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Strategies for Hiring People with Disabilities to Prevent a Skilled Worker Shortage

Andreas Kyprianou
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Andreas Kyprianou

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Andreas Kyprianou

MSc, Walden University, 2015

BA, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Many business sectors are currently facing challenges in the labor market and will need to address inefficiencies in their recruitment and retention strategies. Restaurant managers who lack strategies for recruiting nontraditional staff, such as people with disabilities, risk declining competitiveness because of this labor shortage. Grounded in stakeholder theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages. The participants comprised 7 quick service restaurant (QSR) franchisees and managers from the same QSR brand in Canada with previous experience recruiting staff with disabilities. Data were collected from semistructured, face-to-face interviews, observational notes, and a review of company documents such as training manuals and videos specific to onboarding new employees. The study included the use of thematic analysis to analyze the data. Three themes emerged: authenticity, communication, and creating a positive workplace environment; hiring manager and knowledge of accessibility legislation and employment resources; and recognizing the strategic advantage of hiring people with disabilities. Recommendations include understanding the importance of communication between front line managers and staff and developing education and training programs to assist with recruiting people with disabilities. The implications for positive social change include potentially altering public misconceptions, prejudice, and lack of education concerning the employability of people with disabilities who represent a talent pool who are eager, skilled, and capable of providing value to various organizations.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my mother, father and brother. I am fortunate and forever grateful for having parents and a sibling who provided me with the skills and work ethic required to be successful in whatever I chose to do. To my wife Laurie for her sacrifices over the last 25 years so I could pursue various 'second jobs', including my doctorate. Having you in my corner has been the constant I needed to take risks and go after my dreams. To my son, Jack, you may not realize it, but this doctorate is as much about you as it is me. Never let someone tell you that your dreams are not possible. Always challenge yourself to be the best person you can be for yourself and those around you. To Joe Jenabian, Richard Bucek, and Rick Kalirai, I may have had some bad luck on the health front, but I have won the lottery by having three of the best friends a person could have.

I want to add a special dedication to Mr. and Mrs. Jenabian, and Alison, who were gracious enough to let me be a part-time member of their family throughout my youth. I cannot thank you enough for what you did for me when I needed it most.

Table of Contents

ii

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Aging populations over the next 20 years will place a significant strain on the economy and society that will affect business owners worldwide (Kaplan & Inguanzo, 2017). The effect of this strain on small businesses, like quick service restaurants (QSRs), calls for forward thinking and leadership. Within the disability community there is untapped talent that can be utilized positively to support businesses and fill gaps in the workforce caused by an increase in the number of individuals reaching retirement age. When employers look beyond traditional hires, such as people with disabilities, employers can not only fill the positions lost because of retiring staff but also benefit from the loyalty and longevity of employees with disabilities (Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014).

The challenge for small businesses, like QSR, is to proactively address this staffing concern by exploring alternative recruiting practices and look beyond traditional talent sources and explore the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. In this research, I explored strategies for hiring people with disabilities to prevent a skilled worker shortage, which can provide insights to organizational leaders for recruiting strategies related to talent shortages caused by an abundance of retiring baby boomers. As baby boomers reach retirement age in growing numbers, businesses will need to explore ways to fill the gaps in their workforce. Recruiting people with disabilities can not only also address these gaps but can benefit businesses in positive ways. For example, employing people with disabilities can contribute to a business' reputation, competitive advantage, and promote an inclusive and diverse workplace (Kalargyrou, 2014). Further, for a person

with a disability, the opportunity for work provides them self-worth, professional growth, and independence.

Background of the Problem

The combination of declining birthrates and population aging could create adverse impacts to the economies of many Western countries due to the shortage of individuals to fill positions vacated by retiring workers (Carbonaro, Leanza, McCann, & Medda, 2018). The decline in population growth coupled with the increase of baby boomers reaching retirement age will require businesses to examine opportunities to maintain a competitive advantage resulting from these changes in workforce demographics. This gap left in the workforce will also affect governments and societies worldwide. For example, in Europe, baby boomers represent 45% of the labor force, which is estimated to result in 90-100 million individuals retiring within the next 20 years (Carbonaro et al., 2016). The loss of this many taxpaying contributors from the labor market could result in dramatic consequences to a country's economic and social well-being (Carbonaro et al., 2016).

In Canada, the aging population is one of the most important forces that can affect the social support programs population (Brown, 2011). For instance, the large number of baby boomers exiting the workforce over the next 20 years will leave significant gaps across business sectors, and because this generation is living longer, they will likely require economic and social support for years beyond retirement age (Brown, 2011). Additionally, as baby boomers continue to retire in sizable numbers, they will leave many businesses without a vital knowledge source (Appelbaum, Gunkel, Benyo, Ramadan, & Wolff, 2012). To remain competitive, it is imperative that business owners seek

alternative recruits, such as people with disabilities, to maintain a robust stable of

employees who can learn from existing staff and mitigate the loss of knowledge before

employees retire (Joe, Yoong, & Patel, 2013; Kalargyrou, 2014). Although many

businesses have not considered hiring people with disabilities, in some cases due to

myths and misconceptions about what hiring a nontraditional hire may entail, a

significant amount of scholarly literature has shown positive returns when they do. For

example, previous research has shown that business owners should begin to create

strategies to integrate people with disabilities to fill these gaps in labor to elevate the

strain on their business resulting from retiring staff (Kalagarou & Volis, 2014).

Problem Statement

Current demographic trends such as the aging population could result in a

dramatic shortage of skilled workers (Araten-Bergman, 2016). Estimates indicate that 78

million baby boomers are retiring at an annual projected growth rate of 4.1% or 4 times

the rate of growth of the overall labor force in the United States, resulting in a projected

significant shortage of skilled workers in the traditional workforce (Irshad, 2016; Toossi,

2005). The general business problem is that restaurant managers are reluctant to explore

nontraditional employee recruitment options, such as hiring people with disabilities to fill

positions of retiring baby boomers, based on misconceptions about accommodation costs

and applicants' skill levels (Schur et al., 2014). The specific business problem is that

some restaurant managers lack strategies for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities

to prevent or address skilled worker shortages.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages. The population or participants consisted of 14 managers and owners at seven of the same food service restaurant franchises in southern Ontario with over 20% of staff identifying as a person with a disability. These business leaders were selected for this study for both their proactive recruitment practices and their ability to create business success with a nontraditional staff. The implications for positive social change include the potential of employment opportunities for the estimated 6.2 million Canadians who identify as having a disability and may potentially fill skilled workforce shortages (Statistics Canada, 2018). Employing people with disabilities can improve the quality of life of these individuals by providing meaningful work opportunities while reducing the reliance on government assistance programs.

Nature of the Study

The research methods considered for this study were qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. I selected a qualitative multiple case study approach. Qualitative researchers seek to explore a variety of means to gather information such as structured, semistructured, and unstructured interviews, focus groups or observe participants in a specific environment (Aslan, Duman, Sen, Duran, & Atarbay, 2016). Employing a qualitative research method provides the researcher the opportunity to view an issue from the participant's perspective by asking questions concerning the problem to understand how it affects the participant, and how their responses relate to the topic studied (Leppink,

2017; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). The qualitative research method was appropriate to explore the strategies some restaurant manager's use for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities to prevent or address a skilled worker shortage. The quantitative research method was deemed inappropriate for this study because researchers use quantitative methods to test theories and examine the relationships among variables or groups' differences, which was not the focus of the current research (Brown, 2017). The quantitative approach is appropriate if testable hypotheses are used to understand the relationships or groups' differences among theoretical constructs, variables, or for the prediction of research outcomes (Hayes, Bonner, & Douglas, 2013; Leppink, 2017). The combination of qualitative and quantitative research is referred to as the mixed methods approach, which was also considered inappropriate for this study because I did not need to calculate differences or relationships among variables (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2017).

The choice of a qualitative research method provided the opportunity to consider strategies of inquiry such as phenomenology, ethnographic, and case study designs. Using a phenomenological design can provide the opportunity to gain insights on phenomenon by identifying the meanings of participating individuals' lived experiences (Büyükgöze & Gün, 2017), which was not appropriate because cultural characterizations are not necessary for addressing in my study. In contrast, researchers use the multiple-case study design for the investigation of socially complex phenomena and the surrounding context, which can lead to a meaningful understanding of the phenomena and provide richer insights into a social phenomenon (Gibbins, Bhatia, Forbes, & Reid,

2014; Kothari et al., 2016). Therefore, the multiple case study design was appropriate for my study.

Research Question

The research question for this study was "What strategies do restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages?"

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages?

2. What experience do you have with hiring people with disabilities?

3. In terms of recruiting for vacancies within your organization, what are the main activities, skills, and experience required to obtain employment?

4. What trends have you observed at your organization's location related to employee retention?

5. How have you been addressing the key challenges to implementing your organization's strategies for maintaining an adequate level of employees in your business?

6. Currently, what do you view is the greatest challenge in attracting employees to work at your business?

7. What benefits have you observed related to the hiring people with disabilities in your business?

8. What additional information would you like to share regarding strategies

restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages?

Conceptual Framework

Stakeholder theory, first described by Mitroff (1983), was developed by Freeman (1984) and advanced an understanding of those invested, involved, or affected by an organization. In essence, those affected can range from employees, the surrounding community, governments, and stakeholders. At its core, stakeholder theory proposes that a business's achievements should be measured by all stakeholders and not just those financially invested in it, such as shareholders (De Gooyert, Rouwette, van Kranenburg, & Freeman, 2017). In relation to this study, stakeholder theory applies to a wider view of organizations and their interdependencies within society and how their stakeholders can include suppliers, customers, the local community, other organizations and employees (Hörisch, Freeman, & Schaltegger, 2014). Stakeholder theory was an appropriate framework from which to explore the strategies restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages by considering the perspectives of the multiple stakeholders involved.

