

Campbell Institute Research Outlook



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The Evolving Relationship Between EHS and Voluntary Turnover

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, terms like "The Great Resignation," "The Big Quit" and "The Big Restructuring" have been used to describe significant shifts in workforce behavior, particularly voluntary employee turnover. Voluntary turnover, where employees leave their jobs of their own accord, presents a considerable challenge for organizations across industries. It disrupts operational efficiency, erodes organizational knowledge and can lead to a decline in overall performance. In November 2021, voluntary turnover rates in the U.S. reached a 20-year high, highlighting the profound changes in workforce dynamics (Parker and Horowitz, 2022).

Voluntary turnover is not merely a statistic; it represents a complex interplay of factors that push employees to leave their organizations, taking with them critical skills and knowledge. The reasons behind this turnover are multifaceted and often interlinked with the evolving expectations of the modern workforce. According to Parker and Horowitz (2022), the top five reasons employees voluntarily resigned from their positions in 2021 were:

1. Low pay
2. Lack of advancement opportunities
3. Feeling disrespected at work
4. Childcare challenges
5. Limited flexible work options

These reasons highlight a shift in employee priorities, where concerns about respect, flexibility and work-life balance now join traditional motivators like salary. While turnover rates have decreased since their peak in 2021-2022, organizations should not become complacent. Voluntary turnover remains a pressing concern as the labor market stabilizes, with many companies still struggling to retain top talent. In fact, the post-pandemic period presents a unique opportunity for companies to distinguish themselves by investing in strategies that enhance employee satisfaction and engagement. This is crucial, as recent trends show a steady decline in employee engagement over the last four years, with workers increasingly disconnected from their organizations (Harter, 2024). Low engagement can be a precursor to higher turnover, signaling that proactive measures are still needed (Bandera, 2021).

While organizations have started adapting to these shifts, the need to prioritize strategies that reduce turnover and enhance employee retention remains critical. The National Safety Council (NSC) has presented a compelling [business case](#) for increased investment in occupational EHS initiatives, benefiting both employees and employers. These benefits have been explored in previous research and may be both tangible, such as preventing on-the-job injuries and illnesses, and intangible, including improved morale, retention and reputation (Mustard and Yanar, 2023). This review extends this case by exploring how EHS initiatives can be leveraged to improve employee retention.

The Evolving Role of EHS in Employee Retention

Historically, EHS programs have narrowly focused on organizational factors like compliance with regulations, minimizing workplace incidents and ensuring that organizations meet legal standards. However, the role of EHS is evolving significantly in response to broader changes in societal values, organizational culture and workforce expectations. NSC has recently emphasized [expanding the scope of occupational EHS](#), suggesting that it adjusts to account for emerging areas such as environment, sustainability, ethics and governance (ESG), and worker wellbeing.

NSC has numerous resources that highlight various wellbeing resources in the [Workplace Wellbeing Hub](#). These resources offer practical guidance, tools and best practices to help organizations prioritize and integrate mental health and wellbeing into their workplace strategies.

These expansions reflect the increasing recognition that employee safety and wellbeing go beyond physical health; they include mental health, job satisfaction and alignment with organizational values. ESG and wellbeing initiatives are still emerging, but leading organizations like the American Industrial Hygienist Association (AIHA), American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) and NSC have already prioritized these areas, signaling their growing importance across industries (Blanchard, 2021). This review considers ESG and worker wellbeing as critical opportunities to explore the relationship between voluntary turnover, retention and occupational EHS.

Methods

A narrative review methodology was chosen to comprehensively explore the relationship between voluntary employee turnover and EHS initiatives. Given this topic's broad and multifaceted nature, a narrative review allows for a flexible and in-depth synthesis of diverse sources, including academic research, grey literature and industry reports. This approach enables a qualitative interpretation of findings across various contexts and industries, facilitating a holistic understanding of the current trends and gaps in the literature. This review style made it possible to incorporate a wide range of perspectives and insights, essential for addressing the

dynamic and evolving landscape of workforce behavior and EHS practices after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A systematic approach was utilized to comprehensively search for literature describing the relationship between turnover and EHS. Voluntary turnover was defined as any employee who willingly separated from their organization (as described in Bandera, 2021). Three researchers and a librarian accessed the following databases: Academic Search Complete, APA PsycInfo, Business Source Ultimate, MEDLINE Complete and Regional Business News. The following search strings were used in each database: (turnover OR retention OR attrition OR resignation OR quitting) AND (safety) AND (work* OR occupation* OR industry*) NOT ("patient safety" OR food*).

