The Effect of the Working Environment and Job Factors on the Western Michigan University Resident Assistant Position

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The Effect of the Working Environment and Job Factors on the Western Michigan University Resident Assistant Position

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Western Michigan University
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Abstract

This study examines the factors related to the retention of resident assistants at Western Michigan University. Data was collected from undergraduate students who were resident assistants during the 2019/20 school year. Factors included in this study are resident assistants’ level of conscientiousness, their relationship with supervisors, job satisfaction, effort toward tasks, and retention. The overall goal of this study was to predict how retention was impacted by the other major factors. The results of this study almost fully supported the hypothesized model. The results of this study can be used to assist Western Michigan University Residence Life in understanding why resident assistants choose to leave or stay in their positions.
Introduction

Managing university students’ on-campus experiences is important to ensuring student academic and personal success, including persistence and graduation (Neumann & Finaly-Neumann, 1989; Tinto, 1993). Resident assistants play a very important role in managing these experiences and supporting students (Busam, 2006). Specifically, resident assistants not only maintain order in the hall by enforcing policy but also act as a mentor, friend, resource, and community builder (Busam, 2006). They perform a wide variety of tasks, including acting as a leader, providing counseling and assistance with various resident problems, mediating disputes, providing information about both on-campus and off-campus resources, performing administrative tasks, responding to medical emergencies and crises, advising on academic matters, designing and organizing programs and activities, and enforcing university policies (Fedorovich, Boyle, & Hare, 1994; Winston & Buckner, 1984).

Universities typically struggle with consistency in the resident assistant role, primarily because there is so much change from year to year in resident assistant employees (Hardy & Dodd, 1998). It is critically and strategically important to retain these employees to continue to support undergraduate students and achieve the university’s persistence and graduation goals. However, research on what leads resident assistants to leave their position (i.e., turnover) is limited. My study addresses this gap and is designed to understand the factors that assist with retention and the reduction of turnover in resident assistants at WMU.

Turnover may be defined as, “… the ratio of an organization’s employees who are leaving from the organization to the extant number of employees in the organization during the described period of time.” (Devi & Krishna, 2016; p. 1). There are several different types of employee turnover. Voluntary turnover is when an employee is making the choice to leave.
Avoidable voluntary turnover is preventable by organizational actions whereas unavoidable voluntary turnover could not have prevented (Heneman, Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2019). Involuntary turnover happens when the organization chooses to dismiss an employee. Within the category of involuntary turnover, discharge turnover is often due to discipline and/or job performance problems, whereas downsizing turnover occurs as part of organizational restructuring or a cost-reduction program and dismisses multiple employees at a time (Heneman, Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2019). Both voluntary and involuntary resident assistant turnover occur at Western Michigan University; however, the most common type is voluntary turnover.

Retention is the opposite of turnover; it is defined as the process by which a company ensures that its employees don’t leave their jobs (Tarallo, 2019). Retention efforts by organizations attempt to reduce voluntary employee turnover and typically involve providing a positive and thorough onboarding experience, understanding employee needs, enacting policies like generous compensation plans, matching job offers from competitors, and providing incentives for long-term service (Tarallo, 2019; Heneman, Judge, & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2019). These programs help organizations control the costs associated with turnover. For example, direct replacement costs for employees can be as high as 50%-60% of an employee’s annual salary (Cascio, 2006). Additionally, employee turnover can lead to lost engagement and have a cultural impact on other employees (Merhar, 2019), as well as create disruptions to productivity-related outcomes (Hausknecht, Trevor, & Howard, 2009; Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2005).

Like for-profit organizations, universities can also benefit from developing programs designed to retain their employees. However, the reasons employees (e.g. resident assistants) choose to leave their jobs in a university setting have to be understood. Given that there is little to no research on resident assistants’ reasons for leaving their jobs, I designed my study to
explore the typical factors that may contribute to employees choosing to leave – namely, personality, relationship with their supervisor, and level of job satisfaction. To help build my theoretical arguments, I will use research that explores retention in general employment situations.

This research is generalizable to the university setting and the resident assistant job. One reason this is true is because the university setting is similar to any work setting with specific roles, supervisor relationships, and expectations of employees. Another reason is that the university setting has similar financial responsibilities, mission statements, visions, goals and strategies as other organizations. The resident assistant position is similar to any other job because resident assistants are hired to support the university with its mission, visions, and goals. The resident assistant position, just like other jobs, is a group of tasks put together to create the payment for the services they provided for those services. Therefore, using information from past studies conducted on employees in for-profit settings should be appropriate to understand the factors that impact resident assistants’ retention.

**Literature Review**

When looking at relevant workplace research, constructs such as personality, relationship with supervisor, and job satisfaction are strongly linked with retention and turnover (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Herriot & Pemberton, 1997; Donoghue, 2010). Given these findings, I will focus on these relationships when building my theoretical model. More detail is provided below about each of these constructs and their hypothesized relationship with retention.

**Personality**
Personality is a well-researched construct that is connected to many different criteria (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough, Eaton, Dunnette, Kamp, & McCloy, 1990; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991). While there are many different variables of personality on which one can focus, this study uses conscientiousness, which is a valid predictor across occupational groups and job-related criterion (Barrick & Mount, 1993). Barrick and Mount define conscientiousness as, “dependability, that is, being careful, thorough, responsible, organized, and planful” (Barrick & Mount, 1993; p.4). This personality trait generally has a positive impact on employees’ work attitudes and behaviors with reported significant correlations between conscientiousness and job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997; Sackett & Wannek, 1996).

There have been multiple studies on an employee’s personality impacting job satisfaction and conscientiousness itself has been linked with job satisfaction (e.g., Lapierre & Hackett, 2007). Instrumental theory suggests that there is a positive relationship among conscientiousness, subject wellbeing, and job satisfaction. For example, individuals with high conscientiousness are more likely to be in more favorable situations (Zhai, Willis, O' Shea, Zhai, & Yang, 2013). Also, employees who are more conscientious may attain more formal and informal rewards from their work which can lead to job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002; Haaland, 2006).

