Program Evaluation of ABC Health System’s Employee Engagement Initiative on the Retention of Research Staff

MSA 699 Applied Research Project in Administration
Central Michigan University

Submitted by:
Catherine Jefferson

Concentration:
Research, Health Administration Concentration

Project Instructor:
Dr. Erich Randall

December 2, 2017
Executive Summary

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of the employee engagement program among research staff at ABC health system. It was not known how the employee engagement program has affected retention rates in research support staff. The study addresses the following issues:

1. What variables affect length of stay in research support positions?
2. Does a strong employee engagement program affect retention rates?
3. What gaps exist with the current employee engagement initiative to retain research staff?
4. What steps can ABC Health System take to increase engagement/job satisfaction among research staff?

ABC Health System has spent the last decade on improving their performance goals through the employee engagement program. However, little attention has been given to the effectiveness of the program in relation to high turnover rates of research support staff. In order to evaluate the employee engagement program's effectiveness on retention rates of research support staff, this project analyzed a total of seven performance criteria to provide practical implications and recommendations for the program.

These analyses of the performance criteria did not reveal a statistically significant correlation between retention rates and job satisfaction. However, a strong correlation was found between job satisfaction and the number of employee engagement activities performed by a department on a regular basis. This suggests that while the engagement program does not affect retention rates, job satisfaction was strongly correlated with the program and more specifically, off-site employee engagement activities.
Data for this research project was collected by a new survey created for this research project that was distributed to the research support employees of the health system. A total of 56 participants completed the survey and a small validation sample was also analyzed.

In summary this project showed that the majority of those who participated reported they were satisfied in their current research position and planned to stay in research at ABC for at least the next two year. However, no statistically significant correlations were found between job satisfaction and retention intention.

Job satisfaction was positively correlated to the amount of regular employee engagement activities in a department. Further analyses showed that the driver of this correlation was the engagement in off-site activities. These data suggest that the employee engagement program at ABC is successful at increasing job satisfaction but these data did not correlate to job retention.

The recommendations that emerge in relation to these data relate to the strong correlation between job satisfaction and the amount of employee engagement activities, specifically off-site events. This suggests that the program should focus on increasing the number of engagement activities.

Further analysis of the data uncovered a clear indication that most employees believe that an increase in pay would also increase their job satisfaction. This suggests that basic needs of the employees are not being met. The recommendation based on this finding is for human resources devote time to appropriately benchmark pay scales for similar jobs in relation to competing organizations and increase the pay scale for those salaries that fall under the average.

ABC health system has a robust employee engagement program but they should begin to focus and refine the program around increasing the amount of engagement activities and promote off-site events.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 Problem Definition</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 Literature Review</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 Research Methodology</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 Data Analysis</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A Permission to Conduct Study</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B Consent Form (Anonymous Survey)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C Survey Questions</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1 Types of regular engagement activities of the department ............... 31
Figure 2 What would increase your job satisfaction of non-engagement activities… 32
Figure 3 What would increase your overall job satisfaction ....................... 33
Figure 4 Job satisfaction Rating............................................................. 34
Figure 5 Job satisfaction and number of engagement activities.................... 37
Figure 6 Job satisfaction and type of engagement activities....................... 38
Figure 7 Job satisfaction and non-engagement factors............................ 39
Figure 8 Retention and non-engagement factors.................................... 40
Chapter 1: Problem Definition

Background

The ABC Health System is a comprehensive, integrated, non-profit, managed care, health care organization located in Metro Detroit. The corporate office is located in Detroit, Michigan. The health system was established in 1915 and currently runs by the oversight of a 17-member board of trustees. It has seven hospitals within the health system and a health care insurance provider. It also holds one of the nation’s largest medical groups which includes more than 1,500 physicians practicing in over 40 specialties. The ABC Health System (ABC) generates 4.2 million patient contacts yearly and more than 93,000 patients are admitted to ABC hospitals annually. Approximately 30,000 employees make up the workforce. ABC currently participates in more than 1,300 clinical trials and receives over $82.5 million annually in federal funded research (henryford.com).

In 2009, ABC Health System initiated the employee engagement initiative in order to improve performance and increase retention rates. To gauge these results, a Gallup poll to evaluate employee engagement is given system wide every year. Senior leadership distributes results to each department that provides a systematic breakdown of each question. Managers are tasked with improving scores in their weakest areas by enhancing their engagement program efforts. General results of the survey provide guidance on system wide initiatives on areas in need of improvement. Managers are also tasked with ensuring their departments are meeting these system wide goals.

To assist leadership with improving their areas of weakness and implementing system wide goals in employee engagement, each department sends a representative to quarterly meetings to learn about new engagement initiatives, tools available to enhance engagement,
share stories of engagement, and assist departmental leadership in the implementation of these initiatives. These representatives are referred to as service excellence representatives and they provide a peer-to-peer perspective on engagement. The representatives, along with their manager, facilitate the engagement program at a departmental level. This enables the program to be tailored to specific departments.

Each department is given tool-kits and ideas for low to no cost employee engagement ideas and activities. These include a rewards program, celebrating with potlucks and/or birthdays, increased communication through daily or weekly huddles, and off-site outings. Ongoing training, which encourages management to take part in these activities, is highly encouraged but not mandatory. However, departments that score low on the Q12 are mandated to create action plans to increase scores by way of utilizing the employee engagement initiative. Managers that are consistently unable to increase Q12 scores are mandated through a corrective action plan to attend development workshops that are aimed to assist them with implementing the engagement program into their department.

ABC Health System has spent the last decade working on improving their performance goals through employee engagement in the clinical realm, while little attention has been given to the high turnover rates of research support staff. Research has a strong foundation in the health system, as with most teaching hospitals. Research staff expands over multiple disciplines and consists of far smaller groups than clinical staff, this makes it difficult to collect meaningful data on this narrow population of employees. The majority of the research staff directly reports to a clinical leader; results of system wide surveys do not differentiate between clinical staff and research staff.

Research Problem
ABC Health System has been working the last several years to improve performance and retention through increased employee engagement. The purpose of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of the employee engagement initiative among research staff. It was not known how the employee engagement program has affected retention rates in research support staff.

The study addresses the following issues:

1. What variables affect length of stay in research support positions?
2. Does a strong employee engagement program affect retention rates?
3. What gaps exist with the current employee engagement initiative to retain research staff?
4. What steps can ABC Health System take to increase engagement/job satisfaction among research staff?

Results from Gallup do not delineate between research staff and other healthcare workers. By surveying research as an individual group, a more detailed investigation can be conducted to examine retention rates, employee engagement, and to identify opportunities for improved job satisfaction among these employees.

**Research Audience and Rationale**

Research support staff has traditionally held a high turnover rate which leads to costly expenses of hiring and training new staff. In addition, it places a strain on the existing staff and can create long lag times in data collection. Given the competitive nature of research, these gaps in time create the risk of losing funding and disrupting professional relationships with funding agencies and sponsors of clinical trials. It is critical that funding agencies are able to feel confident in the stability of a site’s research team. ABC continues to refine the existing employee engagement initiative and while it has created an organizational atmosphere that embodies its goals of creating a highly productive and engaged workforce, it has failed to fully engage
research staff as evidenced by high turnover in this population. There has always been a divide between clinical staff and research staff at ABC as the majority of the employees are clinical and most initiatives cater to the clinical side of business operations. The importance of research and how it drives innovative clinical practice and improves clinical treatment of patients is often left out of the organization’s goals and out of departmental discussion and news.