Operational Definitions

Baby boomers: A baby boomer is an individual born between 1946 and 1964 and are referred to as baby boomers due to the large birth rate during these two decades (Moody, 2017).

Epoché: This word, derived from Greek, describes the philosophical process of setting individual preconceptions of experiences aside (Moustakas, 1994).

Franchisee: An entrepreneur who purchases a brand name of an established business for the sale of goods and or services under the original company's business model is known as a franchisee (Evanschitzky, Caemmerer, & Backhaus, 2016).

Intellectual capital: This term refers to the knowledge used to enhance the value of capital, produce wealth, or gain a competitive advantage (Liang, Huang, & Lin, 2011).

Learnability: The way a person's language and ability are constructed over a period can be referred to as learnability (Dupoux, 2018).

People with disabilities: Individuals who are limited in their daily activities because of a physical or mental disability but can actively participate in the labor market and are employable in positions relevant to their qualifications are typically deemed, people or people with disabilities (Turcotte, 2014).

Small business: Organizations that have a staff ranging from one to 500 employees classify as small businesses (Perry, 2001).

Succession planning: The creation of a plan to transition job duties over a set period from one individual to another is commonly known as succession planning (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are paramount to academic research and justify the reason for the specific research problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Assumptions are the presumptions that the researcher believes to be correct; however, this information has not yet been verified by the researcher (Zlatanovic, 2016). Therefore, it is the researcher's

responsibility to mitigate the risk that can be associated with assumptions in a research study (McDonald, Oates, & Alevizou, 2016). This qualitative multi-case study was focused on the strategy's restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent a skilled worker shortage that will occur over the next 20 years because of the steady stream of retirement of those born in the baby boomer generation (Araten-Bergman, 2016; Moody, 2017).

There were four assumptions in this study. The first assumption was that QSR franchisees will experience employee shortages arising from retiring staff. The second assumption was that restaurant managers would benefit from recruiting and hiring people with disabilities to maintain employment levels and maintain competitive advantage. The third assumption was that the locations selected currently employ or have previously employed one or more individuals who identify as having a disability. Lastly, the fourth assumption was that participants selected for this study provide truthful and honest answers to ensure that the data collected is reliable and valid.

Limitations

Limitations refer to areas of potential weaknesses pertaining to a study that is out of the researcher's control (Denzin, 2012). The main limitations of this study were the sample size and restricted geographical location of southern Ontario, Canada. Another limitation was the choice to select a multiple case-study concentrated on a specific QSR franchise, which may not represent the results from studies that include a wider range of restaurants within the QSR industry. Additionally, the data collected for this study may

not be entirely representative of all franchisees or the managers who participated in the study.

Delimitations

Researchers reference delimitations as input that has not been selected for consideration within the context of a study (Alina, Matis, & Oriol, 2012). Delimitations can provide context and define the boundaries of a research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). There were five delimitations in this study: (a) the limited geographical location of southern Ontario; (b) concentration on QSR franchises; (c) participation is restricted to owners and managers and will not include members of the QSR franchise's corporate office management team; (d) small sample size of seven owners or managers and eight research questions; and (e) interviews were scheduled over a set period of time, which may have prohibited participants from adding to their responses before the study is for academic review.

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Significance of the Study

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Aging populations over the next 20 years will place a significant strain on the economy and society that will affect business owners worldwide (Kaplan & Inguanzo, 2017). Additionally, employment rates for people with disabilities are significantly lower than for those without a disability (Kalargyrou, 2014; Turcotte, 2014). But the disability community can be utilized to support businesses and fill gaps in the workforce caused by an increase in the number of individuals reaching retirement age. Employers can not only fill the positions lost because of retiring staff but also benefit from the loyalty and longevity of employees with disabilities (Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014).

The results of this study are significant to businesses because they can provide insights to organizational leaders for recruiting strategies related to talent shortages caused by an abundance of retiring baby boomers. As baby boomers reach retirement age in growing numbers, businesses will need to explore ways to fill the gaps in their workforce. Recruiting people with disabilities can address these gaps and contribute to a business' reputation, competitive advantage, and promote an inclusive and diverse workplace (Kalargyrou, 2014). Further, work provides self-worth, professional growth, and independence for people with disabilities.

The significance of this study for the community and society can be substantial for reducing unemployment rates and counter myths and misconceptions related to nontraditional hires. Hiring people with disabilities could increase the tax base for the community while reducing the dependence of people with disabilities on government-funded programs because these people can be gainfully employed. Utilization of people with disabilities to fill the employment gap created by the current and future retirement of baby boomers could help to ensure a stable, productive workforce benefiting communities through maintaining or improving nontraditional workers' quality of life.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The decline in population growth coupled with the increase in retiring baby boomers could have profound effects on a nation's social, economic and environment strength. The gap left in the workforce from this increase in retirement will also affect businesses, large and small, and will require recruiting strategies that seek alternative candidates, such as people with disabilities, to remain competitive (Joe et al., 2013;

Kalargyrou, 2014). In the United States, baby boomers are retiring at four times the rate

of growth of the overall labor force (Irshad, 2016; Toossi, 2005). In Canada, the aging

population can have dramatic effects on the country's social support programs and the

labor force's ability to fund and maintain these programs. Therefore, it is imperative that

organizations and their management should develop recruiting strategies that can counter

the potential loss of employees by looking to non-traditional hires to address the reality

before them (Brown, 2011). Businesses must recognize that as baby boomers leave their

positions, they are not only losing physical employees but also a vital source of

knowledge (Appelbaum, et al., 2012).

There are similarities in the research conducted on the hospitality and the QSR

industry that are pertinent to my study. Therefore, I have included selected articles that

both contribute and compliment my literature review as retiring baby boomers have

already begun to affect the hospitality and restaurant industry, which is and will continue

to struggle with finding employees to fill the gap left by retiring staff. Traditionally, the

hospitality and food industries have looked to younger people and immigration to fill

required positions, but current demographics show that the birth rates of generations in

the United States and Canada, for example, are not adequate to replace retiring workers

(Paxson, 2009). This reaffirmed the need for research on recruiting nontraditional talent,

such as people with disabilities, who are capable of filling positions in the quick service

food industry (and many other business sectors not studied here) and whom human

resource (HR) managers need to consider for available positions.

The objective of this literature review is to provide an in-depth assessment of previous research and both contribute and stimulate further research opportunities related to recruiting strategies to prevent or address skilled worker shortages by hiring people with disabilities (Aggarwal, 2013). Conducting a critical analysis of the professional academic literature for my study enabled me to support my problem statement and research questions. The main theory reviewed was stakeholder theory. Throughout the literature review analysis, I investigated pertinent academic studies to gain knowledge that could be used to address the issue of retiring baby boomers and how to retain their knowledge. Additionally, I researched issues faced by people with disabilities as it relates to employment, their education and skill levels and the business case for considering them as viable and valuable candidates to an organization's workforce. Finally, I investigated the QSR and hospitality industry for research specific to retiring baby boomers, their recruiting practices and opportunities for hiring nontraditonal talent.

The primary source of information for this literature review was the Walden University Library with support from various databases to ensure a variety of peer-reviewed articles related to my study. The most current research was sought and every effort was made to use articles published between 2014 and 2019. Articles published prior to 2014 are included in this literature review because of their contribution to current research studies, are seminal studies or offer additional and/or provide information on the evolution of particular theories or subject matter. As per the Walden University Doctor of Business Administration's criteria, the total number of journals that were peer-reviewed was 87%, and the percentage that is within 5 years was 52%.

The databases used for searching research material included EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Business Source Complete, SAGE Premier, Thoreau, and Google Scholar. A sample of the key words searched include, *stakeholder theory, corporate social responsibility (CSR), ethics, baby boomers, employee turnover, employment gap, labor shortage, employee turnover, retirement, food service hiring practices, front-line managers, issues in quick service restaurants (QSR), employment and people with a disability, disability and hiring, benefit of hiring people with disabilities, business case for hiring people with disabilities, nontraditional employees, HR management best practices, recruiting best practices, human resource management, leadership styles, and authentic leadership.*

Stakeholder Theory

Freeman's publication of *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* in 1984 was seminal research related to the stakeholder. It was also the beginning of the often challenged difference between the stakeholder and the shareholder. Within the shareholder model, managers are tasked with creating value for shareholders whereas in the stakeholder model, the role of managers is expanded to include employees, consumers, and even the community of which a business is located (Hörisch et al., 2014). At its core, stakeholder theory looks beyond shareholder wealth and suggests that it is the corporation's management of the stakeholder relationship that is vital for a business' success (Jansson, 2005). This view of the stakeholder and the subsequent theory is supported by a number of scholars who argue that businesses also need to address their

ethical and moral aspects responsibilities beyond the shareholder (Persic, Markic, &

Persic, 2016; Sonenshein, 2016).

Freeman's stakeholder theory (1984) asked two central questions: "What is the

purpose of the firm?" and "What responsibility does management have to stakeholders?"

These questions are important for managers to consider, as it will not only establish the

kind of business they want to pursue but also the type of relationships they want to have

with their stakeholders (Freeman, 2000). For the manager, stakeholder theory addresses

the way they chose to lead, conduct themselves, and perform their daily tasks. Thus,

stakeholder theory is directly related to business practice and value creation (Laplume,

Sonpar, & Litz, 2008). Additionally, though stakeholder theory recognizes the

importance of the shareholder and stakeholder, the way a firm creates profits and

financial performance can be achieved by various means on the journey to value creation

(Theodulidis, Diaz, Crotto, & Rancati, 2017).

