existed but did not want to provide personal anecdotes or situations they observed while at the City of La Palma. When alluding to these issues, it seemed like the participant wanted to share specific details. However, ultimately, it was evident that they did not want to share that kind of sensitive information in this study. As such, the researcher did not push the participant and focused on obtaining other information. When asked about their choice to leave the City of La Palma, Participant 11 had a positive and happy tone and a smiling facial expression when they indicated that they were very happy with their choice of leaving and did not regret their decision.

Participant 12

Participant 12 was very forthcoming during the interview and shared information about their personal experiences and opinions. This participant emphasized that employee turnover is one of the greatest threats to law enforcement right now. While saying this, they had a very serious tone, emphasizing that they genuinely believed this statement. Additionally, when discussing the Defund the Police movement and the current anti-law enforcement sentiment, Participant 12 had a disappointed tone when they emphasized how it was disheartening and impacted their outlook on their career. When this participant described how some of the City Council were hypocritical regarding their support of law enforcement, Participant 12 had an annoyed facial expression and rolled their eyes. Participant 12 was unsure if the City of La Palma would still employ him in five years, and they did not elaborate on their reasoning. It seemed as if they genuinely did not know their plans for the future.

Participant 13

During the interview, participant 13 compared several aspects of their new organization to the City of La Palma to highlight the stark differences. It was noticed that while this participant did not appear to be against sharing general information, they often just discussed vague

information and did not disclose any personal anecdotes regarding their time at the City of La Palma. When Participant 13 was comparing how they received approximately the same paycheck amount at their new organization but were working no overtime, they had a boastful tone. Additionally, when describing the work-life balance issues at the City of La Palma, Participant 13 seemed glad those days were behind them. Overall, this participant responded logically to the questions and provided reasonable answers, yet they were vague since they only compared aspects of their new organization to the City of La Palma.

Research Question Response

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 stated: How do the participants view employee retention activities of the City of La Palma? This research question focused on employee retention, which measures the effectiveness of employee turnover within an organization. This question was worded in an unbiased way so that the participants could discuss the effectiveness of the organization or the failures of the organization in terms of retention activities. As such, much of the information obtained from this study was related to either positive or negative retention activities reported by the participants. Interview question 9 directly asked Research Question 1, which acted as direct information to answer this research question. Additionally, interview question 19 asked current employees if they still saw themselves employed by the City of La Palma in five years. This question was an excellent indicator of the participant's perception of retention activities since their answer directly implied if the City of La Palma would effectively retain them over the next few years.

While conducting the interviews, all 13 participants expressed significant retention issues at the City of La Palma. For instance, when directly responding to interview question 9, "How do

you view the employee retention activities of the City of La Palma?” most participants had concerning replies. Participant 1 indicated that the City of La Palma was “late in the game” for retention and mentioned that a hiring bonus had just been implemented, whereas other organizations have offered this hiring incentive for years. Participant 2 described the City of La Palma’s retention activities as “unethical” and elaborated that the organization has utilized retaliation and created hardships for employees, such as issuing poor performance evaluations in an attempt to retain employees. Participant 3 indicated that they were not impressed with the retention activities of the City of La Palma and felt that they could do much better. Participant 4 emphasized that the City of La Palma was not doing everything they could to retain employees, but they did not want to elaborate further. Participant 5 believed the City of La Palma was doing poorly at employee retention and began discussing various organizational issues.

In response to interview question 9, Participant 6 emphasized that the City of La Palma did not effectively retain employees and compared many problems to their new employer, which did not have many of these issues. Participant 7 stated that the City of La Palma was not effectively retaining employees. Participant 8 felt that the City of La Palma was doing a poor job, and their efforts were essentially non-existent. Participant 9 also mentioned that they did not believe that the City of La Palma was taking any actions toward solving employee retention. Participant 10 thought that the City of La Palma was not doing enough to increase retention since the organization had constant turnover. Participant 11 emphasized that while the City of La Palma has made efforts to improve employee retention, several areas work against it, particularly the limited opportunities and particular supervisors that drive employees away. Participant 12 responded that the City of La Palma’s retention ability was limited due to employee benefits and the few opportunities the organization offers. Participant 13 believed that the City of La Palma

was not adequately retaining employees since numerous employees, including themselves, left around the same time.

Interview question 19 only applied to the participants who were still current employees at the City of La Palma. These participants were Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 10, and Participant 12. In response to this question, Participant 1 still saw themselves employed by the City of La Palma. They emphasized that it was easier for them to ride out their career at the City of La Palma than to start over at a new organization. Participant 2 responded, “I really hope not,” when they were asked if they would still be employed by the City of La Palma in five years. They mentioned that they hoped to move to a new organization soon. Participant 3 did not see themselves still employed by the City of La Palma in five years. Participant 4 still saw themselves employed by the City of La Palma. This participant attributed this to potential future opportunities for the participant at the City of La Palma, but they did not elaborate. Participant 10 was unsure if they would still be employed by the City of La Palma in five years since they were conflicted by the low benefits and having to start over again at a new organization. Participant 12 was also unsure if they would still be an employee at the City of La Palma in five years, but they did not provide a reason for this. They indicated that they would see where life takes them.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 stated: What do the participants view as the main factor influencing voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma? This research question sought to obtain the participants' perspectives regarding what they viewed as the main or top few contributing factors that lead to voluntary turnover within the City of La Palma. The answers to this research question were mainly derived from interview questions 10, 12, and 13. Interview

question 10 asked participants, "What are the working conditions like in the law enforcement profession? How is the employee morale at the City of La Palma? Please discuss topics such as salary and benefits, supervision, work-life balance, work-related stressors, society's view of the law enforcement profession, or other topics." This research question directly asks about the City of La Palma's working conditions, which allowed the researcher to obtain valuable insight into their thoughts and views of many potential turnover intention indicators. Interview question 10 was typically the most significant part of the interview since the researcher utilized the semi-structured style to expand on various topics and redirect the interview to obtain detailed and relevant information.

Interview question 12 asked participants, "What or who do you believe is responsible for causing the turnover intentions that exist within law enforcement organizations? Please describe any push and pull factors that you believe influence turnover intentions?" This interview question obtained generalized perspectives and opinions from participants regarding the cause or multiple causes of employee turnover. Interview question 13 asked participants, "Do you believe there is a root cause of voluntary employee turnover within law enforcement organizations, or do you believe employees have different reasons when they decide to leave their organization." This interview question followed up on the prior question and asked participants if they believed there was a single cause or multiple causes that lead to employee turnover to clarify their view on the number of factors influencing employee turnover.

Since the participant's responses to interview question 10 were extensively covered previously in the Participant Data section, this area will be briefly recapped. In response to interview question 10, Participant 1 discussed the retirement formula offered to employees hired after 2011, the low salary, and management issues within the City of La Palma. Participant 2

discussed the retirement formula, salary, PEPRA vs. Classic employees, experiencing burnout, poor work-life balance, lack of communication, the current political climate, not being provided body cameras, management and supervision issues, promotional opportunities, and lack of elected official support. Participant 3 discussed the salary and benefits, a lack of communication from management, the current political climate, supervisors' lack of experience, management issues, and the lack of special assignments. Participant 4 discussed the high cost of living in California, the low salary provided by the City of La Palma, the retirement formula, a lack of communication within the organization, law enforcement's negative spotlight in the media, and the limited promotional opportunities at the City of La Palma.

Participant 5 answered interview question 10 by discussing the different retirement formulas, the low compensation, the political climate, City Council support, labor negotiations, inexperienced supervisors, a divisive management team, special assignments, and promotional opportunities. Participant 6 mainly focused on the financial areas since that was the most significant to them, and they discussed the low retirement formula and salary offered by the City of La Palma. Additionally, this participant discussed the political climate and the lack of special assignments. For Participant 7, they discussed the retirement formula, the low salary at the City of La Palma, citizen support of law enforcement, and the lack of promotional opportunities available at the City of La Palma. Participant 8 discussed the retirement formula, low salary, labor negotiations, experiencing burnout, poor work-life balance, the political climate, issues with the City Council, supervisors and administrators lacking experience, promotional opportunities, and the lack of special assignments available at the City of La Palma. Participant 9 discussed the low retirement formula and salary, the work-life balance problems, the political climate, the lack of special assignments, and the lack of communication in the organization.

Participant 9 emphasized that while the special assignments were unimportant to them, they believed this led to poor morale and turnover at the organization. Participant 10 discussed the retirement formula, salary, work-life balance, burnout, the political climate involving law enforcement, La Palma citizens, supervisors' experience level, and the lack of special assignments. Participant 11 discussed the low retirement formula, the low salary offered to employees, issues with supervisors and management employees, a hostile working environment with one former supervisor, and the lack of special assignments. Participant 12 discussed the retirement formula, the low salary, experiencing burnout, a lack of communication within the organization, the political climate, a lack of support from the City Council and City Hall, public support, and the division between management, supervisors, and officers. Participant 13 discussed the low salary and benefits, employee burnout, work-life balance issues, the political climate, and the lack of special assignments at the City of La Palma.

For interview question 12, Participant 1 argued that in the case of the City of La Palma, the current retirement formula provided to most officers at the City of La Palma significantly caused turnover. It was mentioned that other organizations would not have this major factor, but due to the City of La Palma providing the worst retirement formula in the State of California, officers would continue to leave the organization. Participant 2 emphasized that employees experiencing burnout was a significant factor that impacted turnover at the City of La Palma. They attributed burnout to staffing issues, the large amount of overtime forced on employees, and supervision and management issues. Participant 3 believed that salary and benefits, a lack of communication, the defund the police movement, supervisors lacking experience, management issues, and a lack of special assignments were significant influencers of turnover intentions within the profession of law enforcement. Participant 4 argued that compensation, work-life

balance, and communication with management impacted turnover intentions at the City of La Palma.

For interview question 12, Participant 5 emphasized that the City of La Palma administrators and the salary and benefits offered to employees were responsible for turnover intentions within the City of La Palma. It was mentioned that they believed that the City's administration and the law enforcement management team were aware of all the issues, perhaps besides the management issues that they did not want to recognize or accept. Similarly, Participant 6 believed that the organization's administration is primarily responsible since it controls various aspects of its operations. Additionally, Participant 6 emphasized that numerous aspects, such as special assignments, the political climate, and salary and benefits, were significant push and pull factors influencing employee turnover. It was elaborated that the lack of special assignments at the City of La Palma was a push factor away from the City of La Palma. In contrast, organizations with various special assignments would be a pull factor that would draw employees away from the City of La Palma. It was further emphasized that the City of La Palma's low compensation worked in the same way as special assignments. Participant 6 also mentioned that the general negative political climate involving law enforcement officers was a push factor away from communities that do not support law enforcement or away from the profession in general.

When responding to interview question 12, Participant 7 believed that compensation and the current political climate were significant factors that influenced turnover intentions within law enforcement. Participant 8 strongly believed that the City Manager and City Council were responsible for many turnover intentions at the City of La Palma. This participant revealed that they ultimately left the City of La Palma due to the salary and benefits, poor work-life balance,

and frustration with supervision and management at the organization. They believed these areas could also be significant factors in other organizations if similar issues existed. Participant 9 indicated they did not think one person or thing was responsible for causing turnover within law enforcement. They further elaborated that an employee's perception of events significantly influenced turnover intentions.

Participant 10 mentioned that the retirement formula was a significant issue for City of La Palma employees and that, ultimately, that would be the most likely reason why they would leave the City of La Palma when responding to interview question 12. Participant 11 indicated that the organization's management and the City were responsible for any turnover intentions since they controlled how the organization was operated and structured. Additionally, this participant revealed that some major turnover influencers include compensation, which includes the retirement formula, work-life balance and burnout, micromanagement issues and other issues with management, and the lack of special assignments. Participant 12 believed that salary and benefits, low morale being "contagious" and spreading throughout the organization, and isolation between the different employee classifications were significant factors influencing turnover. Participant 13 believed that similar factors influence employee turnover across various organizations. It was elaborated that the current political climate, compensation, and work-life balance were all significant factors that could impact turnover.

In response to interview question 13, every participant indicated they believed that different reasons impact employee turnover. Participant 1 argued that employees have different priorities, which can lead to varying perceptions of an organization. Participant 2 believed that some organizational problems will impact some employees more than others. Participant 3 did not elaborate on their reasoning, but they indicated that they believed that many factors often

lead to employee turnover. Participant 4 provided the example of numerous employees leaving the City of La Palma for various reasons, but them ultimately deciding to stay with the City of La Palma. Participant 5 provided a personal anecdote about how they left because they were looked down upon by the leadership at the organization for having a higher education. They emphasized that this would have likely not impacted anyone else at the organization, so it goes to show that different aspects impact different employees. Participant 6 initially hesitated to answer this since they felt strongly about why they left the organization, but ultimately emphasized that various factors affect everyone differently. They emphasized that every organization is different in size and culture, so different organizations may experience turnover for different reasons.

In response to interview question 13, Participant 7 did not elaborate besides emphasizing that employees leave for different reasons. Participant 8 indicated that not everyone would be happy at an organization, which can lead to turnover. Participant 9 argued that an employee's perception of events significantly impacted turnover. They provided examples of how some employees get into law enforcement for compensation, whereas some employees join the field for fulfilling reasons, and compensation is not as important. Participant 10 believed that everyone prefers a different culture or is looking for something different in an employer, so ultimately, they may leave an organization for various reasons. Participant 11 similarly mentioned how some turnover occurs due to employees participating in lateral organization transfers since some employees are trying to find the right fit for them. Participant 12 emphasized that they had various turnover intentions over the years, so it was likely that employees who left the organizations also had different reasons. Participant 13 emphasized that multiple reasons for turnover exist, often impacting actual turnover instances.

It was also emphasized that while some areas were more significant than others, some participants believed that a few employees might perceive certain aspects as more meaningful. As such, most of the information discussed by the participants was relevant since what these participants reported might be important to varying degrees. Overall, the participants' top concepts discussed were salary and benefits, poor morale, and leadership and management issues. The concept of salary and benefits, which included topics such as the retirement formula of 2.0 percent at 57 and unlivable wages, were the most referenced factors for law enforcement officer turnover in the City of La Palma. All 13 participants mentioned the concept of the 2.0 percent at 57 retirement formula during the interviews. Regardless of the participants' retirement formula, all 13 participants confirmed that the current formula had led to employee turnover of newer employees. For instance, Participant 5 emphasized that as long as all the other local comparable law enforcement organizations offered a better retirement formula, the City of La Palma would experience employee turnover. Participant 5's facial expressions and tone were very matter of fact, emphasizing this was a strong belief.

Participant 1 believed that the current retirement formula provided to most City of La Palma officers significantly influenced officers seeking employment at other law enforcement organizations. For instance, Participant 3 indicated that higher retirement formulas, such as the standard formula, 2.7 percent at 57, was "looming over their head," and all they had to do was go work for another organization to receive it. Participant 8 even mentioned that although numerous factors caused them to leave the organization, they would have likely stayed if the retirement formula had been consistent with other organizations. Participant 7 stated they left the organization solely due to the low retirement formula and salary and were otherwise happy working at the City of La Palma. This participant emphasized that even if the retirement formula

was 2.5 percent, they would have likely stayed, but 2.0 percent was too low. Participant 6, Participant 8, Participant 9, Participant 11, and Participant 13 all indicated that they also left the City of La Palma due to the low retirement formula. Similarly, the topic of salary, referred to as unlivable wages, was also a topic that 10 of the participants mentioned.

The poor morale at the City of La Palma was also a significant topic attributed to being a primary contributing factor to voluntary law enforcement officer turnover. Burnout and work-life balance issues were substantial areas discussed regarding the organization's poor morale. Participant 2, Participant 8, Participant 9, Participant 10, Participant 11, Participant 12, and Participant 13 revealed they had or were currently experiencing burnout while working for the City of La Palma because of poor work-life balance, which was attributed to lowering the overall organizational morale. Participant 11 expressed that they had experienced burnout while at the City of La Palma and believed that the organization's small size led to many work-life balance issues. Participants 7 and 9 also indicated that burnout exists within the organization and were aware of employees experiencing burnout. Participant 12 emphasized that low morale was "contagious" and could quickly spread if you worked with people who exhibited this attitude and behavior. Participant 2 emphasized that morale had fluctuated over the years, and that there had been good times, and that there had been bad times. This participant mentioned that from their experience, times with poor morale have been followed by high turnover and the hiring of new employees, which subsequently improved morale. This was attributed to the new employees being excited to have a new job, which later shifted when these employees' "eyes opened" regarding some of the issues within the organization. Participant 2 then indicated that this usually occurred approximately two to three years after the new employees were hired and emphasized that the cycle would then continue, resulting in turnover of the newly hired employees.

Participant 8 revealed that before leaving the organization, they were unhappy working for the City of La Palma and dreaded going to work every day. This participant's tone when speaking emphasized their unhappiness at the time. Participant 8 emphasized that initially, they were happy working for the City of La Palma when they first got hired, but after a few years, that changed. This participant attributed this to constantly getting called in for overtime with less than a few hours' notice, which began bothering them. Additionally, Participant 10 mentioned that vacancies in the patrol bureau at the City of La Palma were prompting burnout from overworking existing employees. Participant 2 emphasized that the organization was fun to work for when morale was good. However, it was hard for the organization to break the cycle until a high turnover occurred and new employees brought in better attitudes and motivation to replace the employees leaving.