A relationship between conscientiousness and job satisfaction can be applied to the resident assistant role for several reasons. The first reason is that the resident assistant experience within their position such as the residents they have, environment they work and live in, and even the expectations of their supervisors can differ greatly, and conscientiousness can assist resident assistants with being able to deal with different challenges more productively and sensibly. Resident assistants that are more conscientious and therefore more dependable, responsible, rule-abiding, and achievement-oriented will have a greater understanding of the
responsibilities of their role and seek to successfully carry them out, which will lead to more success in their role and thus more job satisfaction. Resident assistants that lack high conscientiousness may not be as responsible, dependable or successful within their role, thus potentially leading to increased stress, failure, and dissatisfaction. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

**H1: Conscientiousness is positively related to job satisfaction for resident assistants.**

A second way that conscientiousness may impact job satisfaction is through its influence on the relationship between the supervisor and employee (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000). Highly conscientious employees have a higher tendency to be dependable, focus closely on what they are doing, always arrive on time, and can be counted on to do things correctly (Haaland, 2006), all behaviors supervisors look for in a good employee. Studies have shown that employees with higher conscientiousness are more likely to have high job performance and work motivation, which would be behaviors that supervisors rely on and support in their employees (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000), thus making it more likely that conscientious employees have good relationships with their supervisors. One study that focuses on leader-member exchange and leader compassion states, “…conscientiousness predisposes people to approach work in ways that make favorable impressions upon others (e.g. managers, co-workers), who then tend to treat them in satisfying ways (e.g. respect, privileges, trust)” (Lapierre & Hackett, 2007; p. 541).

Therefore, conscientious employees tend to be supported by supervisors because conscientious employees will make a better impression on them.

Conscientiousness may be positively related to supervisory relationships for resident assistants for several reasons. Resident assistants who are more responsible and dependable (conscientious) are employees that residence life will be more likely to trust to complete the tasks related to their positions especially tasks that are more difficult such as administrative
tasks, resident check-ins, or completing security measures. Also, more conscientious resident assistants are more likely to demonstrate a careful approach to doing things and solving the problems that can arise in their position. When a supervisor can depend on a resident assistant to be dependable and responsible, a supervisor may have a more positive relationship with a resident assistant. Therefore, I hypothesize that for resident assistants:

**H2a: Conscientiousness is positively related to employees’ relationship with Hall Director.**

**H2b: Conscientiousness is positively related to employees’ relationship with Graduate Assistant.**

**Supervisor Relationship**

In this study, the resident assistant’s relationship with their supervisor is represented in two ways, through their relationship with their Hall Director and their relationship with their Graduate Assistant. At Western Michigan University, Hall Directors are responsible for supervising a staff of seven to twenty-two resident assistants/resident managers and at least one Graduate Assistant and well as watching over the entirety of the hall (Western Michigan University Residence Life, n.d.). The Hall Director is the overall manager of the hall and directly supervises and supports the Graduate Assistant with direct supervision of the resident assistants. Graduate assistants are primarily responsible for advising hall government and supervising the student workers of the dorm which includes resident assistants (Western Michigan University Residence Life, n.d.). The Graduate Assistant is often viewed as the direct supervisor of the resident assistants and is involved with not only supervising and supporting the resident assistants but also providing feedback for the resident assistants in their jobs.
Supervisory relationship is a greatly researched construct that has been linked with job satisfaction. Studies that support a connection between an employee’s relationship with their supervisor and job satisfaction have found that employees view supervisors as a highly responsible agent for maintaining a psychological contract (Herriot & Pemberton, 1997), and that supervisors have a large role in their employees’ well-being (Ibrahim, 2012). Supervisors assist with describing the purpose of an employee's job and providing the resources to meet the job requirements (Heneman, Judge, & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2019). Other studies have stated that the perception of a supportive management team can greatly influence job satisfaction (Kirmeyer & Lin, 1987; Kopelman et al., 1990; Babbin & Bolles, 1996). Supervisors also have a major role in supporting employees and creating a positive culture in the workplace (Schaubroeck, Shaw, Duffy, & Mitra, 2008; Dike, 2012) as well as being a major resource of support, dictator of amount of work, and social connection in the organization (Peng, Chen, Xia, & Ran, 2017).

Like other employees, resident assistants depend on their supervisors for guidance and support. Hall Directors and Graduate Assistants are supposed to support resident assistants with their experience within the hall as well as create a safe and supportive culture for these employees. Therefore, supervisors’ handling of their employees' needs, environment, and additional factors of their jobs can greatly impact their resident assistant’s experience. Resident assistants who feel supported by their supervisors and safe in their workplace culture will be more satisfied in their role. Because Graduate Assistants are more involved in the direct supervision of student employees within the hall, they may have a greater impact on resident assistants than Hall Directors. Therefore, I hypothesize that for resident assistants:

**H3a: Relationship with Hall Director is positively related to job satisfaction**

**H3b: Relationship with Graduate Assistant is positively related to job satisfaction**
**Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is defined as, “the positive orientation of an individual towards all aspects of the work situation” (Vroom, 1964; p.28-52). Additional definitions of job satisfaction are “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job’s experiences” (Locke, 1976, p. 1304) and that job satisfaction is a mix of an individual's cognitive, affective and evaluative reaction towards their job (Greenberg & Baron, 1997).

Past research shows that job satisfaction positively impacts employee motivation, which can include not only their desire to stay in the organization but also the level of effort they exert on the job. Effort has been defined in many ways, including the definition that it is, “the force, energy, or activity by which work is accomplished” (Brown & Peterson, 1994; p.71). Studies have found that increased job satisfaction within an organization will lead to increased overall productivity and performance (Choong & Lau, 2011).