The results of this research have been disseminated to ABC’s human resources senior leadership. These results focus on research support staff and the possible gaps that exist in their job satisfaction that impacts retention rates. The results may provide effective ways to improve ABC’s ability to maintain a stable research support staff. More specifically, these results have been disseminated to research program managers as a tool to more effectively address the needs of their research support staff.

**Research Study Scope/Delimitations**

This research only focused on issues within ABC Health System and therefore may not be generally applicable to research support staff in other healthcare systems. The survey was distributed to a limited number of research staff within the health system based on job code. Only those currently employed in a research support role, such as research associates, research assistants, research administrators, clinical research coordinators, and RN clinical research coordinators, were surveyed.

This project did not include data on other health care providers, therefore comparison data between research and non-research groups was not collected. While turnover rates for all of research remain high at ABC, this project did not focus on senior research staff, which could provide valuable information on management styles that potentially impact attrition rates of support staff. This project focuses on one anonymous survey instead of an interview method.
While this provided employees an opportunity to freely answer the questions, it was unable to differentiate the department, therefore will not lend meaningful data to individual program managers. Only a few engagement factors were focused on and therefore limited the options for participants.
Chapter 2: Review of the Related Literature

Introduction to the Literature

Job satisfaction and its relation to performance has been the topic of research for decades. However, the term “employee engagement” has only been recently brought to the field of academic study (Macey, 2015). The term “employee engagement” was coined by William Kahn (1990) and has since been studied and evolved extensively in management fields. Kahn’s article describes both personal engagement and disengagement as the organization’s ability to harness employees’ personal enthusiasm in their work roles, thus providing the framework in which the term has evolved over the years.

Employee engagement has been shown to play a vital role in job satisfaction and improved retention rates across various industries. Both the term employee engagement and how high levels of employee engagement define success vary greatly in the current literature. This project aims to focus on how employee engagement improves retention rates, what are contributing factors to key elements of employee engagement, and how employee engagement programs impact research support staff.

The current research will focus on how ABC’s employee engagement initiative affected employee retention and will investigate the differences that exist between current engagement activities and other external factors that influence job satisfaction such as compensation and opportunities for growth and advancement. It will then explore the possible gaps that exist within the current initiative to retain research staff and steps ABC Health System can take to increase engagement, job satisfaction, and retention among research staff.

Presentation of the Literature
**Internal Communication.** Internal communication is a key element that drives employee engagement. The ability to transmit information within an organization plays a vital role in the perception of trust between employees, management, and senior leadership. Studies have shown that strong internal communication enhances bottom line outcomes that include increased productivity and profitability (Mirshra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). An increasing number of hospitals utilize daily huddles to communicate goals, objectives, improve engagement, and safety (Graban, 2016).

Mirshra et al., (2014) found face-to-face huddles have been extremely successful as a way to quickly disseminate information between staff and leaders. This study confirms the findings of other studies that have shown that this type of informal communication increases an employee’s trust in his or her leaders and the organization (Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, & Lings, 2015). Trust between an employee and management is an important facet to employee engagement as well as peer-to-peer trust. This style of face-to-face communication fosters a relationship that builds respect and dignity among employees and managers. The results of Mishra’s study found that this mode of communication serves a dual purpose in that it keeps employees informed and it helps them feel secure about their place in the organization since they are receiving information from their direct supervisors. They also found that this method of informal communication not only promoted a sense of community among the employees, but also reduced turnover (Mishra et al., 2014).

**Retention.** Over the course of 30 years, Drs. Gallup and Clifton created the Gallup Q12, which is a widely used tool to measure employee engagement; it has been administered to over 7 million employees in 112 countries (Reilly, 2014). The final version of the survey was created in 1998 and continues to be used as measurement of engagement. The Gallup Q12 serves as a tool
to differentiate actively engaged employees, non-engaged employees, and actively disengaged employees. Actively engaged employees are known as the change makers in the organization; they will drive innovation and move an organization forward. Non-engaged employees are neutral employees and are likely the employees that are not overtly hostile or disruptive and likely adequately fulfill their job requirement, but will not go beyond their role. Their work is uninspired, lacks motivation, and shows little concern about productivity, quality, or safety. Actively disengaged employees damage an organization by acting out their feeling of discontent with the organization; they are not happy at work and often monopolize the managers’ time and drive customers away (Reilly, 2014).

Engagement tools work to find the non-engaged employees, as these are referred to as the greatest untapped potential for an organization. They have not had the opportunity to perform at a high level in their current role. Research has shown a well-established correlation between employee engagement and key performance outcomes that include customer ratings, profitability, productivity, turnover (for high-turnover and low-turnover organizations), safety incidents, shrinkage (theft), absenteeism, patient safety incidents, and quality (defects) (Reilly, 2014). The ability to find the non-engaged employee and focus on how to improve his or her engagement could dramatically increase overall organizational performance. It is important to note that actively disengaged employees will not likely move from actively disengaged to non-engaged or actively engaged in his or her current job.

A meta-analysis of 339 research studies and 230 organizations in 49 different industries showed work units in the top quartile in employee engagement outperformed bottom-quartile units by 17% in productivity, 21% in profitability, and showed significantly less turnover (24% in high-turnover and 59% in low-turnover organizations), and 41% less absenteeism (Reilly,
These data show the importance of a highly engaged workforce as it increases both productivity and retention rates.

**Retention in Research Staff.** Healthcare organizations are among the highest in turnover rates among all major industries. Much research has been conducted on the high turnover of nursing staff, but sparse research exists solely on research support staff. The improvement of retention in research staff is important given that it is costly to hire and train staff and presents a poor image to sponsors that financially support research projects. In addition to the complexity of research, training new staff can be exceptionally difficult and can lead to negative impacts on the data collection process.

The investigation of ways to improve retention among research staff is imperative. Research has shown that “peer support facilitates academic and social integration by connecting scholars to individuals who share similar academic goals, research interests, sense of purpose, as well as backgrounds. Peer networks can enhance the support available to individuals who may otherwise lack access to information, other types of resources and emotional support” (Nearing et al., 2015, p. 566). This demonstrates the importance of a feeling of connectedness to not only the organization, but between peers and with the employee’s direct managers. The ability of an organization to create an environment of support is key in the engagement of an employee.

This suggests that the creation of a strong social support could benefit retention among research staff. Moreover, it can assist departments that lack a large research infrastructure with feelings of isolation and disconnectedness to the health system. Providing support can affirm a sense of belonging and connect them in a meaningful way to the overall strategic goals of their organization.
Lending more support of fostering a workplace culture that embodies employee engagement is found in one study at the University of Florida Health Shands Hospital. Several projects were implemented after job satisfaction surveys were administered to staff. A key factor in the outcome of increased job satisfaction was the systematic approach of identifying the source of the issue, providing an action to address the issue, and producing an outcome to rectify the issue. The programs also aimed at creating educational training, creating a serenity area, and implementing a reward and recognition program. The results of these projects increased both job satisfaction and retention rates to above the average state level in Florida (Brunges & Foley-Brinza, 2014). This study showed that through a change in the culture, the hospital made improvements based on specific issues that were identified on the job satisfaction survey and thereby had a positive effect on retention rates. The shift in culture following the initiation of these engagement programs proved effective and motivating for staff.