The third major topic discussed regarding factors influencing employee turnover at the City of La Palma was leadership and management issues. This topic included three concepts: a lack of experience among supervisors, an us vs. them mentality, and management issues. All three concepts emerged during the interviews and emphasized how these factors created turnover intentions or caused actual turnover. For instance, multiple participants indicated that many of the supervisors employed by this organization lacked experience or were promoted out of necessity due to prior instances of mass turnover. For instance, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 5, Participant 8, Participant 10, and Participant 11 all indicated that supervisors lacked experience within the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. For example, Participant 2, Participant 8, and Participant 11 expressed their frustration working with a former supervisor who had major problems trusting employees and who excessively micromanaged them.

Participant 2 and Participant 8 also indicated that this organization focused on maintaining the status quo and discouraged making changes. Participant 8 revealed that when they questioned why their organization did something out of the norm, the administration's typical response was, "That's the way we have done it." This participant emphasized that this attitude created a "helpless environment" where employees realized that this organization would not change for the better. Participant 2 mentioned that the organization was so set in its ways that supervisors and management would go out of their way to defend outdated policies or actions to maintain the status quo. Participant 5 mentioned that some employees were promoted to supervisors over more qualified candidates and indicated this was a significant problem. Participant 3 and Participant 10 indicated that there were problems with supervision but did not want to elaborate.

The concept of the organization having an us vs. them mentality between line-level employees and supervisors was brought up by four different participants to emphasize the divisiveness of the organization. The four participants were Participant 2, Participant 5, Participant 8, and Participant 12. Participant 2 and Participant 8 indicated how the supervisors and management employees always sided together, which created a sense of unfairness and tension between the officers and supervisors. Participant 2 indicated that management did not take complaints about supervisors seriously and tried to make the issues disappear rather than addressing the problems that caused employee conflicts. Participant 5 revealed how divisive it was between management and employees and felt that this created a poor working environment between the different classifications. Participant 12 emphasized how the different classifications of employees, such as line-level employees, supervisors, and management, did not adequately

communicate or share information between the groups. Additionally, this participant indicated they often felt isolated in their employee classification.

The concept of management issues within the City of La Palma was also a significant topic that participants addressed. Specifically, Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 5, Participant 8, and Participant 11 mentioned management issues within the City of La Palma. Participant 11 emphasized that some of the management issues that existed within the organization drove away good employees. While this participant did not elaborate, Participant 11's facial expression indicated that they wanted to share more but, at the same time, were holding back with specific details. Similarly, Participant 1 confirmed the presence of management issues at the City of La Palma but did not want to elaborate or provide any specific information. Additionally, Participant 3, Participant 5, and Participant 8 indicated they were underappreciated at the City of La Palma. Participant 5 and Participant 8 even reported being education shamed by management for having a higher level of education, which contributed to these employees leaving the City of La Palma. These participants both indicated they felt no choice but to leave the organization to seek better opportunities since they perceived the management as holding them back.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 stated: What are the participants' suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention at the City of La Palma? Much of the information discussed by participants was relevant to this research question since solutions and suggestions were derived from the participants' perspectives on employee turnover and the factors influencing it. As such, while discussing the many problems within the organizations, potential solutions were also discussed. Specifically, interview questions 15, 16, and 17 were used to obtain data relevant to

Research Question 3. Interview question 15 directly asked participants, “Do you have any suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention? Please elaborate.” This question essentially asked the research question and obtained a generalized response to this question. Interview question 16 followed up on the prior question and asked participants, “What could have been done to reduce or eliminate your turnover intentions?” to make this more personalized and obtain specific information from the participant. In most instances, the responses to both questions were very similar, but the answers varied in a couple of cases. For example, some participants provided organization-specific solutions in response to interview question 15. During interview question 16, some participants offered specific solutions that would have only assisted them and not most employees at the City of La Palma.

In Interview question 17, participants were asked if they believed many aspects went into the decision to leave an organization through turnover or if there were a single or few changes that could reduce turnover. This question attempted to gauge the participants’ perspective regarding the difficulty of improving retention among law enforcement officers. Specifically, this question was looking to determine if participants believed this would be an easy fix through only implementing a few changes or if this would be a more complex problem. The three main concepts discussed regarding improving retention were salary and benefits, work-life balance, and increasing organizational opportunities.

In response to interview question 15, Participant 1 indicated that the City of La Palma needed to fix their retirement formula since it was inconsistent with other local organizations. Participant 2 suggested improving the retirement formula and hiring more officers to improve employee retention at the City of La Palma. The potential solutions provided by Participant 3 consisted of improving compensation, hiring more officers, and adding more special

assignments. Participant 4 suggested that the City of La Palma create a supplemental retirement account for employees to offset the difference in retirement offered and hire more officers to reduce mandated overtime. Participant 5 suggested that the City of La Palma add more special assignments and implement a clause in the MOU to adjust salary based on comparable organizations automatically. Participant 5 mentioned that during prior labor contracts over a decade ago, a clause was written that the salaries would be based on the organization remaining at a particular level compared to the comparable organizations. For instance, if the City of La Palma had to remain in fifth place out of the eight comparable organizations, anytime an organization behind the City of La Palma got a raise which moved the City of La Palma lower than fifth place, the City of La Palma would automatically raise the salary to put the employees back to the fifth place. This employee emphasized that this type of language in a contract would keep the City of La Palma in pace with other organizations and would keep the City from falling behind with salaries as they had done in recent years. Participant 6 suggested improving the retirement formula and adding more special assignments. Participant 7 only had a single suggestion to improve retention and reduce employee turnover. They suggested improving the retirement formula to make it consistent with other local organizations.

For interview question 15, Participant 8 suggested increasing both the salary and benefits provided to officers, hiring more officers to reduce mandated overtime, and adding more special assignments to improve retention at the City of La Palma. Participant 8 mentioned that according to the City of La Palma, the City could not improve the formula after establishing this formula due to state legislation with pension reform. As such, it was mentioned that there was no easy solution for recruiting and retention purposes. This was because, on paper, it would always show that the City of La Palma was lower than other law enforcement organizations. On the other

hand, this participant indicated that a possible retention strategy would be to compensate employees with an equivalent secondary retirement account to make up for the difference between the 2.0 percent and 2.7 percent formula. Additionally, Participant 8 also mentioned hiring more officers but mentioned that the City and City Council would be unlikely to implement this solution since it was cheaper to operate the organization the way it was with excessive overtime than to hire more officers. This participant emphasized that although it would be more expensive, the City and City Council should investigate implementing this recommendation since it could reduce officer burnout by improving work-life balance. It was also emphasized that this recommendation could improve the organization's long-term viability. It was argued that if burnout and poor work-life balance led to high turnover, quality candidates for promotion were less likely to stay at the organization. It could also lead to problems where there would be no candidates to promote, or the organization would promote unqualified candidates just to fill roles, leading to different issues.

Participant 9 suggested increasing the compensation offered to law enforcement officers, including salary and benefits, when responding to interview question 15. Additionally, this participant suggested adding more special assignments, such as participating in county-wide task forces. Participant 9 mentioned that other law enforcement organizations participated in county-wide taskforces for stolen vehicles, computer forensics, narcotics taskforces, and other areas. It was emphasized that many officers have different goals and desires within law enforcement, but having more options and variety would serve the organization well for retention purposes. For instance, it was mentioned that if an officer ultimately wanted to participate in narcotics investigations, there would be limited opportunities at the City of La Palma, which could impact retention. Participant 10 provided three suggestions as possible solutions to improving retention.

Their solutions were the addition of a secondary retirement account, increasing the salary for City of La Palma law enforcement officers, and adding special assignments to become similar to other organizations. Participant 10 emphasized that the City of La Palma should pay near the average of similar local organizations. They understood that their organization would never be the highest-paid organization. Participant 11 suggested adding more special assignments and increasing the retirement formula. For instance, Participant 11 mentioned that adding a motor officer position would significantly benefit the organization since it would be something that some officers would look forward to doing. Participant 12 argued that improving the salary and benefits would be the simplest and most effective method to improve retention at the City of La Palma.

For interview question 15, Participant 13 suggested hiring more officers to reduce the amount of mandated overtime, improving the retirement formula, and adding more special assignments. Participant 13 explained how a motor officer position would help the organization and that while they were not specifically interested in obtaining that position, it would make their life easier since that would take some of the burden off the patrol officers concerning traffic enforcement and writing traffic collision reports. Participant 13 also suggested utilizing the Corporal program to cover shifts for both officers and supervisors, as well as implementing a structured overtime list to ensure that overtime was evenly distributed. It was mentioned that supervisors consistently had a preconceived notion of who would volunteer to cover the shift and who would say no. Hence, these supervisors continually asked the same employees who they thought would say yes, typically newer employees, accelerating the burnout process for the same few employees. It was emphasized that this caused burnout in newer employees, which might prompt them to leave the organization sooner. Participant 13 suggested a roster be implemented

to have the order to choose from for overtime. That way, overtime would be equally distributed among all officers. Participant 13 also mentioned that if it got to an officer and they could not take the overtime shift, they would be placed at the top of the list for the next open shift.

Interview question 16 did not apply to Participant 1, Participant 3, and Participant 4 because they previously indicated that they did not experience turnover intentions while working at the City of La Palma. Participant 2 provided the same answers for interview questions 15 and 16, which consisted of improving the retirement formula and hiring more officers to improve employee retention. It was argued that improving retirement would prevent officers from leaving just for compensation differences and that hiring more officers would improve the work-life balance at the organization. Participant 5 revealed that if they had been treated better by management and were better compensated, they may still have been employed by the City of La Palma. Participant 6 stated that their turnover intentions could have been reduced with their desired special assignment and a normal retirement formula.

In response to interview question 16, Participant 7 indicated that their turnover intentions could have been eliminated entirely if the City of La Palma had offered higher compensation, including salary and retirement formula. Participant 8 argued that it was improbable to eliminate their prior turnover intentions at the City of La Palma since there were so many issues. This participant emphasized that the issues with the organization's leadership would need to be addressed first to ensure that lasting changes could occur. Participant 9 stressed that if the City of La Palma had increased salary and benefits and added more special assignments, such as participating in county-wide task forces, they would have likely stayed at the organization. Participant 10 believed that having a variety of special assignments and a comparable retirement formula and salary would have alleviated many of the turnover intentions they experienced.

Participant 11 revealed they might have stayed at the City of La Palma if the specific assignment they desired had been offered. Participant 12 revealed that they had not experienced turnover intentions for the last year and attributed this possibly to their current assignment at the City of La Palma. As such, increasing special assignments and different opportunities at the City of La Palma could potentially reduce turnover intentions. Participant 13 believed that improving the work-life balance and compensation would have significantly impacted their turnover intentions at the City of La Palma.

For interview question 17, Participant 1 argued that multiple factors influence turnover and that although this could reduce turnover, other issues also significantly impact employee well-being and happiness. Participant 2 believed this could go both ways but ultimately argued that various aspects typically influence an employee's decision to leave an organization. Participant 3 believed that multiple aspects influence an employee's decision to leave since everyone has their own motivations for choosing an employer. Participant 4 believed that multiple aspects impact a decision to leave the organization. Participant 5 also indicated that there are various influencers of turnover since every employee has different opinions and values. Participant 6 initially hesitated to answer interview question 17 but ultimately believed there were various causes of turnover. Although Participant 7 was solely impacted by financial motives when deciding to leave the City of La Palma, they emphasized that, in most cases, many aspects go into an employee's decision to leave an organization. Participant 8 argued that numerous factors influenced turnover intentions and went on to list various issues within the City of La Palma pertaining to the organization's management, salary, and work-life balance. Participant 9 emphasized that multiple aspects impact an employee's decision to leave the organization, and they had multiple reasons for leaving the City of La Palma when they did.

Participant 10 believed that multiple aspects affect an employee's decision to leave an organization and revealed that they had multiple areas that influenced them and felt that other officers would feel the same. Participant 11 revealed that they were aware of other former employees who left for reasons other than their own, so they believed that multiple reasons impact voluntary turnover. Participant 12 revealed that throughout their career, they had numerous instances of turnover intentions, and the reasoning often varied. Therefore, this participant believed numerous aspects influence an employee's decision to leave an organization. Participant 13 indicated that they did not take the decision to leave the City of La Palma lightly and believed that multiple aspects go into an employee's decision to leave the organization.

Overall, all 13 participants suggested increasing salary and benefits as a possible solution to improve employee retention and reduce voluntary turnover at the City of La Palma. It should be noted that Participant 2, Participant 4, Participant 8, and Participant 10 mentioned implementing an alternative or secondary retirement formula. Participant 8 revealed that the labor union discussed this possible strategy during the last contract negotiation. Perhaps the labor union's recent discussion of this topic was why four participants proposed the same specific solution. Additionally, work-life balance was also an extremely significant concept when discussing solutions for employee retention. As such, the presence of excessive overtime and being called into work on short notice on regular days off significantly impacted the work-life balance at the City of La Palma. Five participants, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 8, and Participant 13, suggested hiring more police officers to reduce the amount of mandated overtime and call-ins on their days off. Multiple participants also indicated that improving employee opportunities through special assignments could improve retention within the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. Eight participants, Participant 3,

Participant 5, Participant 6, Participant 8, Participant 9, Participant 10, Participant 11, and Participant 13, suggested the addition of more special assignments as a method to improve employee retention. Overall, the top three suggestions for improving retention at the City of La Palma were improving salary and benefits, hiring more officers to reduce overtime and burnout, and adding more special assignments.

Theme Development

This study utilized information collected during document analysis, semi-structured open-ended interviews, and participant observation to develop and establish a series of themes comprising of various sub-themes. The notes from each interview were examined, and key points were listed. The topics were then counted for frequency based on how many participants mentioned this aspect. It should be noted that since the participants declined to audio-record the interviews, the frequency refers to a single notation of the topic during an interview. The research utilized manual coding by examining the notes from each interview to identify and derive the main themes of this study. This list was consolidated based on recurring concepts and ideas discussed during the interview questions, which then became the list of sub-themes. The list of subthemes was then sorted, and various sub-themes were grouped together by similar concepts and were then placed under generalized themes for organizational purposes. Additionally, it should be noted that this theme development section mainly utilizes data collected during the semi-structured interviews. The reason for this was that, generally, document analysis only provided general context and information about the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization and the turnover that has occurred, so the amount of information from official sources was limited to select topics. Also, the information from the participant

observations was mainly utilized to complement and emphasize the information obtained, but additional findings were not provided outside of the verbal responses provided during interviews.

The themes are relevant to the research questions since the five themes cover all aspects that can influence turnover. Research Question 1 focused on the perception of turnover activities, which involves the participants' perspectives on the effectiveness of the City of La Palma retaining employees. Research Question 2 focused on the main influential factors that prompted voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma. All of these themes were significant areas that were addressed that impacted turnover at the City of La Palma. As for Research Question 3, many solutions for improving law enforcement officer retention at the City of La Palma involved the inverse of the main influential factors causing turnover. As such, the five themes helped explain how employees view the retention activities, the main influential factors of voluntary turnover, and the suggestions for improving employee retention at the City of La Palma. See Table 5 below for the list of themes and sub-themes that were extracted during the data analysis portion of this study. Additionally, see Table 6 for the number of different participants who mentioned each theme or subthemes discussed during their interview.

Table 5*Themes and Sub-Themes*

Themes	Sub-Themes
Salary & Benefits	2.0 percent at 57 PEPRA vs. Classic Unlivable Wages
Poor Morale	Burnout Work-Life Balance Lack of Communication
Political Climate / Public Support	Defund the Police Movement / George Floyd Protests Lack of City Council Support Demographics of Citizens
Leadership & Management	Lack of Experience Among Supervisors Us vs. Them Mentality Management Issues
Limited Opportunities	Special Assignments Promotional Opportunities

Table 6*Number of Different Participants Who Mentioned the Themes and Sub-Themes in Interviews*

Theme/Sub-Theme	Number of Different Participants
Salary & Benefits	13
2.0 Percent at 57	13
PEPRA vs Classic	4
Unlivable Wages	12
Poor Morale	10
Burnout	7
Work-Life Balance	6
Lack of Communication	6
Political Climate / Public Support	11
Defund the Police Movement /George Floyd Protests	10
Lack of City Council Support	4
Demographics of Citizens	4
Leadership & Management	8
Lack of Experience Among Supervisors	6
Us vs Them Mentality	4
Management Issues	6
Limited Opportunities	11
Special Assignments	8
Promotional Opportunities	5

Salary and Benefits

The theme of salary and benefits was a significant theme identified within this study. This theme emerged during every interview that was conducted, and this topic was found extensively during document analysis. Additionally, the concept of salary and benefits was one of the most referenced areas when discussing the concept of voluntary law enforcement officer turnover within the City of La Palma. While a few participants had different perspectives of the salary and benefits offered by the City of La Palma, a vast majority felt a certain way.

Specifically, the most discussed topic was the retirement formula provided to most officers interviewed for this study. The theme of salary and benefits was divided into the following subthemes: 2.0 percent at 57, PEPRAs vs. Classic, and unlivable wages.