The initial search returned 3,099 articles; 416 duplicates were identified and removed from the set, leaving 2,683 articles for initial title and abstract review. After an initial title and abstract review, 2,542 articles were excluded; 2,313 articles were excluded for not discussing voluntary turnover and 229 were deemed unrelated to occupational EHS. The remaining 141 articles were included in the full-text review; 13 articles were excluded due to inaccessibility, five articles were unrelated to voluntary turnover and 64 were not related to occupational EHS. Ultimately, 59 articles from the initial search and two additional articles identified during the search process were included in the final review. Emerging themes and practical applications are described in three parts: (a) the impact of voluntary turnover on EHS, (b) EHS reasons for voluntary turnover and (c) the role of EHS in retaining employees.

The Impact of Voluntary Turnover on EHS

Although employee turnover patterns have shifted dramatically over the last few years, any turnover can dramatically impact the potential success of EHS initiatives and metrics. Voluntary turnover in EHS programs can lead to the loss of experienced workers and institutional knowledge. While creating challenges in maintaining consistent safety practices and compliance, turnover also requires EHS professionals to shift focus toward onboarding and retraining instead of proactive safety efforts, potentially weakening program effectiveness and increasing risks (Markiewicz, 2022). As emphasized by Duncan (2022), a 2021 study by Harvard Business Review suggested an increase in the likelihood for mid-career employees to leave their organization voluntarily, which has notable consequences for safety and health professionals. This is likely due to the reduced likelihood of mid-career employees, compared to new hires and soon-to-retire employees, being injured on the job or otherwise practicing unsafe behaviors. Further emphasized by Duncan (2022), OSHA reports that 40% of injuries occur within the first year of employment, underscoring the impact of higher turnover rates on EHS indicators of success.

In today's competitive job market, retaining employees who are crucial for upholding safety practices is becoming more difficult as voluntary turnover increases. With a tightening labor market and lower unemployment rates, organizations face greater challenges in holding on to qualified workers (Prest, 2023). As a result, the impact on EHS programs is twofold: not only does turnover disrupt safety practices, but the growing competition for skilled employees further complicates efforts to maintain a stable and experienced workforce. Employers must now offer enhanced retention strategies, such as better working conditions and career growth opportunities, to remain competitive in attracting and keeping employees who drive positive safety behavior.

EHS Reasons for Voluntary Turnover

Considering safety and health reasons for turnover is essential when examining the relationship between turnover and occupational EHS to identify the root causes of voluntary turnover. By understanding how factors like inadequate safety protocols, poor health conditions or insufficient EHS support contribute to turnover, companies can develop more effective retention strategies. Furthermore, identifying EHS reasons for employee turnover highlights the importance of considering the role of EHS in reducing turnover and building retention. The following patterns emerged: worker mental health and wellbeing, safety culture and safety climate, workplace violence, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)-related reasons for voluntary employee turnover.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Leading organizations like NIOSH, [NSC](#) and ASSP have emphasized the growing need for comprehensive mental health and wellbeing initiatives (Punnet, 2022; Blanchard, 2021). Given this focus, it's no surprise that mental health factors like burnout can impose substantial financial costs on employers due to increased mental health-related voluntary turnover ("Counting the Cost of Poor Mental Health.," 2020). Burnout is a type of [impairment](#) that may result from different job demands, such as emotional labor, affecting job performance and safety (Lee et al., 2023). As emphasized by Lan et al. (2020), there is prior evidence to suggest a significant relationship between burnout and turnover, where higher rates of burnout are associated with higher turnover levels. Burnout may also contribute to the impact of other organizational factors, such as emotionally taxing labor, on turnover intentions (Back et al., 2020). In the Early Care and Education (ECE) workforce, Farwell et al. (2023) found a significant relationship between burnout and work evaluation and experience (including job satisfaction and workplace support) and overall health status (including mental and physical health).