**Mutually beneficial relationship.** Employees experience a social exchange with their organization, a relationship in which there is mutual benefit. If an employee feels this exchange is of equal reciprocity, they will have a positive experience in their job and thus more likely to fully engage in their work and invested in the organization. Using a research literature method, one study investigated the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention. It found that affective commitment and ones emotional commitment to an organization played a key factor in ones willingness to invest in their job and thereby led to increased intention to remain at the organization (Zhao & Zhao, 2017).

Furthermore, the concept of social exchange plays a vital role between an employee and an organization. When there is a mutually beneficial relationship, the employee becomes highly engaged which is defined by Geeth and Sebastian (2012) as one who is highly optimistic,
focused, enthusiastic, and contributes to the organization on a long-term basis. The social exchange theory suggests that human resource practices are a direct reflection on the organization’s commitment to an employee. If these practices are perceived as positive, the employee is likely to reciprocate with more highly engaged work behavior and long-term commitment (Geeth & Sebastian, 2012).

**Compensation and benefits.** Several studies have explored the relationship between employee engagement and compensation and benefits. A study by Haider et al. (2015) of 250 employees showed a positive correlation between organizational culture and compensation when measured against retention rates. Those employees felt when their cultural and compensation needs are met, the organization’s retention rates decease. Whereas training and development did not show a correlation to retention in the population studied.

One literature review investigated the role that compensation and benefits had on retention rates in various human resource management systems. They found that compensation, benefits, and a reward system had both direct and indirect effects on employee retention. They also reported that neither training nor development played a key role in determining retention rates (Tangthong, 2014).

These data show that when employees believe their compensation and benefits are equal to their job duties a mutually beneficial relationship of an equal social exchange exists. Thus, allowing the employee to reach a higher level of job satisfaction and reduce the intention of leaving their position.

**Personality as a factor of engagement.** Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability of a person who is able to manage and interpret his or her own emotions as well as the emotions of others (Akhtar, Boustani, Tsivrikos, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015). This particular personality
trait has received much attention in the last few years in human resources as a more effective approach to management in healthcare (Delmatoff, 2014). According to Delmatoff, the core of EI stems from self-awareness and moves into social awareness and the ability to understand the behavioral makeup of the organization’s employees. It is important to note that EI must be translated in external behavioral intelligence to be observed by employees.

While some studies have focused on broad personality traits in order to correlate high work engagement, this study chose to narrow the scope to investigating EI as a factor in engagement. Akhtar et al., (2015) measured various personality factors on 1,050 working adults in order to determine what, if any, of these factors were correlated to employee engagement. Results showed that EI was the strongest predictor of work engagement while openness to experience, interpersonal sensitivity, ambition, extraversion, adjustment, and conscientiousness stepped down systematically from strongest to weakest of the predictors measured. This study shows that personality factors play a key role in the prediction of engagement at work. This study utilized the Utrecht work engagement survey in a population that consisted mostly of those in the field of education.

One study examined how conscientiousness strengthened the relationships between engagement and supervisor task ratings, contextual performance, and active learning. It was hypothesized that only employees that score high on a rating of conscientiousness would have positive correlations with work engagement and all three criteria (task performance, contextual performance, and active learning). Conscientiousness was measured using the Five-Factor Personality Inventory and work engagement was assessed with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Task performance requires that the employee fulfills all aspects of his or her job, contextual performance assessed willingness to engage in non-mandatory activities, participates
in jobs outside of the description of his or her role, and active learning was measured by the willingness to develop on his or her own. Results showed a strong link between personality traits and engagement on all three types of performance criteria that were evaluated. This study further showed high work engagement led to high ratings of overall performance on the job (Bakker, Demerouti, ten Brummelhuis, 2012).

Khan (1990) initially described a framework for employee engagement but did not explicitly outline the connection between engagement and job performance. One study examined the relationship between antecedents and job performance to further expand upon Khan’s initial theory. Several psychological factors and self-perceptions play an integral role in job performance; this study targeted three specific categories of value congruence, perceived organizational support, and core self-evaluations. Value congruence is defined as the meaningfulness or value of their role. Perceived organizational support is the psychological safety an employee can feel if they invest personally into an organization without fear of negative consequences. Core self-evaluations are the ability of an employee to fully engage in a particular moment. Results found that all three antecedents were statistically significant in predicting performance outcomes (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010).

**Gaps in Engagement.** In order for employees to be actively engaged they must believe that they are contributing to the organization’s overall goals and understand how they “fit into” those goals (Mishra et al., 2014).

Studies have found that competent managers are a key role in employee engagement (Cardus, 2013). While a clinical supervisor may provide a highly engaged clinical workforce, often the smaller research staff does not have the opportunity to feel engaged in the department or a health system that caters to a clinical staff. These smaller departments can feel as though
they are functioning alone. Providing a larger network of the research community to the research support staff could be one facet of exploration regarding retention rates in this population.

Research has shown that the lack of cultural alignment between the organization and employee may lead to lower engagement scores and lower productivity (Hewitt Associates LLC, 2009). This lack of cultural entropy could be a potential challenge to increase engagement among research support staff. However, a study that investigated retention among junior faculty in an academic setting found that those involved in a developmental program that included professional development workshops, academic strategic career planning, individualized academic performance counseling, mentoring with a senior faculty member that focused on a professional development contract, and network building with other faculty were significantly more likely to remain at the university for greater than eight years when compared to those not involved in the program (Ries et al., 2012). These results suggest the implementation of a development program or access to a research network designed specifically for research staff has the potential to improve engagement and retention rates.

**Influencing factors of engagement.** Literature on employee engagement on research staff alone is sparse, however, studies have shown the importance of both organizational and personal factors on engagement in other healthcare workers. The results of these studies can lend valuable information to ensure these needs are being met for research staff.

One study evaluated six organizational factors (workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values) and five personal factors (type A personality, locus of control, job satisfaction, mental health, and physical health) and compared the findings to healthcare workers’ engagement in their jobs. Results showed the organizational factors of workload,
values, and community were significantly related to engagement while mental health, locus of control, and job satisfaction was related in the personal factors evaluated (Fiabane, 2013).

These results suggest that in order to improve work engagement, it is important to identify employees vulnerable to psychological distress due to individual variables and the need for managers to mitigate workload for staff. In addition, creating a sense of organizational community and provide individuals with the perception of control over their work environment can help promote a more engaged workforce.

Hughes & Rog, (2008) conducted a literature review of 12 major studies that sought to discover the top drivers of employee engagement. This research uncovered the top eight factors that are most likely to influence employee engagement. Trust and integrity were the highest ranked drivers of engagement characterized by how the employee perceived his or her leadership to care about employees, listen and respond to the employee’s opinions, and the trustworthiness of leadership. Other key factors included an employee’s autonomy on the job and the connection between the employee and the organization’s performance. It was also important for the employee to understand the organization’s objectives and how his or her job influences these goals. Pride in the organization in regard to how the employee derives self-esteem from his or her work was also a contributing factor to engagement. The attitudes and perspectives of coworkers towards their jobs and the ability to develop new skills on the job played a key role in engagement and how much the employee values his or her relationship with the manager.

