

**The Relationship between DEI Climate and Turnover Intention in
Suicide Prevention Workers**

by

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ABSTRACT

The present study seeks to examine the relationship between DEI climate and its potential inverse relationship to employee turnover intention in suicide prevention line workers in the United States. We expected that person-organization fit would play a mediating role in this relationship while leader-member exchange moderated the strength of the relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention. Set within the greater embedded theory of social exchange, we expected to see data in line with the idea that relationships between employees and organizations being at least partially accounted for by quality of transaction between them, which is further reflected by the variable of leader-member conversational quality. The sampled population included 329 respondents from The Trevor Project and the 988 National Suicide Prevention Line above the age of 18 in the United States who have occupied a role in their organization for a minimum of three months. Respondents were reached via an online media survey medium Jotform with a convenience snowball sampling method. For data analysis, a mix of: descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor, Pearson-Correlation and hierarchical regression analyses was used with IBM SPSS 23 and the Hayes PROCESS macro patch to uncover relationships between variables and test hypotheses. Results demonstrated statistical significance between all four variables, with all hypotheses being subsequently supported. This may guide additional practical implications and potentially serve as the basis for more nuanced research, along with the recommendations to improve the overall quality of the study should it be replicated.

Keywords: DEI, turnover intention, leader-member exchange, person-organization fit, suicide prevention, mental health

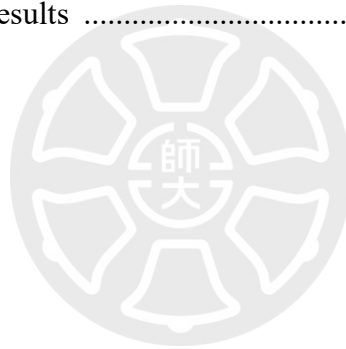
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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This section contains a general introduction to the context of the present study, including: background, statement of problem, the study's purpose, research questions, significance, limitations, and definition of operational terms utilized.

Background of the Study

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Current Mental Health Work Landscape

At the time of beginning this study, DEI was a controversial, yet still growing concept within American workplaces (Ellis, 2024; Minkin, 2023). However, with the recent White House Memorandums decrying DEI-centered initiatives as 'radical and wasteful' programs (The White House, 2025), several public and private institutions across the United States began to rollback their DEI policies, with as many as 263 introduced since 2023, 26 signed into law and 16 anti-DEI bills becoming law across more than 20 states according to the April 2025 update by the Council of Social Work Education (Council of Social Work and Education, 2025). While this is an unprecedented large-scale attempt at unraveling the affirmative action programs and the Civil Rights Act of 1965 and this marks the larger context in which the study is set in, it is not the exact focus of the following research.

While there is still inherent value to addressing the question of DEI across the whole of the working US landscape, this study seeks to shine the spotlight on a much narrower field and population of workers, specifically, those who work in suicide prevention in the United States. According to data from the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, suicide is currently the 10th leading cause of death overall in the United States and the 2nd leading cause of death among teenagers; it is also estimated that 123 Americans die by suicide every day of the year ("Suicide Data and Statistics", n.d.). This impact was acutely magnified by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a widespread global impact and a significantly larger majority of suicide attempts attributed to some of the key factors of financial/job loss, increased instances of domestic

violence/abuse, and pre-existing mental health conditions correlated to quarantine measures enacted across the world (Pathirathna, et al., 2022).

In the United States, there have been several suicide prevention resources established and promoted on the part of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), but the pandemic saw an increase of use for such services like the Disaster Distress Helpline to the point of massive strain, including an uptick of 500% pre-pandemic call volume (Gould & Lake, 2021) and a post-pandemic focus that has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023), the projected growth rate for suicide prevention workers (classed under the bracket of Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder and Mental Health workers) is 9%, with more than 500,000+ jobs already in existence in the United States. However, the turnover rate for a counselor in their first two months may be as high as 60%, according to Crisis Talk (Fichter, 2024).

In 2022, the national suicide prevention line 988 was launched with the goal of addressing this “new normal” in behavioral health and providing another option for Americans to turn to when in times of crisis. In the two years since its launch, the service has seen more than 10.8 million calls, texts and chats from across the country and had more than half a million individual contacts from every state/territory (Saunders, 2024), illustrating the need for such services on a national level and why the development of suicide prevention organizations will continue to be a key trend in the future.

The Role of DEI Climate in Suicide Prevention Lines

Despite the negative national-level attention on the subject, there are still pragmatic reasons to utilize DEI-related concepts as important variables within work research; the first key reason is tied inherently to the other structural issues around employee turnover rates in the mental health industry. One of the most cited reasons for leaving is a relatively lower salary compared to other sectors (Workforce Recruitment and Retention, n.d.). As many mental health centers and suicide prevention lines are connected to nonprofits or receive grants/endowments, there is currently a “ceiling” in terms of available monetary resources that does not exist for other industries like technology or finance. There is some cause for optimism, as *Yahoo! Finance* projects that

the industry may be valued around \$532.86 billion, nearly 1.4x what it was at \$375.21 billion in 2022, however, the very real problem of turnover intention in this sector needs to be addressed by practitioners in the moment, not only the future (\$532 Billion Mental Health Market, 2023).

While salary continues to be an ongoing issue, mental health sector employers must be creative for providing for employees in other, potentially intangible ways such as shifting focus to the developing the organizational climate and culture to leverage instead; this endeavor includes the development of a cohesive climate of inclusion and diversity which continues to be negatively associated with employee turnover intention in a work unit (Nishi, 2013; Park et al., 2023).

The second key point in placing DEI-related concepts under the microscope in suicide prevention work is also tied to the inherent infrastructure of these workplaces themselves, namely, the type of people who work in them. The Trevor Project, the world's largest queer youth suicide prevention line, was estimated to have 23% hispanic or latinx employees, 50% who identify as female (including transfeminine), 10% are black and a large number of its 2,000+ employees also identify as queer (The Trevor Project Demographics, n.d.). Fully leaning into its unique image as the largest queer suicide prevention line in the world, the 2022 edition of employee handbook itself outlines extensive DEI policies implemented at the organizational-level that contributed to the development and as a “draw” for employees of diverse gender, sexual, racial and other minority identities, citing its adherence to fostering an inclusive staff and supporting a diverse staff as “critical, non-negotiable” requirements to its mission of reducing queer youth suicides (T. Paley, personal communication, June 20th, 2022).

In addition, the growing Trans Lifeline is the only suicide prevention line that continues to be run by and staffed primarily by BIPOC and transgender workers and volunteers (Newberry, 2020). The changes behind who is staffing crisis mental health centers and suicide prevention lines can be reflected by changes in who uses the services; data from the Trevor Project's National Survey and 988's caller reports established markedly higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempts among Native American/Indigenous, Latinx, Black and Asian American callers, but correspondingly

lower awareness of available mental health services (U.S. National Survey, 2023; Saunders, 2024), which means that not only are the workers in suicide prevention lines comprised of people from minority groups, but they are also more likely to serve members of other minority groups who call in to use their services, lending another layer of potential consideration for approaching DEI climate as an organization.

However, as we develop systems to address and provide care for someone who may be living through unspeakably difficult circumstances, it is important to remember that the delicate nature of the work demands precision, because missteps can result in difficult escalations. When creating the infrastructure for a service like a suicide prevention line, there are always the questions of: what services can be reasonably provided in the moment when a caller initiates contact, what support systems may already be extant in the contact's life to ensure a continuation of care, and what are the most sound, research-backed practices that can be implemented in the moment to listen and eventually work towards a de-escalation? (Gould & Lake, 2021) These questions require a necessary investment of resources to even begin developing an adequate system of address, and they serve as a sort of cornerstone for how things work on "the Lines" in multiple different iterations of these services.

With these considerations in mind, this study seeks to uncover another potential layer in the complexity of navigating the dynamics embedded in the crisis mental health workplace and the workers who engage in such jobs, beginning with some factors about the workplace culture in general. We have already preliminarily introduced the role of DEI in suicide prevention as a potential lens for examining the workers and callers of the services, but is worthwhile to examine further if DEI climate itself in a suicide prevention work setting could serve to encourage these workers to stay longer serving in arguably difficult circumstances. If there exists a link between these employees' perceptions on how the organization addresses DEI and a suicide prevention line employees' corresponding intent to leave, what else may facilitate this?

This brings us another characteristic inherent to the structures of suicide prevention and crisis mental health organizations; due to the highly sensitive nature of the work and the stringent frameworks to ensure legal compliance, everything from daily

work activities to higher-risk situations must be meticulously accounted for, to include the structure of leadership within a suicide prevention line. The organizational chain of command must be clearly defined, which also necessitates the implementation of key policies and regulations that add definitions and scope to relationships between supervisors and supervisees at multiple levels (988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, 2023). If all of this is regulated, then the operating relationship between supervisors and their direct reportees is also correspondingly regulated, and it becomes possible to examine the *quality* of this relationship as an exchange of resources between employees and a reflection of the will of the organization that passes down directives from the top.

Under these particular circumstances, it becomes possible to not only examine the potential leader-member exchanges that may occur (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) between a supervisor/supervisee dyadic pair, but even more narrowly focus on the specific *conversational quality* (Jian et al., 2014) as a factor that may also influence the link between employee's perceptions of organizational DEI climate and their intention to turnover, as the legal necessity of suicide prevention line accountability ensures that these relationships between supervisor and supervisee exist to a clear, defined degree in the first place. By examining the quality of these relationships, we can uncover to what extent they can influence an employee's behavior in this type of setting.

Lastly, we posit that there may be factors unique to the employees themselves in how they relate to their employing organization. Within the suicide prevention industries, volunteers and employees on direct service are especially likely to face burnout, vicarious traumatization and an increased sense of helplessness while directly engaging with callers, but when adequate structural and social supports are in place, they also demonstrate the capacity to set realistic ambitions and boundaries, adequately self-manage stress levels, and show resilience after negative events (Spafford et al., 2023; Vattøe et al., 2020). As stated previously (T. Paley, personal communication, June 20th, 2022), suicide prevention lines such as The Trevor Project fully acknowledged and leveraged the inherent diversity of their working force, to the point of meticulously carving out spaces to ensure employees of intersectional identities could continue to exist and operate within them, which likely reinforced the attraction of specific types of employees to that

organization and who could identify with others in the same unit to different degrees (Kristof, 1996; Nishi, 2013; The Trevor Project Demographics, n.d.).

Along these lines, Vattøe et al. (2020) found that volunteers on a church-affiliated suicide prevention line in Norway also demonstrated a heightened awareness of the *organization they served*, and were often intentional about drawing lines to what extent they identified with their organization and navigating questions from callers based on those responses. To this end, we posit that in accordance with the in/congruence between an employee's inner self and their employing organization, the variable of person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996) may also be well-suited as a tool to mediate the relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention as the employee determines where they perceive themselves as aligning with the greater organization and what they obtain from this relationship.

To be even more specific, we propose that one of the potential factors that may also influence an employee's potential/intent to leave may be related to intentionality of an employing organization to foster a *climate of inclusion* and *diversity climate* (referred to collectively as 'DEI climate' in the context of this study) as a facet of social exchange theory, since DEI climate is negatively correlated with turnover intention and a worker's series of exchanges with an employing organization can also be explained as resource exchanges in a generally transactional dynamic (Kim et al., 2021; Nishi, 2013). Alongside this, it becomes a little more plausible to examine the dynamics of relationships between supervisors and supervisees through the lens of the dyadic relationship proposed in the leader-member exchange theory (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen, 1975; Graen & Schiemann, 1978), with a special focus on the specific *conversational quality* (Jian et al., 2014) between supervisor-supervisee pairs as a potential moderator for affecting the strength of the hypothetical relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention.

Lastly, yet another key piece of the puzzle may lie in any characteristics inherent to people who are drawn to working in these types of settings and/or organizations enough to enter them in the first place. The current landscape of mental health crisis work is one that seems initially bleak, with large turnover rates, consistent shortages of

personnel, high barriers to entry and seemingly less opportunities to grow (Workforce Recruitment and Retention, n.d.), but the continued existence of these organizations and services does still mean that there are people to provide the work to ensure their continued existence. It is a potential supposition that a key to explaining this occurrence is tied potentially to the person's own evaluation as to how they may relate to and *fit* with the greater employing organization, known as person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996), which could then serve as the mediating function between an organization's DEI climate and employees' intention to leave.

Statement of the Problem

There are some parallels to challenges faced by workers in the health-care industry such as burnout and increased turnover rates (Health Workers Face, 2024), but the extent of impact and the reasons given for departures can be felt quite differently for workers in mental health crisis lines. The Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) notes that while there is little reliable data available to properly assess current vacancies in behavioral/mental health occupations generally in the U.S., turnover rates may potentially range from 70% to potentially as high as 150% in client-facing positions (Workforce Recruitment and Retention, n.d.) It is also noted to be quite difficult for employers to attract and retain workers in these positions, with many citing the difficulties in obtaining certifications and licensure to practice, little opportunities for advancement, a lack of support in the workplace, and an overall constant shortage of workers that increase the scope of work for those who remain (Workforce Recruitment and Retention, n.d.). In the case of the Trevor Project, employee turnover continues to be high, and long-tenured employees correspondingly low; while 746 were totally reported as of May 2025 after the full merger of The Trevor Project Mexico and Trevor 988 with the parent line in the United States, it is estimated that less than 590 remain from the original company, which is lower than the rate of 2022 with 646 full-time employees in the parent company (T. Paley, personal communications, May 18th, 2025).

While there is a lack of research for staffing in other suicide prevention organizations or crisis mental health services in the United States, the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) conducted a key

workforce analysis of the 988 platform after its launch and identified several key challenges in running the new line, including: a shortage of personnel from direct-service on the lines up to administrative positions, a lack of efficiency for onboarding and training, complexity in licensure requirements, technology integration and training challenges, lack of clear directives in operation model, salaries which sit well below the market for direct service workers, little flexibility in work schedules, burnout and access to supervision when on shift (988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, 2023).

Considering the similarity in operations across crisis mental health lines in the United States, some of these key challenges faced by 988 at a national level may also be prominent ones for other organizations working in suicide prevention on smaller scales. As the need for these services continues to rise, we hope that this study can help with uncovering other potential avenues to contribute to the overall positive growth and quality of services like these.

As a well-cultivated DEI climate has previously been correlated with lower employee turnover intentions (Nishi, 2013) aside from the general moral and ethical scruples of creating a safer working environment for the workers, could carefully, well-researched and implemented DEI policies in the workplace be an additional tool to be leveraged for decreasing turnover intention in the suicide prevention industry, specifically?