2.0 Percent at 57. The retirement formula of 2.0 percent at 57 was a concept discussed by all 13 participants. This retirement formula was a major issue among all the participants. Participant 8 explained that the City of La Palma utilized the CalPERS retirement system and that law enforcement officers hired by the City of La Palma after 2013 had the 2.0 percent at 57 formula. Participant 2, Participant 7, Participant 8, Participant 10, and Participant 13 emphasized that 2.0 percent at 57 was not the norm in Southern California and that essentially all other law enforcement organizations offered 2.7 percent at 57. Participant 7 said that if they had stayed with the City of La Palma for 25 years, they would have made tens of thousands of dollars less than a law enforcement officer who worked for an organization that offered the regular retirement formula.

Participant 8 mentioned that the issue of the retirement formula arose during recent labor negotiations a few months back. However, the City and the City Council were unwilling to do anything about it. Participant 8 mentioned that since the City changed the formula, it was now set in stone and unable to be changed. The researcher noted that Participant 8 spoke passionately about this topic and emphasized that this was a major problem within the organization. Participant 2, Participant 5, Participant 7, Participant 8, Participant 10, and Participant 13 emphasized that they believed the current retirement formula was a major factor leading to good officers leaving the organization and seeking employment at other organizations offering better retirement formulas. Participant 10 stated that they had seen former coworkers leave the City of La Palma and go on to work at various law enforcement organizations and get retirement

formulas such as 2.7 percent at 57 and even 3.0 percent at 50. As a current employee, this participant came across as being disappointed and slightly jealous of the benefits that former employees went on to receive.

Participant 4 and Participant 10 mentioned that when they were initially applying for jobs, they were unaware of different retirement formulas and that the City of La Palma had the lowest retirement plan around. Participant 2 and Participant 7 indicated that if they had to do it all over again, they would have chosen another law enforcement organization that had the normal retirement formula of 2.7 percent at 57. Participant 7 indicated this was because of their family, while Participant 2 did not specify their reason. Participant 2 emphasized that they felt like they got the “short end of the stick” by working for this organization. This participant’s body language helped emphasize how they were disappointed with how things turned out. Participant 10 stressed that the City of La Palma’s retirement formula was the most likely reason they would eventually leave the organization. Participant 3 also stressed that 2.7 percent at 57 was “looming over their head” and that all they had to do was go work for another organization to receive it. Participant 8 mentioned that experienced officers looking to lateral to another law enforcement organization would never come to the City of La Palma because of the lower retirement formula offered by the City.

Participant 7 and Participant 13 mentioned that looking back now, they would not go back to work for the City of La Palma due to the current retirement benefits offered. Participant 7, a former employee, mentioned that salary and benefits were vital reasons why they sought employment at another law enforcement organization. However, the retirement formula of 2.0 percent at 57 was ultimately the main reason for this participant leaving. This participant indicated that they would likely still be employed by the City of La Palma if the retirement

formula was consistent with other local organizations. Participant 6, Participant 9, and Participant 11 also mentioned that 2.0 percent at 57 was a significant factor in why they left the City of La Palma. All three participants received a higher retirement formula at their new law enforcement organizations. Participant 8 emphasized that they were okay with having a lower salary than other organizations if the retirement formula was consistent. However, having the lowest salary and retirement formula of any nearby organization caused them to seek employment elsewhere.

The findings from document analysis were consistent with the information reported by participants during their interviews. For instance, Rains et al. (2022) emphasized that the City of La Palma was the only organization out of their seven comparable organizations to offer the 2.0 percent at 57 retirement formula. It was revealed that all the organizations that the City of La Palma compares to were provided the 2.7 percent at 57 retirement formula. During document analysis, the researcher conducted several calculations based on the information identified during the referenced compensation study. It was revealed that based on the numbers in 2022, a La Palma Police Officer would receive \$26,838.00 less in an annual retirement pension than the average organization from their comparable organization. This number mainly had to do with the 2.0 percent at 57 retirement formula but also had to do with the lower salary provided by the City of La Palma.

PEPRA vs. Classic. The concept of PEPRA vs. Classic employees was also a concept that was discussed in multiple interviews. This concept was not discussed as frequently or as in-depth as 2.0 percent at 57, but the instances when this concept was brought up helped explain some of the perspectives of classic employees. Four participants discussed this sub-theme. Participant 2 and Participant 5 helped explain the concept of PEPRA vs. Classic employees, and

upon the researcher asking follow-up questions, the concept was clarified. It was explained that PEPRA was the legislation implemented in 2013 that reduced retirement formulas across California. Many law enforcement organizations in California reduced the retirement formula for new employees hired after 2013 to 2.7 percent at 57. Classic employees were those grandfathered in before PEPRA and who kept their existing retirement formula. In the case of the City of La Palma, PEPRA employees had 2.0 percent at 57, and Classic employees had 3.0 percent at 50. The City of La Palma prematurely reduced the retirement formula in 2011 to 2.0 percent at 55 due to budgeting issues. In contrast, most other law enforcement organizations reduced the formula in 2013 due to mandated legislation. In 2013, the City of La Palma further reduced the PEPRA formula to 2.0 percent at 57.

Participant 8 reported that many other law enforcement organizations grandfathered employees into different retirement formulas based on their original hire date. Participant 8 revealed that the City of La Palma did not do that, which prevents experienced officers from choosing to work for the City of La Palma. Participant 2 mentioned that during a mass exodus of classic employees after 2014, most of those employees could keep their 3.0 percent at 50 retirements at their new law enforcement organizations. It was also mentioned that even some former employees hired between 2011 and 2013 who had a 2.0 percent per year retirement at the City of La Palma went on to receive 3.0 percent at 50 at their new organizations.

Participant 2 mentioned that it often became PEPRA vs. Classic among the employees during labor negotiation time. Participant 2 said that Classic employees often did not want to “ruffle the feathers” of the City and the City Council since they already had an excellent retirement formula. In contrast, PEPRA members felt “underappreciated” in terms of salary and benefits. Participant 2 stated that while Classic employees also argued for higher wages to be

comparable with other organizations, they would often not go out of their way to advocate for too much and often had the attitude that they were happy with what they had. It was also mentioned that Classic employees often told PEPRA members they should be glad they had a job. Statements like these upset the PEPRA members because they perceived it as Classic employees just looking out for themselves. Participant 2 also mentioned that this created a sense of unfairness among employees, especially PEPRA employees who felt that for doing the same job, they would be rewarded much less in the long run. Participant 2 had a solemn expression, emphasizing that this was a significant issue for them.

Only a few participants in this study were Classic employees (both current and former employees), while the vast majority were PEPRA employees. For confidentiality purposes, the participant numbers were not disclosed in this section to protect the identity of Classic employees. A participant in this study who was a Classic employee indicated that they felt lucky that they had a good retirement formula and could support their family financially during their retirement. This participant smiled and truly seemed satisfied with the retirement they would receive in the future. The same participant emphasized that they “felt sorry” for newer officers who are PEPRA employees due to the difference in their retirement system. This participant also indicated they understood why the City of La Palma had a high turnover rate during the last ten years and attributed this phenomenon to a lower retirement formula than surrounding law enforcement organizations.

Document analysis emphasized that PEPRA continues to be the presiding legislation that controls the current retirement formulas for most law enforcement organizations in California (Rains et al., 2022). It was revealed that PEPRA employees now have to work seven years longer than classic employees, and they are ultimately provided a lower percentage formula. Ultimately,

PEPRA employees need to work longer for their organization to retire, and when they do so, they will make less in retirement due to the lower formula. Rains et al. (2022) emphasized that the City of La Palma took a step below the standard PEPRA formula and reduced the retirement formula to 2.0 percent at 57 prematurely due to financial concerns in the City. Ultimately, this variance has resulted in PEPRA law enforcement officers having a significant disadvantage compared to Classic retirement employees, and the City of La Palma PEPRA law enforcement officers got an even worse retirement formula than standard PEPRA employees.

Unlivable Wages. The concept of unlivable wages was discussed in a majority of interviews. This concept had to do with the perceived low salary offered by the City of La Palma and the perceived high cost of living in California. Twelve of the participants discussed the City of La Palma's salary. The participants included Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 4, Participant 5, Participant 6, Participant 7, Participant 8, Participant 9, Participant 10, Participant 11, Participant 12, and Participant 13. They expressed dissatisfaction with the compensation offered to them either currently or when employed by the City of La Palma. Eight participants in this study mentioned California's high cost of living, and three specifically mentioned that they could not afford a house in Orange County. Participant 10 mentioned that several current employees had to buy homes or rent apartments around 50 miles from the City of La Palma to afford the living expenses. Participant 8 emphasized that some employees had a three-hour daily commute to travel to and from the City of La Palma. Participant 10 revealed that on a single income, their family could never afford a house in Orange County, so they chose to live in an adjacent county. Differently, two participants, Participant 1 and Participant 12, emphasized that they were grateful for their careers and that it had allowed them to purchase a house. However,

these two employees acknowledged a wage difference between what they received and other local law enforcement organizations.

Participant 8 mentioned that the City, the City Manager, and the City Council knew the salary for La Palma law enforcement officers was a problem. However, until recently, the City did nothing except implement cost of living increases. Participant 2 believed that the only reason why the City implemented cost of living increases over three years was because there were numerous Police Officer vacancies. Participant 2 also mentioned that despite the recent five percent cost of living increase, the City of La Palma still had difficulty attracting quality candidates. Participant 9 discussed the compensation the City of La Palma provided and indicated that they perceived it as lower than comparable law enforcement organizations. Participant 8 even mentioned that their labor union, the La Palma Police Association, conducted a salary comparison study for their latest labor negotiation. Participant 8 referred to the salary comparison study and emphasized that it was upsetting that the City of La Palma was the lowest-paid law enforcement organization compared to nearby organizations of similar size. Participant 11 revealed that they were not initially aware that the City of La Palma was the lowest-paid organization but mentioned that they assumed they were near the bottom. See the section “Salary and Benefits Offered to La Palma’s Law Enforcement Officers” in Chapter Two of this study, along with Table 2, Table 3, Figure 2, and Figure 3, for information from this salary comparison study.

Participant 5 revealed that when the City of La Palma employed them, they always wanted to become a resident of the City. Participant 5 mentioned that when they were looking, the house prices were much lower than now. It was emphasized that even then, the real estate prices were still unobtainable based on Participant 5’s salary. Participant 5 argued that officers

nowadays could never afford a house in the City of La Palma. Participant 4 brought up the fact that several cities offer financial incentives for their law enforcement officers to be able to reside within their city limits, but the City of La Palma did not offer such a program. Participant 6, Participant 7, and Participant 11 indicated that the low salary offered by the City of La Palma was one of the main reasons why they left the organization. Participant 7 specifically mentioned that they liked the size of the organization but had to make the move to support their family financially. Participant 7's body language, such as nodding their head, was interpreted as them being confident in their decision to leave the City of La Palma for financial reasons. Participant 13 mentioned that they worked little to no overtime at their new organization and had the same paycheck size as when they worked excessively mandated overtime at the City of La Palma. This participant emphasized that they now had to do much less work for the same paycheck, and if they wanted to work as much as they did before, their paycheck would be much larger. Participant 13 appeared happy saying this and seemed glad to be working much less than before. Participant 5 and Participant 13 also indicated that at the end of the day, their career came down to being able to put a roof over their head and financially support their family.

Document analysis revealed similar findings regarding the low total compensation for law enforcement officers at the City of La Palma. The most recent compensation study available centered around the City of La Palma depicted significant results when comparing the City of La Palma to seven comparable organizations. This compensation study showed that out of the eight organizations examined, the City of La Palma had the lowest monthly total compensation for police officers with five years of experience. Additionally, when examining police officers with 25 years of experience, the City of La Palma not only had the lowest monthly total compensation but also had the lowest increase from police officers with five years of experience. Overall, the

significant differences in compensation levels discovered during document analysis highlight and align with the findings from the semi-structured interviews that were conducted.

Poor Morale

The concept of poor morale was a significant theme identified within this study. This theme emerged from numerous interviews conducted, and the concept of poor morale was a consistently referenced area when discussing voluntary law enforcement officer turnover within the City of La Palma. While a few participants had different perspectives of the morale situation within the City of La Palma, a vast majority felt a certain way about the morale being very poor within the organization for the last few years. The theme of poor morale was divided into the following subthemes: burnout, work-life balance, and lack of communication. It should be noted that no official documents were located or identified during the document analysis process of this study due to the specific nature of this theme and subthemes to the City of La Palma.

Burnout. Seven different participants brought up the concept of burnout during the interviews. Specifically, six participants, Participant 2, Participant 8, Participant 10, Participant 11, Participant 12, and Participant 13, indicated that they were currently or had experienced burnout while working for the City of La Palma. Participant 7 mentioned that while they were not directly impacted by burnout at the City of La Palma, they knew it was a problem among other employees during the same time frame. Participant 2 revealed that “the burnout is real here,” and they believed that most employees felt it. While discussing burnout, this participant’s somber tone and disapproving body language (shaking their head) emphasized that they had given up. Participant 10 argued that the burnout they felt was due to the vacancies in the patrol bureau, which caused scheduled overtime almost every week. Participant 8 described the feeling of burnout as feeling unmotivated, not happy when coming to work, and less willing to sign up

for overtime shifts. Participant 8 was very serious when discussing these topics and had a rigid posture and body language. Participant 2 argued that employees felt burnout from staffing issues, supervision/management issues, and the amount of overtime forced on employees.

Participant 2 explained that each 12-hour shift must have a minimum of one Sergeant and two patrol officers. Additionally, if one officer was sick, took vacation time, was at an outside training, or was on some other type of leave, that shift would have to be filled by another patrol officer who was not normally scheduled for that day. For instance, it was mentioned that if an officer working on a weekend day shift called out sick, someone working a night shift or someone working a different day shift would be mandated to come into work on short notice. Participant 13 revealed that other, larger law enforcement organizations did not operate this way since they typically had enough officers working each shift to cover for officers on leave. Participant 2 also mentioned that they had asked a friend at another law enforcement organization if officers would be called in to cover someone calling out sick. Participant 2 revealed that their friend said that this was unheard of and that the officers working would typically just be a little busier due to taking on additional calls and duties.

Participant 12 suggested that poor morale “comes and goes” over the years and that burnout also does. It was mentioned that many employees left the organization during their employment at the City of La Palma, which caused the hiring of new employees. Participant 10 mentioned that it often took months to fill a vacancy for a police officer position, so during that time, other officers would be subjected to work vacant shifts. Participant 12 indicated that they experienced burnout throughout their career and had experienced turnover intentions because of it. Participant 12 stated that they had not experienced burnout for the last year or so, but it might have been because of their current assignment. On the other hand, Participant 2 indicated that

they had consistently experienced burnout for the last few years. Participant 2 attributed burnout to the working conditions within the organization (long shifts, excessive overtime), lack of opportunities for advancement or special assignments, and supervision and management issues.

Work-Life Balance. Six different participants brought up the concept of work-life balance during the interviews. The six participants were Participant 2, Participant 8, Participant 9, Participant 10, Participant 11, and Participant 13. Some participants had families, while some were single or dating and had no children. All six participants indicated that a poor work-life balance created poor organizational morale. Participant 9, Participant 11, and Participant 13 specifically indicated they believed that the sheer size of the organization was a primary contributor to the work-life balance issues these employees had experienced. Participant 11 believed that work-life balance issues would continue to be an issue among City of La Palma law enforcement officers because the constant turnover of employees would lead to staffing issues, which would then cause mandatory overtime.

Participant 8 revealed that a poor work-life balance was one of the main reasons they left the organization. Participant 8 mentioned that before leaving the City of La Palma, it seemed like they would be called into work unexpectedly every week. Participant 8 provided examples such as eating dinner with their family or being on an outing when they got a call from a sergeant to be forced into work on their day off. Participant 10 emphasized that they based their personal schedule on their regular work schedule, but issues arose when plans changed at the last minute because there was a vacant shift to fill. Participant 8 also noted that this poor work-life balance caused stress with their family since they would have to cancel plans at the last minute or had the inconvenience of having plans interrupted midway because the participant would have to leave for work.

Participant 8 indicated that management often did not care about what officers thought or what they requested. Participant 8 mentioned that this organization utilized three-month shift rotations. It was explained that patrol officers were assigned to a particular shift, such as weekend nights, for three months until the next shift began. It was also mentioned that the organization recently switched to a 4-month shift rotation over a year ago. Participant 8 revealed that the former scheduling supervisor was often nonchalant and uncaring towards employees' outside work-life balance. For instance, it was revealed that shift picks would not be released to officers until a few weeks before the new shift went into effect. So, it was often difficult to schedule vacations, doctor appointments, or other outside work activities since the officers would not know what shift they were going to until it was about to start.

It was further mentioned that officers questioned why they could not submit their shift preferences for the following shift at the start of a new shift. This participant argued that if this was implemented, officers could know their primary schedule eight months ahead, but the organization's administration rejected this. Participant 8 mentioned that this was brought up to management, but they did not care and asserted that this was management's right to do what they wanted. Additionally, the management asserted that this was how they had been doing it, so they were unwilling to change their ways. Participant 8 emphasized that this system created work-life balance issues and made planning activities outside work difficult. Additionally, this participant emphasized that there was an easy fix by publishing shifts sooner so employees could plan their schedules. However, it was argued that the organization did not care about the employees' work-life balance. This participant's hand gestures and body language, such as eye-rolling, emphasized that they thought it was ridiculous that the City of La Palma would not implement a simple fix to make their employees happy.