At its foundation, stakeholder theory focuses on the notion that a business exists

to serve the purposes of those who have an interest or stake in the organization (Freeman,

1984). The unique aspect of stakeholder theory is how it diverges from the traditional

view of business. Unlike the traditional view of business, which can operate on an input-

output model (Figure 1) comprised of investors, suppliers, and employees all contributing

into the firm with the outputs going to the customer, the stakeholder model involves

many more stakeholders who can contribute and receive from the organization's business

activities (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).
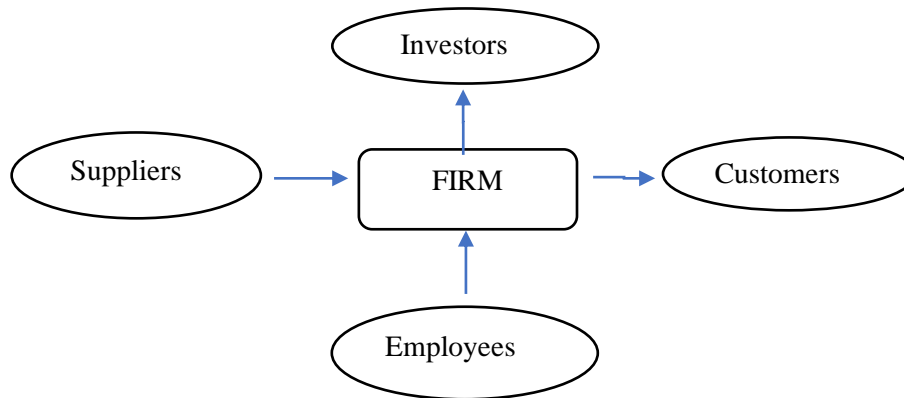
Figure 1. Contrasting models of the corporation: Input-output model. Adapted from "The stakeholder theory of the corporation: Concepts, evidence, and implications," by Thomas Donaldson, and Lee E. Preston, 1995, *Academy of Management Review*, *20,* p. 69.

Further, there is more than one way to consider the aspects of stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). The descriptive approach maps the theory to describe, reflect, and explain the way a business operates (Donaldson & Preston, 1995), though this approach is limited in that it only allows for exploratory propositions and does not facilitate any link between stakeholder management and an organization's traditional business objectives such as, growth and earnings (Damak-Ayadi & Pesqueux, 2005). Instrumental stakeholder theory postulates that, if everything is equal when the management of the stakeholder is practiced, there is opportunity for an increase in positive outcomes such as, but not limited to, profitability and stability (Damak-Ayadi & Pesqueux, 2005; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Jones, 1995). In this view, management accepts that results are dependent on the continued behavior of management to achieve the desired outcomes. The view that the collective "we" are all stakeholders is classified

as the normative aspect of stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). In most

instances, the normative approach perceives individual stakeholder groups as having

intrinsic value and that other groups and their interests are no more important that any of

the stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). This ethical and fair approach to an

organization's stakeholders highlights the idea that each group has intrinsic value to the

firm. Additionally, an organization's responsibility to ethical business practice affects the

community in which they reside (Mackay & Spencer, 2017). The extent to the level of

how "socially responsible" a business is, or should be, is a vast and often argued position.

Expanding on these aspects of stakeholder theory, though Hörisch, Freeman, and

Schaltegger (2014) highlighted the different types of stakeholder theory based on and

extending research by Donaldson and Preston (1995). Hörisch et al. viewed stakeholder

theory as integrative and suggested that it can be approached by implementing the

following four types. The first, descriptive/empirical, emphasizes the structure and

operation of companies. The second, instrumental, is used to examine the effect of

stakeholder management and how a corporation's objectives affect it. Third, normative, is

focused on where a business' morals are viewed in relation to their alignment within

stakeholder theory. Fourth, integrative, involves the interrelation with the three previous

forms of stakeholder theory. This view of the stakeholder, not as a single aspect of a

company, but one that emphasizes the multiple aspects of a company's relationships with

a range of stakeholders, is essential in the analysis of stakeholder theory (Freeman et al.,

2010; Hörisch et al., 2014).

To adequately assess stakeholder theory, it is necessary that managers understand the importance of an integrative approach related to their multiple stakeholders and how their firm's operations, and actions, both internal and external, can affect the areas of their business (Hörisch et al., 2014). Because of the varied extent of stakeholders, a business must interact with and serve, the expectation that all will be served adequately may be perceived as a near impossible task for managers (Machan, 2017). Middle managers in particular are required to act in various roles including, middleman between head office, staff, and a variety of other stakeholders that add to a business' operations (Burgess, 2012; Gannon et al., 2010). Typically, the range of stakeholders includes management, vendors, customers, the local community, and employees. These stakeholders and the relationship between them and an organization can be especially valuable to a firm's performance (Garcia-Castro et al., 2011).

The goal of creating profit and delivering wealth to shareholders does not in itself have to exclude the benefits to stakeholders beyond those who have an investment in an organization (Martin, 2013). Rather, shareholder theory and stakeholder theory can complement one another insofar as viewing the stakeholder, such as the customer, employee, or members of a community as also having an interest in an organization and one that is essential for that organization's economic survival (Zattoni, 2011). These stakeholders should also benefit from a business' success as it is they who also have a stake in the business through their patronage by purchasing goods or services that result in profits for that business. Stakeholder theory is about understanding the right way to

engage and create value for stakeholders, which can ultimately benefit an organization's ability to create wealth and competitive advantage (Freeman et al., 2018).

For the modern business, the bridge between profit and ethics are becoming essential to their customers, their staff, and shareholders, and stakeholder theory can provide a level of guidance for leaders to develop organizational activities that support ethical and sustainable business activities (Amin-Chaudhry, 2016; Rodgers, Soderbom, & Guiral, 2015). Stakeholder theory does not dismiss capitalism but offers a different perspective on how it can function that highlights diversity and ethical behaviors (Bellantuono, Pontrandolfo, & Scozzi, 2016). Though social problems should be addressed by governments and not private business enterprises; when firms acquire these secondary costs, it could result in a negative impact on monetary performance (Friedman, 1970). The role of ethics concerning how organizations conduct business has become a frequently studied aspect of stakeholder theory because of the role stakeholders in their organizations and how they feel the business should conduct itself (Todd, Leask, & Ensor, 2017). When a company engages with its stakeholders, whether it be their customer or their vendors, stakeholder theory requires that communication is based on ethical and honest behavior in the organization's goal toward profit (Mullins & Schoar, 2016). Additionally, the responsibility of corporate managers is to ensure that the company's primary stakeholder, those with shares in the organization, maximize their investment vis-à-vis financial returns (Friedman, 1970; Machan, 2017).

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the recognized term for when a firm incorporates social, environmental, and ethical responsibilities into their corporate activities with the goal of enhancing their position with their stakeholders (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014). However, research has also suggested that it would be more appropriate to replace CSR with the term *corporate responsibility*, which more accurately represents a firm's actions and decisions related to stakeholders (Graham, 2018). The origin of CSR was proposed in the seminal work of Bowen (1953) and draws on fundamental relationship between a company's social and economic responsibilities; this relationship is not so much as what organizational leaders are looking for but how they will accomplish it (Rodriguez-Fernandez, 2016). Theoretically, when a firm engages in socially responsible activities, they are agreeing to act in a way that binds them to an obligation to protect, foster, and enhance the benefit of their stakeholders, from investors to their customers (Tai & Chuang, 2014). Conceptually, CSR is complimentary to stakeholder theory, as it operates as an extension of corporate governance that incorporates those beyond the shareholder (Theodulidis et al., 2017). When a firm's CSR initiatives are perceived as mutually beneficial, they can provide psychosocial, functional, and value to the relationship between the firm and their stakeholders (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006).

The way business is conducted has evolved over the past few decades to recognize the importance of the relationship between corporate financial performance and that corporate social performance (Ruggiero & Cupertino, 2018). When an organization

incorporates CSR practices into their strategic goals, they must also take consideration of how their daily operations and procedures will be affected by these changes. As with any venture, integrating CSR will come at a cost that is not always conducive to positive financial results (Rodriguez-Fernandez, 2016). It is, therefore, essential that organizations that have committed to CSR practices understand that it may not foster immediate positive revenue. In essence, adopting CSR can require patience before a measurable reward can be gleaned. Alternatively, a company can choose to not act in a socially responsible way which could result in negative optics, reputation, and ultimately affect stakeholder perception potentially affecting current and future investment and profits (Boivie et al., 2016; Rodriguez-Fernandez, 2016).

Coupled with expensive marketing campaigns to promote their CSR activities, organizations see the value in CSR as a way to promote their goodwill while aligning with their customer's growing interest in social causes (Cha et al., 2016; Raub & Blunschi, 2014). Brand recognition, especially for businesses in the QSR industry, has become paramount to their success. Leading companies such as Starbucks and McDonald's have implemented CSR activities into their business strategies (Cha, Yi, & Bagozzi, 2016). The past decade has negatively affected an industry blamed for high sugar, high fat food offerings that have contributed to growing obesity rates in the United States and elsewhere. CSR-focused marketing campaigns have continued to combat negative publicity while also addressing customer's social concerns with the hope that their firm will be rewarded for their social agenda (Cha et al., 2016). Service research has shown a positive correlation between CSR activities and consumer trust, satisfaction, and

a companies' financial performance (Raub & Blunschi, 2014). When organizations act in

a socially responsible way, they are rewarded by increased customer loyalty and profits

(Tai & Chung, 2014).