As emphasized by Woods et al. (2023), the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the overall [wellbeing](#) of the workforce, including mental health factors. [2023 NSC survey data](#) of employees across the U.S. suggest this impact was greatest on those whose jobs put them at the greatest risk of infection, with the

highest anxiety reported among those in essential, in-person job roles, including health care, public-facing roles and education. Similarly, findings from Cuc et al. (2022) suggest that in the hospitality industry, heightened occupational stress during the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with turnover intentions. Similarly, Rice et al. (2022) highlighted the impact on transit workers, revealing that employee perceptions of employer responses to COVID-19 were significantly associated with their COVID-19 risk perceptions. While the pandemic-related turnover may be unique, these results highlight the importance of EHS initiatives supporting wellbeing to reduce employee turnover. In high-risk situations where employees feel particularly vulnerable, the impact of these initiatives may be magnified. Not only has the pandemic caused many mental and physical health-related occupational challenges, but it is likely to continue to have a direct and indirect impact on employee wellbeing.

The Campbell Institute has emphasized the positive impact of psychological safety on employee wellbeing and organizational efficiency in [prior research](#) efforts. This review of the literature revealed the potential for a lack of psychological safety to create a toxic work environment that can drive employees to seek employment elsewhere (Blanchard, 2021; Crist, 2024; Liu and Keller, 2021). Similar to stress and burnout, there is also some evidence to suggest that the relationship between turnover intentions and other organizational factors, such as job demands (Morin et al., 2023) and leadership (Lin et al., 2022), may be influenced by psychological safety. Psychological safety is a complicated concept that may both influence and be influenced by a variety of organizational factors, but overall, the literature heavily emphasized the importance of psychological safety in both reducing turnover and retaining employees.

A [2023 NSC SAFER Initiative survey](#) identified a significant relationship between greater degrees of psychological safety, greater job satisfaction and a decreased likelihood of quitting their current job among a random sample of workers across the United States.

Safety Culture and Safety Climate

While still an inherently difficult metric to measure and define, the literature highlighted the important relationship between [safety culture, safety climate](#) and voluntary employee turnover. Frequent workplace incidents and injuries resulting from poor safety practices may worsen employees' perception of organizational EHS support, prompting employees to seek safer work environments (Balogun et al., 2020; Lotfi et al., 2022). Turnover intentions may increase when employees perceive that their employer does not care about their safety and health (Suárez-Albanchez et al., 2021). Lin et al. (2022) emphasized that leaders who fail to foster an inclusive and psychologically safe environment can inadvertently escalate turnover intentions as employees seek workplaces where they feel respected and included.

Leadership's lack of commitment to occupational health and safety may contribute to increased turnover rates (Chen et al., 2023). Furthermore, leadership's influence on safety culture could indirectly influence elevated employee turnover due to the relationship between safety culture and employee turnover (Balogun et al., 2020; Lotfi et al., 2022). One study found that workplace incivility, which included verbal and nonverbal forms of demeaning or rude treatment, has a negative effect on employee engagement (Tricahyadinata et al., 2020). Leaders' perceptions of safety and health and employees' perceptions of safety and health are another interesting relationship that may indirectly affect turnover (Lee et al., 2023), where misalignment leads to failed employee expectations.

Workplace Violence

As emphasized primarily in the health care literature, workplace violence impacts various factors related to workforce behavior and wellbeing, including the potential impact on employee turnover. Workplace violence incidents may increase the likelihood that employees perceive an unsafe work environment, exacerbating turnover intentions (Fajardo, 2022; Ahamed, 2021). In a study by Ose et al. (2023), registered nurses in Norway reported high prevalence rates of workplace aggression, which correlated with an increased intention to leave their jobs. Such violent incidents, including physical assaults, bullying, threats and harassment, create a hostile work environment, leading to increased stress, anxiety and a sense of insecurity among employees. Also in health care, Lee et al. (2023) emphasized the negative impact of workplace violence incidents like verbal abuse and hostile relationships on nurses' likelihood of staying in their current roles. This hostile environment compromises workers' mental and physical wellbeing and diminishes job satisfaction and commitment. Bentley et al. (2021) and Sischka et al. (2021) highlighted that exposure to bullying and harassment results in psychological distress, further exacerbating turnover intentions.