Lack of Communication. Six participants brought up the concept of lack of communication during the interviews. The six participants were Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 8, Participant 9, and Participant 12. The concept of lack of communication focused specifically on communication from the management level to other employees. Participant 4 suggested that lack of communication was perpetuating the poor morale that was currently present within the organization. This participant emphasized that the management of the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization did not adequately communicate with their employees, which caused employees to gossip about what they perceived was happening, often leading to more stress. For instance, this participant mentioned that the management employees had been having frequent closed-door meetings that lasted hours long for the last year. It was revealed that this participant had associated closed-door meetings with major staffing changes, which recently included a supervisor resigning after an internal investigation, an officer being terminated right at the end of their probationary period for no apparent reason, and a probationary employee resigning unexpectedly.

Participant 12 indicated that they often did not know what was happening within the organization and attributed this to a lack of communication from the Chief and Captains. Participant 12 also mentioned that many law enforcement officers felt the same way about how information was communicated within the organization. This participant revealed that they stopped paying attention to what was happening and just tried to stay under the radar. Additionally, this participant felt that communication within the organization could be improved regarding messages passed between City Hall and the law enforcement officers since most officers did not know what was happening within the City. Participant 9 recalled poor

communication within the City of La Palma and emphasized that there had been a much smoother level of communication at their new organization.

Participant 3 discussed how, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a lack of clear information and inconsistencies regarding patrol activity levels. Additionally, Participant 2 brought up that there was very little communication directly from the organization's administration and that most of the information came from the sergeants. It was then mentioned that there were inconsistencies among sergeants regarding limiting nonessential activities, such as proactive policing, to prevent a department-wide COVID-19 outbreak. This participant revealed that this caused confusion since sometimes shifts overlapped and officers worked with different sergeants. Additionally, it was brought up that later, during the pandemic, the organization's administration passed down a message to the sergeants that they were unhappy with the low productivity levels, even though the officers were never told to return to normal productivity levels. Participant 2 emphasized that this caused frustration among the line-level officers. As a result, proactive policing resumed, but when there was another wave of COVID-19 outbreaks in the area, the officers were told to think about what activities to participate in because of the current condition. The organization's administration did not clarify the expected productivity levels, which caused more confusion. Participant 2 expressed frustration through facial expressions when describing this situation.

Participant 8 discussed how this organization did not share information effectively with the employees. For instance, Participant 8 mentioned that when they came to work after a few days off, they had no idea what had happened, crime-wise, while they were away. Participant 8 said they preferred to know what kind of crimes occurred and the locations where crimes occurred during their time off so they could patrol the area more effectively to deter future

crimes. Participant 8 suggested that the organization's administration send out each shift's Watch Commander Log to all officers so they could stay apprised of what was happening in the City. Participant 8 revealed that this document was not confidential and was not supposed to contain any disciplinary or personnel matters, so there should be no reason why this document could not be forwarded to the officers. This participant mentioned that the Watch Commander Log is currently only sent to the organization's administration, sergeants, and detectives. It was also mentioned that the concept of sending the Watch Commander Log had been brought up before, but the organization's administration did not approve of sharing information with employees.

Political Climate / Public Support

The concept of the current political climate and public support was a major theme identified within this study. This theme emerged from numerous interviews conducted, and the concept of the current political climate and public support was consistently referenced by participants when discussing voluntary law enforcement officer turnover within the City of La Palma. There was a consensus among participants regarding the impact of the current political climate on the profession of law enforcement. However, there were some discrepancies when participants discussed the concept of public support. The theme of political climate and public support was divided into the following subthemes: Defund the Police Movement and George Floyd Protests, lack of City Council support, and demographics of citizens. It should be noted that no official documents were located or identified during the document analysis process of this study due to the specific nature of this theme and subthemes to the City of La Palma.

Defund the Police Movement / George Floyd Protests. Ten different participants brought up the concept of the Defund the Police Movement or the George Floyd Protests during the interviews. Specifically, these participants were Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4,

Participant 5, Participant 6, Participant 8, Participant 9, Participant 10, Participant 12, and Participant 13. All these participants indicated the current anti-law enforcement sentiment and the Defund the Police Movement significantly impacted their outlook on their careers. Specifically, Participant 2, Participant 10, Participant 12, and Participant 13 mentioned that watching prosecutions of law enforcement officers had made them somewhat fearful of doing their job. Participant 2, Participant 8, and Participant 10 brought up that the City of La Palma did not issue their law enforcement officers body-worn cameras, so many of their interactions with the public were not captured on video. It was also mentioned that the only audio/video device provided to officers was a patrol vehicle dash camera, which did not capture events not occurring directly in front of the patrol vehicle. Additionally, Participant 8 mentioned that audio recordings typically become out of range or start intermittently cutting out once the officer gets a short distance from their patrol vehicle. Participant 2 and Participant 13 expressed that in today's society, the general public would not believe a law enforcement officer's word if it was not captured on video.

Participant 12 expressed that the Defund the Police Movement had been disheartening because they tried their best to serve their community daily. This participant mentioned that they had noticed that more and more citizens had become increasingly hostile and argumentative during interactions with law enforcement. Additionally, this participant felt that there had been a cultural shift against law enforcement officers. Participant 3, Participant 4, and Participant 9 indicated that law enforcement officers were now more negatively perceived by the community and that this profession was less desirable than before. Participant 9 and Participant 10 attributed the difficulty in hiring law enforcement officers to this negative perception. Participant 9 stated, "Nobody wants to be a cop nowadays," emphasizing the current situation. Participant 12

indicated that many law enforcement officers near retirement age might decide to retire early, and younger officers might want to find a different career since they might see a long road ahead.

Participant 8 argued that the Defund the Police Movement was politically driven and did not appear to be working from what they had seen in the media. Participant 8 further elaborated that after the height of the Defund the Police Movement in 2020 due to the George Floyd protests, several cities that had defunded their law enforcement had recently begun funding these organizations again due to rampant crime rates. Participant 10 indicated that the City of La Palma had no central calling to “defund the police.” However, it was emphasized that all law enforcement officers felt the sentiment as a profession. Participant 2, Participant 4, Participant 8, Participant 10, and Participant 12 indicated that during that time, they had the current political climate in the back of their mind when responding to calls. Participant 8 mentioned that they had heard of the phenomenon where law enforcement officers hesitated to use force because they did not want to be “put on trial and judged by the media.” Participant 12 revealed that they had felt something similar during calls for service and contemplated the risk of stopping an individual.

Additionally, Participant 2 revealed that while the George Floyd protests were occurring, a supervisor discussed with their shift the importance of evaluating the type of proactive calls the officers were pursuing to see if it was worth it. Participant 10 and Participant 12 mentioned that during and after the George Floyd protests, they limited their proactive policing and reduced the number of nonessential contacts because of the fear that the contacted person would not comply. Participant 10 mentioned that this also happened during the COVID-19 pandemic when activity levels were lower, so as a result, many officers further reduced their proactive contacts.

Lack of City Council Support. Four participants brought up the lack of city council support during the interviews. Specifically, these participants were Participant 2, Participant 5,

Participant 8, and Participant 12. Two additional participants, Participant 2 and Participant 8, emphasized their dissatisfaction with the last labor contract implemented a few months prior and attributed it to the City Manager and City Council. Participant 8 discussed how residents of the City of La Palma generally supported the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. It was further mentioned that most political candidates who ran for City Council in the City of La Palma attempted to capitalize on this and ran on the platform of being extreme supporters of La Palma's law enforcement organization. While Participant 12 mentioned that some had been excellent supporters of the law enforcement organization in the past, several candidates were hypocritical, and it appeared they only supported law enforcement to get elected. Participant 2 concurred and suggested that if a high-profile event, such as an officer-involved shooting, had occurred in the City of La Palma, a majority of the City Council would "give in" to protesters and the "anti-police rhetoric" before an investigation was conducted.

Participant 8 indicated that during the last labor negotiation, the City and the City Council were not interested in addressing the union's other concerns about retaining the current officers. Additionally, Participant 8 mentioned that during the last two labor contracts, the City tried to shove a contract "down the union's throat" since the City waited until the last minute to submit offers. Participant 5 emphasized that law enforcement was a unique profession since labor negotiations were not really negotiations due to the City and City Council holding all of the power. This participant mentioned that the labor union sued City Hall multiple times in the past, which caused a breakdown in relations for years to come. Participant 8 explained that law enforcement officers were prohibited from going on strike like other professions, such as sanitation workers or teachers, due to public safety concerns. As such, the City and City Council could offer what they wanted, and ultimately, that was what the labor union would get. For

instance, it was mentioned that during the last negotiation, the City held its ground and would not budge from its original and only offer. This ultimately led to the labor union and the City going through an impasse. Participant 2 emphasized that the City was only interested in raising salaries over the next three years because it offered such a low salary, causing hiring issues since qualified applicants were not applying for the vacant positions.

Participant 2 further emphasized that the City was not interested in addressing current retention but instead focused on hiring new employees to replace those who had left for higher salaries. Participant 2 and Participant 12 mentioned that the City recently implemented a \$13,000 hiring bonus for newly hired law enforcement officers. Participant 2 argued that this did nothing to retain good employees and only attempted to hire employees to fill vacancies. Participant 2 suggested this would not solve the problem since nothing kept current or newly hired officers at the City of La Palma. In fact, other organizations were offering similar or larger hiring bonuses. In addition to providing higher pay and a better retirement formula, Participant 2 indicated that the City and City Council should have focused on retaining current law enforcement officers instead of focusing on how to recruit new employees for the employees constantly leaving.

Demographics of Citizens. Four participants brought up the demographics of citizens during the interviews. Specifically, these participants were Participant 7, Participant 9, Participant 10, and Participant 12. Participant 7, Participant 9, and Participant 10 mentioned that, generally, the residents of La Palma supported the City's law enforcement organization. Participant 12 similarly indicated that residents supported law enforcement officers and even passed a sales tax measure, "Measure JJ," several years ago to ensure the City's financial sustainability. It was further mentioned that the City and City Council at the time ran on needing this sales tax increase to maintain the City's law enforcement organization and not to contract

out law enforcement services to an outside organization. Participant 7 explained that, ultimately, the residents passed this sales tax measure. Participant 12 attributed the residents' support of the City's law enforcement organization as the reason this voter-initiated measure succeeded. Participant 7 mentioned they genuinely enjoyed working for the City of La Palma because of the supportive residents. Participant 7's smiling expression emphasized how much they cared about and enjoyed serving the residents. Participant 10 shared that during the 2020 anti-police riots, many residents displayed signs in front of their homes that said they supported the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. They indicated that this was heartwarming as they drove through neighborhoods.

Participant 10 mentioned that a significant portion of residents were older, and they believed that these residents tended to support law enforcement more than younger residents. This participant also mentioned that the younger generations seemed to be not as friendly towards law enforcement. Participant 12 specifically mentioned that they waived to many older residents when patrolling neighborhoods for years and suggested that from their experience, younger generations were not as supportive of law enforcement. As such, this participant believed there would be even less support for the City's law enforcement organization in another decade due to additional changes in residents and newer generations replacing the older residents. Participant 12 believed that with every generation shifting over time, fewer and fewer residents would care about their City having their municipal law enforcement organization. Participant 12 suggested that this would likely not impact them, but younger officers might run into this problem in the future.

Leadership & Management

The concepts of leadership and management were significant themes that were identified within this study. Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 5, Participant 8, Participant 10, Participant 11, and Participant 12 had referenced this theme's sub-themes within their interviews. These themes emerged from numerous interviews conducted, and the concepts of leadership and management issues were consistently brought up by participants when discussing the concept of voluntary law enforcement officer turnover. Several participants expressed frustration with the leadership and management issues experienced at the City of La Palma and attributed these issues to influencing voluntary employee turnover. It should be noted that only one official document was located during the document analysis process of this study that discussed employees not being ready for leadership roles within the City of La Palma. The themes of leadership and management were divided into the following subthemes: lack of experience among supervisors, an us vs. them mentality, and management issues.

Lack of Experience Among Supervisors. Six participants brought up the concept of the lack of experience among supervisors during the interviews. Specifically, these participants were Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 5, Participant 8, Participant 10, and Participant 11. Participant 8 indicated that during the last mass exodus of employees between 2014 and 2017, the individuals who stuck around got promoted, whether they were ready or qualified. Participant 3 argued that one of the biggest problems was that supervisors did not provide recognition for employees' hard work. Participant 3 emphasized that good supervisors should know when to recognize employees and make them feel valued. However, it was argued that the lack of recognition contributed to the organization's poor morale. Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 8, and Participant 11 indicated that there had been significant issues with micromanagement with

supervisors. Participant 2, Participant 8, and Participant 11 specifically mentioned one supervisor that the organization no longer employs. Participant 2 and Participant 11 specifically mentioned that this former supervisor did not trust officers to do their jobs and that the supervisor made employees run everything by them to ensure the supervisor had the final say in all decisions. It was further mentioned that even when there was a sound course of action, the supervisor would change some aspects of the plan to make it their plan.

Both Participant 8 and Participant 11 indicated that it had been their experience that officers had desperately avoided this supervisor's shift by selecting other shifts to work. It was further mentioned that this had caused the employees with the lowest seniority to be forced to work that shift, and often, these employees kept getting assigned to this supervisor's shift over and over since all other employees avoided working with this supervisor. Participant 8 indicated that they were assigned to this supervisor's shift for numerous three-month and four-month shift assignments, which accelerated the burnout process because of the severe micromanagement experienced daily. Participant 2 mentioned that even though the former supervisor was terrible, the one who replaced him had become just as bad. Participant 2 indicated that this new supervisor had issues with micromanagement and rejects police reports for irrelevant reasons to justify their existence. Participant 2 foresaw officers avoiding this supervisor's shift like the previous supervisor, which would force only newer officers with low seniority to be assigned to this supervisor's shift.

Participant 8 and Participant 11 indicated they felt the supervisors were not confident in their role. Participant 8 further emphasized that they believed these supervisors were scared of making decisions and always wanted someone else to make them. For instance, Participant 8 indicated that it had been the attitude of the former detective sergeant, now a captain, to file

charges by complaint to the district attorney's office instead of proactively making arrests upon completing investigations. This participant felt that this supervisor had been scared to do their job in terms of making arrests. Participant 8 mentioned they believed this supervisor feared liability and did not want something to happen if they made an arrest, such as using force or a wrongful arrest lawsuit. Reportedly, this supervisor had mentioned that it was easier to wait a few months, have the district attorney's office file charges, and let some other law enforcement organization make a warrant arrest to have the case proceed. Participant 8 emphasized that this supervisor did not effectively do their job and shifted the organization's culture to hands-off, significantly impacting the hardworking employees' motivation and morale. When Participant 8 described this, their facial expressions indicated they disapproved of it and were upset with the organizational culture change. Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 11 emphasized that supervisors' lack of experience contributed to law enforcement officers' voluntary turnover at the City of La Palma.

During the document analysis portion of this study, McCrary (2016) emphasized that several quasi-supervisor roles were vacant after a mass exodus of law enforcement officers at the City of La Palma around 2016. It was emphasized that none of these roles were being filled at the time because there were no qualified candidates (McCrary, 2016). It was then recommended that the roles should be filled as soon as eligible employees were available to fill them (McCrary, 2016). This was a significant problem, especially if these employees were being promoted when they were potentially underqualified and were just being promoted to fill a vacancy.

Additionally, documents such as Nunez (2014) and City of La Palma (2015) illustrated the mass exodus of law enforcement officers that occurred after 2014, which showed how the officers who

stayed behind eventually got promoted due to necessity since all supervisors and management were promoted from within.

Us vs. Them Mentality. Four participants brought up the concept of an us vs. them mentality during the interviews when discussing leadership. Specifically, these participants were Participant 2, Participant 5, Participant 8, and Participant 12. Participant 8 stated that “it’s an uphill battle” when dealing with supervisors and management. This participant mentioned that the organizational culture had been to maintain the status quo, discourage change for the better, and not improve the organization’s operations. For instance, Participant 8 mentioned that they had proposed several changes that could have been implemented to improve efficiency, increase cost savings, and assist with the legality of aspects of the police station. However, the organization’s leadership ignored these recommendations and did not respond to these proposed changes. One of the proposed recommendations was to post signs at the entrance to the jail within the police facility to announce that bringing in contraband, such as drugs or weapons, would be charged as a felony. The participant revealed that no such legally required sign was posted. As a result, if a prisoner brought in drugs or other contraband, the department could not charge the section for bringing contraband into a jail facility, which was a felony rather than a misdemeanor for mere possession. Participant 8 indicated they wrote and submitted a memorandum that explained why purchasing two of these signs was necessary and beneficial. Additionally, this participant designed and obtained a quote, which was less than two hundred dollars for professionally made UV signs to hang outside the jail entrances. This participant never received a follow-up for this proposal. More than two years later, these signs have not been implemented, even after contraband-related incidents have occurred at the organization.