Job satisfaction can be related to a resident assistant’s work effort in several ways. I believe that when resident assistants are more satisfied with various aspects of their role, they tend to be more willing to provide effort in their role, therefore, being more productive. An example of this would be when resident assistants are more satisfied with the community they are creating among their residents and coworkers, then they are more likely to invest in it by providing more effort into their role. A model that supports a connection between job satisfaction and increased effort would be Hackman and Oldham’s (1974) Job Characteristics Model. According to this model, there are five aspects of the design of a job that have an important influence on how motivating it is which are feedback, autonomy, task significance, task identity, and skill variety (Hackman & Oldham, 1974; Taylor, 2015). If resident assistants find greater meaning in their position, are more motivated, and are more satisfied in their role they will be
more motivated to exert effort into their role. Given this, I hypothesize that for resident assistants:

**H4: Job satisfaction is positively related to level of job effort.**

Job satisfaction has also been studied regarding its relationship with retention and turnover. Many studies have shown that job satisfaction has a positive relationship with retention and a negative relationship with turnover (e.g., Hulin, 1968; Miller, Katerberg, & Hulin, 1979; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978). Job satisfaction has frequently been used as a key predictor of turnover intention with employees with low job satisfaction being more likely to leave their position. (e.g., Eby, Freeman, Rush, & Lance, 1999; Rosse & Hulin, 1985). Therefore, when employees are highly satisfied, they are more likely to remain in the organization (Larsen, 2000).

This connection between job satisfaction and retention is apparent in the resident assistant as well. If a resident assistant is satisfied in their role then they may be more likely to carry out their position another year, in order to continue being on staff with their coworkers and supervisors, impacting the lives of their residents and building a community, or being a member of residence life. However, when a resident assistant has low job satisfaction they may choose to not return for another year in their position and may even leave mid-year. A resident assistant may leave because balancing their education with their role is too taxing or stressful or perhaps they feel they may be terminated so they leave before that can happen. Therefore, a resident assistant that does not enjoy their job and find satisfaction in their job, will likely leave. Additionally, if a resident assistant’s job satisfaction is so low that it begins to impact their attitude towards tasks, their residents, or their staff this could lead to low evaluations, personal improvement plans, or involuntary turnover such as firing. This means that resident assistants'
level of job satisfaction could provide insight into whether they will choose to remain in their role (retention) or not (turnover). Given this, I hypothesize that for resident assistants:

**H5: Job satisfaction is positively related to retention.**

**Hypothesized Model**

The model below was created to visually represent the relationship between variables hypothesized in this study. The predictors listed in this model are personality and relationship with supervisors. It is hypothesized that personality (conscientiousness) will have a positive relationship with supervisors (Graduate Assistant(s) and Hall Director). Both predictors will have a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Job satisfaction will be the mediating variable of this study and is hypothesized to have a positive relationship with both effort and retention.
Methods

Population Description

Student Population:

The sample of students who participated in this study is derived from the entire population of current resident assistants at Western Michigan University. There is a total of 127 resident assistants that work on campus across six main neighborhoods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 127</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley 1 (Ackley/Shilling, Britton/Hadley)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley 2 (Garneau/Harvey, Eicher/LeFevre)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley 3 (Harrison/Stinson, Eldridge/Fox)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Campus (Western Heights &amp; Henry)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big 4 (Ernest/Smith Burnham, Draper/Siedschlag Hall)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little 3 (Davis, French, Zimmerman)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Population data based on Fall 2019 Resident Assistants

Subject Recruitment:

The student researcher worked closely with WMU Residence Life administrators to develop the measurement instrument and identify the potential subjects. This questionnaire was approved by the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) on November 20, 2019 before the start of subject recruitment and data collection (Appendix A). Western Michigan University resident assistants were recruited through the form of email from WMU Residence Life. A contact list of current resident assistants was acquired through Western Michigan University’s Residence Life. All questionnaire participation was completely voluntary and resident assistants were sent an optional opt out form a month before the study began though no resident assistant chose to utilize the opt out form.
Measures

This questionnaire was created in order to collect data regarding the differences in personality and work factors that can affect the amount of effort Western Michigan University resident assistants put into their role and their intentions to remain in their role next year. This questionnaire is based on validated scales from job satisfaction, personality, employee-supervisor relationship, and retention literature.

Survey Format:

All data was collected through an anonymous, online questionnaire created by the student investigator using Qualtrics survey software (Appendix B). This questionnaire consists of four different scale variables taken and adapted from existing measures which have been thoroughly validated in past research. These four scales are Effort, Employee-Supervisor Relationship (Hall Director and Graduate Assistant measured separately), Job Satisfaction, and Conscientiousness. The questionnaire also contains a 1-item measure for intent to stay in the resident assistant role (retention), a 1-item measure for assigned Neighborhood, a 1-item measure for past resident assistant experience, and a 1-item measure for reason for leaving the resident assistant position. The results were completely anonymous and cannot be linked back to the device used to complete the questionnaire.

Conscientiousness Scale:

The conscientiousness scale consists of participants rating each of three items on a scale of 1 to 5 (Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Strongly Agree, respectively). These statements are from Hanover Research’s study titled “Predicting College Students Retention” and the Big Five Inventory (John, Naumann, Soto, 2008).
Employee-Supervisor Relationship Scales:

Participants were asked their level of agreement on three statements about their relationship with their Hall Director (HD). Students choose from 1-5 (“Strongly Disagree”, “Somewhat Disagree”, “Neither Agree Nor Disagree”, “Somewhat Agree”, and “Strongly Agree”, respectively). These three statements are repeated for the participant’s relationship with their assigned Graduate Assistant (GA). The highest total score is 15 for both relationship with GA and relationship with HD. The lowest score is a 3 for both relationships. Established scales and statements were taken from Gavilan College’s “Supervisor Feedback Survey” (Gavilan College, 2010)
Job Satisfaction Scale:

The 4-item job satisfaction scale asks participants to rate their job satisfaction from 1-5 ("Strongly Disagree", "Somewhat Disagree", "Neither Agree Nor Disagree", "Somewhat Agree", and "Strongly Agree", respectively). The highest total scale score is 20, which means that the participant answered "Strongly Agree" to the three positive statements and "Strongly Disagree" to the single negative statement (reverse scored). The lowest total scale score is a 4, which means the participant answered that they "Strongly Disagree" with the three positive statements and "Strongly Agree" with the single negative statement. These established scales and statements were taken from Paul Spector’s 1994 Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1994).
Effort Scale:

Participants to assign the amount of effort (“Little Effort” – 1, “Moderate Effort” – 2, “Effort Beyond Expectation” – 3) to a list of duties all resident assistants must do. This question will be used to see how much effort participants believe they are putting into their role. The highest score a participant could have would be a score of 21 which means they answered “Effort Beyond Expectation” for every task. The lowest score a participant can get would be a 7 which means they answered “Little Effort” for each task.