The NSC Work To Zero Initiative provides valuable insights into preventing workplace violence. [This resource](#) covers the hazardous situations that contribute to workplace violence and offers practical solutions and emerging technologies to mitigate these risks.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

While DEI was one of the top-rated shareholder proxy proposals in 2022, the relationship between DEI and EHS has received limited attention in existing literature (Markiewicz, 2022). However, gender differences were identified in the literature as a potential contributor to increased voluntary turnover and turnover intentions. As emphasized in Velazquez et al. (2022), prior research suggests that employees who identify as women experience a greater magnitude of race or gender-based discrimination than male employees, which in turn could lead to a rise in voluntary turnover. In industries such as construction and mining, where women make up a significantly lower proportion of overall employees than men, gender discrimination in the form of lower

pay, less representation in leadership and lack of inclusive resources were emphasized in the literature (Debellis et al., 2022; Eiter et al., 2023). While DEI is increasingly recognized across various industries, its specific implications within EHS remain underexplored. Addressing these issues is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and supportive work culture, ultimately reducing turnover rates.

The Role of EHS in Retaining Employees

In addition to identifying the impact of turnover on EHS programs and safety and health-related reasons for turnover, this review's final aim was to investigate the EHS program's influence on employee retention. While a "one size fits all" approach to retaining employees is unlikely, several overarching trends were apparent in the literature that are crucial for enhancing retention via EHS initiatives, including: promoting employee wellbeing, Industry 5.0, leadership and employee engagement, and ESG initiatives. EHS retention strategies don't just retain employees; they protect the safety and health of their employees. While the initiatives discussed below provide many benefits to employees and employers and may already be implemented at your organization, they should also be considered as valuable retention strategies.

Promoting Employee Wellbeing

In recent years, the literature has increasingly recognized the role of employee wellbeing in enhancing retention strategies, particularly in relation to reducing voluntary turnover by addressing both mental and physical health needs. Organizations should continue to consider the weight of the pandemic, labor shortages and economic turbulence on their employees' mental health and wellbeing (Stempak, 2021). As emphasized by Levitt (2023), EHS programs may benefit from taking a proactive approach to recognizing and addressing mental health factors such as burnout, which can be accomplished by routinely investigating employees' psychological and physical health and working conditions and confirming adequate resource availability. Building on this understanding, the literature further explores specific strategies that can be applied as proactive measures to support employee wellbeing and, in turn, reduce voluntary turnover.

In the health care literature, Havaei et al. (2023) underscores the importance of supporting mental health by providing access to mental health resources and implementing flexible sick time policies that recognize mental health as equally important to physical health. Creating a psychologically safe environment, for example, may be considered a preventative retention strategy that addresses work-related anxiety and stress (Liu and Keller, 2021; Hebles et al., 2022). As utilized in Farewell et al. (2023), the [NIOSH Worker Wellbeing Questionnaire](#) (NIOSH WellBQ) is another tool that can help organizations manage employee wellbeing. This tool measures wellbeing across five different domains and can be utilized by organizations looking to tailor specific retention strategies to improve wellbeing.

The NSC SAFER Initiative has a [brief report](#) thoroughly exploring mental health and the workplace, the effects of the pandemic, and specific recommendations for employers on how to address these factors.

How does an organization decide which proactive measures will be the most effective for improving retention and employee wellbeing? The literature suggests that EHS initiatives tailored to specific and evolving employee needs may be beneficial to building employee retention. For example, while investigating causes for nurses' turnover intentions in Germany, Wendsche et al. (2022) found a positive association between rest break disturbances and turnover intentions. This underscores the importance of not just providing an employee benefit but also tailoring the benefit to the employees' unique needs. As emphasized in a study of Korean firefighters, mindfulness-based interventions may have some benefit in reducing turnover indirectly by combating high stress and ergonomic-related turnover (Lee et al., 2020). Whether addressing environmental conditions, mental health support or ergonomic considerations, these EHS initiatives can be particularly effective when they're proactive and tailored to meet the specific needs of the workforce.