Purpose of the Study

This study will, empirically, examine the relationship between the DEI climate in a suicide prevention work setting to an employee's potential turnover intention, moderated by the examined quality of conversational exchanges in the dyadic relationship between supervisor and supervisee, known as leader-member conversational quality (LMCQ) (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen, 1975; Graen & Schiemann, 1978; Jian et al., 2014) and mediated by person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996). Within this framework, the first research objective sought to uncover the relationship between DEI climate and employee turnover intention. The second seeks to determine the effect of LMCQ in moderating the strength and potential directionality of the relationship between

perceived DEI policies in the workplace and employee turnover intention. The next research objective will seek to uncover the effect of DEI climate on employee turnover intention through the mediator of person-organization fit.

Questions of the Study

Based on the above research purposes, this study aims to answer the following three research questions

1. Does an organization's DEI climate affect its employees' turnover intention?
2. Does LMCQ moderate the inverse relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention?
3. Does P-O fit mediate the relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention?

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to uncover nuances in the relationship of employees' perceptions of organization-wide DEI climate and relationship to employee turnover intent in suicide prevention work settings, which is one of the most traditionally unstable industries for employee tenure. Since we are examining factors of how the quality of supervisor and employee relationships may moderate the relationship of organizational DEI climate to turnover intention in conjunction with the mediating relationship posited by potential person-organization fit, we intend to see if these factors can all play a longer-term role in reducing actual employee turnover rate in a chronically understaffed environment. Specifically, the findings and implications of this study may provide additional basis to guide useful practical implications for mental health practitioners regarding how to effectively reduce employee turnover through the management and implementation of DEI policies at fostering a more inclusive climate, leader-member conversational quality and perceived person-organization fit. Moreover, as the target population of this study is seldom studied in the literature, this study can address such a research gap by empirically testing the relationships among DEI Climate, leader-member conversational quality, personal-organizational fit and turnover intention in the context of the US suicide prevention industry.

Delimitations

Due to the nature of the work being conducted in this study, there are some questions inherent to the extent of its generalizability outside of the specific proposed contexts:

1. This study's sample specifically includes employees working at suicide prevention lines in the United States and have occupied their roles for 3+ months.
2. This study is delimited to using a survey approach to collect the data.
3. This study investigates only four variables: DEI climate, leader-member conversational quality (LMCQ), person-organization (P-O) fit, and employee turnover intention.
4. Due to its nature as an earlier study in this field, there are no control variables implemented for this first stage.

Definition of Key Terms

DEI Climate

“Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” has been used as a term within organizational research which typically encompasses perceptions of the working environment by people in the workplace, with corresponding research divided into assessing the levels of diverse voices and perspectives already present, and how much the overarching organization contributes into developing and cultivating these perspectives. These may be referred to as the *diversity climate* and *climate of inclusion*, respectively (Park, Park & Shryack, 2023). To assess how current employees may perceive implemented Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives by their workplace, the instrument developed by Nishi (2013) was utilized. As the proposed 15-item scale integrates both key dimensions of *diversity climate* and *climate of inclusion* within the workplace, it has demonstrated consistent reliability in capturing belongingness and uniqueness at a leadership and organizational level, with the three separate dimensions of foundation of equitable employment practices, integration of differences, and inclusion in decision-making to reflect the overall “DEI climate” within a working unit (Nishi, 2013; Park et al., 2023).

Leader-Member Conversational Quality (LMCQ)

Grounding its theoretical roots in Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) seminal work on relationship dynamics between supervisor and subordinate in workplaces, Jian et al.'s (2014) scale of leader-member conversational quality (LMCQ) takes leader-member exchange's work a bit further from the initial theory that high-quality interaction arises from the interactions that supervisor-supervisee pairs and specifies it down to *conversations* between supervisors and supervisees as the main medium to develop richness in this dynamic. Following this theory, it is also suggested that other dimensions including the quality of interaction and the perspective of either supervisor and employee in general leader-member exchanges can be further dissected to explore key work outcomes including organizational citizenship behavior, productivity and turnover intention (Cha & Borchgrevink, 2017; Kim et al., 2016).

As there may be evidence to suggest that differences in levels of leader-member exchanges can influence turnover intention (Kim et al., 2010) within hospitality workers (another field with correspondingly higher turnover rates than the national average), it is worth the additional exploration to see how this may fit within the context of a mental health crisis work setting. Although it is a relatively newer scale when compared to the literal decades of research backing leader-member exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), the LMCQ scale by Jian et al. (2014) shows promise in reflecting a more than adequate outcome for examining leader-member conversational quality, and effectively removes the double-barreled questions associated with the LMX-7 and contains 9-item scale for robustness. To capture what employees assume about the current state of the relationship they have with their supervisors, the 9-item LMCQ scale developed by Jian et al. (2014) was utilized.

Person-Organization Fit

Person-organization fit is distinguished from other dimensions related to the working environment by centering itself describing the specific qualities of the person and the organization, in contrast to other environments such as person-job fit or person-group fit (Kristof, 1996). P-O fit may particularly suggest that the relationship of person to organization is attributed to the congruence of values, which may be further broken down into *complementary* or *supplementary fit* (Kristof, 1996) that may be inherent to an

individual which corresponds to the environment of the employing organization. These can then be correlated to specific work outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior, employee satisfaction and reduced turnover intention (Kim et al., 2013; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Resick et al., 2007).

However, P-O fit also has an ubiquitous nature dependent on the levels and dimensions of analysis and the value inherent to studying P-O fit also may change depending on whose perspective is assumed for developing operational measures and what values are captured (Kristof-Brown et al., 2023). While P-O fit is consistently correlated with work outcomes such as turnover intention, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Resick et al., 2007; Verquer et al., 2003), we intend to focus on the perspective of the employee in relation to the organization and assess the employees' *own perceived supplementary fit* to their organization to avoid the addition of complex constructs which may complicate the study at this stage.

Further research has also demonstrated that one of the most reliable methods of measuring person-organization fit is to use "*direct measures of perceived fit*" (Kristof-Brown et al., p. 387) and ask participants to self-report to the extent that they identify with their employing organization. With consideration to this, the 7-item p-o fit scale by Resick et al. (2007), which emphasizes and orients itself around capturing the subject's *own perceived fit* in relation to their organization was utilized.

Turnover Intention

Ahmad Saufi et al. (2023) succinctly defined turnover intention to largely be indicative of "the desire to relocate or leave an organisation to find a better job" (Ahmad Saufi et al., 2023, p. 3) on the part of the employee, and continues to remain a strong predictor of actual turnover (Ajzen, 1991; Bluedorn, 1978). While there are other factors and dimensions that correlate to actual employee turnover, this study will focus on primarily voluntary and self-initiated reasons for an employee to leave a place of employment, which can be assessed by asking directly (Ahmad Saufi et al., 2023; Boshoff & Allen, 2000). To assess turnover intention, Boshoff and Allen's (2000) 3-item scale, designed and tested with the intent of asking participants to self-report their likelihood to voluntarily terminate their employment, will be utilized.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

This section contains a detailed analysis of the key identified variables of the study through the lens of existing literature. For added specificity, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Leader-Member Exchange, Person-Organization Fit, and Turnover Intention will be discussed.

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Climate

DEI Climate

In the greater backdrop of national attention on the subject, there are a steady stream of studies emerging on why the “diversity” part of the acronym can play a pivotal role in the workplace. Currently, there is evidence to suggest that the good management of a heterogeneous workforce is linked to an increase of productivity and a positive trend in innovation as different ideas and perspectives might lead to finding solutions in the workplace (Croitoru et al., 2022; Saxena, 2014). However, the double-edged sword implied by research also suggests that *mismanagement* of a diverse workforce will lead to outcomes such as lowered organizational efficiency, potential for misunderstanding within work social groups and corresponds with lower employee satisfaction levels (Patrick & Kumar, 2012).

For now, it is possible to settle on the potential idea that the “diversity” component of DEI climate can refer to the spectrum of ways people differ, including but not limited to the visible and invisible dimensions, and the complexity in which these dynamics unfold in the workplace have a continuous impact worth further examination. This is in line with some traditional research frameworks who address this concept on an operational research level as *climate of inclusion* and *diversity climate* as respectively separate but slightly overlapping constructs (Park et al., 2023).

With reference to “equity,” Arsel et al. (2022) considered it to refer to “the fairness in the treatment of people in terms of both opportunity and outcome” (p. 920). While April (2021) considers the former with the addendum of acknowledgment that these obstacles may exist for different groups of people and subsequent implementation

of measures from micro to macro levels to remove barriers that have historically impacted said groups. The benefits of developing and implementing policies for equity in the workplace are correlated with increased employee satisfaction, increase in employee innovation and contribution and improve overall versatility in the workplace when different perspectives can be nurtured (Greenberg, 1988; Nishi, 2011; Park et al., 2023; Trejo et al., 2024). While there is more to research and uncover, the potential that lies in the direction of exploring the effects of equity in a workplace seem to have increased potential for bearing fruit, despite the current legislative climate in the United States.

For “inclusion,” April (2021) follows a similar approach by pointing out that a place of employment may be diverse, but also may still hold a culture of exclusion where workers do not feel supported, heard, or welcomed. Indeed, “welcoming” might be a potentially good concept to compare “inclusion” to based on the feelings that it may evoke – as a guest may be welcomed into a home and treated comfortably as defined in ancient western and eastern traditions. Within the comparisons of what “inclusion” may not be, we find some common threads as to what it may be.

For the purposes of this paper, we will incorporate the additional idea that “inclusion” in a US workplace can also refer to the ongoing and intentional integration of measures – including research and organizational policy implementation – to support diverse perspectives in a workplace and hold those spaces for such diversity to exist in a way that does not exclude and marginalize those who are already historically excluded and marginalized at various levels.

Components of each part of the DEI acronym appear to have been subsumed in the modern research bracket term of *climate of inclusion* or *diversity climate* (Park et al., 2023), but it is important to note that general research suggests that within a climate that encourages personal expressions without the attempt to assimilate said different perspectives, morale among staff members is more resilient to handling conflict within work groups (Ashikali et al., 2020; Nishi, 2013). In a meta-analysis of 30 studies completed across twenty years and representing more than 49,000 respondents, Mor Barak et al. (2016) found that efforts to cultivate a *climate of inclusion* and promote genuine diversity in an organization resulted in generally positive outcomes, such as:

increased organizational commitment and decreased intention to leave depending on the intersectional identities an employee holds. It is important to additionally recognize the challenge of adequately managing a diverse workforce - aptly described as “diversity management.”

Turnover Intention

Perhaps one of the most famous and well-established phenomena in personnel management studies, turnover intention was initially conceived as a two-dimensional occurrence in which an employee either voluntarily or involuntarily leaves an organization of employment (Bluedorn, 1978). Mobley (1977) posited the idea behind voluntary turnovers having a specific intention on the part of the individual after working in an organization for some time, related to key factors which can then serve as a predictor for actual turnover within an organization. Although turnover intention has been utilized as a proxy to predicting actual turnover for decades, Cohen, Blake and Goodman (2016) have determined that it is still a flawed proxy and other factors also contribute to an employee’s decision to leave in the cases of it being a ‘voluntary’ decision. Some of these key factors could include the quality of relationships employees have to their coworkers, levels of satisfaction relating to the work environment and organizational commitment, as correspondingly higher levels of each have been shown to be inversely correlated to turnover intention within employees in hospitality sectors in Taiwan (Lee et al., 2012).

As previously discussed, the environment in which an employee works in has continued to play a large role into not only how an employee can flourish in a workplace, but also how an employee can be pushed into leaving a workplace that does not suit them; this important distinction in analyzing the perception of the working environment through the employee’s own eyes can yield insight into where the gaps are and facilitate a better organizational environment with more ideal work outcomes (Mor Barak et al., 2016).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) as Theoretical Framework

Brought into the forefront of recent organizational research by Blau (1964), social exchange theory relies on the assumption that humans decide to enter into and maintain social relationships in a manner that incorporates leveraging cost against expected (if

unspecified) benefits. This phenomenon may also be examined and applied when observing the dynamics of a workplace environment, and may be used as a potential framework underlying supervisor-employee relations when looking at leader-member exchange-related concepts (to include the recently-developed LMCQ) and perceived organizational support (POS) (Wayne et al., 1997).

Other research has also shown that this model may be applied in examining dynamics between employees and the organization itself through the lens of person organization fit, as employees throughout every stage of employment are in a position to consistently evaluate their perception of how the organization fits with their needs, thus lending to the overall idea that social interactions even in the workplace may have at least somewhat of a *transactional basis* and have an influence on key employee outcomes, such as: job performance, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and organizational commitment (OC) (Kim et al., 2013).

Zhu et al. (2019) additionally notes that the relationship between employees and organization may be assessed as the outcome of a series of exchanges, specifically that when “the expectations of both parties are met, the quality of the relationships improves” (Zhu. et al., 2019, p. 284). However, there is some caution to be applied here, because the exact constructs and circumstances that comprise social exchange as a measurable variable in a study are highly dependent on the researcher and do not necessarily preclude a universally-accepted definition (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), though it is understood to generally point to the mutual reciprocity of beneficial exchanges between parties begetting potentially more positive work outcomes (such as: increased levels of organizational commitment, better work performance, and lower levels of absenteeism) and a stronger relationship under the right circumstances (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Meira & Hancer, 2021).

To this end, it becomes also possible to link some fundamental points of social exchange theory to the DEI umbrella using this premise; if an employee perceives they are being valued and treated as they are valued by their employing organization, then an organization’s perceived intentional efforts to cultivate a DEI climate and visible

commitment to promote employee wellbeing and performance may be a suitable as yet another mechanism to examine this relationship.

The Bridge from DEI to Turnover Intention

“DEI,” as discussed, still often holds an opaque sort of definition dependent on the researcher asked. Some focus on the dimensions of a *diversity climate*, a *climate of inclusion* and/or an *inclusive climate* (Ashikali et al., 2020) in an organizational context as separate constructs, while others may not make such a distinction at all (Park et al., 2023). Additionally, the focal point of such constructs and corresponding instruments of measurement may also change depending on the perspective of whose perception is used as the anchor and where it is facing, adding the potential for unending multifaceted complexity (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Herdman, McMillan-Capehart, 2010). However, a lynchpin in holding many ideas together seems to be perception as a generality, whether it is employee perception of formal/informal organizational structures at large or employee perception of perceived inclusion within work social groups (Park et al., 2023).

For the purposes of this research, we acknowledge the distinction between *diversity climate* and *climate of inclusion* along similar operational standards as Park et al. (2023) we interpret *diversity climate* to loosely represent the multifaceted perception employees of diverse backgrounds and social groups have of informal/formal employee structures that promote multiculturalism in an organization, such as existing hiring practices and performance evaluation structures (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Herdman & McMillan-Capehart, 2010; Park et al., 2023).