Participant 2 indicated that the sergeants were typically backed by the management, which created a “divide” between line-level employees and supervisors. Participant 5 indicated that line-level employees often viewed and felt the tension between the two groups. Participant 2 mentioned that management would often defend the actions of sergeants, whether justified or not, and told the employees to just deal with it. Participant 2 said explicitly that they had experienced management employees defending a sergeant’s actions when they tried to sweep problems “under the rug.” Participant 2’s facial expression indicated that they were irritated with this. Participant 8 believed management protected the sergeants since they initially held that role before being promoted. Additionally, it was mentioned that the sergeants typically tried to “suck up” to management since these sergeants typically desired to be promoted in the future.

Participant 12 mentioned that the sergeants often did not know what was happening within the department. This participant further clarified that gossip in the patrol bureau often stayed among the officers and did not spread to the supervisors since the officers were worried that this gossip would spread up the chain of command. Participant 12, unlike other participants, indicated that the sergeants differed from line-level and management employees. Participant 12 mentioned that very little information was often shared with sergeants since management rarely involved the sergeants in the decision-making process and that the officers would not share information with the sergeants. Additionally, this participant emphasized that sergeants typically acted as middlemen who passed information between management and line-level employees. Participant 12 emphasized that there was a further division than just officers and supervisors; instead, there was a divide between officers, sergeants, and management.

Participant 5 and Participant 2 emphasized that those who held the position of Corporal were even more divided since they acted as quasi-supervisors. Participant 2 mentioned that

management and sergeants did not recognize those in this role as supervisors. Additionally, it was mentioned that the officers often viewed them as part of the supervisor group since corporals attend monthly staff meetings with the management and the supervisors. Participant 5 revealed that working in this capacity was somewhat lonely since this role did not fit perfectly into either group. Participant 2 mentioned that corporals often had little say in staff meetings, yet other officers thought they were given confidential information. These participants emphasized the presence of a significant divide among the different classifications within the organization and that there was often an us vs. them mentality where supervisors and management were in one group and officers were in another.

Management Issues. Six participants brought up the concept of management issues during the interviews. Specifically, these participants were Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 5, Participant 8, and Participant 11. Three participants went into depth regarding management issues and provided examples, while three other employees generally referenced this issue as possibly leading to employee turnover and causing low morale. Participant 8 mentioned that a few years ago, the City Council conducted a study session regarding equipping the City's law enforcement officers with body-worn cameras. During this presentation, the former Police Chief ultimately, the former Chief convinced the City Council that implementing body-worn cameras was too expensive since there had been no prior lawsuits. Participant 8 indicated that the former Chief was out of touch with contemporary policing since there was a need for body-worn cameras. Participant 2 mentioned that several months ago, when addressing officers regarding anonymous survey results, the former Chief expressed surprise that not issuing body-worn cameras was a concern brought up by multiple officers.

Participant 3 and Participant 5 emphasized that the management of the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization undervalued and underappreciated employees. Participant 5 argued that the management had been "small-minded and easily threatened" during their time at the organization. Participant 5 stated this passionately, which emphasized that they felt strongly about this. Participant 5 revealed they had extensive education and multiple degrees before coming to this organization, but he was degraded by a former Chief of Police while working there. This participant further mentioned that during this interaction, the former Chief of Police told the participant that their education did not mean anything and that "I can train a monkey to be a sergeant." Participant 5 indicated that they felt that this Chief of Police and subsequent management employees felt threatened by him. Participant 5 additionally mentioned that they took the supervisor test four times and ranked the highest each time, but less qualified candidates continually passed over them for promotions. This participant's facial expressions and tone emphasized that they were upset with how they were treated at the City of La Palma.

Participant 5 mentioned they were shocked when a former Chief promoted another employee over Participant 5, who scored lower on the sergeant's exam, had no supervision experience, no education, and had less time on the job. Participant 5 indicated that was when they knew they had no future at this organization, and they had to leave the organization to find a place that would value education, experience, and leadership skills. Participant 5 indicated that if they had been promoted and treated better by management, they would still have been employed by the City of La Palma.

Like Participant 5, Participant 8 indicated they experienced issues with being looked down upon by management employees for their education. Participant 8 indicated that a management employee questioned why they were pursuing advanced education, and the

management employee told the participant that their education would not help them at this organization. Participant 8 also indicated that education was not a priority for the organization. It was mentioned that upon requesting scheduling preferences so schooling could be completed effectively and have minimal impact on the participant's work-life balance, a management employee continually assigned shifts, specifically night shifts, that were difficult to complete schooling. Participant 8 emphasized that degrading an employee for seeking higher education and essentially education shaming caused them to look down on the management of this organization. Participant 5 similarly articulated that all the management employees had gone through an online degree mill to obtain a degree to be promoted. This participant indicated that these online degrees substituted a large portion of the classes for "life experience" and, therefore, should not be considered actual degrees since they were easily obtainable. Participant 5 mentioned that this might be why, historically, the management employees at this organization have felt threatened by employees with higher education and why the organization had promoted employees with little to no education.

Participant 2 mentioned that the organization recently replaced a civilian management position with a sworn captain position. Participant 2 emphasized that there had been little to no positive change from this restructuring and that the promoted employee had, if anything, caused lower morale. Participant 2 indicated that there had been a further divide between management and line-level employees. This participant also mentioned how one of the management employees seemed to not care about employees and had a strange demeanor when officers came to report issues with supervisors. Participant 5 shared that they had experienced management employees talking down to line-level employees. For instance, this participant mentioned that when discussing the concept of the officers being able to have off-duty secondary employment,

the Chief at the time denied this request after initially indicating that it would be approved. Participant 5 stated that the former Chief of Police stated, “You guys won’t understand this, but I do...I’m not going to let you work off duty”. Participant 5 emphasized that he felt that the Chief of Police at the time was very degrading and talked down to employees as if they were “stupid.” This participant had a disgusted look on their face when talking about this former Chief.

Limited Opportunities

The concept of limited opportunities was a significant theme identified within this study. This theme emerged from 11 interviews conducted, and the concept of limited opportunities was a significantly referenced area by participants when discussing voluntary law enforcement officer turnover within the City of La Palma. Most participants had similar perspectives regarding the limited opportunities offered to City of La Palma law enforcement officers. Additional information was obtained through document analysis of official documents from the City of La Palma that outlined the organization’s history as well as the reduction of special assignments over the last two decades. The theme of limited opportunities was divided into the following subthemes: special assignments and promotional opportunities.

Special Assignments. The concept of special assignments, and specifically the lack of special assignments, was mentioned by eight participants. The participants that discussed or mentioned special assignments were the following: Participant 3, Participant 5, Participant 6, Participant 8, Participant 9, Participant 10, Participant 11, and Participant 13. Six of these participants, Participant 5, Participant 6, Participant 8, Participant 10, Participant 11, and Participant 13, specifically emphasized that the lack of special assignments available at the City of La Palma’s law enforcement organization contributed to the employee turnover occurring at the organization. For instance, Participant 9 indicated that while the concept of special

assignments was not a major factor like salary and benefits, the lack of special assignments had also been a factor that had caused employees to leave the City of La Palma.

Participant 11 mentioned that the only special assignments available for police officers employed by the City of La Palma were two detective positions and one school resource officer position. Participant 10 emphasized that out of 13 police officers, there were only three special assignments, so ten police officers would be stuck in the patrol bureau. Additionally, Participant 10 mentioned that once an officer was assigned to a special assignment, they could hold that position for three to four years, which prevented others from obtaining an assignment.

Participant 6 emphasized that they were jealous of other organizations with more special assignments, such as participation in task forces (auto theft, narcotics, computer forensics), and more traditional assignments, such as K-9 and motor officer. This participant also mentioned that some organizations have DUI cars, VICE or undercover units, and helicopter pilots.

Participant 6 and Participant 11 emphasized that the lack of special assignments was a significant reason for leaving the City of La Palma and working for a different law enforcement organization. Participant 11 mentioned that there was a specific special assignment that they wanted to be assigned to eventually, but the City of La Palma did not offer this assignment. Participant 11 emphasized that while the financial compensation provided was another significant factor for leaving, they would have likely remained employed if the City of La Palma had offered that special assignment. Participant 6 similarly emphasized that their new organization offered many more assignments, with a greater chance of obtaining a special assignment. Participant 6 stated that while it was possible they might not end up with the desired assignment at the new organization, there was a “zero percent chance” that they would have ended up with it at the City of La Palma.

Participant 9 indicated that waiting four years for a position to open was a long time to work patrol, especially if one experienced burnout working 12-hour shifts in the same two-square-mile city. Participant 9 also emphasized that working patrol for years and years can become mundane. This participant further mentioned that being placed in a special assignment was an excellent way to break up the career by shifting roles for a few years, allowing time to go by quicker because of new and differing roles. Participant 5 mentioned that while serving in a special assignment at the City of La Palma, the learning curve of a new role created excitement and motivation to learn new things. Participant 9 mentioned that, unfortunately, there were not enough special assignments, so some officers were not selected and had to remain in the patrol division, which might have driven some people in the past to seek other employment.

Document analysis of official documents and publications from the City of La Palma emphasized the current lack of special assignments within the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. Nunez (2014) revealed that the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization peaked around 2000-2001. It was revealed that at that time, special assignments at the City of La Palma included two motor officers, one K-9 handler officer, an ASB Sergeant, and two ASB officers. Due to budgetary constraints, as of 2022, all of these special assignments have been eliminated from the organization (City of La Palma, 2020). Due to the reduction of these special assignments, law enforcement officers working at the City of La Palma will not have the opportunity to expand their expertise in various assignments, and there will be more competition for the few assignments still available at the organization. Additionally, this lack of special assignments could lead to turnover due to the officers being pushed away from the City of La Palma for fewer opportunities and pulled towards organizations that have these assignments.

Promotional Opportunities. The concept of promotional opportunities was in line with the concept of special assignments but discussed less frequently by participants. There was a total of five participants who discussed or mentioned promotional opportunities, and they were the following: Participant 2, Participant 4, Participant 5, Participant 7, and Participant 8.

Participant 2, Participant 4, and Participant 7 mentioned that there were limited promotional opportunities in the City of La Palma. On the other hand, Participant 5 and Participant 8 stated that they believed there were adequate promotional opportunities for the organization's size.

Participant 2, Participant 5, and Participant 8 described the promotional opportunities at the organization, which included five sergeant positions, two captain positions, and one chief position. Participant 2 and Participant 7 indicated that while eight of the 21 sworn positions were considered promotional positions, it was not as easy to promote at this organization since there were many factors, including timing. Participant 2 revealed that numerous sergeants were recently promoted in a short period, so once a few more retirements occur, there will be minimal movement over the next several years. Participant 2 also mentioned that from experience, once an individual was promoted at the City of La Palma, they often stayed for their career even though there were better pay and benefits elsewhere. Participant 2 attributed this to becoming comfortable in the position and not wanting to have to start over at a new organization.

Document analysis also revealed that an ASB Sergeant position was eliminated few years before 2014, which was now one less promotional opportunity available for law enforcement officers at the City of La Palma (Nunez, 2014).

Participant 2, Participant 5, and Participant 8 emphasized that promotional opportunities were often biased, and favoritism was utilized when management promoted employees.

Participant 5 indicated that the selection for supervisors had nothing to do with experience or the

different tests taken but instead had to do with favoritism. Participant 5 mentioned that he scored the highest numerous times. However, he was continually passed up for promotion by individuals with no supervisory experience, less education, and less time on the job. Participant 2 reported a similar situation and indicated that after experiencing this, they had no more desire to attempt to test to promote in this “rigged” system. Participant 8 also indicated that more qualified candidates were passed up during the promotional process, which seemed unfair. Participant 2 mentioned that continuing to conduct the promotional process like this would drive the qualified candidates away, causing the organization to have fewer qualified candidates to choose from in the future.

Participant 8 mentioned that while there was an appropriate number of supervisor and management positions for the size of this organization, other organizations would have more promotional opportunities in terms of numbers and frequency. Participant 9 emphasized that other organizations had more employees, so more retirements and promotions would occur. Additionally, this participant mentioned that other organizations had supervisor roles in various capacities, such as patrol sergeants, traffic sergeants, gang unit sergeants, professional standards sergeants, and detective sergeants. In contrast, the City of La Palma only had four patrol sergeants and one detective sergeant. Participant 5 emphasized that there was minimal lateral movement for supervisors. This potentially meant that there were few promotional opportunities for line-level employees to become sergeants, except for when retirements or administrative-level promotions occurred.

Summary

This exploratory multiple-case study examined the perspectives of various participants regarding voluntary law enforcement officer turnover among current and former City of La

Palma law enforcement officers. This chapter contained an overview of the study, a description of the participants, various experiences and perspectives of participants, answers to the research questions, and a discussion of themes that emerged. Through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, five themes and various sub-themes emerged when discussing the existing problems and factors that lead to turnover intention and actual turnover within the City of La Palma. Several instances of overlap between the themes and the research questions allowed these questions to be answered thoroughly. The following chapter, Chapter 5, will discuss the research findings and implications of the results in detail.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perspectives of law enforcement officers to obtain a greater understanding of voluntary employee turnover and retention. Specifically, this study examined the experiences and perspectives of current and former sworn law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma between 2014 and 2022. This chapter includes a summary of the study's findings and a discussion of the results regarding prior theoretical and empirical literature. Additionally, this chapter contains implications from this study, along with a discussion regarding its delimitations and limitations. Finally, this chapter concludes by providing various recommendations for future studies.

Summary of Findings

This qualitative case study was conducted to investigate and understand the concepts of voluntary employee turnover among law enforcement officers. The methodological theory guiding this study was Lee and Mitchell's (1991) Unfolding Model Theory of Employee Turnover. This theory examined voluntary employee turnover through a retrospective lens. Additionally, this theory attempted to make sense of instances of turnover by reviewing the individual's perspective, influential external situational factors, and various paths that an employee might take after being affected by external factors and their outlooks (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). While this theory had been studied with various other professions, until this study, this theory had not been examined explicitly within a law enforcement setting. The research questions that guided this study were the following:

Research Question 1: How do the participants view employee retention activities of the City of La Palma?

Research Question 2: What do the participants view as the main influencing factor of voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma?

Research Question 3: What are the participants' suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention at the City of La Palma?

The interviews with current and former law enforcement officers addressed the three research questions using semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Additional findings were referenced and supported through document analysis and participant observation. Ultimately, a series of themes containing multiple sub-themes emerged as prominent factors influencing turnover and retention within the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. The themes and subthemes identified during the data analysis were the following:

1. Salary and Benefits
 - a. 2.0 percent at 57 Retirement Formula
 - b. PEPRA vs. Classic
 - c. Unlivable Wages
2. Poor Morale
 - a. Burnout
 - b. Work-Life Balance
 - c. Lack of Communication
3. Political Climate / Public Support
 - a. Defund the Police Movement / George Floyd Protests
 - b. Lack of City Council Support
 - c. Demographics of Citizens
4. Leadership & Management

- a. Lack of Experience Among Supervisors
 - b. Us vs. Them Mentality
 - c. Management Issues
5. Limited Opportunities
- a. Special Assignments
 - b. Promotional Opportunities

Research Question 1

How do the participants view employee retention activities of the City of La Palma? This question assessed the concept of retention, which could measure the effectiveness of turnover within an organization (Hayes, 2020). Because of this vague topic, all five themes and the subsequent sub-themes were relevant. Additionally, participants brought up all of these concepts regarding the factors influencing turnover and the retention activities of the City of La Palma. Throughout the interviews, most participants indicated that they believed the turnover at the City of La Palma was higher than other law enforcement organizations. During the interviews and participant observations, it was widely acknowledged that the law enforcement profession was experiencing retention and recruiting issues, which was consistent with prior research (Thomas, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2021; Mourtgos et al., 2022; Skaggs et al., 2022). Additionally, document analysis indicated that the City of La Palma experienced a mass exodus of employees between 2014 and 2017 (City of La Palma, 2017; City of La Palma, 2019; City of La Palma, 2020; McCrary, 2016). However, numerous participants indicated that several factors significantly influenced voluntary employee turnover among law enforcement officers at the City of La Palma. Specifically, multiple participants indicated that the City of La Palma was not doing an adequate job of employee retention, and one even mentioned that they had witnessed and

experienced “unethical” retention practices within the organization. Other participants mentioned that the City recently implemented a hiring bonus for new employees. However, it was argued that this incentive did little for current employees to prevent them from leaving.

When addressing the retention activities of the City of La Palma, the main concepts discussed were the 2.0 percent at 57 retirement formula, poor morale brought about by poor work-life balance and micromanagement, and issues with leadership and management. Document analysis of the LPPA’s most recent compensation study revealed that the City of La Palma was paid the lowest of the other seven organizations that were compared (Rains et al., 2022). These areas were consistent with various prior literature that discussed these topics as influential factors resulting in law enforcement officer turnover (Allisey et al., 2014; Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Participants indicated that during the most recent labor negotiation process, the City informed the labor union that it could not do anything about the retirement formula since it was unchangeable due to the current state law. Participants indicated that by the City of La Palma offering this unheard-of retirement formula, retention was significantly impacted since every other local organization provided a significantly better one. On top of this, participants indicated that along with receiving the lowest retirement formula, employees were compensated the lowest out of all seven comparable cities. Participants also emphasized that the poor morale within the organization for quite some time had a major impact on employee retention. Participants indicated that the organization had done little to nothing to address issues causing low morale, including poor work-life balance, micromanagement, lack of communication, and employees experiencing burnout. Participants emphasized that these issues were also influenced by supervision and management problems, which reportedly impacted employee retention.