Data Analysis

Both Excel and Qualtrics were utilized to collect and analyze the data. Both programs assisted in organizing the data in different ways, such as Qualtrics storing and completing basic
variable manipulations and Excel allowing for correlational analyses, cross-tabulations and additional manipulation of the visual analytics. Excel also facilitated the creation of pivot tables and charts, to compare subgroupings across categories of data responses and to create visual interpretations of the data. This helped identify the overall themes within the results.

**Results**

**Sample Description**

Out of the 127 resident assistants that work on campus, 61 participants (48% of the total population) responded to the survey. The percentage of resident assistants in the study sample with prior experience was 47.54%; most of the sample were first year resident assistants who began their position in the Fall of 2019 (52.46%). The table below provides basic neighborhood assignment information for both the population and the study sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
<th>Study Sample</th>
<th>% of Neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size</strong></td>
<td>N = 127</td>
<td>n = 62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley 1 (Ackley/Shilling, Britton/Hadley)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley 2 (Garneau/Harvey, Eicher/LeFevre)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley 3 (Harrison/Stinson, Eldridge/Fox)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Campus (Western Heights &amp; Henry)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big 4 (Ernest/Smith Burnham, Draper/Siedschlag Hall)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little 3 (Davis, French, Zimmerman)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Population data based on Fall 2019 Resident Assistants*
The bar chart below was created to show the number of resident assistants from each neighborhood who had prior experiences as a resident assistant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Did you serve as a resident assistant prior to the 2019-2020 school year?" by Neighborhood

Descriptive Statistics

Conscientiousness:

As seen below, there were consistent and high self-ratings about respondents’ levels of conscientiousness, as well as low variance in responses (as indicated by item standard deviations below 1.0). However, there was enough variation in the overall scale (SD=1.56) to allow for it to be used in further analyses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I see myself as someone who is a reliable worker...</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself as someone who perseveres until the task is finished...</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself as someone that makes plans and follows through with them...</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness Scale</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relationship with Supervisor (Hall Director):

The table below summarizes the results for the three Hall Director Relationship items. The sample scored in the neutral to “Somewhat Agree” range regarding the statements pertaining to their relationship with their Hall Director, indicating a slightly positive relationship. However, there was significant variation in the responses, as indicated by the standard deviation above 1.0. This suggests that there may be differences across neighborhoods/Hall Directors as to how the subjects responded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship with Supervisor (Hall Director)</th>
<th>Resident Assistants n = 62</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my Hall Director understands me and listens to my concerns.</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by my Hall Director.</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Hall Director considers the impact of decisions on employees when considering courses of action.</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD Relationship Scale</td>
<td>11.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationship with Supervisor (Graduate Assistant):

The table below summarizes the results for the Graduate Assistant Relationship scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship with Supervisor (Graduate Assistant)</th>
<th>Resident Assistants n = 62</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my Graduate Assistant understands me and listens to my concerns.</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by my Graduate Assistant.</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Graduate Assistant considers the impact of decisions on employees when considering courses of action.</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA Relationship Scale</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sample scored in the neutral to “Somewhat Agree” range regarding the statements pertaining to their relationship with their Graduate Assistant, indicating a slightly positive relationship, but scored slightly lower than the items regarding their relationship with their Hall Director. There was significant variation in the responses, as indicated by the standard deviation above 1.0. This suggests that just like with the Hall Director items, there may be differences across neighborhoods as to how the subjects responded.

Effort in Role:

The table below summarizes the means and standard deviations for the effort items. As seen in the table above, the means for each item slightly vary from duty to duty. The duties that had the lowest effort applied to them seemed to be community development activities and desk shift, while the highest effort activities seem to be door decs/bulletin boards and resident interactions. In regard to standard deviation, each item scored below 1.0, indicating concerns about how much respondents varied in their answers; however, on the overall effort scale, there was adequate variation across respondents in how they rated their effort (SD=2.40).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effort in Role</th>
<th>Resident Assistants n = 62</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duties</strong></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nightly Duty Rounds</em></td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Desk Shift</em></td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Door Decs/Bulletin Board</em></td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Programs</em></td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Community Development Activities</em></td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Resident Interactions</em></td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Policy Violation/Conduct Process</em></td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Effort Scale</em></td>
<td>14.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Job Satisfaction:**

The table below summarizes the means and standard deviations for the four job satisfaction items. The summary statistics provided for the responses to the job satisfaction section of the questionnaire slightly vary with each statement. Sense of Pride is the most positive job satisfaction factor for respondents. The respondents had a neutral position regarding the statement about being rewarded the way they believe they should be. The statements regarding recognition and managements taking into account their opinions in their decisions scored slightly over neutral.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my opinion is considered prior to decisions being made that affect me.</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Satisfaction Scale</strong></td>
<td>13.85</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Retention:**

When looking at all respondents, 33 stated they were returning, 5 were unsure, and 24 were not returning (voluntary turnover). Out of the 62 participants in the study, 10 participants were unable to return because they were graduating or had an internship that was necessary for their major requirements. Because of this unavoidable turnover, they were removed from consideration when examining the impact of other factors on retention. When looking specifically at those who had the choice to return, 33 participants stated they were returning, 5 were unsure, and 14 were not returning.
Correlational Results:

A correlation matrix was created in order to provide insight into the relationships that may exist among the variables. The outcome of this analysis is located in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conscient.</th>
<th>HD</th>
<th>GA</th>
<th>JS</th>
<th>Effort</th>
<th>Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conscient.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistical Significance: p ≤ 0.10*

The correlation matrix above shows several significant relationships. Conscientiousness is moderately related to both the resident assistant’s relationship with their Graduate Assistant as well as job satisfaction, and weakly related to effort in their job duties. The resident assistant’s relationship with their Hall Director is strongly related to both the relationship the resident assistant has with their Graduate Assistant as well as their job satisfaction. The relationship between the resident assistant and their Graduate Assistant is also strongly related to job satisfaction, and interestingly, *negatively* related to the effort their exert in their job. Both job satisfaction and effort on the job are moderately related to the intent of the resident assistant to stay in the job next year. Personality also predicts job satisfaction and relationship with Graduate Assistant. Cross-tabulations were conducted in order to better understand where and why these relationships exist.