Technological innovations in workplace safety may not only be viewed as an opportunity for operational efficiency but also for employee wellbeing and retention. Wearable safety technology, as discussed by Warrener (2022), offers a personalized approach to preventing injuries through the real-time monitoring of workers' vital signs and environmental conditions via devices like intelligent helmets and vests equipped with sensors. This tailored feedback system is designed to be lightweight, easy to use and intuitive, promoting continuous improvement and empowering workers to stay safe. By offering personalized support, these wearables may be a powerful tool for retaining employees by addressing specific safety concerns, reducing physical strain, and providing timely interventions that prevent incidents and health issues. The integration of wearable safety technology exemplifies how tailored solutions can directly address employee needs and enhance retention by creating a safer, more supportive work environment. Building on this idea, some companies also leverage broader data-driven technologies to reinforce safety protocols, reduce health risks and further support employee wellbeing.

As companies seek to enhance workplace safety and wellbeing, many are turning to data-driven technologies to prevent injuries, reinforce safety protocols and address health concerns like COVID-19. Montgomery et al. (2021) describes how advanced monitoring systems and automated reporting tools in warehouses help identify hazards and ensure compliance with safety standards, which, in turn, could reduce workplace incidents and lower turnover rates. Similarly, Frasca (2021) highlights a need for a comprehensive approach to health management in light of the pandemic. Frasca (2021) suggests a focus on integrating technology, such as distance monitoring, contact tracing, health analytics and daily health screenings, to monitor and maintain workplace safety as part of overall risk management strategies. These authors emphasize how integrating such innovations can be beneficial not only for safety outcomes but also for retaining a more satisfied and

secure workforce. As organizations continue to explore these strategies, it is also essential to consider how tailored employee benefits can further support these retention efforts.

The NSC Work To Zero Initiative has a [research series](#) detailing different types of technology, including wearables, and emphasizing the importance of employee engagement.

Industry 5.0

The fourth industrial revolution, coined Industry 4.0, marked a dynamic change in the way humans and technology interact in the workplace. Characterized by the integration of technology-based workplace solutions, it has rapidly escalated since its start in the 2010s, with advancements in robotics, real-time data analytics, and interconnected systems that are transforming industries into highly adaptive and efficient networks, setting the stage for unprecedented levels of customization and innovation. However, as emphasized by prior [NSC investigations into Industry 4.0](#), implementing new technologies alone does not build a strong solution. In this review, NSC emphasizes the need to assess organizational readiness and the need to prepare employees as crucial elements of the effectiveness of implementing new technologies. These factors become especially important when considering the onset of the fifth industrial revolution, Industry 5.0.

While still in its early stages, Industry 5.0 builds on Industry 4.0 by shifting the focus from purely technology-driven advancements to a more human-centric approach. While Industry 4.0 emphasizes the integration of advanced technologies and automation to improve efficiency and productivity, Industry 5.0 seeks to harmonize these technological gains with human wellbeing, societal values and sustainability. Industry 5.0 “complements, rather than replaces Industry 4.0,” by addressing human-machine conflicts and prioritizing worker satisfaction, health and safety within the industrial process (Battini et al., 2022). This is particularly important considering the ethical considerations around technological innovation. For instance, as highlighted by Natalizia (2022), the introduction of new technologies such as exoskeletons and automation can create unforeseen consequences like mental fatigue and increased responsibility for workers, necessitating careful planning and stakeholder involvement to ensure worker safety and wellbeing throughout the implementation process.

Industry 5.0 introduces a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive paradigm where technological progress is aligned with human-centric values (Battini et al., 2022). This model integrates multiple socio-technical factors to optimize job rotation schedules, such as workers' experience, physical capacity, ergonomic risks and perceived boredom. The model collects real-time data on workers' efficiency and ergonomic scores using advanced sensor-based technologies, enabling personalized job assignments and rest-break plans tailored to individual needs. This emerging approach may enhance worker wellbeing, reduce physical strain, and foster a more engaging and satisfying work environment.

Leadership and Employee Engagement

The literature emphasized the importance of effective leadership in the retention of employees, ensuring that health and safety efforts are consistently prioritized, communicated and integrated into the organizational culture. Evidence from Chen et al. (2023) suggests that high turnover rates exacerbate leadership impact on safety and health-related outcomes. Nursing homes where leadership actively communicated and demonstrated a commitment to worker safety, health and wellbeing experienced significantly lower nurse turnover rates – about 10% less – than those that did not prioritize these aspects (Williams et al., 2024). Leadership style and communication may be important practical considerations for demonstrating a commitment to safety and health.