We follow by assigning *climate of inclusion* to be the narrower perceptions an employee may have within the groups they work in an organization, including the capacity to feel included and part of a group while preserving individual uniqueness (Ashikali et al., 2020; Nelissen et al., 2017; Park, et al., 2023). To capture more of these nuanced perspectives and dimensions, we intend to utilize Nishii’s (2013) abbreviated 15-item climate inclusion scale (this can be found in the attached appendices), which continues to be one of the most reliable and consistent measurements that contains survey

items that represent both *diversity climate* and a *climate of inclusion*, and refer to the aggregation of this in the context of this paper as “DEI climate” (Park et al., 2023).

There are several studies that suggest that careful and diligent cultivation of a truly inclusive and diverse workplace climate can bring many benefits, including increased productivity, employee innovation and reduced turnover rates (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Nishi, 2013). However, the reverse may also be true if such a climate is not cultivated, with a potential for increased intergroup conflict (Jehn, et al., 2008), harassment and discrimination (Schneider et al., 2000), and increased turnover rates (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; McKay et al., 2007). Additionally, within workplaces that have been perceived to be more diverse, there is a corresponding increase in employee perceptions of organizational fairness, increased levels of affective commitment in addition to the potential for corresponding decrease of employee turnover intention (Li, et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2024). In specific industries like suicide prevention, where turnover is indeed a looming problem, it seems pertinent to consider factors that may lead towards long-term and sustainable solutions (Workforce Recruitment and Retention, n.d.).

For addressing the specific context of suicide prevention work, there are two key generalities thus supported by research; the first underscores the overall efficacy of such services when it comes to reducing feelings of loneliness, suicidality and emotional distress within the people who utilize the service (Gould et al., 2007), while the second generality is that in the context of the United States, the efficacy of such programs can largely be attributed to the *quality of the training* and *people* who are on the other side of the line answering the calls (Gould et al., 2013; Spafford et al., 2023).

The current stage of research into this area does not reflect a large volume of studies that are focused on the volunteers and crisis workers who are responsible for addressing the incoming callers, but some key findings have confirmed similar trends to those in other care professions like nursing and behavioral health; such as an increased risk of vicarious traumatization, burnout, and other negative mental health outcomes - *especially if* there is a perceived lack of adequate training and social support on the part

of the volunteer or crisis worker (Gould et al., 2013; Spafford et al., 2023; Tanaka & Ikeuchi, 2023).

This is an important distinction to make, as the work itself may exact a heavy toll on the volunteers and crisis workers, but some negative outcomes can be mitigated by uncovering what potential strategies the people behind the scenes may utilize to continue providing these services. Some studies are potentially turning inwards to look at some inherent characteristics of the type of person who chooses to undertake such work and looking at qualities such as resilience and compassion satisfaction (Spafford et al., 2023), some are looking at the external conditions and context in which the work is being performed (Ross et al., 2016; Vattøe et al., 2020), but the focal point for future research on both internal and external factors will be necessary to drive the field forward and improve overall quality for every stakeholder.

While there is not currently a direct link between DEI climate and the turnover rate specifically of suicide prevention line workers, there is a link to employee perceptions of an organization's DEI climate corresponding to a decreased intent to turnover for employees within tech and medical sectors, which may be comparable (Jolly & Self, 2020; Tran et al., 2024).

In addition, there is a link to overall social and organizational support reducing negative mental health outcomes and promoting better ones while in service and occupying the role of a crisis counselor (Spafford et al., 2023; Vattøe et al., 2020). As such, this research will proceed using this tentative link to uncover other nuances about the nature of this relationship, including as to whether or not we may proceed further and draw a line of negative relationship between the potential of perceived support - in the form an organization's DEI climate - to a potential for decrease in turnover intention in a field that is notorious for it.

Since turnover intention continues to be a generally reliable method of predicting actual turnover rates (Mobley, 1977), we intend to test the following:

H1: Employee perceptions of implemented DEI in the workplace correspond to lower employee turnover intention.

Leader-Member Conversational Quality (LMCQ) as Moderator

In order to properly discuss leader-member conversational quality as a recent construct and scale, we must first dissect the theoretical backing of the behemoth of leader-member exchange that forms its skeleton. Brought into greater focus by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), leader-member exchange is a well-established concept that refers to the dyadic relationship between a leader/supervisor holding some level of authority and influence over direct reportees in an employee capacity. Bauer and Erdogan (2015) maintain that, in contrast to other types of leadership development practices and theories, Leader-Member Exchange establishes that influence a supervisor has over their reporting employees develops is directly tied to the quality of the relationship between them. Among some identified dimensions that could comprise what constitutes a ‘high-quality’ relationship exchange are loyalty, trust, and professional respect (Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

While there have been many facets of Leader-Member Exchange that were researched across the decades, a key idea potentially anchors a relationship between LMX and employee turnover intention by analyzing the underpinnings that influence the quality of such relationships (Kim et al., 2010). However, it is equally important to distinguish that while the link between LMX and turnover intention is not clear-cut (Gerstner & Day, 1997), so this is one reason to explore further.

Correspondingly, leader-member exchange as a larger theory also has a well-studied impact on organizational climate and other potential facets like organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and turnover intention through the analysis and classification of ‘quality of relationship’ to supervisor and employee interactions (Cha & Borchgrevink, 2017; Gerstner & Day, 1997). In addition, there is also a growing body of literature to examine a potential link between LMX and implementation of DEI within a workplace (Rice et al., 2023). More specifically, Atta and Zaman (2024) attribute the role of organizational leadership as driving forces behind increased implementation of DEI policies in the workplace, and can be instrumental in increasing overall innovation and changing company culture.

In congruence to potential changes in the company culture, there is also evidence to suggest that LMX may partially mediate the relationship between supervisor-employee

loneliness and turnover intention (Chen et al., 2016). The effect that leader-member exchange potentially has on turnover intention may even be consistently observed in non-western contexts, with enhanced LMX playing a key role in reducing staff turnover intent and increasing organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Abu Elanain, 2014). If we consider the framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET), this directionality may hold water when it comes to employee's own perspectives and evaluations of the quality of exchanges with their organization, as there is evidence to support that negative transactional exchanges between workers and organizations may also lead to an increase of corresponding negative outcomes like job insecurity and turnover intention (Lee & Jeong, 2017).

As established previously, if we understand the social occurrences and exchanges that take place between supervisor and employee to be a continuing, ongoing relationship of reciprocity that is leveraged by the difference of costs to benefits of maintaining said relationship, then we could also assume that higher-quality exchanges between leader and member will facilitate better work outcomes such as organizational commitment, trust, and employee performance and lead to the decrease of negative work outcomes such as absenteeism and turnover rates (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Meira & Hancer, 2021).

While this explains the underpinning of leader-member exchange as a larger theory related to this framework, it is not the exact variable we are considering for use in this model. Jian et al. (2014) found that within the general ambiguity of leader-member exchange, it might give researchers a clearer picture to isolate a particular element of the dyadic exchange which could serve as the driver for the overall quality of interaction between supervisor-supervisee pairs. After careful consideration, the conversational element was chosen to be the cornerstone of leader-member exchanges, and although it is newer in comparison to leader-member exchange, it also has already been utilized (Abu & Connaughton, 2019) to examine workplace interpersonal exchanges and removes the double-barreled questions associated with the LMX-7 while still retaining its critical theoretical backing. Therefore, we would also examine:

H2: Leader-member conversational quality (LMCQ) strengthens the negative relationship between DEI climate and employee turnover intention.

Person-Organization Fit (P-O Fit) as a Mediator

While Person-Organization (P-O) Fit has many facets and nuanced definitions, it may be broadly or loosely tied to the concept of a person's compatibility with the organizations they are employed in (Kristof, 1996). Within this general area, there is also research related to the idea of *complementary* and *supplementary fit* (McCullough & Turban, 2007). If an individual and organization have *complementary fit*, then each party in that relationship has something the other needs (Cable & Edwards, 2004). However, in *supplementary fit*, this congruence is thought to occur when the individual and organization are more aligned on specific values that are fundamental (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). There is also a notable distinction between *perceived* and *actual* fit, where the discrepancy between how an individual perceives they fit into an organization and how this may look like in a performance assessment (i.e., external perceptions around that employee's fit) may yield indicators for predicting turnover rates (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Kristof, 1996). The ideal study may be able to make use of both elements by asking participants to determine for themselves how they perceive their fit with their organization, followed by asking direct supervisors via a performance assessment tool to follow and assess employees' actual fit with their organization, however, this strategy is recommended for a follow-up study that can encompass a more complex design.

As it is, asking the employees themselves to rate the congruence between their perceptions of their own values and goals and the employing organization's values and goals remains an adequate measurement and predictor for employee corresponding turnover (Abdalla et al., 2018), with employees who rate higher for p-o fit amongst other factors being overall less likely to leave their jobs.

It is this facet we wish to explore further, because there are also underlying implications for the implementation of P-O fit when assessing potential candidates for occupations with traditionally high turnover rates (Cable & Edwards, 2004), such as those within health and mental healthcare. Carless (2005) notes that while P-O fit and P-J (person-job) fit are typically classified under the bracket of P-E (person-environment),

they carry different implications and have different effects on attraction to specific jobs at various stages of hiring. This distinction is one that we wish to highlight and examine further when it comes to the specific environments cultivated in the work, culture and environment associated with suicide prevention lines.

To further underscore the importance of the working environment, Lopez et al. (2009) additionally made the case for cross-cultural retail firms undertaking the efforts to understand the role of multicultural perspectives to reconcile employee operations and perspectives utilizing ethical work climate (EWC) and P-O fit, positioning it as *necessary* to succeed in overall business operations in a changing and globalized working landscape. In broader terms of employee perspective, research also suggests that nurturing a community of inclusiveness within the organization where an employee is valued for what they bring corresponds to lower levels of absenteeism, lower turnover intention, and greater affective commitment (Findler et al., 2007; Mor Barak et al., 2001; Peng et al., 2014).

Verquer et al. (2003) previously investigated the relationship of P-O fit to turnover intention, job satisfaction and organizational commitment amongst a series of studies in a meta-analysis, and Kim (2012) tested the mediating effect of P-O fit on organizational commitment and job satisfaction for workers in the public service sector, drawing attention to the possibility that P-O fit can be used to explain the relationship between external employee environment and potential employee work outcomes. Considering that person-organization fit is tied to the perception an employee has of their employing organization and encompasses how well that employee perceives themselves as integrating with their organization (Kristof, 1996), we are proposing that how employees perceive their employing organization's efforts towards cultivating a DEI climate may additionally impact employees' intent to turnover, potentially determined by how aligned they perceive themselves to be with the organization's values and goals at large (person-organization fit).

In comparison to these other contexts, it is important to note that person-organization fit often serves as a moderator or independent variable within a research model, this is likely because it may be comparatively more difficult to position it as a

variable that could be at least partially explained by one variable and at least partially explain another variable, such as within a mediation context (Verquer et al., 2003). However, by embedding this within the social exchange theory framework and leveraging the uniqueness of The Trevor Project employees (who comprise a total of two-thirds of the study's respondents when including the Trevor-988 subsidiary), it becomes possible to avoid the logical pitfall of DEI climate partially 'explaining' person-organization fit. While exact numbers are not accessible due to legal protection and compliance issues, it is estimated that more than one-fifth of The Trevor Project employees identify as queer, with potentially up to one-fifth of employees also knowing about The Trevor Project because they have utilized its services prior to employment or someone in their social circle has (T. Paley, personal communications, May 18th, 2025).

Under the logical framework set by social exchange theory, relationships between parties can be looked at through the lens of transaction, with the component of mutual reciprocation and the expectation of future benefits playing a role in whether parties would continue to maintain or terminate a relationship (Blau, 1964). Although access to the exact number presents an ethical and compliance issue on the part of HR (or People Ops, as they are referred to at The Trevor Project), we may extrapolate with the data that is appropriate for presentation in this setting that many Trevor employees specifically seek out roles and opportunities within the organization *because* of its perceived DEI climate; this is corroborated further with the 2022 Employee Handbook specifically allocating several provisions dedicated to legal and medical transition for employees, including separate time off for mental health, support and mentorship connections for those who have transitioned, enhanced disability services access, as well as the promotion of several religious and ethnic minority group affiliations and recognition of official holidays within the organization (T. Paley, personal communications, June 20th, 2022). If as many as 20% of these potential workers are indeed the queer youth who may have even utilized these services, and then sought out employment there when they were older, then this also likely means: they initially had *some* informed perception of the type of organization that The Trevor Project is, and that this previous perception may also give way to *expectations and outcomes* of what working life at such an organization may be like, while simultaneously continuing to identify with the current queer youth (and

subsequently, the larger organization that serves them) that will utilize the services in the future (Blau, 1964; Kristof, 1996).

While this potential premise, nestled in embedded expectations and employee self-identification are worthy of a study on their own to explore its viability, there are unfortunately none in existence at this moment. However, by centering the unique characteristics of the sampled population in conjunction with previous research taking a potentially similar approach in utilizing person-organization fit as a mediator, this may indeed be enough for the current study and inform potential viability for future research (Kim, 2012).

P-O fit, in this context, can be leveraged to examine the potential effects of DEI climate by employees to levels of turnover intention as a mediator. This leads us to the following:

H3: P-O fit mediates the negative relationship between DEI climate and employee turnover intention.

CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will explain the methodology used for conducting this research and the study's conceptual model. There are six main stages in the framework for this research implementation. The stage begins with the research framework, research procedure, research sample and data collection, measurement, and data analysis.

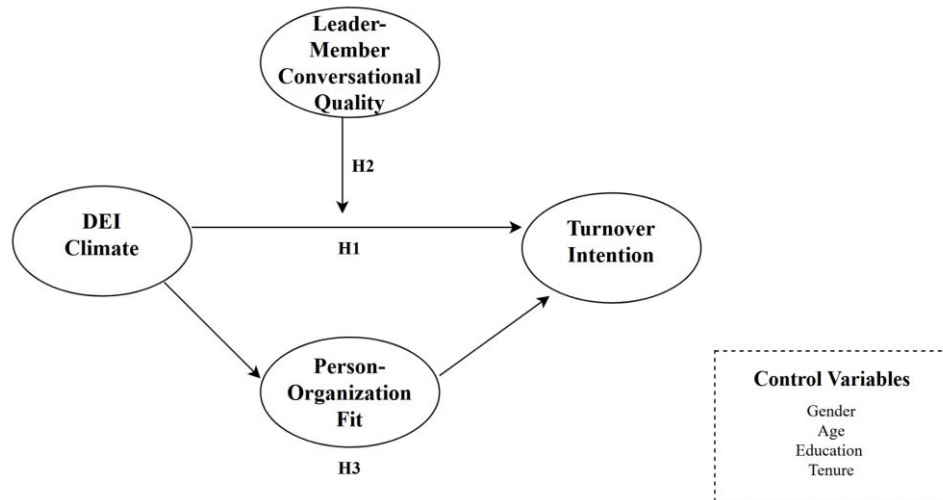
Research Framework



The initial framework is derived from the literature review, with a special emphasis on the contexts surrounding each chosen variable. Each variable also has existing empirical to bolster their presence in this study as well as the intent for their selection. Figure 1.1 describes the initial directionality and relationships among each variable in this study.