**Cross-tabulations**

In conducting cross-tabulations, I focused on trying to investigate only the relationships shown to be significant in the correlational analyses. As was suggested by the descriptive statistics earlier, there appeared to be differences across neighborhoods; since Hall Directors and
Graduate Assistants also vary across neighborhoods, the first set of cross-tabulations focuses on neighborhood differences in the primary relationships identified above.

**Neighborhood**

In this analysis, the sample has only 60 subjects instead of 62. This is due to only 2 respondents from the Little 3 neighborhood. Since there can be no assurance that these 2 individuals were representative of the rest of the resident assistants in that neighborhood, they (and the neighborhood) were excluded.

**Conscientiousness:**

The chart below shows that most resident assistants rated themselves fairly high on conscientiousness, regardless of their neighborhood, with RAs from the Central neighborhood most frequently believing themselves to be highly conscientious.

![Neighborhood by Personality](chart.png)

**Relationship with Supervisor (Hall Director):**

The chart below shows that respondents from Valley 2, Valley 3, and Big 4 had more strongly positive ratings of their relationship with their Hall Director, whereas respondents from Valley 1 and Central Campus had more varied opinions of their Hall Director relationship.
Relationship with Supervisor (Graduate Assistant):

The chart below shows that the Graduate Assistant variable had similar responses to the Hall Director variable; however, Valley 3 had more variation in their relationship with their Graduate Assistant than with their Hall Director relationship. Valley 3, Valley 1, and Central neighborhood all had more negative to moderate responses whereas Big 4 and Valley 2 had positive responses.
Job Satisfaction:

As seen in the chart below, respondents from the Valley 1 and Central Neighborhoods were much more likely to answer in a neutral or negative way to the job satisfaction items than respondents from Valley 2, 3 or the Big 4, who were more likely to have a somewhat higher level of job satisfaction.

![Job Satisfaction Chart]

Effort:

The vast majority of respondents, regardless of neighborhood, answered that they provided moderate to high levels of effort on average across all resident assistant duties. Only 6 participants scored within the category of “Little Effort”, and these participants were from Valley 1 (1), Big 4 (1), and Central Campus (2).
Retention

Participants who were leaving their position due to graduation or internships (unavoidable turnover) were removed from this analysis, since they did not have the choice to return. Therefore, only 50 subjects who participated in the study are shown in this chart. The chart below shows that Big 4 (11) and Valley 1 (9) had the highest number of respondents who intend to return next year. Central Campus and Valley 3 had the greatest variation in responses.
**Relationship with Supervisor (Hall Director)**

The next cross-tabulations focused on participants’ relationship with their Hall Director. Cross-tabulations were conducted with Graduate Assistant relationship and job satisfaction in order to provide deeper analysis of the data.

**Graduate Assistant Relationship:**

The chart below shows that those believe they have good relationships with their Hall Director are much more likely to also have strong relationships with their Graduate Assistants.

![Chart showing relationship between HD and GA variables](chart.png)

**Job Satisfaction:**

As shown in the chart below, respondents who had a good relationship with their Hall Director (the gray and yellow columns) also had high levels of job satisfaction. In addition, those that were neutral or somewhat negative in their relationship were generally neutral or dissatisfied with their job.
Relationship with Supervisor (Graduate Assistant)

The cross-tabulation analyses for the Graduate Assistant relationship included conscientiousness, effort, and job satisfaction.

Conscientiousness:

As represented in the chart below, respondents who had a good relationship with their Graduate Assistant (yellow and light blue columns) generally had high levels of conscientiousness.
Effort:

A cross-tabulation analysis was conducted given the interesting negative correlation between the respondents’ relationship with their Graduate Assistant and their effort on the job. The chart below indicates that respondents with positive or strongly positive relationships with their Graduate Assistant were much more likely to exhibit *moderate* effort in their job duties, than effort beyond expectation. Phrased differently, having a more positive relationship with one’s Graduate Assistant does not make an resident assistant more likely to exert effort beyond expectations. Interestingly, the respondents who exert little effort also reported having a good relationship with their Graduate Assistant.
Job Satisfaction:

As represented in the chart below, respondents who had a good relationship with their Graduate Assistant (the gray and yellow columns) generally had high levels of job satisfaction. In addition, those that were neutral or somewhat negative in their relationship were generally neutral or dissatisfied with their job.
**Job Satisfaction**

**Conscientiousness:**

The chart below shows that most respondents who had moderate or strong levels of job satisfaction are also likely to report neutral or higher levels of conscientiousness.

![Personality Variable by JS Variable](chart.png)

- **Retention:**

The chart below shows that most respondents who had neutral, moderate or strong levels of job satisfaction are likely to have intentions to return next year to their resident assistant position. However, 8 respondents replied that they enjoy their jobs, but are choosing not to return next year as resident assistants. This indicates that other factors beyond job satisfaction determine retention, which is consistent with our findings on effort.
Effort

Conscientiousness:

The chart below shows that respondents who considered themselves to be conscientious were more likely to put in at least moderate amount of effort toward their job as resident assistants.
Retention:

The chart below shows that the majority of participants who believed they provided moderate effort or effort beyond expectation in their roles as resident assistants were more likely to return. However, there were some respondents who exert at least moderate effort in their work who are not returning, indicating that the decision to return is based on more than just the level of effort given in their job.

Discussion

This research was designed to explain why resident assistants choose to exert effort on the job and return to the job in future years. While the study did not confirm all of my hypothesized relationships, there are some important findings related to why resident assistants choose to exert effort into their position and return to their positions in future years. First, conscientiousness was positively related to both job satisfaction as well as effort. These findings are consistent with past research that shows that conscientiousness is a precursor to high job performance because employees with greater conscientiousness display higher levels of work
motivation (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000). Interestingly, the results also showed a positive association between conscientiousness and Graduate Assistant relationship, meaning that more conscientious resident assistants showed more positive relationships with their Graduate Assistants. This outcome is supported by studies showing that more conscientious employees have better relationships (Lapierre & Hackett, 2007), and therefore would be more likely to be positively viewed by their Graduate Assistant who is their direct supervisor within the role. While there was a positive association between conscientiousness and Graduate Assistant relationship, there was not a similarly positive relationship with resident assistants’ Hall Director. Perhaps this is because the Hall Director, while a supervisor, is not as involved in resident assistants’ day-to-day activities and potentially does not have as much interaction or insight on resident assistants’ conscientiousness within their role.