Selective optimization with compensation. Studies on employee engagement focus on activities that relay on the culture of the organization. Much literature also addresses the personal factors that influence employee engagement that are related to an individual’s ability to deal with job demands, achieve personal development, and the ability to utilize resources. These are all
fundamental in work engagement. One study investigated the framework of selective optimization with compensation (SOC) to determine if work engagement is dependent on both the availability of resources and the ability of an employee to handle shortage in resources (Venz & Sonnentag, 2015).

The theory of SOC states that when these three action regulation strategies work in harmony then the maximum positive employee outcome exists. Selection is the choice and prioritization of goals to pursue based on either personal preferences or the loss of resources. Optimization and compensation are strategies involved with the individual’s resources to achieve a goal and replacing means that do not contribute to goal attainment with more effective means, respectively (Zacher, Chan, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2015). The study of Venz and Sonnentag (2015) showed that while employees using SOC at work helped to energize them, there was no support that it would offset low levels of job control. It is believed that an employee must feel a certain amount of job control to fully realize the positive potential of SOC; therefore it is essential that an employee feel that he or she is able to have some anonymity in his or her role.

Summary of the Literature

Although there is not one singular definition for employee engagement, the results of a highly engaged workforce evaluated by various methods are consistently associated with organizations in the top percentile of performance. It is clear that both internal and external factors drive an individual’s engagement which directly impacts both job satisfaction and retention rates. Personality has a tremendous impact on employee engagement as well as the ability of the organization to meet basic needs of their staff, such as adequate compensation and staffing. Based on the literature it is important that organizations bring attention to their culture to ensure employees are able to utilize their strengths in their roles on a regular basis and feel in
control by exhibiting anonymity. Employees must also feel that they are invested and contribute to the culture of the organization meeting their expectations of a mutually beneficial social exchange. Management styles that focus on using emotional intelligence and promoting an environment of communication, trust, and integrity is imperative to the creation of a highly engaged staff.

Research support staff at ABC lack fundamental elements that are commonly found in a highly engaged workforce that could account for the high turnover in this population. The current employee engagement program is geared to improve key elements that propose to lead to improved engagement and retention rates.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Research Approach

This quantitative, correlational study used the program evaluation typology to understand the overall effectiveness of the employee engagement program on research support staff at ABC Health System. The employee engagement initiative intends to increase job satisfaction, which is measured by performance and results from the Gallup Q12 (Q12) questionnaire administered annually. It has been shown that an increase in job satisfaction as evidenced by high Q12 scores led to increased performance ratings by patients as measured by health care scores from patient satisfaction surveys. However, research support staff scores on Gallup Q12 are combined with clinical staff scores and therefore may not reveal relevant data to this employee population. Furthermore, patient rating scores are not applicable to research staff. This research investigates job satisfaction and explores the possible gaps that exist within the current employee engagement initiative to retain research staff. Results provide insight into the necessary actions ABC Health System may choose to take in order to improve the engagement program or tailor it appropriately to research staff. An anonymous survey was distributed to research support staff as the method of data collection.

Data Collection Approach and Procedures

Data collection. To gauge the effectiveness of the employee engagement program, the researcher developed a primary research question and four sub-questions. Each sub-question was answered by evaluating specific Performance Criteria (PC). To do so, operational indicators were determined through the data collection process. Thus, the program was comprehensively evaluated as follows:

Primary research question and sub-question data details.
Research question (RQ)1: The effectiveness of the employee engagement initiative among research staff is answered through the following Performance Criteria using the Operational Indicators described:

PC1: Satisfaction of employees. To gauge the program’s effectiveness of employee satisfaction, question 12 of the survey questionnaire assesses the operational indicators and is analyzed.

PC2: Motivation of employees. To gauge the program’s effectiveness of employee motivation, questions 7 and 10 of the survey questionnaire assesses the operational indicators and is analyzed.

RQ2: What variables affect length of stay in research support positions is answered through the following Performance Criteria using the Operational Indicators described:

PC3: To gauge the effectiveness of the program’s ability to retain research support staff, questions 7 and 18 of the survey questionnaire assesses the operational indicators and is analyzed.

PC4: To gauge the effectiveness of the program’s ability to retain research support staff, questions 10 and 18 of the survey questionnaire assesses the operational indicators and is analyzed.

RQ3: Does a strong employee engagement program affect research staff retention rates is answered through the following Performance Criteria using the Operational Indicators described:

PC5: To gauge the effectiveness of a highly engaged employee engagement program in relation to research support staff, questions 12 and 18 of the survey questionnaire assesses the operational indicators and is analyzed.
RQ4: What gaps exist with the current employee engagement initiative to retain research staff is answered through the following Performance Criteria using the Operational Indicators described:

PC6: To gauge deficiencies in the current employee engagement program, questions 12 and 17 of the survey questionnaire assesses the operational indicators and is analyzed.

PC7: To gauge deficiencies in the current employee engagement program, questions 10 and 17 of the survey questionnaire assesses the operational indicators and is analyzed.

The survey questionnaire provides basic demographic data such as age and education level. Work parameters were collected to determine the type of research performed and job title in order to delineate any differences found between fields of research, such as bench, administration, animal, and human research. Years of employment and projected years to remain in their job were also collected.

Data collection procedures. Data for this research project was collected by a new survey created for this research project that was distributed to the research support employees of the health system.

A new survey was created for this research project and was distributed to research support staff as determined by job code to ABC employees through an internal email distribution. Any eligible employee based on job code was provided an invitation to take the survey. The office of research administration sends a weekly newsletter out to all research staff. In order to reach those employees that do not check their email regularly, an invitation to take the survey was posted every week for one month in the research newsletter. Once the survey was distributed all raw data was stored in a secure spreadsheet for analysis. No personal identifiers
will be associated with the data to ensure confidentiality of the data and protection for human subjects.

**Target Population.** The target population for this research project is all research support staff. These are individuals who do not have advanced degrees nor serve as principal investigators on research studies. The population of interest is clinical research coordinators, research administrators, research assistants, research technicians, research registered nurses, and all other categories of support staff in research. It is important to note that job title alone did not distinguish an employee’s role in research and therefore each participant indicated on the survey if his or her role is in research. An email was sent out initially based on job code. In order to obtain as many research support staff as possible, correspondence through the research administration newsletter increased the likelihood to capture a broader range of employees working in research that do not hold a standard research job title. ABC currently employs over 23,000 staff members with approximately 160 research support staff. Each research department varies greatly in the number of staff and can range anywhere from one to twenty. The estimate of 160 research staff members is gathered from the number of large research departments that employs approximately five individuals.

**Sample Details.** An enrichment of the research population through extra targeting assisted in a higher completion rate among this target population. The survey was distributed through newsletters to the research community. Low completion numbers were discovered after the month of distribution. Therefore, a personal email invitation was sent to all research support staff to complete the survey. Given there are approximately 160 research support staff with a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5%, 110 is the recommended sample size.
No vulnerable populations of individuals participated in this survey. No contact information was provided in the survey; it remained completely anonymous.

Instrumentation. Since the survey created for this study has not been tested for validity or reliability, a pilot study was performed in order to validate the survey. A total of four employees not in the target group were asked to take the survey. Cronbach's alpha was used to provide a conservative estimate of reliability of the survey. This survey contains questions that aim to measure job satisfaction and likelihood of retaining their current role. It also evaluated opinions on the current employee engagement initiative. A Likert scale was used for a portion of the survey to provide for quantitative analysis and open-ended questions are included to ensure that any information missed by more structured questions is obtained. Demographics and general job roles were also collected in the survey. The ABC Institutional Review Board approved this research project.