Figure 1.1

The Research Model



The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Positively-oriented DEI climate corresponds to lower employee turnover intention rates.

H2: Leader-member conversational quality (LMCQ) moderates the negative relationship between DEI climate and employee turnover intention.

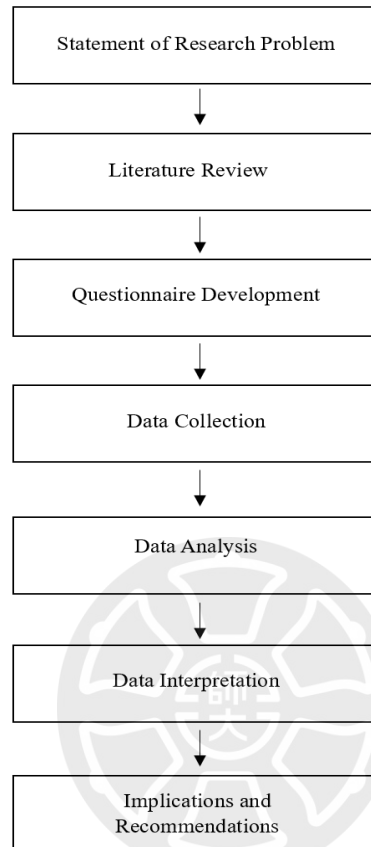
H3: P-O fit mediates the negative relationship between DEI climate and employee turnover intention.

Research Procedure

This section contains each stage of development and execution of this study. As demonstrated in Figure 1.2 , the research procedure will be presented in subsections corresponding to procedure and progression.

Figure 1.2

Research Procedure



Statement of Research Problem

Given high turnover rates in the US mental health industry (more specifically, suicide prevention lines) and the constant need for trained staff to occupy critical roles (Workforce Recruitment and Retention, n.d.), it is worth concentrating efforts and resources to understand what makes employees want to stay in these environments, what makes them leave, and what underpinnings can be explored to improve the overall state of mental health working circumstances. In exploring what perceptions crisis mental health employees have of themselves in specific relation to the organization they work for and what that organizational culture might have as far as its perceived implemented efforts for diversity, equity and inclusion, we might uncover additional routes to reducing turnover intention.

Literature Review

With due consideration to the precedent set by the previously discussed literature review, the design and execution of this experiment greatly reflects the products of an extensive background and development. Each variable has a corresponding scale which will be utilized in conjunction with the aggregation and analysis of obtained data. Ethical and institutional research activity guidelines will be followed to ensure compliance, quality and greater capacity for replicability of the experiment.

Development of Questionnaires

The proposed surveys for each variable to include: perceptions of DEI, turnover intention, leader-member exchange and person-organization fit have all been adapted from existing measures which have been reliably tested and implemented to ensure adherence to proper research standards and protocol. The surveys will be distributed and collected online, in their initial language of publication to a correspondingly English-speaking audience.



Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed online and via an english-speaking medium to respondents above the age of 18 (as it is the minimum mandatory age to volunteer and/or begin work at a suicide prevention/mental health crisis center), who have occupied their current roles in a suicide prevention/mental health crisis service center for three months and above. The method will primarily be the “snowball” form of convenience sampling and respondents will be encouraged to share in their networks to other potential respondents who fit the selection criteria.

Interpretation of Results

The expectation was that hypothesis 1-3 would be supported after undergoing statistical analyses, which is further bolstered by previous research that underpins the relationships between each established variable.

Research Sample and Data Collection

The main population for this study comprised of english-speaking workers at the suicide prevention lines of The Trevor Project and three 988 provider centers; two of the centers were within the state of Arizona and the final unit came from The Trevor-988 collaborative unit of suicide prevention line workers. The workers were primarily sourced through the researcher's own network of previous coworkers from The Trevor Project and 988, and the two provider centers within Arizona were accessed on joining a social networking group. Additionally, the sample comprised of 164 workers from the main company of the Trevor Project, and the other 165 were workers in the 988 National Suicide Prevention Line network, to include The Trevor Project's collaborative branch of 988.

For the questionnaire, the key additional criterion that served as prescreener items were the mandatory age, as most suicide prevention lines and crisis mental health services require a minimum age of 18 to undertake work even as a volunteer; and a second prescreen question required respondents to have occupied their position at their organization for approximately three months. Three months was chosen as the designated minimum time to address the potential for new hires who may not have spent enough time in the role to understand what is fully required in their job, and it also reflects the 'probationary hire' period across most American workspaces.

An online self-administered survey was developed and convenience sampling as well as snowball sampling approach (non-probability sampling) was adopted to collect the data. The designed survey contained two main parts, with the first part comprising questions addressing variables of research interest and the second part comprising demographic questions dealing with participants' demographic profile. The screener questions were placed at the beginning to ensure only the targeted population will access the survey, which was then distributed via social media platforms such as LinkedIn and via email to direct employees.

To account for common method variance, we added two attention check questions (ex: "Please check 'strongly agree' for this task."), alternated between 5-point Likert scales and 7-point Likert scales, as well as added a mandatory drawing captcha to ensure participant attention and temporarily disrupt the flow of survey-taking

(Tehseen et al., 2017). To prevent multiple access attempts, each respondent could only take the survey once, with a total of 329 valid responses sourced.

Measurement

The survey items representing each variable are derived from existing research and have undergone a battery of analyses to determine validity and reliability. The following series of tables for the main measured variables represented in the research model contain a detailed overview on each item used within the abbreviated scale along with the results of confirmatory factor analysis (Brown & Moore, 2012), which stipulates that items that assess above 0.7 are considered ‘fit’ for usage as they are more likely to measure the intended construct; all CFA loadings were obtained through the Mplus version 7.4 statistical software.

DEI Climate

As there are now a few brackets associated with examining DEI in a working environment as a latent variable, this study utilized Nishi’s (2013) 15-Item scale ($\alpha = 0.93$) encapsulating both *diversity climate* and *climate of inclusion* aspects in an organizational environment, as it remains one of the most integrated and reliable scales of measurement in use. Participants answered questions representing the three dimensions of: foundation of equitable employment practices, integration of differences and inclusion in decision-making within the workplace and rated their employing organization on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very much disagree to very much agree. The following table containing DEI climate survey items and their attached confirmatory factor analysis loadings maybe be referenced in greater detail.

Table 3.1*DEI Climate Items and CFA Loadings*

DEI Climate	Item	Factor Loadings
<i>Dimension 1: Foundation of Equitable Employment Practices</i>	This organization has a fair promotion process.	0.77
	The performance review process is fair in this organization.	0.84
	This organization invests in the development of all of its employees.	0.85
	Employees in this organization receive “equal pay for equal work.”	0.74
	This organization provides safe ways for employees to voice their grievances.	0.70
<i>Dimension 2: Integration of Differences</i>	This organization is characterized by a non-threatening environment in which people can reveal their true selves.	0.81
	This organization values work-life balance.	0.73
	This organization commits resources to ensuring that employees are able to resolve conflicts effectively.	0.82
	Employees of this organization are valued for who they are as people, not just for the jobs that they fill.	0.89
	In this organization, people often share and learn about one another as people.	0.70

(continued)

Table 3.1*DEI Climate Items and CFA Loadings (continued)*

DEI Climate	Item	Factor Loadings
	This organization has a culture in which employees appreciate the differences that people bring to the workplace.	0.71
<i>Dimension 3: Inclusion in Decision-Making</i>	In this organization, employee input is actively sought.	0.80
	In this organization, everyone’s ideas for how to do things better are given serious consideration.	0.89
	In this organization, employees’ insights are used to rethink or redefine work practices.	0.84
	Top management exercises the belief that problem-solving is improved when input from different roles, ranks, and functions is considered.	0.71

Turnover Intention

With consideration to previously established research, directly asking participants continues to be an effective method of assessing turnover intention, Boshoff and Allen’s (2000) 3-item scale measuring turnover intention ($\alpha = 0.82$) on a 5-point Likert scale. As the initial study utilized a 7-point Likert scale for their self-administered research tool, we implemented it in a similar manner to account for common method variance. The following table illustrates each survey item in detail along with the corresponding factor loadings after confirmatory factor analysis in Mplus.

Table 3.2*Turnover Intention Items and CFA Loadings*

Turnover Intention	Item	Factor Loadings
	I often think about resigning.	0.96
	It would not take much to make me resign from the organization.	0.70
	I will probably be looking for another job soon.	0.85

Leader-Member Conversational Quality

Leader-Member Exchange (LMCQ) was captured by asking employees to rate the quality of their interactions to supervisors on the LMCQ 9-item scale, with a corresponding Likert rating of 1-7 ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale is sourced from Jian et al. (2014) ($\alpha = 0.90$). The following table includes the results of CFA performed on Mplus and the subsequent factor loadings attached to each item.

Table 3.3

LMCQ Items and CFA Loadings

Leader-Member Conversational Quality	Item	Factor Loadings
	With regard to getting things done, the conversations between my supervisor and me are efficient.	0.86
	When discussing work-related matters, my supervisor and I can convey a lot to each other even in a short conversation.	0.82
	When talking about work tasks, the conversations between my supervisor and me are often smooth.	0.96

(continued)

Table 3.3*LMCQ Items and CFA Loadings (continued)*

Leader-Member Conversational Quality	Item	Factor Loadings
	When talking about how to get things done, the conversations between my supervisor and me usually flow nicely.	0.90
	When talking about how to get things done at work, my supervisor and I usually align our ideas pretty easily.	0.90
	When talking about how to get things done at work, my supervisor and I are usually in sync with each other.	0.70
	My supervisor and I usually have accurate understanding of what the other is saying when trying to get things done at work.	0.82
	When we discuss how to get things done at work, my supervisor and I usually have no problem correctly understanding each other's ideas.	0.79
	My supervisor and I interpret each other's ideas accurately when discussing work-related matters.	0.82

Person-Organization Fit

Person-Organization (P-O) fit was derived from the research by Resick et al. (2007) ($\alpha = .90$) on a 5-point Likert scale. The items additionally ranged from very much disagree - very much agree and ask participants to rate themselves in relation to their organization. The corresponding factor loadings may be examined utilizing the table below.

Table 3.4*P-O Fit Items and CFA Loadings*

Person-Organization Fit	Item	Factor Loadings
	I feel my values “match” or fit this organization and the current employees in this organization.	0.91
	I think the values and personality of this organization reflect my own values and personality.	0.87
	The values of this organization are similar to my own values.	0.89
	My values match those of current employees in this organization.	0.70
	I feel my personality matches the “personality” or image of this organization.	0.71

Control Variables

At this stage of the study, the control or adjustment variables of age, (Jin et al., 2018) and tenure within the organization (Caillier, 2013) were implemented because of their previously established correlations with turnover intention. Although the findings have generally been mixed between gender and turnover intention, this variable was also included (Hur & Abner, 2024) for further study. Additionally, due to bodies of existing research also suggesting a link between education levels corresponding to turnover intention (Groenveld, 2011; Hur & Abner, 2024), a survey item recording the participants’ responses to education levels will also be added.

Gender

Previous research elucidates on the idea that gender identity may be a factor in employee turnover intentions (Hur & Abner, 2024), however, there seems to be a lack of consensus determining directionality. According to Blomme et al. (2010), when uncovering potential reasons for intent to turnover among highly-educated employees, women (presumably cisgender) often cited the reasons of family-work balance and

promotional opportunities were among the top, suggesting that there are indubitably other reasons factoring into the paradigm of gender-turnover intention. Huffman et al. (2021) also confirms the lack of adequate literature that capture the interaction between working conditions and the workplace with workers of transgender, nonbinary, and other non-traditional gender identities, so the impact of gender on turnover intentions is put further into question with the introduction of employee gender identity outside of the binary. In addition, The Trevor Project is uniquely situated as a work organization in the United States due specifically to its nature as a queer youth suicide prevention line, with as many as one-fifth of its workforce belonging to the LGBTQ+ community (T. Paley, personal communication, June 20th, 2022).

Considering the very existence of employees who occupy intersectional identities, it was necessary to amend the usage of this variable to be more inclusive of intersectional identities (Corlett & Mavin, 2014). To account for the usage of a categorical, nominal variable as a control, the usage of dummy variables was employed using the following formula of $n = n - 1$ for the number of gender categories to avoid perfect multicollinearity and “the dummy variable trap” in regression analysis (Suits, 1957). This study controlled for this variable with a demographic question with the following categories and corresponding codes: 0 for *other identity*, 1 for *woman*, and 2 for *man*, and 3 for *non-binary*. The “0” category of *other identity* served as the reference point of comparison for the other gender category variables.

Age

According to previous research, there is a generally negative (although weak) correlation between age and turnover intention (Hur & Abner, 2024; Jin, McDonald & Park, 2018). Although recent meta-analyses have drawn a link between other heterogeneous factors indigenous to the countries being examined for cultural frameworks for turnover intentions (Wong & Cheng, 2020), for the purpose of this study’s setting in the United States, turnover intention in a parallel care sector of nursing and health is also serving as a reference point. Woodward and Willgerodt (2022) have also corroborated that age *does* have an effect on registered nurses and turnover intention, but also find that several studies do not necessarily agree on the directionality of the impact. With consideration to this, the study accounted for age by

asking participants to directly fill in their age with a blank space, allowing for means to be calculated as well.

Education

In relation to turnover intention, education has been demonstrated to be positively correlated, with highly educated employees leaving their employers at consistently higher rates (Hur & Abner, 2024). This is especially visible in industries like care and hospitality, which already tend towards higher overall turnover rates than many other industries in western countries (Blomme et al., 2010; Groenveld, 2011). Although this correlation tends to be weak (Hur & Abner, 2024) it is important to account for the potential effects on the present study. The question has the following responses and corresponding codes allocated: 1 for *Some High School* 2 for *High School Graduate/GED*, 3 for *Associate's Degree or Equivalent*, 4 for *Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent*, 5 for *Professional Degree (MA/MBA or Equivalent)*, and 6 for *Doctoral-Level Degree (PhD or Equivalent)*.