Firm performance and CSR have been examined by many academic researchers,

resulting in various opinions and study results (Saeidi, Sofian, Saeidi, Saeidi, & Saaeidi,

2015). But one of the problems related to previous research on CSR is the lack of

sustainable competitive advantage as a variable related to the customer, their satisfaction

with an organization, and a firm's reputation (Awang & Jusoff, 2009; Saeidi et al., 2015).

Corporate Social Responsibility and Reputation

A direct benefit of incorporating CSR is its effect on an organization's reputation.

Maignan et al. (2005) observed that CSR initiatives can demonstrate that a company

shares similar societal values to their communities. Reputation refers to something that is

not only about its benefit to an organization but is also a collection of other criteria such

as social responsibility and ethical behavior (Walker & Dick, 2014). Agarwal,

Osiyevskyy and Feldman (2015) relate corporate reputation to their past behaviour and

relationships and how taken together can influence their various stakeholders. When an

organization places effort on developing strong relationships with their customers there is

evidence of higher levels of customer satisfaction and positive financial outcomes

(Swimberghe & Wooldridge, 2014). In a study conducted by Luo and Bhattacharya

(2006) of Fortune 500 companies, their findings revealed a link between CSR activities

and customer satisfaction and firm market value. Optically, the promotion of a

companies' CSR initiatives may be positively received by their various stakeholders,

including their customers, as adding value to their product and/or service offerings

(Kemper et al., 2013).

There is a growing number of studies supporting the benefits of engaging in CSR

but the most commonly cited among executives are legitimization and corporate

reputation (Ruggiero & Cupertino, 2018). For a firm to succeed in their industry and

marketplace, they must focus not just on profits, but also on all of their stakeholder's

needs (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Reputation, in this context, is viewed as judgments

related to business made by stakeholders that are based on the business' corporate

identity (Agarwal et al., 2015). When a firm's CSR activities are considered favorable by

stakeholders it can result in a positive reputation that can translate into important

organization outcomes, such as increased brand equity and financial performance (Lai,

Chiu, Yang, & Pai, 2010; Pfarrer, Pollock, & Rindova, 2010). Corporate reputation, when

assessed against outcomes can have the potential to evolve into an intangible element of a

firm that is valuable, rare, unique, and non-substitutable – all foundational elements to

creating a competitive advantage (Boyd, Bergh, & Ketchen, 2010).

Ruggiero and Cupertino (2018) suggest that a benefit derived from CSR tactics

could relate to a firm's corporate reputation which, in turn, could foster the development

of better relationships with external stakeholders such as, key business supporters,

governments, and investors. A study conducted by Luo and Bhattacharya (2006)

confirmed a link between CSR behaviour and customer satisfaction. This finding was

supported with evidence provided by Walsh and Beatty (2007) who found that consumers

tend to feel more positive about purchases of products and services made at a business

that has a favorable reputation. When a business promotes their CSR activities, such as

the previous examples of Starbucks and McDonald's, it can bring awareness to the shared

values between the business and their consumer. Consistent with the previous research by

Luo and Bhattacharya, Walsh and Beatty, and Kuo and Kalargyrou (2014) when

restauranteurs acted in a socially positive way, such as hiring staff with disabilities, the

purchase intentions of consumers at restaurants went up when management hired staff

with disabilities.

Hiring people with disabilities should not be considered as a form of tokenism or

altruism, but rather be embraced as another beneficial aspect of CSR. Adding non-

traditional employees, such as those with disabilities, can not only help a company's

financial goals, but also bridge potential avenues to profit and social consideration

(Kalrgyrou & Houtenville, 2012). An example of such an outcome was referenced in a

national research study on consumer attitudes towards people with disabilities by

Siperstein et al. (2005) who found that customers felt better about the establishments they

frequented who hired people with disabilities and would look favorably on any company

who did so. When people with disabilities are active members of organizations there is

evidence of increases in a firm's revenue because their presentence attracts customers,

who are socially conscious and observant of a business' CSR policies (Kalargyrou &

Volis, 2014).

Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethics

Vardamin, Gondo, and Allen (2014) found that when the climate at a firm is

based in ethical behavior it translates to positive work attitudes. A firm's attitude and

adherence to business ethics is of significant importance when establishing a CSR

strategy. This has been a particular issue in the QSR industry; specifically, in adopting an

approach that appeals to enhancing customer relationships in a market that has

traditionally low levels of brand loyalty and similar product offerings, which make it

challenging to create a unique identity (Swimberghe & Wooldridge, 2014). This coupled

with a low level of consumer commitment to food brands, negative media coverage

related to obesity and fast food, has created a need for QSR restaurants to incorporate

CSR practices into their strategic planning.

Business ethics, customer-value orientation, and brand value are essential

variables required for long-lasting business relationships with stakeholders who can offer

the support and funding required to achieve competitive advantage (Fernández & Pinuer,

2016). An ethical issue arises when CSR is used simply as a marketing campaign to

deceive consumers into believing that an organization is acting in a socially or

environmentally responsible way, when their product is near impossible to meet the

essence of what CSR is meant to promote. An example of ethical dilemmas such as this is

often applied to the fast food restaurant, soda, and tobacco manufacturing industries. In a

study on tobacco giant, Philip Morris USA, McDaniel and Malone (2012) examined this

corporation's interpretation of what CSR means to their business. The result was that

because of the undeniable health hazards inherent in using their cigarette product, Philip

Morris could not adhere to the principles intrinsic in a CSR strategy (McDaniel &

Malone, 2012). This reality resulted in the company not implementing a CSR program;

however, not implementing one will likely have no effect on their ability to sell cigarettes to their customer base.

When CSR strategies are pursued by companies that produce products with potential health risks, such as, soda, fast food or cigarettes, they often support it with multi-million-dollar advertising campaigns used primarily for the purpose of branding (Dorfman, Cheyne, Friedman, Wadud, & Gottlieb, 2012). This questionable morality was explored by Bhatia (2012) in a comparative study that examined three separate Chinese and three separate American corporations in the oil, aviation and banking industries. Bhatia found that CSR to the organizations studied veered from the foundational goals associated traditionally associated with CSR programs and was more in line with an exercise in brand building with the intent of producing a more positive image.

To some extent this misguided approach to CSR is occurring in the fast food industry. Organizations in this industry have taken legislated government regulations to combat the rise in childhood obesity through the implementation of calorie notification on their product offering to promote themselves as good corporate citizens who are actively contributing to a solution to the health crisis (Nixon et al., 2015). Consequently, Peloza, Ye, and Montford (2015) argued that CSR activities aimed at improving reputation can also influence customer perceptions of nutritional content of food offerings and lead to overconsumption. In this context, CSR is not only being used in a way it was not intended for, but the motives in this example are ethically suspect, as their promotion to stakeholders, specifically consumers, is disingenuous. When CSR is used irresponsibly it can create various negative outcomes, such as the loss of trust and

creativity, escalation of unethical behaviors, corruption, and dishonesty (Gu, Tang, & Jang, 2015; Tang et al., 2016). Ensuring that CSR is practiced as intended can be assisted with HR management (HRM) policies that are based on removing exploitative and demeaning practices (Gill, 2018; Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

Human Resource Management

One of the biggest challenges for business leaders is adapting to change (Ulrich, 1998). Baby boomers are retiring in large numbers now and over the next decade. This trend in the labor force will require the development of an aging related HRM strategy to address the gaps in staffing created by retiring workers (von Bonsdorff et al., 2018). To address this challenge HR managers will need to act as their organizations change agents. Doing so will require taking on the responsibility of recruiting and training to ensure that these employees will have the skills and attributes needed to be successful within the organization (Babu et al., 2015).

In Wright and McMahan's (1992) view, strategic HRM is a design of planned placements and activities that aim to assist a firm to achieve their business goals. Previous research on HRM has focused on the systems of HR practices, which has shown a positive correlation between organizational performance, depending on the HR practices implemented (Boon, Eckardt, Lepak, & Boselie, 2018; Delery, 1998). High-performance HR practices invest in improving service capacity through employee selection policies, training practices, integrated performance management system, competitive rewards and empowering employees in decision making jobs (Breaugh 1981; Santhanam, Kamalanabhan, Dyaram, & Ziegler, 2015). Incorporating these practices can

provide sufficient support to employees enabling them to do their best to satisfy customers and effectively perform their jobs (Breaugh 1981; Santhanam, Kamalanabhan, Dyaram, & Ziegler, 2015).

Hiring new employees is an essential aspect of HR that includes a range of activities including, recruiting, processing, eliminating, and selecting candidates for positions (Durrani & Rajagopal, 2014). Changing workplace demographics because of the aging population will require HR managers to not only continue their standard roles and processes but develop new ones that specifically address this change and ensure that vacant positions are filled to ensure their organizations can continue to satisfy their customers and operate effectively (Laohakosol & Adhikari, 2018). This shift in the workforce is happening quickly as employees across industry sectors are retiring and contributing to the need for many firms to fill positions or be left in a desperate situation (Datt & Rivera, 2013). Consequently, HRM strategies that embrace innovative and proactive thinking are positioning themselves well despite the challenges ahead.