Creel et al. (2021) argued that the adoption of Transformational Leadership (TRFL) over Transactional Leadership (TRAL) has been shown to enhance both safety and employee retention significantly. Transformational leaders may cultivate a positive organizational culture that addresses psychological distress, empowers employees, reduces burnout, and increases job satisfaction and work engagement (Creel et al., 2021). Compared to TRAL, TRFL may promote the long-term wellbeing of employees by focusing on sustainable goals, which directly contribute to reducing turnover by mitigating common factors such as absenteeism and the intention to leave (Creel et al., 2021). Understanding the benefits of TRFL provides a foundation for examining how reinforcement strategies, both positive and negative, can influence safety behaviors within organizations.

The literature revealed an opportunity to build employee engagement and retention strategies by utilizing techniques that positively and negatively reinforce safety-related behaviors like incentives. Incentives are reinforcers such as financial rewards or recognition of favorable safety and health behaviors and may positively reinforce a safe behavior (Punnett, 2022; Grimmer, 2020; King, 2024). For instance, King (2024) suggested incentivizing employees to engage in positive safety behaviors such as completing training programs. Leaders may also consider the potential impact of implementing negative reinforcers or consequences for unsafe behaviors, like implementing a zero-tolerance policy for workplace violence (Wallgren, 2022; Lee et al., 2023). Building on the use of reinforcement strategies to influence safety behaviors, investing in targeted training and education programs further strengthens employee commitment to safety practices while enhancing overall engagement and retention.

When it comes to the benefits of safety and health training, Murphy (2020) suggests that organizations calculate the ROI on investing in different training and educational initiatives by considering the money saved in hiring and retraining onboarding employees. As stressed in Prest (2023), prior research suggests a direct relationship exists between the implementation of comprehensive training and the retention of employees. Hoisington (2023) emphasized the importance of training for retaining and onboarding employees in the hospitality industry and for refresher training opportunities for all employees that underscore and educate employees on the importance of risk management. Investigating optimal forklift safety training, Kriz (2022)

emphasized the importance of including the "why" behind procedures, policies and suggestions in safety training. Training should consider the organizational landscape, including company goals, employee motivations and firmographics (Lin et al., 2022).

The Campbell Institute recently published a [white paper](#) on developing and measuring the effectiveness of safety training programs.

EHS managers can significantly enhance employee retention by being actively involved in recruitment and onboarding. Fowler (2022) described various ways EHS initiatives are prioritized and requirements are well understood, facilitating accurate candidate assessments. First, active participation in the recruitment process, including writing job postings and networking, helps attract and evaluate suitable candidates (Fowler, 2022). This can ensure that EHS priorities and employee expectations are well established before the potential employee initiates the interview process (Aryal et al., 2023). During the interview process, EHS professionals can be involved in updating selection criteria and attending interviews to ensure that candidates meet specific EHS needs such as life requirements, pretraining or certifications (Fowler, 2022). Finally, providing tailored onboarding and mentorship for at least six months supports new employees and encourages long-term retention (Fowler, 2022). By being involved in recruitment and onboarding processes, EHS initiatives create engagement opportunities right away, building employee engagement through communication, knowledge sharing and support.

ESG Initiatives

While still an emerging topic, an emphasis on sustainable business practices, including environmental and social initiatives, is gaining momentum as a promising strategy for boosting employee retention. As highlighted by Florek-Paszkowska and Hoyos-Vallejo (2023), aligning business operations with the values of a modern workforce through ESG initiatives may boost retention across industries. This convergence of efforts reflects a broader shift toward creating workplaces that are not only safe and inclusive but also sustainable and resilient. For example, July 2021 marked the hottest month ever recorded globally (Stempak, 2022), underscoring the urgency of addressing climate-driven risks like heat stress. Implementing practical solutions, such as utilizing fans to mitigate heat-related turnover and productivity loss (Risen, 2020), demonstrates how integrating ESG considerations into EHS programs can enhance employee wellbeing and strengthen overall organizational resilience.