Tenure

According to previous research, there is also evidence for a negative relationship between longer tenures at an organization and intention to turnover, (Caillier, 2013; Maden, 2014), but this is also subject to further scrutiny as the emergence of additional factors also influence the potential impact (Hur & Abner, 2024). To account for this effect, a fill-in-the-blank space was allocated to allow participants to self-report on their own tenure within their organization, allowing for means and ranges to be calculated.

Validity and Reliability Tests

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is an established statistical technique for determining validity of the proposed model, which specifically tests the measured variables in the identified framework for the purpose of assessing the strength of the proposed research configuration (Brown & Moore, 2012; Mueller & Hancock, 2001). In the current study, the ratio of Chi-Square (X^2) to degree of freedom (*df*), the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardized Root Mean Square (SRMR) were

assessed to determine construct validity. The corresponding factor loadings, composite reliability indices and average variance extracted (AVEs) for each item were also calculated and analyzed. As a potential bolster to model suitability, convergent and discriminant validity analysis were also run. Mplus version 7.4 was utilized to administer the comprehensive assessments.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

The main purpose of the descriptive statistics analysis was to ensure organization and proper classification of all the gathered raw data. This includes accessing the central tendency (i.e. mean, median, and mode), measures of variability (i.e. variance and standard deviation), and associated information on demographic data such as gender and age. In general, the descriptive statistics analysis may be used to uncover other potential information that may also influence the study.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to determine the suitability of the measurement's validity for the purpose of usage in this study. The CFA may also be useful for determining any potential weaknesses and gaps within the research, so we prioritized this test to address any model-fit issues before proceeding. The Mplus 7.4 software was utilized to determine Model-Fit Indices. In accordance with findings by Mueller and Hancock (2001) for determining the strength of a theoretical framework, Chi-square (χ^2), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), The Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR) and The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR indices were utilized to assess goodness-of-fit. Utilizing guidelines set by Brown and Moore's (2012) research, values were assessed against acceptable ranges and model fit indices and were determined to be suitable enough to proceed. The aforementioned values may be further explored in Table 3.5 The corresponding factor loadings for each measurement item along with Cronbach's alpha, the composite reliability indices, and average variance extracted (AVE) values calculated and attached, using Henseler et al. (2015) as the reference point for assessing

appropriate convergent and discriminant validity thresholds and continuous adherence to structural equation modeling techniques to enhance accuracy. Since the results assessing the suitability of the model, reliability and validity of the constructs and associated measurement items were found to be within acceptable ranges, we were able to proceed with the main correlation, moderation and mediation analyses. All results from the model fit battery may be visible at Tables 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7.

Table 3.5

Summary of Model Fit Indices

Index	Acceptable Level	Ideal Range	CFA Test Results
χ^2/df	< 5	2-5	3.80
CFI	> 0.90	> 0.95	0.91
TLI	> 0.90	> 0.95	0.91
RMSEA	< 0.08	< 0.05	0.07
SRMR	< 0.08	< 0.05	0.07

Table 3.6

CFA results

Variables	Means	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliabilities	AVEs
DEI climate (DEI)			0.90	0.62
DEIA1	2.92	0.77	0.89	0.61
DEIA2	2.85	0.84		
DEIA3	2.85	0.85		
DEIA4	2.83	0.74		
DEIA5	2.75	0.70		
DEIB1	3.07	0.81	0.90	0.60
DEIB2	2.68	0.73		
DEIB3	3.10	0.82		
DEIB4	3.04	0.89		
DEIB5	4.18	0.70		
DEIB6	3.49	0.71		
DEIC1	2.86	0.80	0.88	0.66
DEIC2	2.78	0.89		

(continued)

Table 3.6*CFA results (continued)*

Variables	Means	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliabilities	AVEs
DEIC3	2.70	0.84		
DEIC4	2.30	0.71		
Leader-member conversational quality (LMCQ)	3.61	0.66	0.95	0.70
LMCQ1	4.87	0.86		
LMCQ2	5.16	0.81		
LMCQ3	5.03	0.95		
LMCQ4	5.07	0.90		
LMCQ5	4.85	0.90		
LMCQ6	4.92	0.70		
LMCQ7	5.32	0.81		
LMCQ8	5.23	0.79		
LMCQ9	5.20	0.82		
Person-Organization Fit (P-O Fit)			0.91	0.67
POF1	3.58	0.91		
POF2	3.40	0.87		
POF3	3.51	0.88		
POF4	4.17	0.71		
POF5	3.60	0.70		
Turnover Intention (TI)			0.75	0.50
TI1	5.14	0.96		
TI2	4.37	0.70		
TI3	5.25	0.85		

Note. $N = 329$. $\chi^2 = 475.01$ ($df = 125, p < .001$); CFI = .91; TLI = .91; SRMR = .07; RMSEA = .07. All factor loadings are significant at $p < .01$

Table 3.7*Convergent and discriminant validity*

	CR	DEI	LMCQ	P-O Fit	TI
DEI	0.90	0.62			
LMCQ	0.95	0.32	0.70		
P-O Fit	0.77	0.44	0.19	0.67	
TI	0.74	0.55	0.17	0.13	0.50

Note. Bolded numbers are AVE and unbolded items are the computed R². DEI = DEI Climate, LMCQ = Leader-Member Conversational Quality, P-O Fit = Person-Organization Fit, TI = Turnover Intention

Pearson Correlation Analysis

In accordance with Rodgers and Nicewander's (1988) seminal work on statistical analysis and interpretation, the Pearson correlation coefficient analysis (r) was utilized to initially determine the surface-level correlational relationship between variables in terms of strength and direction. Generally speaking, the possible range of values between variables may fall between -1 and 1, with the negative value indicating an inverse relationship. Additionally, the closer the number is to the whole value of 1, the more likely one variable may be used to predict the behavior of the other. In addition, p values in this context represent the likelihood of such results occurring due to chance, with $p < 0.05$ representing the acceptable threshold to attribute the existence of a relationship between two variables (Rodgers & Nicewander, 1988).

Hypotheses Tests

For this study, a hierarchical regression analysis was utilized via Hayes PROCESS Macro on SPSS 23 to test the degree of correlation between key variables. This test was also used to simultaneously examine the mediating effect of person-organization fit for the DEI-turnover intention relationship, as well as the moderating effect of leader-member conversational quality on the relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention in the target population. The use of the Hayes PROCESS macro allows for detailed examination of effect sizes, streamlined statistical analysis

implementation for moderation and mediation, and the capacity for automatic bootstrapping, which can yield greater overall insight into findings due to its capacity to run complex, nuanced models simultaneously (Hayes, 2012).

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section gives further allocation to the presentation of analytical results from subsequent data analyses using SPSS 23. A total of 329 valid responses were sourced. The first half includes the results of the descriptive statistics analyses that determined the composition and general demographics of the sampled population, along with the statistically-relevant overview of the relationships between variables using the Pearson correlation analysis. In addition, hierarchical regression was for further analyses on the four variables of DEI climate, turnover intention, person-organization fit, and leader-member conversational quality. Due to the model's specific nature of including both a moderator and mediator, the hierarchical regression and moderation effect testing results obtained via the Hayes PROCESS macro for SPSS 23 are also included.

Descriptive Statistics

The participants' demographic information is highlighted in Table 4.1. The demographic questions of gender, age, education, and tenure were included in the distributed questionnaire. Respondents were numbered at 329, taken from the identified suicide prevention centers of The Trevor Project and three provider units forming part of the 988 National Suicide Prevention Line network with the following characteristics: predominantly self-identifying as women at 41%, followed by non-binary respondents at 32.8%. Participants were aged between 21-54, with the majority of respondents ($n = 170$) falling between ages 27-31. Respondent profiles also leaned towards higher levels of education, with the majority ($n = 158$) obtaining at least a BA. Lastly, all participants fell between <1 year of tenure and 8 years of tenure at their current organization, with the majority of respondents occupying a role at their present organization between 1-4 years ($n = 247$). Table 4.1 is included below for further details on the sourced sample.

Table 4.1

Participants Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	68	20.7
	Woman	135	41.0
	Non-Binary	108	32.8
	Other Identity	18	5.5
Age (years)	21-26	66	20.1
	27-31	170	51.6
	32-36	74	22.5
	37-54	19	5.8
Education	High School Graduate/GED	9	2.7
	Some College	31	9.5
	Associate's Degree or Equivalent	35	10.7
	Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent	158	48.0
	Professional Degree (MA/MBA or Equivalent)	96	29.1
Tenure	Less Than 1 Year	48	14.6
	1-4 Years	247	75.0
	5-8 Years	34	10.4

Note. Respondent Demographic Statistics ($N = 329$)

Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted on SPSS 23 to assess the mean, standard deviation and correlations among the control variables of: gender, age, educational levels, tenure alongside the results for DEI climate (DEI), leader-member conversational quality (LMCQ), person-organization fit (P-O Fit), and turnover intention (TI) in Table 4.2. In summary, the results show DEI was positively correlated

with LMCQ and P-O Fit but negatively correlated with TI ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, LMCQ was positively correlated with DEI and P-O Fit, but negatively correlated with TI ($p < 0.01$). P-O Fit was also positively correlated with DEI climate and LMCQ but negatively correlated with TI ($p < 0.01$).

In terms of control variables, education was the only one correlated with all four main model variables according to the results of the Pearson correlation. When aggregated, gender had significant positive relationships with both DEI climate ($r = 0.28, p < 0.01$) and turnover intention ($r = 0.14, p < 0.01$). However, this changed when the gender dummy variables were evaluated alongside the other variables. However, despite adequate support in other literature indicating the potential impact of tenure (Caillier, 2013; Maden, 2014), for the Pearson correlation, there were no statistically significant results in relation to tenure's impact on the other variables for this study. The initial analysis also yielded interesting results pertaining to the directionality of the relationships between variables, with all three main variables of DEI climate, LMCQ, and P-O fit yielding negative relationships to turnover intention ($r = -0.74, p < 0.01, r = -0.42, p < 0.01, r = -0.35, p < 0.01$, respectively).

Generally, the propositions of all three hypotheses seem to be supported on the basis of the initial results of the Pearson correlation analysis. As evidenced by the negative relationship between DEI, LMCQ, and P-O Fit to TI, we may initially extrapolate that cultivation of an inclusive DEI climate, higher quality exchanges between supervisor and supervisee, and the elevated congruence of a suicide prevention line employee's own perception of how much they identify with their company are likely to reduce their intention to voluntarily leave said place of employment. However, while tenure did not appear to have as much of a statistically significant effect in these circumstances, gender, age, and employee education levels need to be accounted for further as they yielded a relatively diverse impact.

More specifically, while the aggregated gender variable was significantly positively correlated with turnover intention and negatively correlated with DEI climate, when broken down further into the gender dummy variable comparison categories, the impact was much less straightforward. For example, if a participant was

sorted into the “woman” category, there was a statistically significant positive relationship to DEI climate, but a statistically negative relationship with LMCQ, with no significant relationship to turnover intention and person-organization fit. The “man” gender category variable yielded a statistically significant relationship that was positively correlated to DEI and negatively correlated to turnover intention. Representing a group not often addressed in personnel research, non-binary participants had extremely strong ($p < 0.01$) correlations to DEI climate, person-organization fit, and turnover intention, but not with LMCQ.

Conversely, participants who held other gender identities showed strong significant positive ($p < 0.01$) correlations to DEI climate, LMCQ, and p-o fit, but no statistically relevant relationship to turnover intention. The finding becomes more interesting when one considers that non-binary participants demonstrated a negative relationship to DEI climate and a positive relationship to turnover intention. As the three represented gender categories of women, non-binary and other gender identity participants have a history of facing systematic marginalization along with other minority groups, this initial finding merits even deeper analysis to fully understand the circumstances and dynamics faced by these groups, especially as a growing body of research is devoted to examining how participants in these groups interact in an environment and perceive it when there is not often a space for them (Corlett & Marvin, 2014; Felix et al., 2024; Hur & Abner, 2024).

Age was negatively correlated with LMCQ and P-O Fit ($r = -.139, p < 0.05, r = -.128, p < 0.05$, respectively), but not significantly correlated with either DEI climate or turnover intention, which may function as a case of generational differences within a cohort, in line with the ideas proposed by Nelson (2012) on different age attitudes towards supervisor-supervisee relationships and organization-self relation. Lastly, education was strongly correlated with all main model variables, but negatively correlated with turnover intention, which contrasts earlier findings in other research (Blomme et al., 2010; Groenveld, 2011).

Hur and Abner (2024) previously determined that highly educated employees were more likely to leave their places of employment (especially in Western countries),

but this was not the case in the present study. Since education was strongly positively correlated with DEI climate, leader-member conversational quality and person-organization fit, it may be possible that these intangible factors play a larger role in influencing highly-educated workers in suicide prevention lines to stay longer than initially predicted. While these findings represented an interesting first-look, more nuanced analysis was necessary to examine the underlying relationships and further understand what may be activated under certain conditions, which is the rationale behind the inclusion of the more robust Hayes PROCESS analyses that follow. The complete list of results for our initial Pearson correlation analysis along with means and standard deviations may be referred to in Table 4.2.