An essential role of HR management teams is to evaluate the needs of their organization (Ozcelik & Uyargil 2015). With the demands on businesses to fill gaps in their labor pool increasing because of the onslaught of retiring workers, the HR manager must view their role as one that can lead change within their organization, regardless of its size. Implementing an HR strategy that addresses the challenges in the current labor market is essential for businesses to ensure they can remain competitive in their specified sector. Surijah (2016) argued that HR managers must align HR activities to reflect corporate culture with a strategy that incorporates recruiting practices aimed at

developing talent that align with the overarching goals and environment of an

organization. When this is achieved effectively it can contribute to a firm's ability to

maintain advantages over their competitors (Barrick et al., 2015).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics data from 2015 indicated that 4.7 million positions

were being recruited for citing that half of the employers surveyed responding that they

were not able to find qualified candidates. The challenges faced by HR professionals

requires a recruitment strategy that can maintain staff levels, improve the standard of

small businesses, increase productivity, enhance sustainability, and reduce turnover

(Yücel, 2012). HR managers are in a prime position to help their organizations identify

the gap between current practices and best practices. In this view, the HR manager is a

strategic partner who should be less concerned with operational managers and more

concerned with assisting in core decisions related to human relation management

decisions such as, recruiting, planning, strategy, and the human capital makeup within an

organization (Phillips & Phillips, 2016; Surijah, 2016).

Human Resource Management and the Divide Between Theory and Practice

In theoretical terms, the view that those responsible for enacting the practices put

forth by strategic HRM policies does not necessarily translate to the day to day operations

of business. The hospitality and QSR sector are examples of this disconnect. For

example, where an HRM policy is shared across multiple franchisees of a restaurant

chain, it is the line managers who are, in most cases, responsible for HR functions, such

as recruiting, hiring, interviewing, and a series of other managerial demands aimed at

satisfying various stakeholders (Gill, 2018; Sanders & Frankel, 2011). For the line

manager who must juggle a myriad of tasks, the well-intentioned HRM strategy may not align with actual practice performed in the restaurant because of lack of time and competing objectives that require immediate attention such as, filling vacancies on their staff.

Aligning theory and practice is imperative to ensuring that HRM practices are implemented on the ground level of operations, which can only happen if line managers enact the practices (Gill, 2018; Sanders & Frankel, 2011). Thus, the line manager is increasingly being recognized as increasing considered to be the most critical HR implementers (Sikora & Ferris, 2014). Sanders and Frankel (2011) argued that it is the line manager's ability and willingness to support the HRM practices tasked to them, which is key to bridging the divide between theory and practice. This has led to a dissonance between scholars and practitioners in terms of implementation, lack of awareness, and even lack of belief that HRM is valuable (Gill, 2018). Academics argue that the divide is the result of management not implementing practices, or not staying with them long enough to reveal their effectiveness. Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) note that while good management relies on the implementation of practices based on research evidence, not all managers make logical choices supported by academic research, but rather choose to make decisions based on dogma, belief and even self-interest. The result is that HRM's value proposition may be incompatible to those given the responsibility of practicing it in the workplace.

Acting on self-interest, and preconceived beliefs, can not only have detrimental effects on the implementation of an HRM strategy, but also to the prosperity of business.

The reality is, according to some academic researchers, those with the responsibility of practicing evidence-based HRM at the employee level are either choosing not to or more realistically, are not aware of the evidence because they are not reading academic literature regularly or at all (Gill, 2018; Rynes, Colbert, & Brown, 2002). This is a logical assumption as many managers who perform the daily operations of a business are not academics and may not have the time nor ambition to seek out scholarly journals, periodicals and articles on the subject. Instead, managers rely on the task before them at the moment and elect to make decisions based on their own experience and knowledge citing managerial prerogative (Briner & Rousseau, 2011). The consequence, unfortunately, can be HRM strategies and policies that never quite reach their intended goal.

Human Resource Management, the Aging Workforce, and Recruiting People with Disabilities

The implications of an aging population on business could have detrimental effects on an organization and their ability to remain competitive if not addressed. Greller (2012) argued that many organizations have not addressed the inevitable HR implications of their aging workforce. It is imperative that that HR managers devise strategies to address the demographic changes occurring in their workplace and approach the process in an innovative and progressive way. Employers that have acknowledged that the key to success in the 21st century economy is to look beyond traditional talent recruits and recognize the advantages of diversity and inclusion within their workplaces are positioning their organizations for success (Henry, Petkauskos, Stainislawzyk, & Vogt,

2014). How HR managers address retaining and recruiting talent will be instrumental to the long-term sustainability of their organizations (Noe et al., 2012).

Organizations can benefit from HR professionals who know and value workplace diversity and ethical hiring practices (Durrani & Rajagopal, 2014). Some forward-thinking HR managers, and managers responsible for hiring, have addressed worker shortages in their firms by exploring nontraditional talent options such as, people with disabilities. Houtenville and Kalargyrou (2012) argued the value of hiring people with disabilities in their research within the hospitality sector and noted that when employers have people with disabilities on their staff they can (a) benefit from an improved workforce, (b), increase profitability, and (c) benefit from diversity and corporate responsibility. The Conference Board of Canada (2018) recognized these benefits and suggested adding more individuals who identify as having a disability could add to labor market participation, the economy, and the quality of life of those individuals with disabilities.

Some notable examples of companies that have experienced these benefits are Walgreens and Verizon Wireless who have seen a direct correlation between employing people with disabilities and profitability. Specifically, Walgreens designed two distribution centers that catered to their staff with physical and cognitive disabilities. Verizon developed a program to accommodate and retain employees who acquired a disability during their tenure at their company which resulted in significant cost savings by reducing turnover and training costs associated with new hires (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012). HR managers are in a prime position to influence the decisions of

organization leadership and act as change agents and thinking about nontraditional talent, and their potential contribution and value to a business. Human resource theorists argue that when workers feel included, they are more satisfied with their job, work harder, are more productive and have increased job performance (Ostroff, 1992; Spence-Laschinger, Zhu, & Read, 2016).

The QSR sector, while generally headquartered by large corporations such as McDonald's, Tim Horton's and Subway, are largely run by franchisees who own one or more smaller operations. The hiring of staff and HR responsibilities are generally left to owners and managers of a specified location. While these organizations have open recruiting policies welcoming applications from candidates with disabilities, the reality is not often conducive to their HR corporate policy. Schur, Colella, and Adya (2016) found that even when a person with a disability has identical qualifications of candidates without a disability, managers are reluctant to hire them. One of the frequently cited reasons for this reluctance is the prejudiced view that people with disabilities cannot adequately perform the job they are applying for (Sundar et al., 2018). The opinion that people with disabilities cannot perform required job duties contributes to the stigma and major barriers to their employment – it is also not based on fact.

Hernadez et al. (2008) found that in a study of 21 administrators in healthcare, hospitality, and retail businesses hiring managers expressed concern about hiring people with disabilities because they felt it would require more supervisory time and productivity would suffer because of possible issues related to absenteeism. However, the reality counters the misconceptions of the managers in Hernandez et al.'s study.

McFarlin, Song, and Sonntag (1991) found that employers with disabled individuals on staff had positive attitudes about them, their work, and indicated that their loyalty, absenteeism, and tenure was often better than their traditional staff members (Kulkarni, Boehm, & Basu, 2016). This finding has been supported in other research that highlight the benefits and reality related to hiring people with disabilities (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012; Kalargyrou, 2014).

Many business sectors will or are currently facing challenges in the labor market and will need to address inefficiencies in their recruitment and retention strategies (Reilly, 2018). HR professionals are in a prime position to take advantage of a talent pool that has largely been overlooked and that has the potential to fill gaps left because of retiring baby boomers. Kalargyrou's (2014) research on people with disabilities, and the benefits they can offer businesses, is punctuated by the realities of the restaurant and hospitality industry, which are particularly susceptible to high turnover rates beyond just retiring employees.

A 2012 study conducted in the Canadian and American hospitality sectors indicated that 84% of employees studied plan to look for a job within the year (Chi & Qu, 2003). Employed people with disabilities, however, generally remain in their positions longer across a variety of careers within various industries (Kalargyrou, 2014; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014). Looking beyond a person's disability can result in real and tangible benefits for an organization. Hernandez and McDonald (2010) found that when employees with disabilities were evaluated, they ranked evenly on job performance, remained in their positions longer, and required similar levels of supervision to other

employees. Food service employers expressed favorable attitudes with employees with disabilities related to skills, cooperation, absenteeism, turnover, and their overall interaction with other staff (Chi & Qu, 2003).

Developing recruiting strategies aimed at nontraditional talent will not only stabilize a firm's talent pool, but also contribute to the benefits of these often-overlooked job seekers. Retirement coupled with high turnover should motivate managers responsible for HR activities to focus their efforts on recruiting under-represented groups as a key priority for the sustainability for their business operations (Kalrgyrou, 2014). When innovative recruiting practices are implemented it can positively affect performance (Hallak et al., 2018).

Diversity and Inclusion

The workplace in North American, and other western countries has experienced considerable transformation related to the workforce, which has become increasing diverse (Morely, 2018). Population projections indicate that the workforce in the United States, and in many countries worldwide, are becoming increasing diverse (Brimhall, & Barak, 2018; Colby & Ortman, 2014; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2017). HR managers, and those responsible for recruiting and hiring practices in an organization, are in a unique position to lead their organizations despite changing demographics and potential gaps in the labor pool. In addition to CSR, and HRM, diversity management (DM) strategies have proven to be beneficial to organizations. Emphasizing variety in the workplace, DM is a managerial approach that recognizes the value of diversity of its

employees as a means to financial prosperity for a company (Urbancová, Čermáková, & Vostrovská, 2016).

The implementation of DM practices can create value, contribute to an organization's competitive advantage and foster the dismantling stereotypes, misconceptions, and falsehoods related to nontraditional job candidates (Armstrong et al., 2010; Urbancová et al., 2016). Armstrong, et al. (2010) argued that some firms are not equipped to assess the net impact of their diversity policies. That said, with the evolving business environment and strain on talent, companies, large and small, are being forced to adapt antiquated strategies related to recruiting to appeal to the new future of talent (Cletus, Mahmood, Umar, & Ibrahim, 2018).