Procedures. This survey was conducted through SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool. The invitation for the survey was distributed in the various newsletters and email distribution lists for research staff. Employees interested in participating clicked on the link in the invitation, which provided a brief summary of the questions, and either choose to participate by advancing to the next screen or declined to participate. The survey was completely anonymous. No known relationship exists between the researcher and those completing the survey.

There was an expected return rate of five percent for the population of employees. This number is consistent with survey studies that do not contain incentives for completion. Data from incomplete surveys was included in final analysis. Data will be retained until the final report of the project has been completed and terminated with the Institutional Review Board.
**Timing.** The research project began during the second quarter of 2017 and complete by the third quarter of 2017. Response rates remained low, yet consistent with other non-incentive survey data despite continued efforts of recruitment.

**Proposed Approach for Data Analysis and Synthesis**

The approach for data analysis used was Spearman’s Rho correlation to depict monotonic relationships. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were performed for gender, education, age, and job role.

**Methodological Limitations**

The sample size of this study is small and the results of the study are limited to only research staff at ABC Health System. The survey created for this research is not generalizable to other research institutes. The low response rate does not provide conclusive results of the current employee engagement initiative, but shows possible trends in the research community to help better understand the high turnover in this population. Further research will need to be conducted to determine if results could be repeated.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

The following data presented this chapter are both visual and text formats in order to enhance analysis comprehension. These data were analyzed to further explore the research questions and provide a better understanding of the current employee engagement program at ABC health system and the potential implications it has on retention in research staff. This chapter will explore, analyze and discuss the relationships among and between the variables that were collected in the job satisfaction survey between and among variables will be discussed and analyzed. All variables were recoded to nominal data prior to analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to show general trends in the data and Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength and direction of association between two ranked variables. Spearman’s Rho is a nonparametric measure of rank correlation that is the statistical dependence between the rankings of two variables.

The following data was analyzed based each research question and the correlating performance criteria as it relates to a specific survey question. Each performance criteria were evaluated using the Spearman’s Rho correlation to determine the overall effectiveness of ABC’s employee engagement initiative. A validation sample was collected and tested using a Cronbach’s alpha to determine validity of the survey. All statistical analysis was calculated using IBM SPSS statistical analysis program.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Descriptive statistics. A total of 56 (47 = female; 9 = male) participants completed the survey. The participants reported an age of 18 -24 (3.5%), 25 – 35 (21%), 36 – 49 (34.5%), 50 – 60 (31%), and 60 and older (5%). A total of 44.5% received their Bachelor’s degree while 39%
received a Masters degree or higher. Job categories were reported as follows: management
(25%), clinical research coordinator RN (19%), project coordinator (13.5%), research associate
(13.5%), clinical coordinator (13.5%), administrative (11.5%), and research assistant 4%). The
majority of participants reported working in direct patient care (49%) and administrative roles
(27%).

The length of time working in research ranged from; 0 – 5 years (32%), 6 – 10 years
(23%), 11 – 15 years (11%), and 16 years and greater (34%). While time working in research at
ABC was reported as 0 – 5 years (37.5%), 6 – 10 years (21%), 11 – 15 years (14%), and 16 years
and greater (27%) with 79% indicating they anticipated remaining employed at ABC for the next
two years and 76% anticipated remaining in to stay in research. For those who responded they
intended to leave the health system or intended to leave research it was indicated that it was due
to the lack of opportunities for growth, low salary, lack of support, burnout, relocating, and
pursuing higher education.

The majority of respondents indicated that they felt their job impacts system wide goals
(85%). Participants indicated feeling very satisfied (30%), satisfied (59%), neither (5%),
dissatisfied (5%), and very dissatisfied (0%) in their current job. A total of 87% reported their
department participates in employee engagement activities and out of those respondents 69%
believe it has a positive influence on their job satisfaction, while 31% believe that it does not
influence job satisfaction. Of those that responded that their department did not participate in
employee engagement activities 65% believed it would have a positive impact on their job
satisfaction, 35% did not believe it would have a positive impact.

**Validation sample.** A total of four non-research staff completed the survey to capture a
validation sample. A Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure the validity of the survey, as it is a
function of the number of items in a test, it is the average covariance between pairs of items, and the variance of the total score. A reasonably strong Chronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.75 was based on job satisfaction and retention rates. Retention rates were converted into a linear scale for data analysis. Furthermore, both employee engagement activities and non-engagement activities also indicated a reasonably strong alpha coefficient of 0.8. Further exploratory analyses were not conducted on this sample.

**Employee engagement activities.** For those that participated in employee engagement activities the following take place on a regular basis; huddles (67%), potlucks (78%), off-site gatherings (49%), and other (7%) (Figure 1). These engagement activities were chosen as they both huddles (internal communication) and on-site activities (potlucks / celebrating birthdays) are encouraged the most in the employee engagement initiative. Off-site outings are also recommended but more difficult to execute due to 24h operations in the hospital.

Types of regular engagement activities of the department

---

**Employee Engagement Activities**
Figure 1. Types of reported employee engagement participated in on a regular basis, as a part of the employee engagement initiative (N=55). Image by SurveyMonkey.

While these data indicate that most participants work in departments that participate in regular engagement activities, when asked about factors not included in the employee engagement initiative that would increase their job satisfaction participants overwhelmingly chose an increase of pay over other factors. Participants reported the positive impact on their job satisfaction was opportunities for growth (46%), increase in pay (89%), more opportunities for advancement (64%) (Figure 2).

What would increase your job satisfaction of non-engagement activities

Figure 2. Percentage of factors that were found to increase job satisfaction among respondents, not considered part of the employee engagement initiative (N=56). Image by SurveyMonkey.

Participants were asked what would most likely influence increase their job satisfaction, opportunities for growth (50%), increase in pay (95%), more opportunities for advancement (68%), huddles (14%), potlucks (12.5%), off-site gatherings (18%), other (16%) (Figure 3).
Those that reported “other” stated adequate staffing, improved communication, colleagues closer in age, and better benefits.

What would increase your job satisfaction overall

![Percentage of factors, both non-engagement and engagement activities that were found to increase job satisfaction among respondents (N=56). Image by SurveyMonkey.](image)

**Factors of Job Satisfaction**

*Figure 3.* Percentage of factors, both non-engagement and engagement activities that were found to increase job satisfaction among respondents (N=56). Image by SurveyMonkey.

**Data Analysis Summary**

**Research question 1:** To investigate research question 1, the effectiveness of the employee engagement initiative at ABC health system, specifically targeting research support staff, several analyses were performed. Among the research staff that participated in the study, the majority indicated that they felt they were satisfied (59%) in their job, on a Likert scale from very satisfied, satisfied, neither, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, (Figure 4.)
Performance criteria 1. To further investigate the operational indicator, performance criteria 1, job satisfaction and potential impacts on retention rates, a Spearman’s Rho correlation was performed on questions 12 (how satisfied are you with your current job at ABC?) and performance criteria 2 (question 10: do you anticipate staying at ABC in a research capacity for the next two years?). No significant correlation was found between these two measures (N = 52; \( p = .07 \)).

Several reasons could account for the lack of a correlation between these two measures. A closer look at the responses show that only three individuals reported feeling dissatisfied, two of those indicated they did not plan to stay at ABC for the next two years due to low pay. Other responses to question 10 indicated reasons for leaving ABC for reasons other than satisfaction (i.e. moving and going back to school).