Table 4.2*Means, Standard Deviations, Coefficients, and Correlations among the variables (N=329)*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Other Identity	0.55	0.22	1											
2. Woman	0.41	0.49	-0.20**	1										
3. Man	0.21	0.41	-0.12**	-0.43**	1									
4. Non-Binary	0.33	0.47	-0.17*	-0.53**	-0.36**	1								
5. Gender (Aggregate)	2.23	.833	.051**	-0.23**	-0.75**	0.64**	1							
6. Age	29.61	4.52	-0.14*	0.09	-0.05	0.02	-0.03	1						
7. Education	4.92	1.00	-0.09	0.08	0.01	-0.05	0.11*	0.07	1					
8. Tenure	2.28	1.49	0.02	0.02	-0.063	0.07	-0.09	0.26**	-0.06	1				
9. DEI	2.94	0.95	0.14*	0.17**	0.23**	-0.44**	0.28**	0.10	0.36**	-0.03	(0.95)			
10. LMCQ	5.07	1.18	0.29**	-0.12*	0.68	-0.08	0.08	-0.14*	0.30**	-0.00	0.57**	(0.95)		
11. P-O Fit	3.66	0.96	0.21**	0.09	0.10	-0.29**	-0.09	-0.13*	0.20**	-0.07	0.66**	0.43**	(0.87)	
12. TI	4.93	1.60	-0.64	-0.07	-0.12*	0.21**	0.14**	-0.03	-0.11*	-0.03	-0.74**	-0.42**	-0.35**	(0.89)

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent Cronbach's alpha value. The asterisk represents significance levels * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *Corresponding Codes:* Gender: 0 = Other Identity, 1 = Woman, 2 = Man, 3 = Non-Binary, Education: 1 = Some High School, 2 = High School Graduate/GED, 3 = Associate's Degree or Equivalent, 4 = Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent, 5 = Professional Degree (MA/MBA or Equivalent), and 6 = Doctoral-Level Degree (PhD or Equivalent)

Results of Hypotheses Tests

Hayes' (2012) PROCESS macro for SPSS 23 was utilized to simultaneously test the three hypotheses along with the effects of the moderator leader-member conversational quality and mediator person-organization fit. Due to the study's unique characteristics of adding multiple gender identity categories, the nominal variables were initially separated out in accordance with previous research as the basis for utilizing dummy variables within linear regression analysis (Miller & Erickson, 1974; Suits, 1957). The category of 'Other Gender Identity' was positioned as the reference category (OGI = 0) and the following categories and codes of Woman = 1, Man = 2, and Non-Binary = 3 were created as dummy variables for comparison in both the PROCESS model 4 and model 1 analyses, allocated in this manner to avoid multicollinearity (Farrar & Glauber, 1967).

After proper encoding, the results for the moderation effect of leader-member conversational quality were computed using model 1, yielding an interaction effect consistent with what we had predicted for hypothesis 2 in that leader-member conversational quality (LMCQ) would moderate the negative relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention, presented as DEI x LMCQ ($\beta = -0.33$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = -4.87$, $p < 0.01$). The results yielded a rather strong and visible effect, with high LMX and high DEI climate corresponding to lower turnover intention. In addition to the results of the moderation analysis, the variables of education, age, and the gender conditions of woman and non-binary yielded statistically significant results, which may be visibly explored in Table 4.3 and in Figure 4.1 as the Model 1 PROCESS macro results and the interaction plot of the effect between DEI and LMCQ, respectively.

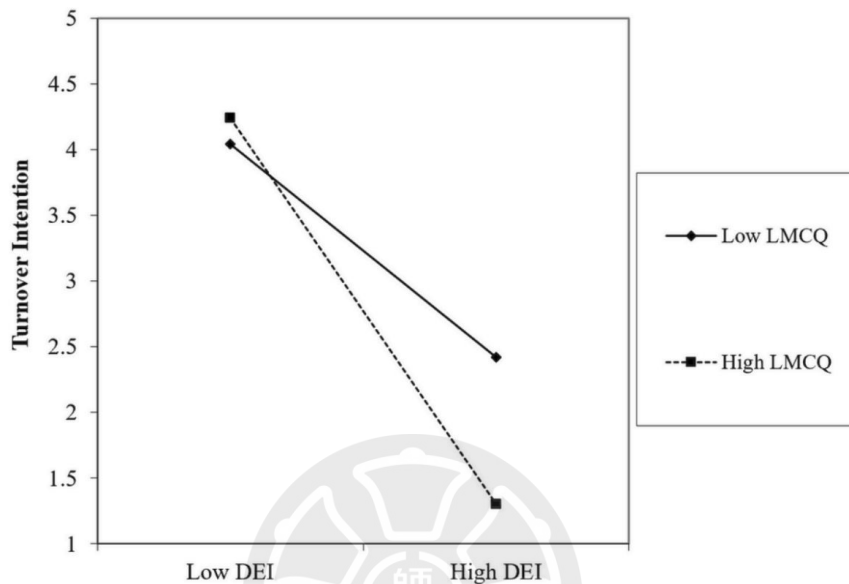
Table 4.3*Moderation analyses for LMCQ (PROCESS: Model 1)*

Model	Coefficient	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i>	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Model 1:						
Outcome variable model						
Outcome: TI						
DEI	-1.14	0.24	-3.54	0.04*	-0.68	-0.98
LMCQ	-0.23	0.15	-4.04	0.00***	-0.32	-0.92
DEI x LMCQ	-0.33	0.06	-4.87	0.00***	-0.40	-0.17
Age	-0.29	0.01	2.00	0.04*	0.00	0.05
Education	0.14	0.07	1.97	0.04*	0.00	0.28
Tenure	-0.05	0.04	-1.36	0.17	-0.13	0.02
Woman	-0.78	0.27	-2.88	0.00**	-1.31	-0.25
Man	-0.70	0.28	-2.52	0.01*	-1.25	-0.15
Non-Binary	-1.06	0.27	-3.86	0.00***	-1.60	-0.52
$R^2 = 0.63$						

Note. $N = 329$; DEI = DEI Climate, LMCQ = leader-member conversational quality, TI = Turnover intention, Boot = Bootstrapped result, LL = Lower limit, UL = Upper limit, CI = Confidence interval (95%); Bootstrap sample size = 5000. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 4.1

DEI Climate x Leader-Member Conversational Quality Effect on Turnover Intention



In combination with the results of the data analyses and the visible depiction of the effect LMCQ has on the independent and dependent variables, we may infer that compared with low quality exchanges between supervisor and supervisees, higher quality exchanges between supervisor and supervisee pairs specifically in a well-cultivated, inclusive DEI climate has the stronger effect in reducing employee turnover intention. However, an interesting result also becomes visible in that under the conditions of lower DEI climate, LMCQ on its own is not enough to reduce turnover intention, and perhaps may further exacerbate it under low DEI, according to the results of Figure 4.1. Additionally, according to the results of the PROCESS model 1 analysis, tenure was the only control variable that did not yield a significant impact on turnover intention, which suggests that the variables of age, education, and gender identity play far more of a role in determining how an employee perceives their organizational climate and their decision to potentially leave.

After the initial testing for moderation effect was completed, PROCESS macro analysis for Model 4 was then run to determine mediation effect and receive more

comprehensive results as it toggled between analyses of variable relationships between different outcome variables. The first step determined that under the indirect effect size that the bootstrapped lower level confidence and upper confidence limits of the indirect effect size of X on Y were not zero (Index = 0.30, CI, .17, .44), which indicates the existence of a partial mediation effect. In addition, the second step determined that the *a* path (independent variable's effect on the mediator) and the *b* path (the mediator's effect on the dependent variable) were also significant ($\beta = 0.74, t = 16.10, p < 0.01, \beta = 0.42, t = 5.28, p < 0.01$, respectively).

Interestingly, the *b* path analysis also yielded a positive correlation, which is worth additional exploration and discussion because it means that competitive mediation is likely occurring between the three main variables (Montoya & Hayes, 2017). With these results, we may also confirm the initial existence of a mediation effect of P-O fit on the relationship between DEI and TI, and that it is a relatively strong total one regardless of the differences between direct and indirect effects. In accordance with the findings established by Hayes (2012), the analysis indicates that DEI climate's influence on employee turnover intention can indeed be explained through the mechanism of person-organization fit, or more specifically, the levels of *perceived supplementary fit* (Kristof, 1996; Resick et al., 2007) where an employee perceives themselves as aligning with the external organization.

This represents a unique finding because we may now extrapolate that within the working contexts of The Trevor Project, 988, and the Trevor-988 subsidiary branch, the existence of a DEI climate in general partially explains the level of association that suicide prevention line employees have in relation to their employer, and this also affects their intentions to voluntarily exit. Additionally, while it was predicted that DEI climate would influence P-O fit levels, the control variable of age yielded significant results. For the coded dummy variables to represent categorical genders, being a man or woman yielded a stronger statistically significant effect on the mediator, but in relation to effects on turnover intention, non-binary participants demonstrated the highest comparative rates associated with turnover intention levels.

It was also discovered that if the mediation analysis for PROCESS model 4 instead utilizes *non-binary participants* as the reference category and consequently runs the analysis for mediation, other gender identity participants yield no statistically significant impact when the outcome variable is person-organization fit, but yield a strong, positive relationship when the outcome variable is employee turnover intention ($\beta = 0.84, t = 3.08, p < 0.01$), which corroborates the initial findings of gender as a relevant indicator to explore when predicting turnover attention utilizing p-o fit as a mediator. The associated values from the main analysis (using other gender identity as the reference variable for categorical gender) may be examined further in Table 4.4

Table 4.4

Mediation results for P-O fit (PROCESS: model 4)

Model	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p
Model 1:				
Mediator variable model				
Outcome: P-O Fit				
DEI	0.74	0.04	16.10	0.00***
Age	-0.04	0.01	-4.53	0.00***
Education	-0.01	0.04	-0.38	0.78
Tenure	-0.00	0.02	-0.09	0.92
Woman	-0.35	0.18	-1.96	0.04*
Man	-0.45	0.19	-2.41	0.01*
Non-Binary	-0.30	0.19	-1.56	0.11
Model 2:				
Outcome variable model				
Outcome: TI				
DEI	-1.72	0.09	-19.66	0.00***
PO Fit	0.42	0.08	5.28	0.00***
Age	0.05	0.01	3.75	0.00**

(continued)

Mediation results for P-O fit (PROCESS: model 4) (continued)

Model	Coefficient	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i>
Tenure	-0.45	0.04	-1.15	0.25
Woman	-0.46	0.25	-1.80	0.07
Man	-0.19	0.27	-0.71	0.41
Non-Binary	-0.84	0.27	-3.08	0.00**
R ² = 0.63				
Bootstrapping results for the direct effect				
	Index	SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Direct effect of DEI on TI via P-O Fit	-1.82	0.09	-2.00	-1.63
Bootstrapping results for the indirect effect				
	Index	SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Indirect effect of DEI on TI via P-O Fit	0.30	0.07	0.17	0.44

Note. *N* = 329; DEI = DEI Climate, P-O Fit = Person-Organization Fit, TI = Turnover Intention, Boot = Bootstrapped result, LL = Lower limit, UL = Upper limit, CI = Confidence interval (95%); Bootstrap sample size = 5000. * *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. ****p* < .001

Discussion

The aim of this research was two-fold; the first was to help fill a gap on a seldom-researched population that performs a critical function in the role of American mental health, and the second included providing insight into the practical and statistical impact of DEI as it relates to employees voluntarily departing a workplace. All three tested hypotheses were supported, which signifies this study's potential to serve as a valuable foundation for future research utilizing similar models and configurations to explore the latent variables of DEI climate, leader-member conversational quality, person-organization fit, and turnover intention. As previously mentioned, this study represented a unique view that is not often taken in regards to this very specific population of working Americans, and the chosen variables in both the research model and the amendment of control variables to include genders outside of

the binary have likely never been studied in this combination outside of this exact context, which highlights the uniqueness of the findings at the same time it emphasizes the glaring gaps in existing literature (Corlett & Mavin, 2014; Vattøe et al., 2020).

While it is still comparatively “new” when held up against the behemoth constructs of Leader-Member Exchange, Person-Organization Fit, and Turnover Intention, DEI Climate is not so new that groundbreaking studies that focus on the inherent diversity within organizations, in an especially heterogenous society such as the United States, should be appearing in 2025 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kristof, 1996; Nishi, 2013). However, the results of this study indicate that there is still much work to be done when examining the working circumstances of employees in an American suicide prevention line context, beginning with the initial results of a direct effect on DEI climate levels corresponding to turnover intention for suicide prevention workers.

As we predicted, the more an employee perceives their organization (in this case, The Trevor Project, 988, and Trevor-988) as recognizing and cultivating a climate of inclusion and creating space within the working culture to celebrate a workforce’s diversity of experience and identity without assimilation, the less likely it is that those employees want to *leave* said organization. This is in line with other research that indicates similar findings across other work sectors such as tech, the public sector and medical industries (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Jolly & Self, 2020; Tran et al., 2024). This corroborates the potential for this model to be fairly consistent across different types of working landscapes, so suicide prevention may be added to this list of related industries it has been applied in.

Secondly, consistent with previous findings (Lee & Jeong, 2017), examining the dyadic pairs of supervisor-supervisee relationships in relation to turnover intention also bore fruit within the context of this study, and the work by Jian et al. (2014) focusing on the *conversational* component of leader-member exchange served quite well as a moderator in our research model; we may establish, within this context, differing levels of LMCQ may strengthen or weaken the effect of DEI climate on turnover intention. A component that stands out from this particular study is the indication of a specific *threshold*, of where LMCQ levels become very similar in the case of very low DEI

climate. This is very interesting, because it suggests that practically, under the conditions characterized by extremely low DEI climate levels in combination with high LMCQ, which can look like: assimilation, suppression of minority identities, and perceived lack of organizational support and recognition for individual experiences *at the same time* that leader-member conversations that still contain a high degree of understanding, communication, and efficacy between supervisor-supervisee pairs may actually result in higher instances of turnover intention, which is a finding worth examining further.

Lastly, the choice to utilize person-organization fit as a mediator may have seemed like an odd one at its onset, but it has resulted in findings that appear consistent with existing research by Kim (2012) utilizing p-o fit as a mediator between public service motivation and work attitudes in the comparable sector of public service. We determined the existence of what appears to be at least a partial mediation effect when p-o fit is placed between DEI climate and turnover intention, because the main effect still remains significant and negatively oriented when direct and indirect effects are taken as a total mediation effect. Additionally, the results of both model analyses demonstrates that DEI climate has a significant positive correlation to p-o fit, and p-o fit also has a *positive correlation* with turnover intention. This is a very interesting finding, because in all other instances of analysis in this study, increased DEI climate corresponds to lowered turnover intention rates, which confirms the existence of an inverse relationship for the main effect. However, because the mediation results for both the *a* path and *b* path of the research model are positive, *competitive partial mediation* is likely taking place, with a negative main/direct effect and a positive indirect effect (Montoya & Hayes, 2017). This means that within this model, increases in DEI climate correspond to increases in p-o fit, while simultaneous increases in p-o fit also correspond to increases in turnover rates, which *does* still suggest that mediation is taking place, but in a manner that is not as straightforward as initially believed.

More specifically, the mediator variable of person-organization fit acts as a potential suppressor to the negative main effect of DEI on turnover intention, which points to the existence of other potential phenomena and mechanisms to elaborate on further; this may lead to discovering in which specific circumstances that person-

organization fit would either reinforce or suppress the effect of DEI climate of turnover intention. As of this study, we may still find statistical support for hypothesis 3 in determining that p-o fit does still function as a partial mediator mechanism between DEI climate and turnover intention, but the exact conditions where this changes and the subsequent directionality of the direct and indirect effects requires further scrutiny and testing.