Diversity in the workplace has the potential to encourage employee development, growth, and stimulate innovative solutions (Cletus et al., 2018). When HR leaders develop diversity policies that foster a culture of acceptance and break down barriers minorities and marginalized groups it can be used to develop robust business strategies designed to compete at a firm's optimum level of performance (Kalargyrou, 2014; Ng & Metz, 2015). A diversity program that embraces the uniqueness of the individuals that make up their workforce, including the skills, experiences and approaches they bring can increase value and revenues for an organization (Nyberg & Wright, 2015). For example, a person with a disability will likely have a unique perspective related to the customer experience from their unique lens, which could aid in future planning aimed at creating a fulsome and inclusive design plan for customers with disabilities. The aging process can lead to higher rates of disability, especially in seniors (Cichy, Leslie, Rumrill, & Koch,

2017). To adequately accommodate the growing number of seniors who may develop a disability, organizations should review their current operations, from employee make-up through to the design and construction of brick and mortar stores, which could prove to be highly beneficial to both business and customer alike (Frank, 2001).

The concept of diversity has been embraced by many business leaders as a strategic priority that will benefit their organizations providing increased levels of creativity, innovation and other important contributions leading to a firm's competitive advantage (Randel et al., 2018). However, Cook and Glass (2014) found that focusing on diversity does not necessarily equate to benefits. Efforts to recruit, develop and promote individuals from underrepresented groups is not a guarantee of business success, and can produce a negative perception of DM strategies. For example, managers with looming sales and or productivity targets may question the need for a diversity plan if they observe team performance and productivity waning, prompting the abandonment of the strategy without providing adequate time to produce the desired results (Rendel et al., 2018).

Some studies have shown that diversity can potentially lead to issues within the workplace such as, interpersonal and intergroup conflict, increased turnover, and hinder performance and productivity (Brimhall & Mor Borak, 2018; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013). This potential downside of diversity practices has prompted some business leaders to explore ways to channel the positive aspects of their diversity programs with inclusion initiatives (Mor Borak et al., 2016). A diversity strategy that is not supported by line managers, who are often the decision makers of hiring talent, diminishes its value,

credibility, can lead to loss of trust of management and their intentions related to promoting a diverse workplace policy (Gill, 2016).

Inclusion

Often linked together, the terms diversity and inclusion are sometimes, and incorrectly, used interchangeably. Diversity is a characteristic of a group or organization and refers to the composition of differences from one individual to the next, such as, race, gender, ethnicity and education (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009; Homan & Greer, 2013). Inclusion refers to the degree to which employees feel valued for the unique characteristics they bring to the workplace, have a sense of belonging, and are comfortable sharing their feelings and who they are within the workplace (Mor Barak, 2015; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). Core aspects of inclusion are the perceptions of employees related to belongingness and uniqueness. *Belongingness* reflects the sense of acceptance for all members within the construct of the organization. *Uniqueness* refers to value generated through all employee's contributions and the opportunity to voice their opinions within the workplace (Boekhorst, 2015). Tulenko and Kryder (1990) found that employees must feel comfortable before they apply their uniqueness or differences within the workplace.

Brimhall and Borak's (2018) study on workplace inclusion supported previous research indicating that group inclusion initiatives are associated with a higher level of employee satisfaction (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). Similar research findings have garnered interest from companies across the globe who support

initiatives that aim to combat biases and remove barriers that have previously restricted access to the workforce for underrepresented and marginalized groups (Grissom, 2018). In order to provide a more comprehensive opportunity to involve members of the workplace researchers and practitioners have increasingly looked to inclusion as a way of bridging the gaps that exist between their employees by creating a culture of belongingness (Shore et al., 2011).

Inclusion policies can go beyond simply bridging gaps; they can also create opportunities to recruit nontraditional talent to fill positions left vacant from retiring baby boomers. People with disabilities have been faced with barriers to mainstream employment because of various discriminatory barriers (Vornholt, Uitdewilligen, & Nijhuis, 2013). Organizations that have adopted inclusion programs can provide an opportunity for people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, to enter the workforce. Evidence has shown that inclusion programs can assist in dispelling myths related to employing people with disabilities such as, the cost of accommodation, higher rates of absenteeism, and other falsehoods (Kalargyrou, 2014). An essential aspect in increasing inclusion practices is related to the quality of leadership within an organization (Brimhall et al., 2017). Leaders who promote employee inclusion not only hold the promise of the value of retaining a diverse base of employees but interact with their staff in a meaningful way that enhances their beliefs and support of removing discriminatory workplace practices (Simons, Leroy, Veronek, & Masschelein, 2015).

The Authentic Leader

Authentic leadership is well suited to fostering diversity and inclusion plans and encouraging the best levels of performance from individuals and teams (Boekhorst, 2015). The leader who exhibits a genuine, transparent, ethical form of leadership, who enacts his true self in the workplace is practicing authentic leadership (Anseel, Gardner, & Sels, 2012; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Moreover, authentic leaders are characterized by their level of approachability, self-awareness, and clarity behaviors (Anderson & Sun, 2017; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Wang, et al., 2014). Research has shown that the attributes embodied by authentic leaders is gaining academic and practical importance in a modern, diverse, and changing workplace (Leroy, Anseel, Gardner, & Sels, 2012).

As businesses become increasingly competitive, ensuring that daily operations are being managed by leaders who can motivate, encourage, and represent an organization in a positive way can depend on their ability to manage paradoxical strategies such as business and ethics and quality and products and services (Nicolaides, 2015). Chaundry and Panda (2018) note the importance of integrity in the actions of leaders which is not only expected by senior levels of management but also by the various stakeholders essential to a business's operations. Support for recruiting and retaining authentic leaders has become desirable for the leadership styles' emphasis and potential to promote confidence, instill trust, hope, resilience and optimism among a wide range of a firms' stakeholders (Avolio et al., 2004). In conjunction with other organizational driven strategies, such as HRM and CSR, the authentic leader possesses the traits required to

support desired outcomes, such as high productivity, satisfied and valued employees, which can lead to competitive advantage.

The relationship the authentic leader has with his team can influence follower actions and create alignment of the values of the leader (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Support shown to the leader by staff can contribute to the shared values of the firm, reinforce the acceptance and value and trust of the leader, and support the implementation of organization strategies (Gill, 2018). This finding was supported by Gardner, et al. (2005) who discovered that authentic leaders have the ability to inspire staff which can often lead to providing individuals and teams, a deeper meaning which can translate to increased meaningfulness at work by influencing self-awareness, and self-regulation. Moreover, Unanue, Gómez, Cortez, Oyanedel, and Mendiburo-Seguel (2017) found that satisfaction at work, specifically the feeling of meaningfulness, can also have beneficial affects to employees in their personal lives and psychological well-being.

As discussed previously, employees who view their relationship with their organization, influenced by their direct manager's leadership skills, can have a myriad of benefits for both the organization and the individual (Gill, 2018). The authentic leader, and their strong moral foundation, focuses not only on the task at hand, but the person performing it. Wang and Hsieh (2013) found that this approach has proven to reduce job related stress, health related absences, and employee turnover. Cho and Tay (2016) found that when a leader is authentic it can benefit the leader/follower relationship because it intrinsically involves inclusion and decisions based on information garnered from how

the follower will be impacted. Moreover, when an employee perceives and authentic connection between themselves and their leader a meaningfulness can arise in the work they perform (Bailey & Madden, 2017).

Labor shortages are identified in various government and private sector reports that highlight the challenge and potential disruption to the economy because of the significant number of retirees exiting the labor pool. Having authentic leaders, who have the leadership and soft-skills to foster relationships and create meaningful bonds with their staff are ideal candidates to provide businesses a competitive edge by positioning their organization as one that has a positive reputation for treating staff well (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Robles, 2012). In a war for talent, especially in the QSR industry, where potential job seekers have numerous choices for minimum wage employment, the deciding factor for accepting an employment offer may be decided by which manager is most likely to treat them with dignity and respect. Robles (2012, p.462) defines hard skills as the "technical abilities and knowledge that one possesses" and soft skills as, "personal attributes and interpersonal qualities that are intangible". Leading teams, especially those directly in contact with the customer, such as those in the hospitality and QSR sector, requires a combination of hard and soft skills to assist in the navigation of the workplace, manage staff and inspire performance (Lippman, Ryberg, Carney, & More, 2015).

The Importance of Frontline Managers

Often viewed as the lowest level of management in an organization, front-line managers (FLM), are in a unique position to work and develop directly with staff to

influence worker performance on the ground level of an organization (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). Chevalier (2014) observed that the importance of FLMs is related to their vantage point in an organization, specifically in their closeness to the employees required to perform the day-to-day tasks required to keep a business operating. Furthermore, it is the FLMs that are responsible for developing the tone and expectations of an organization (Beattie et al., 2014). Evans (2015) found that research in this area has shown that a devolving trend of HRM duties and managers at this level of an organization is related to the various responsibilities these individuals undertake on a daily basis.

With a range of demands, heavy workloads, access to resources such as, education, technological and financial, FLMs can often be left out of larger company personal improvement initiatives imperative to their ability to perform their job to the best of their ability (de Jong, Leenders, & Thijssen, 1999; Wooderson, Cuskelly, & Meyer, 2017).When FLMs are left out of professional and self-improvement opportunities it can create barriers directly related to skills, knowledge, and ability to function at the highest level, which can affect their ability to recognize and properly handle the range of issues that occur at an organization (Beattie et al., 2014; de Jong et al., 1999). Without access to formal managerial training, some managers often rely on strategies garnered from previous experiences or the experiences of colleagues, rather than current best practices, which may not improve issues in the workplace (Chevalier, 2014; Wooderson et al., 2017).