Research Question 2

What do the participants view as the main factor influencing voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma? This question sought to uncover what the participants perceived as the main or the top few contributing factors that led to voluntary employee turnover within the City of La Palma. All the participants indicated they believed that different factors influenced individuals differently. As such, it was argued that no single factor led to all instances of turnover. This finding was consistent with prior literature examining law enforcement officer turnover (Charman & Bennett, 2022; Hilal & Litsey, 2020). Instead, participants indicated that some main factors might have influenced a large percentage of turnover within the City of La Palma. For example, numerous participants mentioned that some factors appeared more significant than others when they impacted employees and potentially led to turnover intentions and actual employee turnover. The top three themes used to answer this question were the discussion of salary and benefits, poor morale, and organizational leadership and management issues. Document analysis allowed the researcher to examine the total compensation between the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization and other comparable organizations. When discussing the concept of salary and benefits, the retirement formula of 2.0 percent at 57 was a significant factor impacting employee retention at the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. Numerous participants emphasized that the stark difference in retirement formulas between the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization and other local law enforcement organizations had been a leading reason for low retention and high voluntary employee turnover.

Multiple participants also indicated poor employee morale significantly impacted employee retention and turnover. This finding also was consistent with prior literature by Hayes (2020), Li et al. (2021), and Shim et al. (2015). Subthemes such as employee burnout, poor

work-life balance, lack of communication, and micromanagement were all contributing factors that influenced poor morale within the organization and were reported to influence employee retention and turnover. Leadership and management were also prominent themes discussed in multiple interviews. This theme encompassed the sub-themes of a lack of supervisor experience, an us vs. them mentality, and management issues. Various participants painted a picture of a divide between the line-level officers and the supervisors and above, creating a toxic culture where employees felt that their best interests were overlooked. Overall, while participants discussed various concepts when discussing the law enforcement officer turnover within the City of La Palma, salary and benefits, poor morale, and leadership and management stood out as the most frequent and most significant factors discussed.

Research Question 3

What are the participants' suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention at the City of La Palma? This question allowed the participants to provide their thoughts and recommendations to reduce employee turnover. The themes most discussed in this question were salary and benefits, work-life balance, and opportunities within the organization. Every participant in this study recommended increasing the salary and benefits as a possible solution to improve retention among law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. This finding was similar to Schuck and Rabe-Hemp (2018), who argued that higher salaries were associated with lower turnover rates. Additionally, Hayes (2020) found that salary was a significant indicator of turnover intentions. The topics of salary increases and the addition of a supplemental retirement system were recommended to help bring the City of La Palma's compensation package up to par with other local organizations. Document analysis also revealed the problems associated with the current salary and benefits offered to City of La Palma law

enforcement officers. As such, improving these areas were reasonable suggestions to improve employee retention and reduce turnover at the City of La Palma. Participant 8 believed this would be the easiest area to address since compensation could be calculated and directly compared to other organizations. In contrast, other subjective areas, such as leadership or morale, would be difficult to compare among organizations.

Similarly, this participant indicated that opportunities within the organization would be a similar concept that could be easily improved. Numerous participants indicated that other local law enforcement organizations had more advancement opportunities, including special assignments and promotional opportunities. Document analysis also revealed that since its peak in 2001, the City of La Palma has eliminated six special assignments, limiting employees' opportunities to experience new roles within law enforcement. A few participants indicated that certain employees might have ultimate goals to go on to do specific law enforcement roles and that if the City of La Palma did not offer that assignment, the employee would likely leave the organization for one that offered that position. Some of the more popular special assignments discussed were the addition of a motor officer and a K-9 officer.

The theme of work-life balance was also a significant concept brought up by participants as something that should be improved to reduce and potentially prevent employee turnover. Multiple participants expressed experiencing burnout, especially because they had been mandated to work excessive overtime. Multiple participants recommended that the City of La Palma hire additional patrol officers, which would reduce the number of times an officer would be called into work on short notice and the amount of mandated overtime that would occur in general. It was emphasized that if each patrol shift were staffed with three patrol officers, very little overtime would occur since it would require two officers on the same shift to call out sick,

be at training, utilize vacation, or use some other type of leave before an officer working a different shift would be called into work on their day off. Overall, the participants provided various suggestions to improve retention among law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. However, some participants were not optimistic about the City of La Palma making these changes anytime soon.

Discussion

This qualitative case study aimed to examine the perspectives of current and former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma regarding voluntary employee turnover. As such, this multiple case study utilized semi-structured interviews and participant observation to obtain more detailed participant data. Additionally, document analysis was utilized to examine official documents and provide context to the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization, compensation offered to the City of La Palma's law enforcement officers, and special assignments within the organization. The data collection methodology deployed during the interview portion was snowball sampling, which assisted in finding potential participants for this study. The theoretical framework that guided this study was Lee and Mitchell's (1994) Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover. This section will discuss the findings of this study, which will include any connections to the theoretical and empirical literature discussed in the second chapter.

Theoretical Literature

Lee and Mitchell (1994) argued that the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Turnover attempted to make sense of instances of voluntary employee turnover through three methods. The methods were the individual's perspective, influential external situational factors, and different paths the individual took after being impacted by their outlooks and external factors.

This research study attempted to examine these methods specifically in a law enforcement profession setting. This study specifically examined current and former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma between 2014 and 2022. This selection was because the participants would have been exposed to the same leadership, organizational morale, compensation, and work-life balance. The Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Turnover utilized three components: rational choice theory, the concepts of “script” and “shock,” and how these employees chose to leave their organization through distinct and different decision paths (Skaggs et al., 2022, p. 3).

Rational choice theory contained the concept of image theory, which included the components of employees basing their decision-making on their "values (the decision-maker's principles), trajectories (desired goals), and strategies (how to achieve these goals)" (Morrell et al., 2008, p. 130). The findings revealed that the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover utilized during this qualitative study aligned with prior research. This study found that specific individualistic factors influenced the strengths of push and pull factors that employees experienced, potentially shifting the balance from retention to voluntary turnover within an organization. For instance, the impacts of salary and benefits, work-life balance, leadership and management, limited opportunities, and political climate and public support were all major themes that individually influenced the participants, some of whom experienced voluntary employee turnover because of one or more of these factors. Specifically, the theme of poor morale, which included employee burnout and work-life balance issues, leadership and management issues, and the current political climate, could have impacted the participants' values. The themes of limited opportunities and the salary and benefits offered to employees could be considered the trajectories because some participants negatively perceived what the

City of La Palma had to offer. The third component in image theory, strategies, could be the occurrence of turnover intentions and whether or not the employee followed through with actual turnover.

Additionally, the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover theorized that aspects known as “shock” and “script” could have impacted an employee’s turnover intentions and ultimately lead to employee turnover (Skaggs et al., 2022). Skaggs et al. (2022) described the concept of “shock” as a specific occurrence that prompted an employee to consider turnover, while the concept of “script” was described as a preplanned action to leave the organization. These specific concepts were crucial components to evaluate in instances of voluntary employee turnover since these possible explanations of event-motivated situational factors could explain the rationale behind some instances of employee turnover. During the interviews, no specific situations were mentioned that could be considered a “shock” situation, while much of what was discussed by former employees and current employees experiencing turnover intentions could be considered a “script” situation. All of the former employees discussed what ultimately led to them seeking employment outside of the City of La Palma, and some current employees discussed what was ultimately driving them away. Several participants who were current employees indicated that they did not see themselves still being employed by the City of La Palma in five years. This finding was a strong example of employees experiencing a scripted situation and already planning their exit from the City of La Palma within the next few years.

Finally, the third aspect of Lee and Mitchell's theory was five different decision-making paths that could occur when an employee leaves their organization voluntarily (Skaggs et al., 2022). All of the participants who were former employees and went through the turnover process

went through the last decision-making path, which was referred to as path 4b. All of the former employees interviewed for this study did not experience or at least mention experiencing what could be considered a shock, which narrowed them into the last two paths, paths 4a and 4b. Additionally, all of these former employees conducted a job search, evaluated their alternatives, and left the City of La Palma after they had an offer, so all the participants followed path 4b. This was a significant finding since it showed that all former employees experienced an image violation and disaffection, ultimately leading to a job search, and the participants followed through with leaving the organization. Through participant observation, multiple participants, such as Participant 6, Participant 9, and Participant 13, visually and verbally expressed their happiness with leaving the City of La Palma. With all areas of the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover being found within this study, it confirmed that law enforcement was no different from other professions when examining the turnover process. Specifically, this study helped confirm the causes of employee turnover and that employees' different paths during the voluntary turnover process aligned with prior research in other professions.

Empirical Literature

The findings of this study closely aligned with the empirical literature discussed in Chapter Two. As Charman and Bennett (2022) emphasized, voluntary employee turnover was avoidable through proper recruiting and effectively motivating employees. Multiple participants who were former employees indicated that the City of La Palma would have still employed them had the city changed a few key aspects. Similarly, Hital and Litsey (2020) emphasized that research indicated that the reason an employee leaves an organization is not always the same as what caused them to stay with the organization. This was consistent with findings in this study since some employees voiced complaints about aspects within the organization but ultimately

stayed there because they were comfortable and did not want to start all over at a new organization.

Abdullah Al Mamun and Nazmul Hasan (2017) emphasized that prior research had indicated that managerial factors, salary and benefits, working environment, promotional opportunities, and the overall job fit had been significant, influential factors that caused and resulted in employee turnover. Apart from overall job fit, these factors were extensively discussed during participant interviews. A possible reason for this was that this study limited participants to law enforcement officers who were currently off their initial probationary status. As such, officers who left the organization before completing their 18-month probationary period, either voluntarily or involuntarily, might have had issues with job fit. However, there were no reportable data since this study excluded this data set.

Prior research by Charman and Bennett (2022) indicated that voluntary employee turnover typically occurred when there were changes in the working conditions, which then impacted the employee's perception of the organization and overall attitude. This was consistent with the findings of this study since numerous participants addressed poor morale, work-life balance issues, and leadership and management issues, which influenced their turnover intentions. Similarly, Skaggs et al. (2022) emphasized that aspects such as poor leadership, unmet job expectations, salary and benefits, and lack of growth or promotional opportunities were all factors that had been attributed to impacting turnover in law enforcement. Document analysis supported these findings regarding the low compensation and lack of opportunities present within the City of La Palma. Again, all of these factors were significant topics of discussion for all participants, which helped the five themes emerge as significant influencers of employee turnover within the City of La Palma.

Schuck and Rabe-Hemp (2018) argued that law enforcement officers were less likely to leave their organization through voluntary employee turnover if they received higher salaries. This previous finding was confirmed by the findings of this study since salary and benefits was the most discussed theme during the interviews. This finding indicated that salary and benefits had the most influence and impact on turnover intention for current employees and actual voluntary turnover for former employees. Similar to these findings, Orrick (2018) emphasized that supervisor issues significantly impacted turnover intentions. With law enforcement being a paramilitary organization, rank and leadership were significant parts of the organization's structure. As such, the findings of this study confirmed prior research since leadership and management issues were significant factors that influenced voluntary employee turnover in the law enforcement profession. Overall, the findings of this study confirmed much of the existing research that examined law enforcement officer turnover and indicated that various factors were the leading causes of voluntary employee turnover.

Implications

Upon examining the findings and results of this study, various key pieces of information emerged with implications. Three types of implications emerged from this study: theoretical implications, empirical implications, and practical implications. While each type of implication has its own importance, the researcher argues that the practical implications are the most significant since the findings of this study could lead to potential reductions in employee turnover among law enforcement officers. The reduction of law enforcement officer turnover is a significant goal that is highly relevant to the field of public administration due to the potential impacts on public safety. On the other hand, theoretical and empirical implications that emerged

from this study can be used to inform future research in this field and act as a guide for studies that may wish to utilize a similar research design on a different sample population.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implication of this study was that path 4b of Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover was the most common and likely path for law enforcement professionals who experienced turnover intentions (1994). Due to none of the former employees experiencing what would be considered a "shock" occurrence, the most logical choice was step 4b, which made sense as to why all the participants proceeded with this pathway. Step 4a, the other choice, involved the employee leaving without conducting a job search, evaluating other options, or having an offer in hand, which appeared to be a rash action (Skaggs et al., 2022). Several participants discussed the high cost of living in California, which also probably influenced the former employees to conduct a job search and have an offer before leaving the City of La Palma. Factors such as organizations located in lower cost of living areas or individuals who are near at are at retirement age, may influence the outcome of the study since employees may be able to walk away without conducting a job search. These factors were not present in this study but should be examined in future studies to determine if there would be relevance.

It was also significant that none of the participants described having a "shock" occurrence. This was a positive aspect since the interviewed employees did not experience a significant event that prompted the immediate consideration of employee turnover. Instead, the participants indicated that they experienced ongoing issues, which built up over time and ultimately caused the former employees to leave the organization and seek employment elsewhere. As such, the administration of the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization

should attempt to identify solutions to prevent employees from experiencing image violations and disaffection in order to dissuade employees from conducting a job search for outside employment. A potential positive aspect was that the organization and the organization's administration had more time to fix the problems influencing voluntary turnover since employees had not been experiencing significant and traumatic issues that were prompting immediate and unexpected turnover. The organization's administrators should recognize voluntary employee turnover as a decision-making process and attempt to implement changes that could combat some of the influential factors that led to turnover intentions. Additionally, the administrators could utilize the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover to examine future instances of turnover for a greater understanding.

Empirical Implications

Besides the theoretical implications, this study's findings could prompt further studies in other law enforcement organizations. Also, this study could potentially prompt additional detailed experimental studies within the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization to follow up on the original results. For instance, this study could be replicated in other organizations with significant differences, such as in organizations with better or worse organizational morale or leadership techniques. In those instances, comparisons could be drawn between the two data sets to determine the influence between organizational and profession-wide factors. A possible follow-up study at the City of La Palma could be conducted after a specific factor has been addressed to examine the effect on turnover. For instance, after a solution to a significant factor such as compensation with salaries and benefits had been addressed, the study could be conducted again to gain an insightful understanding of the employees' perspectives.

Similarly, this study could be replicated in other law enforcement organizations with different compensation levels. In this study, the interviews and data analysis confirmed that the City of La Palma was at the bottom of their comparable cities in terms of both salary and benefits. Replicating this study with a law enforcement organization near the average compensation or at the top compensation would likely yield different results and implications than this study. The results from the other organization(s) could then be compared to the results from this study, and conclusions could be drawn. In the case of the City of La Palma, not only were the law enforcement officers compensated the lowest, but they were aware of this fact, which made it more relevant when employees experienced turnover intentions. Organizations with different compensation levels may still view compensation as a significant factor, but receiving a higher compensation could lead to various results.

Additionally, it was significant that much of the findings in this study matched the empirical literature from prior studies in this field. The implications for these findings included that the themes discussed in this study's results section were consistent among the law enforcement profession regarding turnover and retention activities (Hital & Litsey, 2020; Kiekbusch et al., 2003; Li et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2015). As such, salary and benefits, organizational morale, political climate, leadership and management issues, and limited opportunities were all significant areas that should be examined when different organizations scrutinize their law enforcement officer turnover. One of the main empirical implications was that salary and benefits are major factors impacting employee turnover in the profession of law enforcement (Mourtgos et al., 2022). Additionally, organizational morale and the political climate are significant factors that can influence turnover within a law enforcement organization (Bright, 2020; Nix & Pickett, 2017). Overall, within this study, multiple current employees

expressed disaffection with the current supervisors and administration, and all participants emphasized their disapproval of the organization being the lowest-paid organization and having the worst retirement formula offered compared to other law enforcement organizations.

Practical Implications

Multiple practical implications could be examined in detail now that this study has been completed. Ultimately, the organization's administration should attempt to utilize the empirical data from this study to gain a better understanding of the perceptions and problems that exist within the organization. Additionally, these administrators should attempt to solve some factors resulting in high voluntary turnover and low employee retention (Allisey et al., 2014; Orrick, 2018). As such, administrators could use the information from this study to implement their own anonymous survey to see what items are driving factors within their organization. While some aspects, such as political climate, might be out of the administrator's hands, they should attempt to improve the working conditions within the organization as a retention method (Brunetto et al., 2012). Based on the interviews with participants, the top three recommendations for the organization's administration would be to find a way to improve the salary and benefits of the law enforcement officers, adjust staffing to ensure that three patrol officers are assigned per shift, and work on improving organizational morale through addressing the current perception of supervision and management issues.

Employee compensation was the most addressed issue during this study. All participants in this study referenced compensation as a significant factor impacting turnover. Additionally, every participant expressed being dissatisfied with the compensation provided by the City of La Palma. While salary and benefits were both significant factors, the current retirement formula should be addressed first. Salaries among different organizations fluctuate due to the

implementation of different contracts, but state law has set the retirement formula in stone. The administration should work with the City to address this concern and find an alternative solution, such as a supplemental retirement account to make retirement compensation equivalent to that of other organizations.