Performance criteria 2. Further analysis on performance criteria 2 investigated job satisfaction to length of stay in their current position from question 7 (about how long have you been working in research at ABC?) showed no significant differences (\( p > .05 \)).
There are various possibilities that no correlation was found between job satisfaction and either intention of retention, to remain in their current position for the next two years and how long they have currently been in their position. One reason may be the sample size, a larger sample would allow for a more robust analysis of this correlation. It is also possible that the Likert scale did not adequately capture satisfaction as it relates to job retention. Further investigation using a more robust scale and larger sample size may uncover trends between these groups.

**Research question 2.** Research question 2 explores the variables that affect length of stay in research support positions. Performance criteria were evaluated between the length of stay in their current position and rating of amount of engagement activities their department participated in on a regular basis.

**Performance criteria 3.** Analysis was performed on performance criteria 3, questions 7 (about how long have you been working in research at ABC?) and question 13 (does your department actively participate in employee engagement?). Question 13 is a yes or no response, this question expanded to question 18 which specified three specific engagement activities that are targeted in the employee engagement program (huddles; potluck/birthdays; off-site outings). These three activities were combined into one category to include a total number of how many engagement activities the department participated in on a regular basis (1,2, or 3 activities). Results showed no statistical significance ($p > .05$).

**Performance criteria 4.** Furthermore, performance criteria 4 did not show a meaningful correlation found between intended retention (question 10) and regular participation in employee engagement activities (question 18). The amount of engagement activities and / or types did not
have an impact on retention rates when asked if the employee intended to stay in their current role for the next two years.

Research suggests that there is a strong correlation between retention rates and job satisfaction (Brunges & Foley-Brinza, 2014). However, the current data does not support this notion, which is likely due to the narrow scope of using only one question to delineate job satisfaction and retention. There are several compounding factors in retention rates and the current study is too small to determine them in a meaningful manner. Future studies should focus on including more robust or valid scales of measurement of retention.

**Research question 3.** Research question 3 focused on if a strong employee engagement program affects research staff retention rates by exploring performance criteria 5, job satisfaction (question 12) and regular participation in specific engagement activities (question 18) that included huddles, potluck/birthdays, and off-site activities. The combined question 18 was used in the analysis, as total engagement activities.

**Performance criteria 5.** These analyses on the job satisfaction (question 12) showed a statistically significant correlation between job satisfaction and a department’s regular participation employee engagement (question 18). A Spearman’s Rho correlation was performed on job satisfaction rating and the number of employee engagement activities. A total of three activities were listed in the survey, huddles, potlucks/birthdays, and off-site activities. These three activities were combined into one variable that indicated the total number of activities that the participant’s department participated in on a regular basis. A positive correlation was found between the number of events and job satisfaction (*p*=.01) (Figure 5). Further analyses were conducted on the individual activities to discover if there was a particular driver of the
correlation. It was found that off-site activities strongly correlated with job satisfaction (*$p = .01$) (Figure 6).

These results indicate that those departments that are participating in a higher number of engagement activities have managers that are more supportive of the employee engagement initiative. Since the initiative does not specify the level of engagement and it is left to the individual manager to determine their department’s level of involvement, it is likely these managers are highly engaged leaders and using several tools of the initiative. Given that off-site outings were by far the main driver of the results, it may be a result of a high level of support from the entire team to participate in the program. Off-site outings are typically not mandatory and focus on team building. This supports the idea that both management and employees are equally involved in the program and receive mutual benefit. Future studies would benefit from expanding the categories of employee engagement activities to determine fundamental characteristics of the activities that correlate with job satisfaction.

**Job satisfaction and number of engagement activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JobSatisfaction</th>
<th>total_engage_act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman’s rho</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total_engage_act</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>-.343&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>*</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Figure 5. Bivariate correlation of reported job satisfaction and the total number of employee engagement activities the department participates in on a regular basis.*
Job satisfaction and type of engagement activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>job satisfactio</th>
<th>total_engage</th>
<th>Does your dept conduct</th>
<th>Does your dept conduct</th>
<th>Does your dept conduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>-345 $^*$</td>
<td>-.180</td>
<td>-211</td>
<td>-348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.129</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                      | Correlation Coefficient | -345 $^*$ | 1.000 | .707 $^{**}$ | .590 $^{**}$ | .784 $^*$ |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 | .000 | .000 |
|                      | N               | 53 | 53 | 53 | 53 |

|                      | Correlation Coefficient | -190 | .707 $^{**}$ | 1.000 | .160 | .312 $^{**}$ |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed) | .197 | .000 | .254 | .023 |
|                      | N               | 53 | 53 | 53 | 53 |

|                      | Correlation Coefficient | -211 | .590 $^{**}$ | .160 | 1.000 | .240 |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed) | .129 | .000 | .254 | .083 |
|                      | N               | 53 | 53 | 53 | 53 |

|                      | Correlation Coefficient | -348 $^*$ | .784 $^*$ | .312 $^{**}$ | .240 | 1.000 |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed) | .011 | .000 | .023 | .083 |
|                      | N               | 53 | 53 | 53 | 53 |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 6. Bivariate correlation of job satisfaction and three types of employee engagement activities.

Research question 4. The final research question will focus on the gaps that exist with the current employee engagement initiative to retain research staff. To measure these gaps the survey asked what the employee felt would increase job satisfaction. They were given six choices and could check all that would apply. These included both engagement activities that are commonly used in the program and other non-engagement factors (pay, opportunity for education, and opportunity for growth).

Performance criteria 6. No correlations were found between the engagement initiative and retention, therefore the data analysis performance criteria 6 focused on job satisfaction (question 12) and employee engagement activities and factors outside of the initiative in question 17 (opportunity for education; increase in pay; opportunity for growth). Question 17 (what do
you feel would increase your job satisfaction?) aimed at identifying factors that are not a part of the employee engagement program.

A Spearman’s Rho correlation was performed on job satisfaction and non-engagement factors of which no correlation was found ($p > .05$) (Figure 7.) This supports research that found an increase of pay does not increase job satisfaction. Some research suggests that a plateau of job satisfaction is attained at where a certain level of pays meets the expectations of the employee and the employee is unable to gain greater job satisfaction through money alone, supporting the notion of employee engagement (Reilly, 2014).

### Job satisfaction and non-engagement factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman’s rho</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Would increase job satisfaction: Opp Education; yes = 1; no = 0</th>
<th>Would increase job satisfaction: Increase Pay; yes = 1; no = 0</th>
<th>Would increase job satisfaction: Growth; yes = 1; no = 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would increase job satisfaction: Opp Education; yes = 1; no = 0</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would increase job satisfaction: Increase Pay; yes = 1; no = 0</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>.552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would increase job satisfaction: Growth; yes = 1; no = 0</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>-.083</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>.552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7.* Spearman’s Rho correlation between job satisfaction and non-employee engagement factors ($p > .05$).

**Performance criteria 7.** Further analyses were performed on performance criteria 7, intention to remain at ABC for the next two years, as evaluated by question 10 and the non-engagement factors that would influence this decision from question 17. These data contradict
the notion that pay does not influence retention, statistically significance was shown for increase in pay (*p < .05) (Figure 8).