Research on FLMs found that when supported by their organizations, managers provided education in HRM, management, and general business best practices, can result

in organizational improvements such as, the ability to identify workplace issues and the development of strategies to improve the causes of poor performance (Wooderson et al., 2017). When organizations ignore their FLMs and their needs, it can affect their ability to succeed at the ground level of a business and perpetuate inadequacies in management and result in the failure of the business (Dahmen & Rodríguez, 2014; Kardag, 2015). Therefore, when a firm understands the importance of their FLMs they are positioning the company and their managers to better handle the daily issues inherent on the floor of a business.

Understanding the importance and linkage between FLMs, HRM, and firm performance is imperative in an organization's success (Nehles, Riemsdijk, Kok, & Looise, 2006). However, Yeardley (2017) argued that a significant amount of academic research focused on management competency models that have been created around seasoned managers, who have already developed managerial prejudices and operational bias. This is particularly relevant because these senior FLMs are often responsible for hiring front-line staff and training new managers in a range of organizations (Nehles et al., 2006). The growth of the hospitality and QSR industries and corresponding organizational challenges, such as maintaining staff levels, calls for well-trained and qualified FLMs who exhibit authentic leadership qualities to proactively circumvent potential worker shortages because of demographic inevitabilities (Bufquin, DiPietro, Orlowski, & Partlow, 2018; DiPietro, Murphy, Rovera, & Muller, 2007).

As such, their role as HR manager has become increasing important because of demographic challenges such as the aging workforce and challenges inherent in customer

service-based industries, such as retaining staff, absenteeism, and motivation. These challenges are compounded by the reality that the pool of talent to choose from is less than previous generations making it increasingly difficult to fill positions not only for qualification factors but also to address the reality of not having candidates at all. Werner and Herman (2012) found that for organizations to remain competitive they must recognize and adapt to these changes and align their recruiting practices accordingly. This finding was supported in research by Bufquin et al. (2018) found when FLMs are trained in HRM best practices and current leadership training in a range of managerial competencies there are linkages to competitive advantage.

The Food Service Industry

According to the National Restaurant Association, the industry's annual sales are projected sales of $799 billion in 2017, which equates to 4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of the United States. This number is supported by the QSR and fast-casual restaurants which were estimated at $233.7 billion in sales in 2017 (National Restaurant Association, 2017). The contribution to the national economy is equally significant in Canada's restaurant industry. Similarly, Restaurants Canada's recent data indicated that the Canadian restaurant industry generated $85 billion in annual sales or 4 per cent of the Canada's economic activity (Elliot, 2017).

To remain competitive the hospitality industry will need to address the labor shortage arising from retiring baby boomers, and how to attract and retain current talent levels and ensure present and future business objectives are met (Murray et al., 2017; Tourism Industry Association of Canada, 2014). Increasing the level of urgency for

leadership to address this demographic certainty was the 2016 Canadian Research Institute report that projected the labor shortage the tourism and hospitality-focused industries will potentially face could exceed 240,000 (10%) of jobs being unfulfilled between the period from 2010 – 2035. The food and beverage industry could realize even more pronounced effects of a worker shortage. Bradley et al. (2017) suggests that this industry could experience the largest shortfall of available talent compared to any other industry. Besides the reality of demographic related challenges such as large numbers of retirees and lower birth rates to fill employment gaps, the industry also has an image problem compounded by low pay, high turnover rates, and poor leadership (Bradley et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2017).

The opportunity and need to tap into previously ignored segments of available workers is essential to the restaurant and other industries based on the dire reality of dwindling talent pools. Yet, many organizations, including those in the hospitality and restaurant industry, continue to ignore nontraditional talent sources, like people with disabilities, despite studies that have found that consumers have shown positive purchase intentions towards restaurants that employ people with disabilities (Kuo & Kalagyrou, 2014; Sipersein et al., 2006). Moreover, when organizations integrate people with disabilities into their CSR strategy, including recruiting, there is evidence that it can have a positive result on corporate reputation because consumers have shown a propensity to patron companies that hire people with disabilities (Kuo & Kalargyrou, 2014).

Additional challenges for the restaurant industry, besides the inevitability of retiring workers, is the prevalent issue of recruiting and retaining staff. The Tourism

Industry Association of Canada estimated that in addition to the labor shortages likely to occur, the cost to the industry sector could exceed $31.4 billion in unavoidable revenue losses (Tourism Industry Association of Canada, 2014). The National Restaurant Association (2017) conducted a survey of industry leaders that indicated that recruiting and retaining staff as ranked highest on a list of priorities, even more than attracting new customers. A report by the Tourism and Human Resource Council of Canada (2017) confirmed these findings in a similar study but added that the demand for labor will not only grow significantly but will likely remain unfilled. In an industry that has historically struggled with recruiting and maintaining talent coupled with the demographic reality of an aging population exiting the labor market only emphasize the need for HRM to look beyond dwindling traditional labor sources and develop recruiting strategies that include and attract nontraditional candidates such as, people with disabilities (Kalargyrou, 2014; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014). Governments across the globe have recognized the importance of creating policies to ensure fair and equal societies where all citizens can participate in all aspects of daily life such as, but not limited to, access to transportation, housing, and employment.

Legislation: Employment and People with Disabilities

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted to protect individuals with disabilities from being discriminated against in the workplace and/or in their quest to gain employment (Siperstein et al., 2006). Unfortunately, legislation like the ADA, has failed to result in a significant change to employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Vornholt et al. (2018) argued that this may be because legislation

like the ADA, requires that accommodations for employees are available to them to ensure they can perform their job to the best of their ability. Accommodations from the employer perspective is often viewed as an additional cost, and one they would not have to endure with a person who does not have a disability. Williams, Fossey, Corbière, Paluch, and Harvey (2016) found that providing workplace accommodations is vital to people with disabilities to participate and be effective in the workplace. However, in a Canadian survey of employer attitudes regarding the potential costs associated with reasonable accommodations when hiring people with disabilities the view was primarily negative (Hornberger & Milley, 2005).

In Canada, the rights of people with disabilities are protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which was ratified in 2010. Additional protections from discriminatory practices in employment are further guaranteed by select Federal acts and programs like the Canadian Human Rights Act (1985) and the Employment Equity Act, (1995). Additional legislation is also provided by individual provinces. For example, in Ontario, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) of 2005 was created to integrate people with a disability into the labor market and assure equal opportunities and participation.

The AODA's purpose is to benefit all Ontarians by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises. Under the act, people with disabilities should have access to and involvement in various sectors of the economy. The *Contrat d'intégration au travail*

(Ministère du Travail, 2017a) in the province of Quebec, promotes employment for people with disabilities by offering grants to businesses who hire from this talent pool. Laflamme and Nadeau (2011) highlighted that Quebec's approach to hiring people with disabilities is voluntary, unlike some European countries that impose fines to companies who do not meet imposed hiring quota policies.

Legislation that protects the rights of citizens and discriminatory employment practices is undoubtedly positive. However, even with legislation in place, employers' attitudes, misconceptions, and fear of hiring people with disabilities continues to be a barrier to employment for this often-marginalized group of individuals (Siperstein et al., 2006). Ironically, even when countries create legislation to protect the rights and access to jobs for people with disabilities, the results significantly favor those without a disability (Harris, Owen, Jones, & Caldwell, 2013; Siperstein et al., 2006). For real change to occur, it will need to move beyond legislation and become an ingrained part of a countries culture. The challenges of combatting attitudinal and social barriers that stem from prejudices, stereotypes, misconceptions, ignorance, contribute to marginalizing groups of the population and their ability to fully participate in society (Padkapayeva et al., 2017). Where these challenges exist, there is also opportunity for positive social change for forward thinking organizations that are proactive, want to stay competitive, and eliminate operational disruptions from retiring baby boomers.

The Challenge and Opportunity: People with Disabilities

The expected decline of the working-age population, precipitated by retiring baby boomers, has drawn attention to other sources of talent to keep organizational staff levels

stable (Vornholt et al., 2018). Front-line managers, who are often the hiring managers at the branch or restaurant level, are in an optimal position to recruit people with disabilities. However, to benefit from the various advantages of hiring a person with a disability, organizations and their FLMs must remove the barriers that have continued to prevent job-seekers who want to work and are capable of adding value to an organization.

A study of 643 Australian employer outcomes found that surveyed employers who hired a person with a disability expressed that the benefit gained from this addition to their workplace far outweighed any costs related to accommodation (Graffam, Smith, Shinkfield, & Polzin, 2002). Similar results were supported in a survey by Domzal, Houtenville, and Sharma (2008), who found that hiring people with disabilities can have a positive correlation to a company's bottom line. The Conference Board of Canada (2018) argued that adding people with disabilities to a workplace should be viewed as an investment where the benefits far exceed any associated costs. Further, by incorporating people with disability into the labor pool, organizations can maintain staffing levels affected by retiring baby boomers, while also providing a positive contribution to organizations, the economy, and the quality of life for people with disabilities (2018). While an opportunity exists, persistent challenges continue. Kulkarni and Legnick-Hall (2012) cited experimental studies that found that even when a person with a disability is perceived positively by a prospective employer, employers are apprehensive about hiring them.

Diversity, inclusion, and CSR initiatives were a response by organizations to address environmental and social injustices within areas of their operation and promote

these values to their employees and stakeholders (Ellis & Keys, 2015). However, while this can be observed as progress, there remain noteworthy gaps related to recruiting, and providing fair and equal opportunities for all job applicants, such as people with disabilities progress, who have experienced only modest improvements (Peck & Kirkbride, 2001; Prince, 2010). Improvements resulting from businesses and government policy initiatives that address, and support previously ignored areas such as, sustainable business practices and inclusion and diversity programs, has not translated in a substantial way for marginalized groups.