The second recommendation is to address staffing issues to prevent work-life balance issues and burnout. A potential solution for addressing staffing is having three patrol officers assigned to all four shifts. Each shift has a minimum staffing level of two officers and one supervisor. The rationale behind this recommendation was that if three patrol officers were assigned to each shift, this would limit the number of times an officer outside of this shift would be called into work to cover a vacancy. It is also recommended that the City of La Palma use the full potential of the Corporal program so this officer assigned to each shift could fill the role of an officer or a supervisor during a vacancy. Increasing each shift to three officers and one supervisor could significantly reduce burnout and work-life balance issues that currently exist within the City of La Palma. It should be noted that other factors will need to be addressed since if turnover continues to occur, these new staffing levels will not be able to be implemented, and employee burnout will continue to occur due to poor work-life balance.

The third recommendation is to improve organizational morale by addressing and improving supervision and management issues. According to numerous participants, there were issues among supervisors and administrators that impacted the morale of the entire organization. As such, administrators within the organization should review the topics mentioned in the results section and attempt to address these concerns to improve organizational morale. This last recommendation may be difficult for the organization's administration to implement since it involves criticism. It may be beneficial for the organization to utilize third-party facilitators to

organize team-building events and leadership training to solve some of the issues described in this study. Overall, this study could be a reference guide for administrators to view concerns from current and former employees who shared information anonymously.

Delimitations and Limitations

From the start of the research study, there were built-in delimitations to ensure that the participants came from a consistent background and had a similar employment experience within the City of La Palma. To accomplish this, the researcher implemented several requirements for participants to be eligible to participate in this study (Allisey et al., 2014). Before any data collection in this study, this delimitation significantly limited who would be eligible to participate. For instance, the potential participants were limited to current and former law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma between 2014 and 2022. Additionally, these employees must have completed their 18-month initial probationary period and had yet to hold the rank of Captain or Chief. Another requirement for former employees was to leave their organization voluntarily and must not have been terminated, resigned in lieu of termination, or left the profession due to an illness, injury, or retirement.

Due to the implications, this delimitation could be both positive and negative. This could be considered a positive aspect since restricting the potential participants to a tiny and specific group made the data relevant since the participants had a similar background and experience in the City of La Palma (Tomažević et al., 2013). For instance, during the semi-structured interviews, many participants discussed similar occurrences in morale, salary and benefits, limited opportunities, political climate, and leadership within the organization, which provided an increased sense of validity to their statements since they worked at the same organization, during the same time, and under the same leaders. A negative aspect of this delimitation was that

reducing the number of potential participants limited the possible findings (Suboch et al., 2017). For instance, during interviews, it was discovered that in only a few months leading up to when the interviews were conducted, one employee was terminated right after his initial probationary period, a supervisor resigned after an investigation, and one employee unexpectedly resigned after approximately one year of working for the City of La Palma. These three cases and others that occurred between 2014 and 2022 could have had relevant details that provided significant findings regarding employee turnover issues and retention practices at the City of La Palma.

In addition to the delimitations, some limitations could have impacted the data and results of this study. For instance, one potential limitation was that due to the tiny size of the organization, it appeared that some potential participants were hesitant to volunteer to participate in this study, possibly due to fear of their administrators being able to identify their statements or participation in this study. This insight was gained through multiple participants stating such during their interviews and several potential participants hinting at the fear of being a part of this study when declining to participate. As such, because the topic of this study specifically addressed the potential participant's current or former employer, this might have caused some potential participants to choose not to participate. One participant even mentioned that this study was brought up to all employees, and management told them they could not stop them from participating. However, the employees were encouraged to be mindful of what they said if they chose to participate. As a result, fewer participants were interviewed for this study, potentially resulting in less data and less valuable insight being collected.

Additionally, the researcher noticed that for the participant observations, some participants went into detail and were passionate about what they were discussing. In contrast, some participants were very vague and just provided simplistic and generic answers to the

interview questions. Some participants appeared to participate in order to see what the study was about but wanted to keep their detailed perspectives and ideas private. These participants merely mentioned vague topics and did not provide examples or detailed information. This was especially prevalent with current employees, probably because management unofficially discouraged participating or sharing information. While some participants shared less information than others, the vague concepts with which they answered the questions were consistent with the participants who went into great detail. This emphasized that these participants experienced the same organizational issues regarding turnover and retention but could have been conflicted with sharing detailed information.

A second limitation of this study was that none of the participants consented to audio recording their interview (Creswell, 2013). This may have been because there was a specific box to check on the second page of the consent form that stated, “The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study” if consent was granted. Suppose there was a yes or no check box regarding consenting to audio recording the interview. In that case, the results may have been different since the participants might have thought they were required to answer instead of leaving a section blank. Alternatively, the researcher could have included a statement in the consent form asking participants to verbally inform them of their request to not record the interview instead of having a check box at the bottom. One participant (Participant 2) told the researcher that they declined to have the interview audio recorded since all of their interactions in law enforcement were recorded (dash camera, citizen cell phone cameras, etc.), so it was nice to talk off the record anonymously. Ultimately, this limitation reduced the amount of data analysis that occurred since the researcher had to take notes of what

was said rather than being able to upload audio files to a transcription software and then upload the transcripts to a data analysis software (Creswell, 2013).

Another limitation of this study was that due to the small population size of potential participants available for this study, the researcher had to conceal specific demographics to help maintain confidentiality among participants (Creswell, 2013). Unlike larger organizations or larger populations where detailed demographics (gender, age, ethnicity, education level, and level of experience) could be listed in the results of the study, it was discovered that upon examining the participant's demographics, there was a potential for a breach of confidentiality. The researcher ultimately decided that it would be best to conceal specific demographics to protect the confidentiality of the participants. During some interviews, participants expressed concern about their demographics being displayed since they believed their identities could be easily discovered. The length of service was one concern that arose since it was discovered that many law enforcement officers were hired around the same time. At the same time, only a few employees had been employed by the City of La Palma for an extended period, potentially exposing those who worked at the organization for less or more than the large group of employees hired around the same time.

Additionally, it was discovered that there was only one female law enforcement officer who was a current employee and two former female law enforcement officers who would be potential participants. Due to this finding, the researcher limited the participant demographics and did not include the participants' gender since there would be confidentiality issues just by looking at the demographics (Chu, 2017). Additionally, the researcher chose not to publish the participants' ethnicity in the study since readers familiar with this organization may be able to identify the participants with the other listed demographics (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also

grouped the length of service into year brackets rather than putting the exact amount of service. Ultimately, the only demographics listed in this study were age, years of experience, and employment status. The demographics of age and years of experience were listed in ranges for confidentiality purposes.

The limitation of organizational consent also arose at the beginning of the IRB process. In the early planning stages of this research project, the researcher met with a Police Captain employed by the City of La Palma concerning conducting this study. At the time, the researcher was assured that there was no issue conducting the study and to reach back out when it was time for participant interviews. In February 2023, the researcher sent an organization permission request to the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization. However, after approximately one month of waiting, the researcher followed up on their initial request, at which time the Chief of Police unexpectedly denied it. As such, the research methodology was modified to utilize snowball sampling as the participant selection method. Also, the research changed the study to ensure that the participants understood that this study was not endorsed, authorized, or sanctioned by the City of La Palma. Advertising that the study was not authorized or sanctioned by the City of La Palma in the consent documents and verbally before the interviews likely swayed some potential participants from participating in this study. Suppose the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization granted permission and was a cooperative partner. In that case, there might have been many more willing participants and more perspectives shared, especially by those who might have feared retaliation from the organization.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher specially designed the methodology of this study with a very narrow perspective and purpose. This specific limited design left open an opportunity for future

researchers to expand upon this study and further the area of knowledge in law enforcement officer voluntary turnover. As previously mentioned, Kiekbusch (2003) argued that quantitative studies were often limited in detailed data collection and that there was an identified research gap involving qualitative studies in voluntary law enforcement officer turnover. As such, this study was designed with a qualitative methodology to obtain detailed information and participant viewpoints regarding turnover to see if Lee and Mitchell's (1991) Unfolding Model Theory of Employee Turnover was consistent with and applicable to law enforcement officers.

Ultimately, the qualitative methodology was a great success in terms of collecting firsthand data through semi-structured interviews and a large amount of participant-specific data. On the other hand, the narrowed perspective of this study also severely limited the results due to the prequalifying screening and strict eligibility requirements to participate in this study (Creswell, 2013). The original purpose of this study was to utilize a tiny law enforcement organization so that all participants experienced consistent exposure to the same law enforcement organization. Additionally, another intent was that a large portion of the population could potentially be included in this study. With the limitations of this study in mind, future studies should base their study on a slightly larger law enforcement organization than what was used in this study to ensure an adequate sample size could be easily collected. The researcher recommends that this study be applied to a medium-sized law enforcement organization rather than a small one. Utilizing a larger organization as a setting could allow for additional findings and more willing participants.

As mentioned in the limitations section above, this study hit an unexpected roadblock regarding organizational permission right before the data collection of this study. An additional recommendation for future studies would be to gain written organizational permission before

finalizing the study proposal to ensure that the research had an organization that would be cooperative and supportive of the study. As a result of this study having to specifically advertise that this research was not authorized or sanctioned by the participant's current or former employer, it was likely that multiple potential participants chose not to participate due to fear of retaliation from the organization. This conclusion was reached through multiple participant interviews, as well as several potential participants hinting at this while declining to participate. Ultimately, having a willing organization as a partner can be a significant benefit, especially if the organization seeks answers and wants to benefit the organization since they may welcome feedback and encourage employees to participate (Jolicoeur & Grant, 2017). Unfortunately, this was not the case for this study. However, there were enough willing participants, and as a result, relevant findings were still discovered.

The findings of this study highlighted a few possible key causes of turnover intentions that participants consistently mentioned. One of the main themes present within this study was salary and benefits being primary factors in the causation of turnover intentions and actual turnover among former employees. This finding was consistent with prior research (Schuck & Hayes, 2020; Mourtgos et al., 2022; Rabe-Hemp, 2018). While this conclusion was a significant finding for this qualitative study of the City of La Palma's law enforcement organization, salary and benefits vary across different law enforcement organizations. As such, another recommendation for future research could be to conduct the same study but examine two organizations side by side, one with a high salary and good benefits and one with a low salary and poor benefits. In the case of the City of La Palma, these officers were provided the lowest compensations among their comparable organizations, so findings may vary with an organization that receives compensation near the median or near the top of their comparable organizations.

This hypothetical study could specifically examine salary and benefits to see how much difference variation in compensation made in turnover intentions and retention, as well as other possible reasons that could be highlighted in the study.

Another recommendation for future research would be to modify the participant selection to only former employees from a specific law enforcement organization. While this study had relevant findings from current employees, such as their turnover intentions and perspective of the organization, examining only a group of former employees who acted on their turnover intentions might prove more relevant. Under the current study, there was not a large enough population of former employees of the City of La Palma to examine only those employed during a similar period. If future researchers choose a larger study site, examining only former law enforcement officers who experienced voluntary turnover could reveal significant findings. Additionally, factors such as an organization's geographic location may impact the results of future studies. For instance, this study was conducted in Southern California, one of the areas with the highest cost of living in the United States. In contrast, organizations located in lower-cost-of-living areas may have employees who may be able to just walk away from their jobs without notice. In Southern California, due to the high cost of living, this is highly unlikely since most individuals would not be able to survive financially with the reduction of one income. Future studies should also examine or consider the participant's age and how close they are to retirement age. While this factor did not appear to impact this study, individuals nearing retirement age may resign and wait out a short time before they can begin collecting retirement. This study's research design eliminated those who retired from participating in this study, but in some situations, individuals who resign immediately before retirement age may cause some

confusion with data analysis. Overall, based on the findings and experience during the data collection process, a few recommendations for future studies emerged.

Summary

This research study aimed to investigate push and pull factors influencing and impacting voluntary employee turnover and retention among law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. A qualitative case study research design was utilized to examine and interpret the perspectives and viewpoints of participants through semi-structured open-ended interviews and participant observation. Additional relevant information was obtained and utilized through document analysis. The following three research questions guided this research study: Research Question 1: How do the participants view employee retention activities of the City of La Palma? Research Question 2: What do the participants view as the main influencing factor of voluntary law enforcement officer turnover at the City of La Palma? Research Question 3: What are the participants' suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention at the City of La Palma?

The guiding theory of this study was Lee and Mitchell's (1991) Unfolding Model Theory of Employee Turnover, which argued that specific pathways led to voluntary employee turnover. Ultimately, it was determined that salary and benefits, poor morale, the current political climate and public support, leadership and management issues, and limited opportunities were significant factors that influenced employee turnover among law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma between 2014 and 2022. Some of the most important implications of this study were that various factors contributed to the decision-making process for each former employee who left the City of La Palma and that all the employees who went through the turnover process went through a similar pathway per the Unfolding Model Theory of Voluntary Employee Turnover.

While this study had some limitations, it provided a good foundation for future research into the relatively unexplored area of voluntary employee turnover in law enforcement.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah Al Mamun, C., & Nazmul Hasan, M. (2017). Factors affecting employee turnover and sound retention strategies in business organization: A conceptual view. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 15(1), 63–71. [https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.15\(1\).2017.06](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.15(1).2017.06)
- AlHashmi, M., Jabeen, F., & Papastathopoulos, A. (2019). Impact of leader–member exchange and perceived organisational support on turnover intention. *Policing: An International Journal*, 42(4), 520–536. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pijpsm-06-2018-0081>
- Allisey, A., Noblet, A., Lamontagne, A., & Houdmont, J. (2014). Testing a model of officer intentions to quit. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 41(6), 751–771. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854813509987>
- Andreescu, V., & Vito, G. (2021). Strain, negative emotions and turnover intentions among american police managers. *Policing: An International Journal*, 44(6), 970–984. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pijpsm-01-2021-0014>
- Barthauer, L., Kaucher, P., Spurk, D., & Kauffeld, S. (2020). Burnout and career (un)sustainability: Looking into the blackbox of burnout triggered career turnover intentions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 117, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.103334>
- Bishopp, S., Piquero, N., Worrall, J., & Piquero, A. (2019). Notice of duplicate publication – negative affective responses to stress among urban police officers: A general strain theory approach. *Deviant Behavior*, 40(6), 635–654. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2020.1752057>

- Boag-Munroe, F. (2018). Recent police recruits' existing knowledge of the police and organisational commitment. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 34(1), 91–101. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-018-9273-1>
- Bowen, G. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/qrj0902027>
- Bright, L. (2020). Does perceptions of organizational prestige mediate the relationship between public service motivation, job satisfaction, and the turnover intentions of federal employees? *Public Personnel Management*, 50(3), 408–429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091026020952818>
- Brinkman, S. (2018). The interview. In N. Dezin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 576-599). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Brunetto, Y., Teo, S., Farr-Wharton, R., Shacklock, K., & Shriberg, A. (2017). Individual and organizational support. *Personnel Review*, 46(4), 750–766. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-12-2015-0319>
- Brunetto, Y., Teo, S., Shacklock, K., & Farr-Wharton, R. (2012). Emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, well-being and engagement: Explaining organisational commitment and turnover intentions in policing. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 22(4), 428–441. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2012.00198.x>
- California State Association of Counties. (2012). *California public employees' pension reform act of 2013 AB 340 and AB 197*. https://www.counties.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/ab_340_guide.pdf?1376607803

- Cambareri, J., & Kuhns, J. (2018). Perceptions and perceived challenges associated with a hypothetical career in law enforcement: Differences among male and female college students. *Police Quarterly*, 21(3), 335–357. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611118760862>
- Carlan, P. (2007). The search for job satisfaction: A survey of alabama policing. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 32(1–2), 74–86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-007-9014-y>
- Carminati, L. (2018). Generalizability in qualitative research: A tale of two traditions. *Qualitative Health Research*, 28(13), 2094–2101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318788379>
- Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(5), 811–831. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2337>
- Charman, S., & Bennett, S. (2022). Voluntary resignations from the police service: The impact of organisational and occupational stressors on organisational commitment. *Policing and Society*, 32(2), 159–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2021.1891234>
- Chu, D. (2017). Employment motivation and job-related satisfaction: A comparison of police women’s perceptions in dubai and taipei. *Policing and Society*, 28(8), 915–929. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2017.1329306>
- City of La Palma. (2013). *Frequently asked questions city of la palma’s financial situation*. <https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/3802/Financial-Situation-Top-10-FAQ-april-3-web-version?bidId=>
- City of La Palma. (2014). *La Palma general plan*. City of La Palma. https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/4845/Final-La-Palma-GP_Adopted-June-2014?bidId=

City of La Palma. (2015). *Community development and police department overviews; and prior meeting follow up* (Agenda Item No. 2).

https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/5702/Item-2_October-27-Staff-Report?bidId=

City of La Palma. (2017). *City of la palma 2017 compensation report*.

<https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/7789/2017-La-Palma-Compensation>

City of La Palma. (2018). *City of la palma Agenda item no. 9*.

https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/8577/Item-9_NOC-Public-Safety-Grant_Inspoteen?bidId=

City of La Palma. (2019). *City of la palma 2019 compensation report*.

<https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/9979/2019-Employee-Compensation-Report>

City of La Palma. (2020). *City of la palma 2020 compensation report*.

<https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/10849/2020-Employee-Compensation-Report>

City of La Palma. (2021). *Resolution No. 2021–21*.