Additional findings that are consistent with past research are results showing the resident assistant’s Hall Director relationship linked to both their relationship with the Graduate Assistant and with job satisfaction. These results are supported with past research that has stated that the perception of a supportive management team can greatly influence job satisfaction (Kirmeyer & Lin, 1987; Kopelman et al., 1990; Babbin & Bolles, 1996). Past research has also found that supervisors also have a major role in supporting employees and creating a positive culture in the workplace (Schaubroeck, Shaw, Duffy, & Mitra, 2008; Dike, 2012). Both of these conclusions support the results found in this study of Graduate Assistants and Hall Directors having a relationship with one another as well as job satisfaction.

The impact of supervisor relationship was also found to be more substantial of an impact when looking at how resident assistants from different neighborhoods had similar and differing responses regarding their relationship with their supervisors. A possible reason for differing
responses across campus could be because resident assistants are assigned to a neighborhood and that neighborhood becomes their immediate supervisor and staff with very little interaction from other neighborhoods or central management. This means that each neighborhood’s supervisors have more autonomy over their staff and can have a greater impact on their staff’s experience within their role.

Another interesting group of findings is the impact that the resident assistant’s relationship with the Graduate Assistant had on job satisfaction as well as effort. While the relationship between Graduate Assistant relationship and job satisfaction is positive, the connection between the Graduate Assistant relationship and effort is negative. These results mean that potentially, some resident assistants felt less pressure to input more effort into their position because they did not think it would impact their relationship with their Graduate Assistant. Perhaps this is because Graduate Assistants are often closer in age to resident assistants or it may be because Graduate Assistants may allocate disciplinary functions to the Hall Director of the hall. This may make resident assistants believe having a positive relationship with their Graduate Assistants does not mean that they need to perform more and provide more effort.

Also contrary to what was expected, job satisfaction was not related to effort. This is surprising because it was hypothesized the more satisfied resident assistants were with their role, the more effort they would put into it. This was based on arguments made by Hackman and Oldham’s (1974) Job Characteristics Model, which stated the design of a job has an important influence on how motivating it is (Hackman & Oldham, 1974; Taylor, 2015). One reason for this is that the resident assistant job may have limitations regarding the autonomy that individuals have in choosing their effort in completing tasks. Another possible reason that job satisfaction
would not lead to additional effort in resident assistants is that the job as it is designed might only require what is perceived to be a moderate amount of effort, so resident assistants do not feel they need to put more into the job. Finally, there are currently few ways for a hardworking resident assistant to be recognized, perhaps limiting the amount of effort resident assistants would like to exert in their job, regardless of their job satisfaction.

However, the sample did confirm past research that showed job satisfaction as moderately related to retention and negatively related to turnover (e.g., Hulin, 1968; Miller, Katerberg, & Hulin, 1979; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978). This is important because it shows that job satisfaction is an impactful aspect of a resident assistant’s experience within their role. This means that job satisfaction can be potentially used as a predictor of turnover in the resident assistant position.

While supervisors did not have direct relationships with retention, they are indirectly important through the level of job satisfaction their resident assistants have. Job satisfaction has a positive relationship with retention; therefore, if supervisor relationship is related to job satisfaction, then it is indirectly effecting retention. This means while there is not a direct relationship between supervisor relationship and retention, it should still be discussed as a potentially impactful factor of resident assistant turnover and retention.

To summarize, results generally support the proposed model and most of the hypothesized relationships; conscientiousness predicts both job satisfaction and effort, relationship with supervisor(s) predict job satisfaction, job satisfaction and effort both predict retention.
Results by Neighborhood

Given that the findings differed somewhat by neighborhood, I have created a summary table to show the results of the hypothesized relationships for each of these distinct units:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Hall Director Relationship</th>
<th>Graduate Assistant Relationship</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Level of Effort</th>
<th>Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big 4</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Varied</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Campus</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Varied-Positive</td>
<td>Varied</td>
<td>Varied</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley 1</td>
<td>Mid-High</td>
<td>Varied-Negative</td>
<td>Varied-Positive</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley 2</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley 3</td>
<td>Mid-High</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Varied-Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Moderate-High</td>
<td>Varied-Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows a clear relationship between Hall Director relationships and job satisfaction. Neighborhoods with positive Hall Director relationships are more likely to have high resident assistant job satisfaction. Neighborhoods with varied Hall Director relationships tend to have neutral or varied resident assistant job satisfaction. In regard to resident assistants’ relationship with their Graduate Assistant, there is less of a consistent impact on job satisfaction across the neighborhoods, leading to the conclusion that the relationship with the Hall Director has a stronger direct impact on resident assistant job satisfaction than the relationship they have with their Graduate Assistant.

Another interesting finding in this table is that the relationships among job satisfaction, effort, and resident assistant retention vary within neighborhoods. In general, neighborhoods with higher resident assistant job satisfaction tended to have slightly higher effort reported. However, most resident assistants reported moderate effort even if their job satisfaction was lower than what was found in other neighborhoods. This supports the likelihood of other factors.
that contribute to the level of effort exhibited by resident assistants, such as the job design issues limiting effort (as described previously), or their relationship with their residents or coworkers. This same pattern can be seen in the relationships between job satisfaction and retention as well as effort and retention. There appear to be no consistent patterns for these relationships across neighborhoods.

While the results of the study are valid for any given resident assistant, regardless of neighborhood, it would appear that the different cultures developed in each neighborhood may create relationships among the variables that do not directly correspond to the hypothesized model. This suggests that the relationships among the model variables could be different within each neighborhood based on the unique culture of that unit. This is beyond the scope of this study to examine, given the limited sample size. In addition, it suggests that there are factors that influence effort and retention that are not measured in this study. For example, one potential factor in retention may be the resident assistant’s financial situation; a resident assistant might need the job in order to be able to finish college, leading them to return to the position regardless of their job satisfaction or relationships with supervisors. As suggested above, another factor might be the quality of the resident assistant’s relationship with their coworkers or residents, which impact nearly every aspect of the position and thus might impact effort and retention within the role.