Retention and non-engagement factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>Do you anticipate staying at Henry Ford in a research capacity for the next two years? 1 = yes, 0 = no</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Would increase job satisfaction: Opp Education; yes = 1, no = 0</th>
<th>Would increase job satisfaction: Increase Pay; yes = 1, no = 0</th>
<th>Would increase job satisfaction: Growth; yes = 1, no = 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.382**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td>Would increase job satisfaction: Opp Education; yes = 1, no = 0</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.382**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td>Would increase job satisfaction: Increase Pay; yes = 1, no = 0</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.382**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td>Would increase job satisfaction: Growth; yes = 1, no = 0</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.382**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 8. Intended retention correlated to types of non-engagement factors (increase pay, *p < .05).

Summary of performance criteria. In order to evaluate the employee engagement programs effectiveness on retention rates of research support staff at ABC health system a total of seven performance criteria were evaluated. These analyses of the performance criteria did not reveal a statistically significant correlation between retention rates and job satisfaction. However, a strong correlation was found between job satisfaction and number of employee engagement activities performed by a department on a regular basis. This suggests that while the engagement program did not affect retention rates, job satisfaction was strongly correlated with the program and specific engagement activities, specifically off-site activities.
Chapter 5: Summary Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview

The focus of this research project was to evaluate the current employee engagement program at ABC health system as it relates specifically to research support staff. Its aim was to determine if the current initiative affected retention rates by evaluating variables that affect the length of stay for research support staff. It also investigated the affect the program had on retention rates and explored the gaps that may exist in the program. The results of this project focus on the actions ABC health system can take to increase engagement/job satisfaction among research staff.

This final chapter will summarize the findings of the research project and provide guidance for the employee engagement program at ABC health system. It will also suggest directions for future research for further exploration of the correlation between engagement, job satisfaction, and retention rates among research support staff.

Summary

In summary this survey showed the majority of those who participated were satisfied in their current research position and planned to stay in research at ABC for at least the next two year. However, no correlation was found between job satisfaction and retention intention.

Overall job satisfaction was positively correlated to the amount of regular employee engagement activities in a department, which is consistent with the literature. Further analyses showed that the driver of this correlation was off-site activities. It is possible that this correlation identifies a deeper level of engagement by both the manager and employees of departments that engage in off-site activities. While the sample was small and there were only a limited number of engagement activities listed in the survey, results were statistically significant and should be
explored further to develop underlying factors to these results. It would be advantageous to further explore the management styles of these departments. The literature shows that leading with emotional intelligence leads to more highly engaged teams and higher productivity.

Previous research has shown communication to play a vital role in job satisfaction; the current study did not uncover this, which is possibly due to the oversimplification of the question relating to communication (i.e. huddles and potlucks).

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to investigate the effectiveness of the employee engagement initiative among research staff. This study investigated various aspects of employee engagement activities and non-engagement activities and how they relate to job retention. The employee engagement program has a focus on various elements of engagement such as internal communication through daily or weekly huddles, rewards programs, potlucks, and off-site activities. The program aims to increase engagement through communication, trust, and team building.

The results of this study did not reveal a significant relationship between employee engagement activities and job retention. Nor did it find significant differences between job satisfaction and retention rates. However, positive correlations were found between job satisfaction and the amount of engagement activities a department participates in on a regular basis. Specifically a driving factor of these results was the participation in off-site activities. Off-site employee engagement activities were strongly correlated to job satisfaction and this indicates that overall the program is successful at increasing job satisfaction. It is still unclear if job satisfaction in this population improves retention rates.
An interesting finding in the results showed that when asked what would increase an employees’ job satisfaction rating, overwhelmingly 95% of participants reported that an increase in pay would create greater job satisfaction. While this was not specifically a research question of the project, it is important to note these findings and the implication that employees at ABC do not feel they are adequately paid in their current role. This could have an impact on the overall findings of job satisfaction and should be explored further in future studies.

The study addressed the following issues:

**Research question 1.** What variables affect length of stay in research support positions? The effectiveness of the employee engagement initiative among research staff was answered by two different performance criteria. Data was analyzed from performance criteria one which was a Likert scale rating of job satisfaction. The second performance criteria evaluated two types of retention, how long the employee has worked in research at ABC and do they intend to remain at ABC in research for the next two years. No correlations were found between engagement and retention rates.

**Research question 2.** Does a strong employee engagement program affect retention rates? A strong engagement program was described by the amount of engagement activities that the department participates in on a regular basis. These factors were analyzed as a combination of a total number of engagement activities of the three activities listed (huddles, potlucks, and off-site activities). The combined total engagement number was correlated to and job satisfaction using a Spearman’s Rho analysis. While neither of these factors correlated to retention, job satisfaction was strongly correlated to off-site engagement activities. Further exploration for these results may uncover a relationship to retention rates.
Research question 3. What gaps exist with the current employee engagement initiative to retain research staff? The results of the current project found that gaps exist in the current employee engagement program, however it is unclear the affect it has on retention rates. Results showed that employees are unsatisfied with their current rate of pay. The results also indicate that a more robust program is necessary that can explore the needs of employees and create specific action plans to address those issues.

Research question 4. What steps can ABC Health System take to increase engagement/job satisfaction among research staff? ABC Health System need to re-evaluate their current program to ensure management remains highly involved in the program and understands the potential outcomes of a highly engaged staff. The health system should consider annual benchmarking in order to provide competitive salary and benefits to employees.

Recommendations

Based on the research presented in this project correlations were found between job satisfaction and the amount of employee engagement activities that departments participated in on a regular basis. These data suggest that the employee engagement program at ABC is successful at increasing job satisfaction. However, these data did not correlate to job retention. The recommendations that emerge in relation to these data relate to the strong correlation between job satisfaction and the amount of employee engagement activities, specifically off-site events. This suggests that the program should focus on increasing the number of engagement activities.

These data show a strong correlation between job satisfaction and off-site employee engagement activities. In fact, this was the main driving factor of the correlation of job satisfaction. The recommendation for ABC is to expand their current employee engagement
program to promote off-site activities and provide more support to management to enable them to implement these types of activities into their regular practice within the program. It is important that departments focus on these types of activities to increase job satisfaction in their departments.

Further analysis of the data uncovered a clear indication that most employees believe that an increase in pay would also increase their job satisfaction. This suggests that basic needs of the employees are not being met. The recommendation based on this finding is for human resources to devote time to appropriately benchmark pay scales for similar jobs in relation to competing organizations and increase the pay scale for those salaries that fall under the average.

The following recommendations are based on the findings in the current research project:

1. Refine the current employee engagement program by engaging management to include an emphasis on more engagement activities.
2. Promote off-site activities and provide support for these efforts.
3. Re-evaluate the current pay scale for research support staff and increase salaries of those jobs that fall beneath the average.

ABC health system has a robust employee engagement program but they should begin to focus and refine the program around increasing the amount of engagement activities and promote off-site events.

The health system invests time and effort in job satisfaction surveys (Gallup Q12), yet does not create specific action based on these results. Conversely they rely on management to improve scores without support or guidance into what is working for other departments. Based on these data it is important that after results from the Gallup Q12 are distributed, managers with departments with low scores should be mandated to attend training that will focus on how to
implement more engagement activities into their regular routine within the department. These managers need better resources and training, as it is likely some managers do not know how to implement these types of activities or do not have the financial resources within their budget to support such activities. If the health system provided more training, they should focus on low to no-cost engagement activities that are available.