<https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/11023/CC-RESO-2021-21-LPPA?bidId=>

Cordner, G., & Cordner, A. (2011). Stuck on a plateau? Obstacles to recruitment, selection, and retention of woman police. *Police Quarterly*, 14(3), 207–226.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611111413990>

- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Third ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc. <http://www.ceil-conicet.gov.ar/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CRESWELLQualitative-Inquiry-and-Research-Design-Creswell.pdf>
- Day, A., Giles, G., Marshall, B., & Sanderson, V. (2004). The recruitment and retention of indigenous criminal justice agency staff in an Australian state. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 48(3), 347–359.
- De Winne, S., Marescaux, E., Sels, L., van Beveren, I., & Vanormelingen, S. (2018). The impact of employee turnover and turnover volatility on labor productivity: A flexible non-linear approach. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 30(21), 3049–3079. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1449129>
- Desmond, J., Reynolds, B., Frank, J., Klahm IV, C., & Henson, B. (2020). Police productivity and performance over the career course: A latent class growth analysis of the first 10 years of law enforcement. *Police Quarterly*, 23(3), 333–367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611120907555>
- Deuchar, R., Crichlow, V., & Fallik, S. (2019). Cops in crisis?: Ethnographic insights on a new era of politicization, activism, accountability, and change in transatlantic policing. *Policing and Society*, 30(1), 47–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2019.1584197>
- Donnelly, D., & Quirin, J. (2006). An extension of Lee and Mitchell's unfolding model of voluntary turnover. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(1), 59–77. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.367>

- Galletta, A., & Cross, W. (2013). *Mastering the Semi-Structured interview and beyond: From research design to analysis and publication (qualitative studies in psychology, 18)*. NYU Press.
- Gupta, R., & Awasthy, R. (2015). *Qualitative Research in Management: Methods and Experiences* (First ed.). Sage Publications.
- Hayes, M. (2020). Tax and expenditure limitations, salary reductions, and public employee turnover. *Public Budgeting & Finance*, 40(4), 38–61. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pbaf.12269>
- Hilal, S., & Litsey, B. (2020). Reducing police turnover: Recommendations for the law enforcement agency. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 22(1), 73–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461355719882443>
- Hoffman, C., Hinkle, J., & Ledford, L. (2021). Beyond the “ferguson effect” on crime: Examining its influence on law enforcement personnel. *CrimRxiv*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.21428/cb6ab371.b09d3e9d>
- Hom, P. W., Lee, T. W., Shaw, J. D., & Hausknecht, J. P. (2017). One hundred years of employee turnover theory and research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 530–545. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000103>
- Islam, T., Ahmad, R., Ahmed, I., & Ahmer, Z. (2019). Police work-family nexus, work engagement and turnover intention. *Policing: An International Journal*, 42(5), 739–750. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pijpsm-09-2018-0138>
- Jabeen, F., Al Hashmi, M., & Mishra, V. (2020). Should i stay or should i go? The antecedents of turnover intention among police personnel. *Safer Communities*, 19(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1108/sc-05-2019-0013>

- Jolicoeur, J., & Grant, E. (2017). Form seeking function: An exploratory content analysis evaluation of the imagery contained in law enforcement agency police officer recruitment brochures. *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles*, 91(4), 339–355.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032258x17740318>
- Jones, J. (2021). *Black, white adults' confidence diverges most on police*. Gallup.
<https://news.gallup.com/poll/317114/black-white-adults-confidence-diverges-police.aspx>
- Kiekbusch, R., Price, W., & Theis, J. (2003). Turnover predictors: Causes of employee turnover in sheriff-operated jails. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 16(2), 67–76.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0888431032000115600>
- Kruth, J. (2015). Five qualitative research approaches and their applications in parapsychology. *The Journal of Parapsychology*, 79(2), 219–233. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 79(2), 219–233.
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/1776152718?parentSessionId=itzYQMjcBkHYYdUPpZzJHxz4sypercent2BB2nJ0nnH8hfo94BIpercent3D&pq-origsite=summon&accountid=12085>
- Krysiak, J., & Finn, J. (2018). *Research for effective social work practice* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Lee, T., & Mitchell, T. (1994). An alternative approach: The unfolding model of voluntary employee turnover. *Academy of Management Review*, 19(1), 51–89.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1994.9410122008>
- Lee, T., Mitchell, T., Holtom, B., McDaneil, L., & Hill, J. (1999). The unfolding model of voluntary turnover: A replication and extension. *Academy of Management Journal*, 42(4), 450–462. <https://doi.org/10.5465/257015>

- Lees, T., Elliott, J., Gunning, S., Newton, P., Rai, T., & Lal, S. (2019). A systematic review of the current evidence regarding interventions for anxiety, PTSD, sleepiness, and fatigue in the law enforcement workplace. *Industrial Health, 57*(6), 655–667.
<https://doi.org/10.2486/indhealth.2018-0088>
- Leip, L., & Stinchcomb, J. (2013). Should i stay or should i go? Job satisfaction and turnover intent of jail staff throughout the united states. *Criminal Justice Review, 38*(2), 226–241.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016813478822>
- Li, J., Cheung, C., Sun, I., Cheung, Y., & Zhu, S. (2021). Work–Family conflicts, stress, and turnover intention among hong kong police officers amid the COVID-19 pandemic. *Police Quarterly, 0*(0), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10986111211034777>
- Mansell, A., Brough, P., & Cole, K. (2006). Stable predictors of job satisfaction, psychological strain, and employee retention: An evaluation of organizational change within the new zealand customs Service. *International Journal of Stress Management, 13*(1), 84–107.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/1072-5245.13.1.84>
- Matz, A., Woo, Y., & Kim, B. (2014). A meta-analysis of the correlates of turnover intent in criminal justice organizations: Does agency type matter? *Journal of Criminal Justice, 42*(3), 233–243. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2014.02.004>
- McCrary, M. (2016). *La palma police department organizational review* (Agenda Item No. 12). City of La Palma. https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/6324/Item-12_PD-Org-Review?bidId=
- Morrell, K., Loan-Clarke, J., Arnold, J., & Wilkinson, A. (2008). Mapping the decision to quit: A refinement and test of the unfolding model of voluntary turnover. *Applied Psychology, 57*(1), 128–150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2007.00286.x>

- Morrow, W., Vickovic, S., & Shjarback, J. (2020). Motivation to enter the police profession in the post-Ferguson era: An exploratory analysis of procedural justice. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 34(2), 135–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1478601x.2020.1802591>
- Mourtgos, S., Adams, I., & Nix, J. (2022). Elevated police turnover following the summer of george floyd protests: A synthetic control study. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 21(1), 9–33. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12556>
- Mukwevho, N., & Bussin, M. (2021). Exploring the role of a total rewards strategy in retaining south african police officers in limpopo province. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v19i0.1391>
- Nix, J., & Pickett, J. (2017). Third-person perceptions, hostile media effects, and policing: Developing a theoretical framework for assessing the ferguson effect. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 51, 24–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2017.05.016>
- Nunez, E. (2014). *Police department reorganization proposal* (Agenda Item No. 5). City of La Palma. https://www.cityoflapalma.org/DocumentCenter/View/4664/Item-5_PD-Reorganization?bidId=
- Orrick, D. (2018). *Recruitment, retention, and turnover of law enforcement personnel*. International Association of Chiefs of Police. <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/BP-RecruitmentRetentionandTurnover.pdf>
- Patton, M. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4rd ed.). Sage.
- Police Executive Research Forum. (2019). *The workforce crisis, and what police agencies are doing about it*. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>

- Polit, D., & Beck, C. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 47(11), 1451–1458.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2010.06.004>
- Rabinovich, M., & Kacen, L. (2013). Qualitative coding methodology for interpersonal study. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 30(2), 210–231. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030897>
- Rains, M., Lucia, R., Stern, H., St. Phalle, E., & Silver, S. (2022). *La Palma police association total compensation survey police officer*. Rains Lucia Stern St. Phalle & Silver, PC.
- Sankofa, N. (2022). Critical method of document analysis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 26(6), 745–757. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2022.2113664>
- Schuck, A., & Rabe-Hemp, C. (2018). Investing in people: Salary and turnover in policing. *Policing: An International Journal*, 41(1), 113–128. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pijpsm-09-2016-0137>
- Shjarback, J., & Maguire, E. (2019). Extending research on the “War on cops”: The effects of ferguson on nonfatal assaults against U.S. police officers. *Crime & Delinquency*, 67(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128719890266>
- Shim, H., Jo, Y., & Hoover, L. (2015). A test of general strain theory on police officers’ turnover intention. *Asian Journal of Criminology*, 10(1), 43–62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11417-015-9208-z>
- Shin, S., & Miller, S. (2022). A review of the participant observation method in Journalism: Designing and Reporting. *Review of Communication Research*, 10.
<https://doi.org/10.12840/issn.2255-4165.035>

- Sire, J. (2015). *Naming the elephant: Worldview as a concept* (2nd ed.) [E-book]. IVP Academic. Retrieved July 2, 2022, from <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=3317006>
- Siu, O., Cheung, F., & Lui, S. (2014). Linking positive emotions to work Well-Being and turnover intention among hong kong police officers: The role of psychological capital. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *16*(2), 367–380. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-014-9513-8>
- Skaggs, S., Harris, C., & Montgomery, L. (2022). The impact of police–community relations: Recruitment and retention concerns of local police agencies. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, *0*(00), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1093/policing/paac029>
- Stewart, H., Gapp, R., & Harwood, I. (2017). Exploring the alchemy of qualitative management research: Seeking trustworthiness, credibility and rigor through crystallization. *The Qualitative Report*, *22*(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2017.2604>
- Stancanelli, J. (2014). Conducting an online focus group. *The Qualitative Report*, *15*(3), 761–765. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2010.1179>
- Stout, M. (2013). Preparing public administration scholars for qualitative inquiry: A status report. *Public Administration Research*, *2*(1), 11–29. <https://doi.org/10.5539/par.v2n1p11>
- Suboch, G., Harrington, C., & House, J. (2017). Why do female and minority police officers remain in law enforcement? *Race, Gender, Class*, *24*(3–4), 100–118. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26529225>
- Thomas, E., & Magilvy, J. K. (2011). Qualitative rigor or research validity in qualitative research. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, *16*(2), 151–155. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6155.2011.00283.x>

- Thomas, M. (2019). *Motivations for pursuing a career in law enforcement: An analysis of a local law enforcement agency* (Doctoral Dissertation). ProQuest. <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2239318866?pq-origsite=summon>
- Tipton, E. (2013). Stratified sampling using cluster analysis. *Evaluation Review*, 37(2), 109–139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841x13516324>
- Tomažević, N., Seljak, J., & Aristovnik, A. (2013). The impact of CAF enablers on job satisfaction: The case of the slovenian law enforcement agency. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 25(11–12), 1336–1351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14783363.2013.844914>
- Vaughn, P., & Turner, C. (2015). Decoding via coding: Analyzing qualitative text data through thematic coding and survey methodologies. *Journal of Library Administration*, 56(1), 41–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2015.1105035>
- Wang, W., & Sun, R. (2020). Does organizational performance affect employee turnover? A re-examination of the turnover–performance relationship. *Public Administration*, 98(1), 210–225. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12648>
- Wolfe, S., Rojek, J., Manjarrez, V., & Rojek, A. (2018). Why does organizational justice matter? Uncertainty management among law enforcement officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 54, 20–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2017.11.003>
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Fourth). SAGE Publications, Inc. http://cemusstudent.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/YIN_K_ROBERT-1.pdf
- Yun, I., Hwang, E., & Lynch, J. (2015). Police stressors, job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover intention among south korean police officers. *Asian Journal of Criminology*, 10(1), 23–41. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11417-015-9203-4>

APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 25, 2023

Andrew Kim
Abiodun Oguntuase

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-1073 Push and Pull Factors that Influence Law Enforcement Officer Turnover: A Qualitative Case Study

Dear Andrew Kim, Abiodun Oguntuase,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a) (7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Potential Participant:

As a graduate student in the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree in Public Administration. The purpose of my research is to study voluntary employee turnover among law enforcement officers, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be current or former sworn law enforcement officers employed by the City of La Palma. Additionally, the participants must either hold or have held the title of Police Officer, Corporal, Detective, or Sergeant. Current or former Captains or Chiefs will not be eligible in this study due to being in a different employee bargaining group and being at-will employees. Participants must have been employed by the City of La Palma for over 18 months and off their initial probationary status. In the case of former law enforcement officers, these individuals must have left the organization voluntarily, and as such must have not been terminated, or left the profession due to an illness, injury, or retirement. This research is not approved or sanctioned by the City of La Palma. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a semi-structured open-ended interview that will be audio-recorded (is consent is granted) and take approximately 20-30 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me at [REDACTED] to schedule an interview.

A consent document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Andrew Kim
Doctoral Candidate



Consent
Form.pdf

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM – PAGE 1

Consent

Title of the Project: Push and Pull Factors that Influence Law Enforcement Officer Turnover: A Qualitative Case Study

Principal Investigator: Andrew Kim, Doctoral Candidate, Helms School of Government, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a current or former sworn law enforcement officer employed by the City of La Palma. Additionally, the participants must either hold or have held the title of Police Officer, Corporal, Detective, or Sergeant. Current or former Captains or Chiefs will not be eligible in this study due to being in a different employee bargaining group and being at-will employees. Participants must have been employed by the City of La Palma for over 18 months and off a probationary status. In the case of former law enforcement officers, these individuals must have left the organization voluntarily, and as such must have not been terminated, or left the profession due to an illness, injury, or retirement. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the leading causes of employee turnover and retention among law enforcement officers. Voluntary employee turnover within law enforcement organizations is a significant problem that can impact public safety, organization staffing levels, employee morale levels, increase the organization's expenditures. As such, this study will examine the perception of law enforcement officers regarding voluntary employee turnover, potential causes for turnover, and potential solutions for employee retention.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a semi-structured open-ended interview that will be audio-recorded and take approximately 20-30 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include adding to the area of knowledge regarding voluntary employee turnover in the profession of law enforcement.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Additionally, participant responses will be kept confidential through assigning a unique identification number to conceal the participants' identities. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future

presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the City of La Palma. This study is not approved or sanctioned by the City of La Palma. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Andrew Kim. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Oguntuase, Ph.D. at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.
Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Potential Participant:

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Please fill out this questionnaire to determine the eligibility to participate in this study. Circle Yes or No for the following questions:

Current Employees:

YES / NO	Are you currently employed as a Police Officer, Detective, Corporal, or Sergeant with the City of La Palma?
YES / NO	Have you completed your initial 18-month probationary period?

Former Employees:

YES / NO	Were you formerly employed as a Police Officer, Detective, Corporal, or Sergeant with the City of La Palma between 2014 and 2022?
YES / NO	Did you leave your employment position at the City of La Palma voluntarily? For the purpose of this study, you would not have been able to have been terminated, resigned in lieu of termination, or left the profession due to an illness, injury, or retirement.

APPENDIX E

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another.
2. Please go into details regarding your law enforcement career, including details about the City of La Palma and any other prior or subsequent employment at a different law enforcement organization.
3. How has your experience been working in law enforcement?
4. What is your understanding of employee turnover?
5. Have you witnessed employee turnover within law enforcement organizations?
6. If you have witnessed employee turnover, have you felt any impact, positive or negative, from the turnover of other employees?
7. Do you believe that voluntary employee turnover is consistent among different law enforcement organizations, or do you think that different organizations have different levels of voluntary employee turnover?
8. Do you believe the amount of turnover at the City of La Palma has been higher or lower than other law enforcement organizations? Why do you think this?
9. How do you view the employee retention activities of the City of La Palma?
10. What are the working conditions like in the law enforcement profession? How is the employee morale at the City of La Palma? Please discuss topics such as salary and benefits, supervision, work-life balance, work-related stressors, society's view of the law enforcement profession, or other topics.

11. Have you specifically experienced turnover intentions while working in law enforcement? If so, can you describe what you felt or thought at the time?
12. What or who do you believe is responsible for causing the turnover intentions that exist within law enforcement organizations? Please describe any push and pull factors that you believe influence turnover intentions?
13. Do you believe there is a root cause of voluntary employee turnover within law enforcement organizations, or do you believe employees have different reasons when they decide to leave their organization? Please explain.
14. Do you believe that some instances of employee turnover within an organization can be considered normal? Please explain.
15. Do you have any suggestions for improving law enforcement officer retention? Please elaborate.
16. If you experienced turnover intentions, what could have been done to reduce or eliminate your turnover intentions?
17. Do you believe there is a single or a few changes that could be implemented to reduce voluntary turnover significantly, or do you believe many aspects go into an employee's decision to leave an organization? Please explain.
18. For former employees only: Do you regret leaving the City of La Palma? Why or why not? Is the factor or factors that you left the City of La Palma due to present at your current organization?
19. For current employees only: Do you see yourself still employed at the same law enforcement organization five years from now?

20. We have discussed many topics through the last few questions, and I appreciate the time you have given to this. What else do you think would be important for me to know about voluntary employee turnover in law enforcement?
21. Can you please recommend one to three current or former law enforcement officers from the City of La Palma that would be interested in participating in this study that would meet the eligibility requirements?