**Implications**

This study aimed to capture the factors that had the greatest effect on retention for resident assistants at Western Michigan University. Factors that were analyzed were level of conscientiousness, relationship with supervisors, job satisfaction, and effort toward the job.
Personality (conscientiousness) impacts relationship with supervisors, job satisfaction, effort, and therefore has an indirect impact on turnover. Because of this, it may be wise for conscientiousness to be a trait that is searched for in potential job candidates during the hiring process. This would result in resident assistants who naturally, because of their nature, exert more effort into the job, have better relationships with their supervisors, have more job satisfaction, and therefore are more likely to return after one year. Since the cost of a personality inventory in order to test candidates level of conscientiousness is very low, it would result in a significant cost savings for the university due to reduced turnover.

Relationship with supervisors is strongly related to job satisfaction. Because of this, it may be wise for both Graduate Assistants and Hall Directors to have continuous leadership and management training to assist with providing them tools for building positive relationships with their resident assistants, as well as more mandatory staff bonding events between supervisors and resident assistants. This would result in greater connection between supervisors and their resident assistants, therefore positively impacting job satisfaction. By investing in more positive supervisor relationships, Western Michigan Residence Life will also be investing in job satisfaction and retention.

One relationship that must be individually investigated is that a positive Graduate Assistant relationship had a negative impact on effort whereas a positive relationship with one’s Hall Director had a positive impact on effort. This potentially means that when resident assistants feel like they have a good relationship with their Graduate Assistant they don’t need to put in as much effort into the job. This may also mean that Graduate Assistants who like certain resident assistants will be more relaxed with their expectations of those resident assistants, thus allowing them to input less effort. Whether this is because of a potentially smaller age gap
between resident assistants and Graduate Assistants, or the fact that Graduate Assistants have sometimes a more direct role with their resident assistants, this strange relationship should be investigated. Because a resident assistant’s retention is influenced by their job satisfaction, and job satisfaction is greatly influenced by resident assistants’ relationship with their supervisors, it is important that Western Michigan University Residence Life invests more in investing in the creation of these positive and supportive relationships.

In this study, job satisfaction was hypothesized to relate to effort and past research was found to have supported this hypothesis (Choong & Lau, 2011). However, in this study’s results, job satisfaction was not found to be related to effort. In order to learn more about why this may have been the case, crosstabulations between effort and each job satisfaction statement asked in the study were analyzed to see if there was a particular element of job satisfaction that may increase effort (Appendix C). The individual statements in the job satisfaction section asked questions relating to recognition, appropriate rewards, supervisors taking resident assistants’ opinions into account when making decisions, and resident assistants’ pride within their job. Out of all of these questions asked, the statement regarding resident assistants’ sense of pride within their role had the highest impact on effort. This means that the more pride a resident assistant feels in their position, the more effort they will exert within it. It is therefore important for Western Michigan University Residence Life to find ways to increase resident assistant pride, perhaps by providing more ways for resident assistants to see and understand their impact on their student residents and on Western Michigan University’s institutional goals for retention and persistence.

Job satisfaction and effort moderately impact resident assistant retention. Because of this, it may be wise for more investment in creating a satisfying and motivating experience for
resident assistants. This could come in the form of additional leadership training, events to increase resident assistant community and pride, or even additional recognition programs throughout the year. This would result in resident assistants being more motivated to exert more effort into the job, have more job satisfaction, and therefore they would be more likely to return after one year. While additional training, recognition, and events may cost additional time and money, the increased retention would lead to lower recruiting and hiring costs, as well as initial training costs associated with brand new resident assistants.

**Limitations**

A limitation of this study is that the size of sample was quite small. Out of the 127 resident assistants on Western Michigan University’s campus, only 62 resident assistants participated in this survey. This is only 48% of the total population, and while that is enough participants to be able to conduct this study, this did limit the representation of some neighborhoods. Because only two resident assistants from Little 3 participated, they had to be omitted to neighborhood analysis because they would not have been able to represent their neighborhood.

Out of thousands of secondary education institutions located across the country that employee resident assistants, only one institution was studied. While resident assistantships are quite common in many institutions, the role of Western Michigan University resident assistant may be different than the roles of other resident assistants across the country. This may mean that what happens at Western Michigan University can not be generalized for other universities.

Another limitation was that additional factors were not measured. Due to the small sample, the study needed to be very focused. This unfortunately limited what could be studied
and how many factors could be studied which may have lessened the relationships we could have found and understanding we could have taken from this study.

While all resident assistants are employed by Western Michigan Residence Life, resident assistant experience can be vastly different based on the hall they have been assigned to, the number of residents they are looking after, their expectations from the management, and other variables of the position. While this study did not ask for data for those specific elements of the position, they are possible factors that may have impacted the study in regards to how different neighborhoods responded to different statements. The data showed that while overall variables such as relationship with management and job satisfaction did have correlation across campus, other variables provided differing responses and patterns for the different neighborhoods.

**Conclusion**

This study shows that results generally support the proposed model and most of the hypothesized relationships. Conscientiousness predicted both job satisfaction and effort, relationship with supervisor(s) predicted job satisfaction, and job satisfaction and effort both predicted retention. Additionally, resident assistants in different neighborhoods across campus may have different experiences based on their differences in their relationship with their supervisors, effort in their role, or overall job satisfaction. This study aimed to examine the factors related to the retention of resident assistants at Western Michigan University. Given the findings of this study, Western Michigan Residence Life may be able to develop ways to improve the experiences of resident assistants on campus, thus retaining them.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A – HSIRB Approval

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
FW00007042
IRB00000254

Date: November 19, 2019
To: Christina Stamper, Principal Investigator
    Holly Harmon, Student Investigator for thesis
From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair
Re: IRB Project Number

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “The Effect of Personality, Previous Experience, and Job Factors on the Resident Assistant Position at Western Michigan University” has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., add an investigator, increase number of subjects beyond the number stated in your application, etc.). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation.

In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

A status report is required on or prior to (no more than 30 days) November 15, 2020 and each year thereafter until closing of the study. The IRB will send a request.

When this study closes, submit the required Final Report found at https://wmich.edu/research/forms.