This signifies that it is not enough to focus only on an organization's DEI climate, it is also necessary to pay close attention to how employees perceive the larger organizational working culture and how it subsequently affects their individual perceptions of *relating* to their employing organization to better understand the overall circumstances in which they would quit.

In accordance with the results of our initial hypotheses, the effects of the control variables were also examined and their impact was determined to vary, serving as important foundational indicators to other factors that could impact the study. It was initially posited that age, gender, tenure and educational levels were likely to impact the results, mostly attributed due to previously established links with turnover intention (Blomme et al., 2010; Caillier, 2013; Hur & Abner, 2024; Jin et al., 2018). In some ways, this was adequately captured by the results of the analyses, but in other ways, these results were not so straightforward. While tenure is the only control variable that was not significantly correlated with the main research model, age, gender, and educational levels were significantly correlated at different stages when run using the moderation and mediation analyses in the Hayes PROCESS macro.

A key feature that sets this study apart from its foundational predecessors is directly tied to the way that the control variable of gender was treated and addressed; both Corlett and Mavin, (2014) along with Huffman et al., (2021) have emphasized the extreme lack of research that actually encompasses different intersectional gender and sexual identities, and with the addition and creation of dummy variables to adequately represent and reflect non-binary identities on a *data level*, we were able to examine the impact that challenges findings related to working conditions and turnover that only includes male and female categories of respondent self-identification. According to the

results, the different represented gender conditions were highly correlated in analysis of the main effect, with non-binary respondents appearing at $p < 0.01$ when considered in DEI climate to turnover intention.

Even more specifically, all gender conditions were correlated negatively with the outcome variable when using the Hayes PROCESS macro analysis model 1 procedure for moderation analysis, but only the non-binary gender category was significantly correlated to turnover intention when running the model 4 mediation analysis. This contrasts the findings from the earlier step of the model 4 mediation analysis; when the outcome variable was set to person-organization fit, the woman and man gender categories were significantly negatively correlated to p-o fit, but non-binary participants showed no significant correlation, sharing a similar when considering the reference category of other gender identity to p-o fit. This also likely means that other gender identity participants demonstrate higher correlation with turnover intention than non-binary participants, pending all else being equal when utilizing person-organization fit as a mediator. However, the results indicate a slightly different set of circumstances where only the moderation effects are accounted for, since moderation analysis using model 1 determined that every control variable was statistically significant for the exception of tenure on the outcome variable of turnover intention, with education having a positive correlational relationship to turnover intention and other gender identity participants having a more positively-oriented relationship to turnover intention than the participants who identify as a woman, man or non-binary person.

Taken together, all of these results lend support to the idea that employees of different gender identities experience different levels of turnover intention. Drawing conclusions based on control variables is subject to a number of ethical and erroneous pitfalls, so it is with caution that we potentially point out the results of other gender identity respondents having tentatively the strongest positive correlation with turnover intention. In addition, an interesting effect can be observed in PROCESS Model 4, where participants who identify as either a man or a woman have the strongest correlation when the outcome variable is person-organization fit, the only other adjustment variables to be significantly correlated besides age. However, the other gender conditions besides non-binary became statistically insignificant when the second

analyses of model 4 added p-o fit in its regression, suggesting that there may be potential links between person-organization fit and gender identity in the workplace. Interestingly, educational level appeared to be the only variable that was consistently positively associated with turnover intention when specifically examined using the Hayes PROCESS Macro.

As for the contrast of results between the initial Pearson Correlation and the Hayes PROCESS analyses, one potential explanation may be that the Hayes PROCESS is built to address the more complex relationship variables, including indirect/direct effects of mediation analysis and account for more nuances in the data that the Pearson Correlation Analysis cannot capture at its surface (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). While the results of the first correlation analyses painted a very general picture of potential directionality and variable relationships, the supplement of the Hayes PROCESS macro was necessary to better understand under what conditions the studied variables in the research model may behave.

As such, using the results obtained from this study, we may tentatively conclude support for all three hypotheses (with the caveat that hypothesis 3 requires further study and development), and have determined that for the adjustment variables, only tenure did not yield a statistically significant effect on turnover intention, highlighting the potential roles of gender, age, and education levels on employee TI. Table 4.5 provides a brief overview of the overall outcome of the analyses.

Table 4.5

Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Result
H1: Positively-oriented DEI climate corresponds to lower employee turnover intention rates.	Supported
H2: Leader-member conversational quality (LMCQ) moderates the negative relationship between DEI climate and employee turnover intention.	Supported

H3: Person-organization fit (P-O Fit) mediates the negative relationship between DEI climate and employee turnover intention.

Partially Supported

The Effect of DEI Climate

In conjunction with the findings of other researchers, our statistical analyses validated DEI climate as a potential predictor for key working outcomes, not least of all its potential to predict turnover intention (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Nishi, 2013; Park, et al., 2023). In addition to its correlation on turnover intention, this study also found that DEI climate influences turnover intention through the mechanism of person-organization fit in a potentially complex manner, and that the overall negative relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention can be moderated by leader-member conversational quality.

This also suggests that the social exchange theory framework was an appropriate one for this model, since the cornerstone of its implications involve the transactional nature of relationships between parties and the differences of perception around continued expectations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Meira & Hancer, 2021). As social exchange theory has already been used in relation to working outcomes like OCB, absenteeism, and turnover intention when the perspective of the employee is assumed, DEI climate can also be examined under this light when we orient questions around an employee's perception of their workplace and its cultivation of diverse and more inclusive climates (Nishi, 2013; Zhu. et al., 2019).

Simultaneously, since the results confirmed a negative relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention in this case, this implies that the opposite direction is also likely true; a poorly cultivated DEI climate within an organization would also increase rates of employee turnover intention.

The Moderating Effect of Leader-Member Conversational Quality

Despite its relative newness as a validated scale, the founding theoretical background and roots of comparatively better-established leader-member exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) enabled LMCQ to function well in this model as a

moderator, and statistically significant results were obtained in the directionality that we initially predicted. Practically speaking, the results indicate that higher quality relationships between supervisor-supervisee, characterized by the richness of their conversational exchanges, will moderate the strength of the negative impact of DEI on turnover rates. The interaction plot demonstrated that under circumstances of high DEI climate and high LMCQ, turnover rates are likely to be at their lowest. However, the analyses also indicated that in the case of high LMCQ but lowered DEI climate that turnover rate will still be correspondingly high, which suggests the existence of other potential internal limits or gauges employees have that also impact their decision to voluntarily exit the organization.

As Jian et al. (2014) had initially posited, focusing on the richness of conversational quality as the main component of leader-member exchanges yielded key insight into the manner in which employees perceive interactions with supervisors, something which was reflected in the present study and also fits alongside the social exchange theory framework of interpreting interpersonal relations by using transactionality as a guide (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This subsequently followed with an observable impact on the strength between the main effect of DEI climate on TI.

The Mediating Effect of Person-Organization Fit

While person-organization fit has been examined in relation to turnover intention before along with other working outcomes, it was not often used in relation to DEI climate (Abdalla et al., 2018; Cable & Edwards, 2004). However, since social exchange theory and person-organization fit both find a theoretical backing in addressing the in/congruence between the self and other parties while simultaneously leveraging the expected costs and benefits of continued association and transaction, this enabled person-organization fit to serve an adequate role in this model as the mechanism by which DEI climate impacts turnover intention, which was bolstered by the inherent uniqueness of The Trevor Project employees who may have engaged with the organization at different levels before assuming employment, thereby forming an initial perception that may have contributed to the establishment of an internal

awareness between ‘self’ and ‘organization’ at pre-employment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Kristof, 1996). This baseline then may have been perpetuated during employment, creating and sustaining the process where perceptions of DEI climate may partially explain person-organization fit, which we then adapted into the present research model to determine the mediation of p-o fit between the main effect of DEI climate on turnover intention.

After running the Hayes PROCESS macro, the effect of person-organization fit remained significant in both corresponding paths of being influenced by DEI climate while influencing turnover intention, but it is pertinent to acknowledge the potential suppressing effect it has as a competitive mediator. While we had posited that p-o fit would mediate the negative relationship between DEI climate and turnover intention, we did not predict that it would yield a positive indirect effect. This likely means that in the positive relationship between person-organization fit and turnover intention, there are other potential factors extant that may also play a role in whether p-o fit would mediate for a negative or positive relationship between DEI climate and TI.

While this finding was extremely relevant, it should be treated as a first step when determining other factors in addition to person-organization fit that are activated under specific contexts. There is potentially much more to uncover, including the prospect of utilizing person-organization fit as a moderator in future amendments to this research model, since there is already a strong foundational basis to utilize p-o fit in this manner in other research (Kristof, 1996; Verquer et al., 2003) This also means that there is merit in allocating resources to look further into how much employees identify themselves with their employing organization, as it does have an effect (likely a complicated one) on determining reasons to voluntarily leave.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings of the study and discusses its practical implications. It also outlines the limitations of the study and concludes with recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

The research questions generated and the gaps in the literature that this study sought to fill were answered in some manner; insight was needed into the working circumstances of suicide prevention line workers in the United States, which was obtained. Then came addressing whether an organization's intentional cultivation and fostering of an inclusive and diverse working climate that created spaces for differing perspectives without the attempt to assimilate them would have an impact on an employee's intention to voluntarily leave that organization. Additionally, within the hypothetical relationship between this DEI climate and employee turnover intention, did the conversational exchanges between supervisor-supervisee pairs moderate the strength of said DEI-TI relationship? Lastly, we sought to determine if the manner in which employees perceived themselves as identifying with their organization could function as the mechanism through which DEI climate affects turnover intention.

In all cases, the results spoke to the affirmative for the underpinnings of each variable in this relationship, so we may tentatively conclude that for this specific population of 329 respondents across The Trevor Project and the 988 National Suicide Prevention Line, higher levels of DEI climate is strongly correlated with lowered levels of employee turnover intention, and higher levels of leader-member conversational quality affects the strength of that relationship while person-organization fit helps explain why DEI climate can influence turnover intention in these same workers. From these statistical inferences, we can extract the following recommendations and translate them into potential practical implications for practitioners to consider.

Theoretical Implications

While the foundational basis of this study is grounded in decades of research for each main component of the study framework, the uniqueness of the assembled constructs in relation to its unique population make this study markedly different from those that came before. Firstly, by choosing to focus on a not-oft studied population, there is the initial implication about characteristics inherent to said population, such as the increased potential for emotional resilience and burnout for those who engage in suicide prevention work, the extent to which suicide prevention line workers may already identify with their employing organization and seek it out because they are also likely to have previous experience/history with a suicide prevention line (T. Paley, personal communication, June 20th, 2022), and how these intersectional identities affect the daily lives and experiences of those who work in these types of environments (Corlett & Mavin, 2014; Vattøe et al., 2020).

The initial results of this study allude towards trends worth uncovering further, starting with a closer look at the types of people who occupy the roles of suicide prevention. Despite its parallels in working conditions to the healthcare and hospitality sectors, including the proclivity for faster-paces, larger amounts of burnout, and turnover rates (Carless, 2005; Kim et al., 2010), the working life of one in suicide prevention is not exactly the same, which necessitates further investigation on this premise alone. In addition to their occupations, participants holding gender identities outside the binary are still not often studied in any context, which leads to a huge oversight in current personnel research which excludes these populations and its subsequently unique circumstances. Corlett and Mavin (2014) highlight the need for intersectional identities to be better represented within the context of research, and the conversion of gender into a categorical variable for this study yielded extremely valuable information about the correlation of different gender identities to the outcome variable of turnover intention, but also to every other main variable in the research model.

With the results of PROCESS model 1 and model 4 analyses demonstrating the initial relationship of each gender identity dummy variable in a negative significant

relationship to turnover intention, this not only implies that the reference category of other gender identity had the highest relationship to turnover intention, it also underscored the potential existence of an effect between gender identity and person-organization fit, as well, since statistical significance on the outcome variable of turnover intention was reduced for all except non-binary participants when p-o fit was added. This could potentially be a study on its own merit, and it does tie into some ideas posited by Huffman et al. (2021) and Felix et al. (2024), which suggests that employees of gender identities outside of the binary will often respond to their environment based on perceived acceptance or threats and navigate based on environmental cues, which can serve as a valuable indicator towards an organization's success in fostering an inclusive workplace.

Additionally, person-organization fit as a competitive partial mediator also yielded a lot of information, since it buffered the effect of DEI climate on turnover intention with a positive indirect effect, yet still functioned as a partial mediator since the overall total effect was still negative. This opens up the possibility that other variables may be introduced to form a more comprehensive model that includes person-organization fit as either a moderator or a mediator, or even a moderated-mediation model that may be applied to exploring its divergent effect on turnover intention while picking further at its links to DEI climate. The significant correlations to gender identities also call attention to an additional, complex and nuanced relationship to person-organization fit, which may be further explored on their own since the man and woman group members of the study had strong, positive correlations.

Another key finding was relevance of leader-member conversational quality (Jian et al., 2014) as a valuable derivative of Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) leader-member exchange. While the former is a scale that is only just a decade old, the results generated in this study underscored that there was indeed a lot of value to choosing a framework that made conversational elements the centerpiece of leader-member exchange analysis, and removed some of the more potentially confusing survey items from play. Not only did LMCQ function quite well as a moderator within this study, this opens up the possibility for it to be utilized again in relation to DEI climate and turnover intention whether together or separately. Lastly, all four of the main variables

and the specific combination of them employed in this research model are quite well-embedded with the overall framework of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). With our emphasis on the transactional nature of the relationship between individual employee and greater employing organization, it became possible to establish DEI climate as a potential facet of transactional consideration within social exchange theory, which means it can function as a construct to be cultivated and leveraged within organizational settings. Additionally, the results of this study also enhanced the potential link between DEI climate and person-organization fit, by serving as the theoretical foundation established with the union of the greater external organizational perception of an individual employee and the reconciliation of their own internal alignment to this perception. There is yet more to glean from further exploration of these constructs and their nuances within this population.

Practical Implications of the Study

The findings of this study suggest that when employees in American suicide prevention lines perceive an organizational climate as inclusive and promoting diverse experiences and perspectives, they are less likely to want to leave that organization. In addition, the higher quality of interactions that these employees have with supervisors also plays a role in reducing intent to turnover. Lastly, this perceived DEI climate also has an effect as to how much an employee potentially identifies with their employing organization, which in turn affects their likelihood of voluntarily terminating employment there. In accordance with previous findings that outlined the characteristically high turnover rate for employees in the mental health sector (Workforce Recruitment and Retention, n.d.), this represents a very practical step to finding ways to address some of these issues and work towards the overall goal for organizations to reduce costs associated with replacing employees and improve organizational efficiency by retaining those who are already familiar with the role and the organization.