In addition to these environmental and sustainability factors, DEI initiatives are growing in prevalence as important opportunities for employee retention. For instance, while creating a psychologically safe environment was heavily emphasized in the literature as beneficial to all employees, psychologically safe work environments may be especially valuable to marginalized groups who may not otherwise feel inclined to share their experiences without fear of consequences (Crist, 2024; PRNewswire, 2024). Furthermore, an essential

precursor to psychological safety is inclusion, as discussed in the [Campbell Institute review](#) on psychological safety and inclusion. As emphasized in Livingston (2023), the presence of inclusive climates is linked to reduced group conflict and greater trust among employees, making it easier for organizations to retain workers from different backgrounds.

The Industry 5.0 model actively acknowledges the role of DEI (Battini et al., 2022). Notably, the model aligns with DEI initiatives by actively considering workforce diversity in age, gender, physical abilities and experience levels. By recognizing and accommodating each worker's unique attributes and limitations, the model promotes a tailored and inclusive workplace, which may support job satisfaction and retention. This focus on personalized job design and worker participation is crucial for retaining a diverse workforce and ensuring long-term organizational success. Building on this broad framework, organizations can further operationalize DEI principles by addressing the specific needs and experiences of their diverse workforces in practical ways.

One practical way that organizations may take into account DEI initiatives is to ensure that they acknowledge that employees' sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender, age, weight and cultural factors, may all contribute to different workplace experiences. A practical approach to addressing these individual differences that emerged from the literature reinvesting in inclusive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (Warren, 2022). For example, three in 10 women in the construction industry do not have access to PPE (Debellis, 2022). Prioritizing well-stocked, continuously checked and inclusive PPE creates a safer environment for all, over some, employees.

In terms of the evolving role of EHS professionals, experts predict a growing intersection between EHS and ESG initiatives, as outlined in the [NSC New Value of Safety report](#). EHS programs are no longer solely focused on compliance and risk management; they are now integral to achieving broader sustainability and social responsibility goals. This shift is becoming increasingly urgent as climate-related challenges continue to intensify. This interconnected approach to ESG, DEI and EHS initiatives lays the groundwork for not only retaining a diverse and committed workforce but also for ensuring that organizations thrive in a rapidly changing environment. By addressing the unique needs of their employees through thoughtful and inclusive strategies, companies can drive both engagement and retention.

Conclusions and Future Directions

This review emphasizes the evolving relationship between EHS and voluntary turnover. As organizations continue to grapple with shifting workforce dynamics, there are numerous opportunities for future research that can expand our understanding of effective retention strategies. One important area of focus is the exploration of safety culture and its varying impacts on retention across different industries, which could provide valuable insights into sector-specific approaches. Additionally, the growing prevalence of remote and hybrid work models calls for further investigation into how EHS programs can be adapted to ensure the safety and satisfaction of employees working outside traditional office settings.

The role of DEI within EHS programs also remains underexplored, particularly in terms of how these initiatives can better support underrepresented groups, such as women and minorities in high-risk industries. Moreover, understanding the long-term impact of proactive mental health support and tailored employee benefits on reducing turnover presents another promising research avenue. Tailoring interventions, such as flexible schedules and personalized health plans, to meet the unique needs of employees could be a key factor in enhancing retention, particularly when looking to foster inclusive environments.

The integration of wearable technology and data-driven safety solutions offers a new frontier for improving employee wellbeing and engagement. Research focusing on the barriers and successes of implementing such technologies, especially in industries like manufacturing and logistics, could provide actionable insights for organizations. Understanding how to effectively leverage these technologies can help organizations tailor interventions that address specific safety challenges while enhancing productivity. Additionally, examining employee perceptions and the long-term impacts of wearable tech on wellbeing will be crucial for driving adoption and maximizing benefits across different sectors. The concept of Industry 5.0, which prioritizes human-centric solutions and personalized job designs, offers yet another area where research could assess the potential benefits of job rotation and cross-training models on retention.

EHS initiatives should be further explored as an opportunity to reduce voluntary turnover, considering factors like disengagement, wellbeing, productivity and impairment. Overlooking EHS in retention strategies may mean missing out on key opportunities to both attract and keep top talent. With workforce dynamics rapidly evolving, these initiatives not only help retain employees but also foster a safer and healthier work environment. This review is just the beginning – there's a lot of potential for expanding how EHS can boost retention, swiftly respond to changes in turnover, and integrate into areas like onboarding, ESG and overall employee wellbeing.