Note: All research data must be kept in a secure location on the WMU campus for at least three (3) years after the study closes.

Office of the Vice President for Research
Western Michigan University
1920 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5164
Phone: (269) 387-8293; Fax: (269) 387-8736
wmich.edu/orec/templex/pdfs

Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair
Appendix B – Resident Assistant Survey

STUDY SUMMARY: This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to participate in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The purpose of the research is to identify how the differences in personality and work factors can affect the amount of effort Western Michigan University resident assistants put into their role and will serve as Holly Hammon’s thesis for the requirements of the Lee Honors College. If you take part in the research, you will be asked to answer multiple Likert-scale questions regarding your experiences in the resident assistant role. You may take the study any time from 10 - 31 minutes to complete the survey. Possible risks and benefits to you for taking part in the study are for the involvement of your time to complete a survey and there are no potential direct benefits to taking the survey. Your intention to participate in the research study is not to take part in it.

You are invited to participate in this research project titled “The Effect of Personality, Presence Experience, and Job Factors on the Resident Assistant Position at Western Michigan University” and the following information in this consent form will provide more detail about the research study. Please ask any questions if you need more clarification and to assist you in deciding if you wish to participate in the research study. You are not giving away any of your legal rights by agreeing to take part in this research or by signing this consent form. After all of your questions have been answered and the consent document reviewed, if you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
This thesis project aims to identify how the differences in personality and work factors can affect the amount of effort Western Michigan University resident assistants put into their role. This increased awareness of differences in resident assistants’ experiences may provide necessary information needed to adopt measures for positive change.

Who can participate in this study?
All current Western Michigan University resident assistants working during the 2018/2019 school year are invited to participate in this study.

Where will this study take place?
You will complete the survey from wherever device you choose in the location you choose and the data will be contained and analyzed on student investigator’s private laptop.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
This study should take 10 - 15 minutes to complete through the provided Qualtrics survey.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
You will be asked to complete the Qualtrics survey provided to answer multiple questions about your experiences in the resident assistant role.

What information is being measured during the study?
The datasets collected as a part of this research project may aid in identifying patterns or trends in resident assistants’ experiences across campus as well as provide information relating to whether these residents are satisfied with their position and intent to stay in the resident assistant role. This analysis of the dataset may include the use statistical tools to aid in understanding any similar patterns or trends in the response.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
Slight inconvenience is the only risk. The choice of keeping the survey anonymous eliminates the risk of releasing sensitive information. There are no other known risks.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There are no immediate benefits to participating in this study.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There is no cost for participation. The choice of keeping the survey anonymous eliminates the risk of releasing sensitive information. There are no other known costs.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Data will be contained and analyzed on student investigator’s private laptop. All results are anonymous and cannot be linked to participants, so there is no risk for the exposure of private or identifying information. The data is only be used for the purposes of undergraduate honors thesis research pursuit, and the results will be presented to required audiences during defense. After the graduation of investigator Holly Hammon, Professor Christian Stamper and Western Michigan University’s Residence Life will retain the documents and data.

What will happen to any information or biospecimens collected for this research after the study is over?
The information collected from you for this research will not be used by or distributed to investigators for other research.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
If you decide that you do not wish to continue after you begin this questionnaire, you may stop at any time. You may choose to not answer any question for any reason. You will experience NO consequences whether academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study.

If you have any questions prior to or during the study, you may contact Christian Stamper at 269-387-3139 or Holly Hammon at 734-904-4022. You may also contact the Chair, Institutional Review Board at 269-387-3593 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-3298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use on or after the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (WMU IRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

Participating in this survey online indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply.

Please answer the following questions relating to your position as a resident assistant to the best of your abilities. Your responses will be anonymous. You may choose to not answer any question for any reason. Please answer the questions as honestly and thoroughly as you can.

Please check the box that correctly represents your effort in performing the following duties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nightly Duty Rounds</th>
<th>Little Effort</th>
<th>Moderate Effort</th>
<th>Effort Beyond Expectation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desk Duty/Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door/Desk/Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Violation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please check the box that correctly represents the level at which you agree with the following statements regarding your relationship with your Hall Director:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel my Hall Director understands me and listens to my concerns.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by my Hall Director.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Hall Director considers the impact of decisions on employees when considering courses of action.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please check the box that correctly represents the level at which you agree with the following statements regarding your relationship with your Graduate Assistant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel my Graduate Assistant understands me and listens to my concerns.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by my Graduate Assistant.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Graduate Assistant considers the impact of decisions on employees when considering courses of action.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please check the box that correctly represents the level at which you agree with the following statements regarding your position:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my opinion is considered prior to decisions being made that affect me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please check the box that correctly represents the level at which you agree with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I see myself as someone who is a reliable worker...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself as someone who perseveres until the task is finished...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself as someone that makes plans and follows through with them...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please check the correct boxes according to your hall assignment:

- Valley 1 (Drake/Shilling, Britton/Hadley)
- Valley 2 (Gammel/Harvey, Ehrler/LeVonne)
- Valley 3 (Heron/McKinley, Drinage/Peck)
- Central Campus (Western Heights & Henry)
- Big 4 (Ehren/Smith, Burnham, Dasher/Rodriguez, Hadley)
- Little 3 (Davis, French, Zimmerman)

Which neighborhood do you currently work in?

- Yes
- No

Did you serve as an RA prior to the 2018-2019 school year?

- Will Not Return
- Unsure
- Will Return

Do you intend to return as a resident assistant next school year?

- If you answered "will not return or unsure", choose the most appropriate reason:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduating</th>
<th>Don't like the work</th>
<th>Not what you expected</th>
<th>Don't want to live on campus</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If other, please explain:
Appendix C – Pivot Tables for Effort Variable and Job Satisfaction Statements

**Effort by JS Statement "When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive."**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Effort</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Effort</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Effort</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort Beyond Expectation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effort by JS Statement "I feel a sense of pride in doing my job."**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Effort</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Effort</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Effort</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort Beyond Expectation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effort by JS Statement "I don't feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be."**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Effort</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Effort</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Effort</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort Beyond Expectation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effort by JS Statement "(Inverse) I don't feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be."

Effort by JS Statement "I feel my opinion is considered prior to decisions being made that affect me."