Furthermore, the current research supports that off-site engagement activities on a regular basis were strongly correlated with job satisfaction. This indicates that ABC should focus attention on how to encourage and make these opportunities available system wide. Off-site events require the engagement of both management and the employees. Managers must feel that the benefit in off-site events will outweigh costs. To this end, they need to be made aware of the positive results of a highly engaged team can provide which includes less absenteeism and higher productivity. Various types of activities should be explored and promoted, including an annual potluck picnic at a local park, volunteering as a team, joining fitness team or going on a holiday themed trip to the apple orchard, or a sporting event. These types of activities can take place either during work hours or after work hours. The health system should explore options and make resources available to promote these activities.

The current project investigated the effectiveness of the employee engagement program on job retention in research support staff. While correlations were not present in terms of retention, strong correlations were found between job satisfaction and employee engagement activities. Results further showed a clear indication that most research support staff feel an increase in pay would significantly increase their job satisfaction. It is important that employees feel that their basic needs are met with adequate pay in order to achieve maximum job satisfaction and engagement in their role. Therefore, it is recommended that the human resource
department invest time and effort into annual benchmarking targeting research roles to ensure ABC remains competitive in both salary and benefits.

**Future Research Suggestions**

There is sparse research conducted on retention rates on research support staff and given the negative consequences related to high turnover in this field it is important that more studies investigate the root cause of this issue. Research support roles require individuals with a very specific skill set, formal education, and have lengthy training periods. High turnover can lead to disgruntled employees with less staffing resources and loss of profits during lapses of data collection.

Future research should explore other employee engagement programs at various organizations with a focus on engagement activities and the relationship between retention rates and job satisfaction. Studies should use a validated measure of job satisfaction to correlate various factors of both non-engagement factors and engagement activities. There are several factors to consider in future research. Given research is sub-divided within a department and not a stand-alone department it is difficult to target research support staff at an institution. Studies may wish to disseminate the survey(s) in various methods to ensure they are capturing the entire population. It is also important that future studies further investigate the correlation between off-site activities and job satisfaction. There are likely several factors that are connected to this specific engagement activity that were not captured in the current research.
References


Tangthong, S., Trimetsoontorn, J., & Rojniruntikul, N. (2014). Therefore, to conclude, both compensation & benefits management and reward system, and training & development have a direct and indirect effect on employee retention, even if training & development do. *International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance, 5*(2), 162-166.


Appendices

Appendix A  Permission to Conduct Study
Appendix B  Survey Consent Form
Appendix C  Survey
Appendix A

Permission Letter

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE
Henry Ford Hospital & Medical Centers

Henry Ford Health System
2799 West Grand Boulevard
Detroit, MI 48202
313-916-5177

October 02, 2017

Catherine Jefferson
Manager, Research Program
Gastroenterology/Hepatology
2799 West Grand Blvd, K7
Detroit, MI 48202
313-916-3369

Dear Catherine Jefferson

I have reviewed your request to conduct a research project involving Henry Ford Health System and the survey that will be used. I feel that this project will be beneficial to Henry Ford Health System. You have my permission to submit this research project to the Henry Ford Institutional Review Board for approval in order to distribute a survey and use data collected for this project.

The following stipulations should be observed: the survey is done on personal time, the company name should be disguised in the project, and data may not be collected until IRB approval is obtained.

If you have any questions regarding this letter of approval, please give me a call at 313-916-5177.

Sincerely,

Timothy Roehrs, Ph.D.
Director of Research Sleep Disorders & Research Center
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor, Psychiatry, Wayne State University
Appendix B

Survey Consent Form

Dear Participant:

My name is Catherine Jefferson and I am a graduate student at Central Michigan University. For my final project, I am examining retention rates and job satisfaction among research staff. You are being asked to participate in this study because you work in research at ABC Health System. I am inviting you to participate in this research study by clicking Begin below and completing brief a survey. This survey should be done on your personal time.

The following questionnaire will require approximately 10 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. In order to ensure that all information will remain confidential, your name will not associated with your answers, copies of the project will be provided to my Central Michigan University instructor. If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible and submit the survey. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time. Anonymous results will be shared with management to make improvements to job satisfaction.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors. The data collected will provide useful information regarding how job satisfaction affects retention rates among research staff. Completion of the questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at the email listed below.

Please note that if you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the MSA Program by calling 989-774-6525 or addressing a letter to the MSA Program, Rowe 222, Central
Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859. You may also contact Dr. Erich Randal at randa1ew@cmich.edu

Sincerely,

Catherine Jefferson

Jeffe3c@cmich.edu

IRB#11741 Approval dates 10/16/2017 – 10/15/2018
Appendix C

ABC Job Satisfaction Survey

Please complete the following questions and click on the Done button when you have finished all of the questions. Your answers are completely anonymous. Thank you for your participation.

1. Are you male or female?
   - Male
   - Female

2. Which of the following best describes your current job category?
   - Research Assistant
   - Research Associate
   - Research Administrative role (i.e. manager, administration, regulatory)
   - Research Clinical Coordinator, RN
   - Research Clinical Coordinator
   - Other, please indicate ______________

3. Please indicate the type of research you conduct on a regular basis
   - Direct patient care / clinical trials
   - Bench work / lab work
   - Animal research
   - Minimal patient contact
   - Administrative

4. Indicate your highest level of degree achieved or certifications?
   - High school, some college
   - Bachelors
   - Masters or higher education
   - MD, DO, PhD
   - Certificate earned ____________

5. What is your current age?
   - 18-24 years old
   - 25-35 years old
   - 36-50 years old
   - 51-65 years old
greater than 65 years old

6. About how long have you been working in research?
   0-5 yrs 6-10 yrs 11-15 yrs 16+yrs
   ○ ○ ○ ○

7. About how long have you been working in research at ABC?
   0-5 yrs 6-10 yrs 11-15 yrs 16+yrs
   ○ ○ ○ ○

8. Do you anticipate staying at ABC for the next two years?
   ○ Yes ○ No

9. If you answered no, what would be a key factor in your decision to stay at ABC? _______

10. Do you anticipate staying at ABC in a research capacity for the next two years? ○ Yes ○ No

11. If you answered no, what would be a key factor in your decision to stay in your role? _______

12. How satisfied are you with your current job at ABC?
    Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied
    ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

13. Does your department actively participate in employee engagement?
    ○ Yes ○ No

14. If yes, do you feel that it has a positive impact on your job satisfaction? ○ Yes ○ No

15. If no, do you feel that active participation in employee engagement could have a positive impact on your job satisfaction? ○ Yes ○ No

16. Do you believe your job impacts ABC’s system wide goals?
    16 a. If you answered yes, why _____________________________
    16 b. If you answered no, why _____________________________

17. What do you feel would increase your job satisfaction? Check all that apply
    ○ More opportunity for education / certifications
    ○ Increase in pay
    ○ More opportunity for advancement

18. What types of activities does your department participate in on a regular basis? Check all that apply
    ○ Huddles (pick one: daily / weekly / monthly)
19. What do you feel would most likely increase your job satisfaction? Check all that apply

- More opportunity for education / certifications
- Increase in pay
- More opportunity for advancement Huddles (pick one: daily / weekly / monthly)
- Potlucks / birthday parties
- Off-site gatherings
- Other _____________