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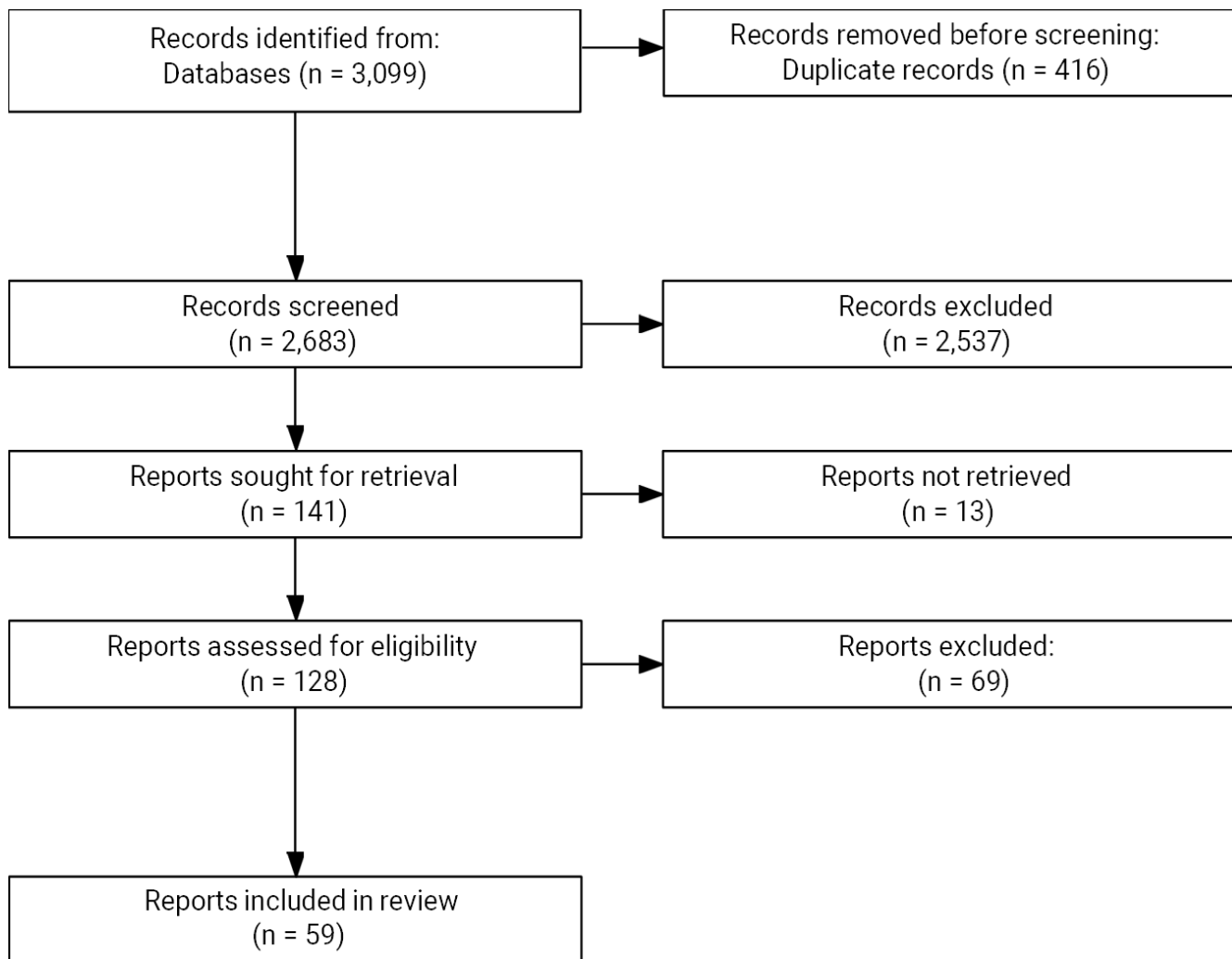
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Appendix A. Flow Diagram of Included and Excluded Articles



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