In addition, for those longer-tenured employees who are present within the ranks, this offers another perspective of understanding their motivations to staying in their role and what factors can help influence that decision. The following sections

recommend potential courses of action for practitioners to pursue based on the variables presented within this study, all with the goal of reducing employee turnover intention by leveraging key elements of the workplace and interpersonal climate.

Fostering DEI Climate

Despite its unfavorable position in American legislation and American media representation at the moment, this study presents statistically relevant reasons for organizations continuing to invest in fostering a DEI climate, as it presents several opportunities to develop organizational innovation, promote employee satisfaction and organizational versatility (Greenberg, 1988; Nishi, 2011; Park et al., 2023; Trejo et al., 2024). As the findings from this study also suggest, it may also go a long way towards reducing employee turnover intention even in an industry that struggles with it at elevated levels. Fostering a DEI climate can look like implementing workplace policies that recognize the diversity of workers' experiences and emphasize listening and creating spaces to do so when workers belonging to minority groups bring up suggestions. The HR function in an organization is uniquely positioned to spearhead this initiative, since American HR offices usually often function as the hub of sourcing employee feedback, coordinating hiring practices, and communicating new company policies to the rest of the organization (Nishi, 2013). Using an already-extant department that can align organizations quickly and acclimate the workforce to different policy changes in a structured manner, HR in suicide prevention organizations like The Trevor Project and 988 can look towards developing and implementing mechanisms to source and integrate employee feedback, spread awareness and education on intersectional identities within the workforce, and monitor for inter-group climates to ensure conflicts are being appropriately addressed.

Options to source employee feedback directly and facilitate a better DEI climate could include the capacity for anonymous comment boxes, process groups composed of various across different job roles and perspectives that can assist the trial and development of new policies and test them before rollout, and developing more opportunities for those in top leadership positions to mix with those who are not to facilitate more dialogue and communications.

Additionally, when trying to intentionally foster a DEI climate, it is always encouraged for hiring professionals to reflect that within their hiring policies and practices, emphasizing not only taking in a potential applicant's credentials, but recognizing the diversity and breadth of their life experience that can enrich the organization as only the first step. Then, the hiring organization must actually follow the path of that individual as they settle into the role/organization and continuously work with them to co-create mechanisms to help others like them succeed.

As previously mentioned within the specific case of The Trevor Project, the 2022 Employee Handbook outlined quite a few policies unique to its workplace that were intentionally targeted at supporting employees of several intersectional identities, such as: organizational-level support in assisting employees who were transitioning by changing their paperwork to match their new identity and pronouns, allocating special medical time off for gender affirming procedures, connecting employees who are in the transition process to other employees and HR for support, adding a protective clause within reporting contexts if an employee is disrespected, harassed or targeted because of any gender, racial, ability, or religious status an employee may hold (T. Paley, personal communication, June 20th, 2022). These types of policies, which were codified within a body of text like the handbook and adhered to, represented concrete and repeatable steps for an organization to foster a climate that is more inclusive of its diverse workforce without requiring assimilation and/or erasure of these identities.

In considering the navigation of turbulent political times where DEI cannot be physically referred to out of censure, the potential for renaming and rolling out some of these policies under different functions remains potentially viable if "DEI climate" as a phrase itself comes into further legislative question.

Examining Leader-Member Conversational Quality

The implementation of leader-member conversational quality in practicality is perhaps a little bit more difficult to achieve, but based on the results of this study, the rewards suggest that this pursuit remains worthwhile. As leader-member conversational quality settles within the framework of social exchange theory, the evidence is reflected by the corresponding increase of leader-member conversational quality and high DEI

climate on inversely low rates of turnover intention, suggesting that the nature of supervisor-supervisee exchanges is responsible for this strength and direction (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In a similar capacity to DEI climate, the HR function of an organization may be well-suited to taking charge on how to promote these types of high level dyadic exchanges between supervisor and supervisee, since it may already be partially-built into 360 performance evaluations (Pollack & Pollack, 1996).

By taking the element of a supervisor's rating on an employee's behavior and performance, there is potential to expand on this and introduce other elements examining the nature of communication strategies and habits between dyadic supervisor-supervisee pairs, which may provide further insight for practitioners who wish to use this as a leverage to enhance better working outcomes. This can translate into a longitudinal process of continuous assessment of periodic check-ins with supervisor-supervisee pairs where HR professionals ask both supervisee and supervisor to self-assess and rate their interaction quality independent of each other and compare the results along with any resulting discrepancies.

For example, if Supervisor A reports that their interactions with Employee B are progressing fine, but Employee B reports that they rarely see or interact with Supervisor A, then this can be a point of opportunity for HR professionals to dive deeper and work with both Supervisor A and Employee B and co-create a more robust and suitable plan for communication that suits each party well. Both The Trevor Project and 988 implemented a markedly similar construct, where performance reviews happened at least once a year, which consisted of the "360" employee feedback aggregation (Pollack & Pollack, 1996) in conjunction with actual performance metrics that were obtained from the job descriptions, but many supervisor-supervisee pairs across different departments also incorporated bi-weekly check-ins with direct reportees to discuss any professional matters (T. Paley, personal communication, June 20th, 2022). Consistent communication like this can go a long way towards fostering trust and enhancing communication between supervisor and supervisee pairs, so this model of operation is one worth maintaining and repeating in other contexts (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Jian et al., 2014).

Address Person-Organization Fit

Due in part to its role as a mediator in this specific model, this means that intentional efforts to cultivate a stronger DEI climate will also likely result in more employees identifying with their employing organization, which in turn will affect the potential for them leaving. Person-organization fit sits at a unique point alongside leader-member exchange-related concepts because it also fits within the framework of social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Kristof, 1996), so the creation and utilization of methods that can capture individual perceptions related to self, other parties, and the expectations associated with a continued relationship between the self and other parties, are key to understanding how person-organization fit can be leveraged in this context.

More specifically, what this may look like in terms of its practical implementation could function as a follow-up to implementations of DEI-forward policies in the workplace. In the example of implementing a new policy related to inclusive hiring practices, person-organization fit may be inferred from the results of a targeted survey assessing employees that comes afterwards and directly asks how employees see themselves in relation to their employing organization, and the resulting discrepancies may be explored further to determine where it is pertinent for organizations to see these potential gaps and communicate values clearly.

Organization-sanctioned employee social groups may represent another key opportunity for practitioners to tap into, such as creating Slack channels or allocating physical spaces for workers that can congregate over shared interests and/or shared identities. Organizations can let these social groups function semi-autonomously (ensuring that work social groups are still compliant with organizational policy) and present the opportunity for the larger organization to serve as a platform that can help develop a sense of belonging across the entirety of the organization. For example, if recently-formed the karaoke interest group may want to put on an open mic performance night and open it to all workers, then the organization could benefit from diverting a few resources to do so, and the longer-term impact could result in

employees who participated relating to and identifying more with their fellow colleagues and the organization at-large.

Limitations

The intention of this study was to examine the impact of DEI climate on turnover intention for employees in suicide prevention lines, and whether this relationship could further be affected by person-organization fit as a mediator and leader-member exchange as a moderator. While the results have interesting potential, it is prudent to note the ways that this study may also be improved. The first involves a potentially more representative sample; while respondents were collected from two of the largest suicide-prevention lines operating in the United States, they are not the only ones, so there is far more to be done for adequately capturing the working circumstances of this unique population under potentially different circumstances. In addition, the associated limitations of utilizing the mediums of self-administered surveys distributed via several online channels (non-probability sampling) in English are as follows: reduced potential access to respondents who do not use online mediums, reduced potential access to those whose English levels are not at the required proficiency for this survey, and the question of generalizability outside of this population and circumstances due to non-probability sampling methods used.

It should also be noted that this study did not include any temporal or qualitative components in its design, which could yield a breadth of enriched data to explore respondents' motivations and processes more than a cross-sectional quantitative design may initially capture.

Additionally, at the time of beginning this study, DEI-related constructs were not yet being dismantled at a legislative level in the United States (The White House, 2025), and the unforeseen impact of this directly affected our ability to gather responses, with potential respondents risking the fallout of being labeled as 'non-compliant' by their employing organizations in response to federal mandates. As a result, the data gathering phase for this study was delayed significantly due to executive orders to dismantle DEI at public institutions (including that of 988) and compel private corporations into following suit; initially, the research was to be done with direct

collaboration alongside 988, but it became extremely difficult to do so. This was a complicated hurdle that was not anticipated, and carries impact far beyond the confines of this study, but it was one necessary to overcome nonetheless. While it is uncertain whether ‘DEI’ will continue to be censured in the United States in the future, it is our hope that it may be further examined and expanded on to demonstrate its practical relevance despite any governmental bans.

Recommendations for Future Research

With the careful acknowledgement of the current study’s limitations, we propose the following potential considerations should this study be repeated: the first involves the potential for a longitudinal study to better capture the changing attitudes and circumstances of respondents, which may also go further if we want to better attribute causality. This study found that DEI climate does have a negative relationship to employee turnover intention, and the strength of this may be moderated by leader-member conversational quality and the relationship can be at least partially explained and addressed (with caveats) through the mechanism of person-organization fit, but there could very well be other circumstances and research contexts where this is not necessarily the case. The second recommendation is to expand the sample to make the research implications more generalizable; this study limited the population to specifically those who spoke english and were employed at suicide prevention lines in the United States, but what findings could potentially appear should we expand the definition to include those who work at out-patient behavioral intervention centers, or at other types of crisis mental health lines such as SAMHSA, for example? Lastly, A qualitative component and the capacity to interview respondents may help in unearthing some of the motivations, thought processes, and behaviors associated with this specific population, as well as point towards the logical underpinnings of why they may be inclined to make certain decisions such as leaving or staying in their working circumstances.

Most importantly, this study represents the value in continuing to delve into research on DEI-related constructs and all of the potential they represent, as there is assured value and merit to continue exploring the nuances brought by an increasingly

globalized workforce, despite the presented challenges. Additionally, the importance of accounting for intersectional identities from a research and data-driven aspect is critical; this study has demonstrated findings that directly challenge previously asserted ideas that only operated on addressing participants from a gender binary standpoint, and gender identities are also far from the only potential identities participants may hold, so future studies should take extra care to build the capacity to accommodate this diversity on a research level and properly account for other unique circumstances and conditions which can influence their research.



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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Participants,

I am a student of the Graduate Institute of International Human Resource Development Department at National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan, R.O.C. I am conducting a study to assess attitudes that employees in crisis mental health and suicide prevention may have in their line of work.

I am inviting you to spend 10 – 15 minutes to answer the following questionnaire. Please note that this questionnaire does not require you to include your name or any information that will identify you. All data will be encoded to ensure it remains private and confidential, please feel free to share your honest thoughts and opinions.

Your participation would contribute to a better understanding of the conditions for employees in similar lines of work. If you have any questions about this questionnaire, you can email me at 61286018i@ntnu.edu.tw.

Sincerely,

Ruby Zenteno

APPENDIX B: PRE-SCREEN MESSAGE

Thank you for agreeing to take this survey. Please select the most appropriate answer.

1. Are you above the age of 18?

Yes

No*

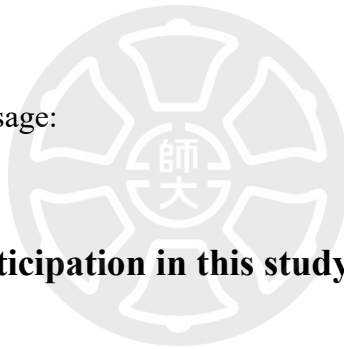
2. Have you worked for your current organization for at least three months?

Yes

No*

*If No, Direct to Ending Message:

Thank you for your participation in this study!



APPENDIX C: DEI CLIMATE SCALE

The following questions deal with your perception about the work environment of your current organization. Please read each of the following statements carefully to rate your agreement! *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This organization has a fair promotion process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The performance review process is fair in this organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This organization invests in the development of all of its employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employees in this organization receive "equal pay for equal work."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This organization provides safe ways for employees to voice their grievances.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This organization is characterized by a non-threatening environment in which people can reveal their true selves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This organization values work-life balance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please check "Strongly Disagree" for this task.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This organization commits resources to ensuring that employees are able to resolve conflicts effectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employees of this organization are valued for who they are as people, not just for the jobs that they fill.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In this organization, people often share and learn about one another as people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This organization has a culture in which employees appreciate the differences that people bring to the workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In this organization, employee input is actively sought.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In this organization, everyone's ideas for how to do things better are given serious consideration.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In this organization, employees' insights are used to rethink or redefine work practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Top management exercises the belief that problem-solving is improved when input from different roles, ranks, and functions is considered.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX D: LMCQ SCALE

The following questions deal with your perception about the relationship between you and your supervisor. Please read each of the following statements carefully and rate your agreement. *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
With regard to getting things done, the conversations between my supervisor and me are efficient.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When discussing work-related matters, my supervisor and I can convey a lot to each other even in a short conversation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When talking about work tasks, the conversations between my supervisor and me are often smooth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When talking about how to get things done, the conversations between my supervisor and me usually flow nicely.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When talking about how to get things done at work, my supervisor and I usually align our ideas pretty easily.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When talking about how to get things done at work, my supervisor and I are usually in sync with each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please check "Strongly Agree" for this task.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My supervisor and I usually have accurate understanding of what the other is saying when trying to get things done at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When we discuss how to get things done at work, my supervisor and I usually have no problem correctly understanding each other's ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My supervisor and I interpret each other's ideas accurately when discussing work-related matters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX E: P-O FIT SCALE

The following questions deal with your perception about your current organization. Please read each of the following statements carefully and rate your agreement. *

	Very Much Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Very Much Agree
I feel my values "match" or fit this organization and the current employees in this organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the values and personality of this organization reflect my own values and personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The values of this organization are similar to my own values.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My values match those of current employees in this organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel my personality matches the "personality" or image of this organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



APPENDIX F: TURNOVER INTENTION SCALE

The following questions deal with some other nuances about your current place of employment. Please read each of the following statements carefully and rate your agreement. *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often think about resigning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It would not take much to make me resign from the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will probably be looking for another job soon.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



APPENDIX G: DEMOGRAPHIC INFO COLLECTION

How many years have you been employed there?

*If 0 total years, please write 0

How many months have you been employed there?

Gender: How do you identify?

- Man
- Non-binary
- Woman
- Other Identity

Age (in Years)

Please indicate your educational background:

- Some High School
- High School Graduate/GED
- Some College
- Associate's Degree or Equivalent
- Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent
- Professional Degree (MA/MBA or Equivalent)
- Doctoral-Level Degree (PhD or Equivalent)