According to Houtenville and Kalrgyrou (2012), people with disabilities, for example, are often not awarded positions they are capable and qualified for because of perceived concerns about their ability, productivity and costs associated with accommodation. Kalargyrou and Volis (2014) referenced studies that found that hiring a person with a disability has shown that they are more loyal than the average worker, have lower turnover, and improved management skills, all of which are essential factors in achieving competitive advantage.

The obstacles faced by people with disabilities who are willing and want to obtain employment continues despite CSR, inclusion and diversity programs. Therefore, strategic efforts from senior management and supported by HR and hiring managers is needed to address the reality of a worker shortage and how this untapped talent pool can help their business to succeed (Kulkarni & Legnick-Hall, 2012). All citizens should have the opportunity to participate in the workforce, wherein they can experience the benefits gained from employment such as, independence, economic security, and the self-worth

one can have when they are accepted and included in all aspects of society (Ameri et al., 2018). Exploring how the benefits hiring people with disabilities can have on various aspects of their organization, from better retention and attendance records to often times better or equal performance on the job as those without a disability, all of which are desirable attributes that can affect an organization's bottom line (Ameri et al., 2018; Lindsay, Cagliostro, Albarico, Mortaji, & Karon, 2018).

Hiring an individual with a disability should not be considered an act of altruism but rather providing the same opportunity for employment as any qualified candidate without a disability. Yet, a clear division exists between who gets hired in countries around the world. The United States Department of Labor's 2017 data on people with disabilities, labor force characteristics found that across all age groups, people with disabilities were much less likely to be employed compared to those without a disability. Specifically, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was twice that of those without a disability, 9.2% compared to 4.2%. (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). The employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Canada is equally discouraging. Statistics Canada's 2017, *Canadian Survey on Disability*, found that of people aged 25-64, people with disabilities 49% of people were employed compared to 79% of those without a disability. In the United Kingdom, recent House of Commons research found that people with disabilities have a similar situation to the US and Canada with an employment rate that is 30.1% lower than those who do not have a disability (Powell, 2018).

Viewing candidates as human beings who bring with them a range of skills, education, and experiences, rather than focusing on their disability, can not only provide an opportunity for the candidate, but also for an organization. The past two decades has shown the importance of 'reputation' for businesses. Being a good corporate citizen that acts in a way that mirrors the values of their stakeholders and customers in areas of social justice and environmental responsibility can enhance a business' reputation (Agarwal, Osijevskyy, & Feldman, 2015). With the reality of a worker shortage facing many businesses it is time for HRM professionals, business owners, and managers to educate themselves on the business case for hiring people with disabilities, and explore the benefits, rather than being misled by prejudices, myths and misconceptions about a group of individuals who could be an asset and contributor to their organization.

Transition

Section 1 introduced the impact that declining birthrates coupled with population ageing could have on the economies of many countries resulting from a shortage of workers, and how business owners should create strategies to integrate people with disabilities. The review of academic literature included the conceptual framework of this study, which supported the focus to explore strategies for hiring people with disabilities by providing evidence of the asset this often-overlooked demographic can provide a business. The academic research selected for the literature review supported the examination stakeholder theory, CSR, HRM, authentic leadership, FLMs, the fast food service industry, accessibility legislation, and the challenge and opportunity for hiring people with disabilities. In section 2, I will discuss the project, and in section 3, the

findings, application to professional practice, and implication for change will be examined.

Section 2: The Project

The substantial, and potentially negative, impact of retiring baby boomers on employment levels could result in some businesses struggling to find talent (Kalargyrou, 2014). In this study, I explored the often-overlooked talent pool of people with disabilities who could fill the employment gap created by a steady stream of retirees. The participants in this multiple case study included owners and managers from seven franchised QSR restaurants in southern Ontario, Canada. The data collection technique included semistructured interviews supplemented by review of company and archival documents.

Section 2 of this study encompasses information related to the research purpose, the role of the researcher, method and design of research, participants, population and sampling. The information presented indicates the process and guidelines followed to ensure the research data were ethically obtained and conducted objectively. The content of this section adheres to Walden University guidelines and includes information used to support the study through various peer-reviewed sources that were used to assist my research and ensure that the sources consulted had previously been through a rigorous and accepted academic review.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages. The population or participants consisted of 14 managers and owners at seven of the same food service restaurant franchises in southern Ontario with

over 20% of staff identifying as a person with a disability. These business leaders were selected for this study for both their proactive recruitment practices and their ability to create business success with a nontraditional staff. The implications for positive social change include the potential of employment opportunities for the estimated 6.2 million Canadians who identify as having a disability and may potentially fill skilled workforce shortages (Statistics Canada, 2018). Employing people with disabilities can improve the quality of life of these individuals by providing meaningful work opportunities while reducing the reliance on government assistance programs.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher has an important role in any study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Though each researcher may choose to perform their research and derive conclusions using various methods, it is imperative that the researcher understand that inherent biases that can occur in in the research process that may affect the collection and analysis of data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Bias involves a combination of factors that lead to inaccurate findings (Ioannidis, 2005, p. 697). Recruiting participants, protecting the privacy of participants, collecting and analysing data, and presenting the research findings in an unbiased and ethical manner is within the role of a researcher (Roller, 2015; Yin, 2018).

As the researcher of this qualitative case study, my role required the exploration of the most appropriate research method and design to examine my business problem. My role was to contact study participants, conduct semistructured interviews, organize and analyze the data, and report the findings resulting from the study. Because most case

studies involve human affairs, it is imperative that the researcher made every effort possible to protect the human research participants (Yin, 2018). A consent form was presented to participants for review and agreement to participate in this study prior to the face-to-face interview in accordance with the Belmont Report (1978). Through application of the Belmont principles I ensured that each participant understood their rights, risks, and responsibilities as related to my study. I also made it clear to participants that their identities will be safeguarded through confidentiality procedures, and they could withdraw participation from the study at any time before, during, or after the data collection process begins (Emanuel, Wendler, & Grady, 2000). During my face-to-face meetings with participants, I ensured that my personal opinions and emotions that could potentially influence their participation and interview question responses were not shared or insinuated in any way to avoid biases.

In this multiple case study, I obtained permission from seven QSR owners and or managers in southern Ontario, Canada, to contact members of their management team, including the owners themselves, for the purpose of formally introducing myself, the general purpose of my study, and to obtain their participation in an interview. Prior to this contact, I did not have any familiarity or relationship with the potential research subjects. I was, however, well-acquainted with some aspects of my study subject matter as it relates to the struggles and barriers people with disabilities face in obtaining employment versus those without a disability because of my work with the provincial Government of Ontario within the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. Therefore, I remained

especially diligent to avoid any personal biases during contact with the selected participants.

Throughout the research process I remained conscious of previous knowledge, opinions, and personal feelings throughout the research process, including the transcribing of participant responses and coding process. Qualitative researchers should be cognizant of researcher bias (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Reducing researcher bias and the potential for issues related to subjectivity requires the implementation of bracketing or epoché as an element of data collection, interpretation, and presentation process (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing is a method that some researchers use to suspend judgment and remain objective in terms of the researcher's role of increasing rigor in research by mitigating an individual's observations while investigating an issue reflectively (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Participants

The researcher has the responsibility to recruit research participants who meet the criteria required through a process of purposeful sampling (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013). For this qualitative multiple case study, I acquired the participation of a combination of seven QSR franchisee owners or managers. The inclusion criteria employed for this study was limited to individuals who either own or manage (or perform both functions) of a QSR franchise within southern Ontario and are responsible for the recruitment, hiring, and managing of front-line staff. I ensured that an informed sample was achieved and that the eligibility and processes for recruiting participants was adhered to (Doody & Doody, 2015; Jessiman, 2013). The primary method for identifying research

subjects that meet study criteria was to conduct an Internet search of QSRs and locations in southern Ontario. The search for locations began in the city of Hamilton, Ontario. This area was selected because I live in this city. The Internet is an accepted research tool for identifying and accessing research subjects who met the established research criteria (Hirsch, Thompson, & Every, 2014; Reips, Buchanan, Krantz, & McGraw, 2015). Once I contacted the participants, I developed a working relationship with each person throughout the interview process.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The three most common types of research are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). Qualitative and quantitative research methods are used to explore the *how*, *where*, *when*, *who*, and *why* with the intent on addressing a phenomenon (Leung, 2015). The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods within a study is known as a mixed method approach (Cairney & St Denny, 2015; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Qualitative researchers explore behaviors, emotions, cultural factors, motivational factors, and opinions using words, whereas quantitative researchers explore the same elements but present their findings numerically and the testing of hypotheses (Annansingh & Howell, 2016; Larkin, Begley, & Devane, 2014; Longfield et al., 2016).

The researcher's choice of design provides the framework required to collect information that is relevant to the study (Eisner, 2017). A qualitative case study was elected for this study because it aligned with its purpose and nature and was best suited to

explore the business problem and provide information related to the main research question. Qualitative case studies are appropriate for exploring how managerial processes occur in organizational situations where multiple data resources are available (Yin, 2018). My intention for this study was to investigate how owners and their FLMs are addressing the key challenges faced by organizations such as, worker shortage, recruiting, and retention within the QSR industry.

Research Design

Researchers choose research designs that are the most appropriate to answer their specific research questions (Breunig, 2016; Yin, 2018). Researchers have various options available to them when considering the most appropriate design for their study. These include, the case study design, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, or narrative inquiry (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). A qualitative multiple case study design was appropriate for this study.

Case studies are used when the researcher seeks a deeper understanding of the social and organizational processes related to a specific phenomenon (Stake, 2006). Multiple case studies are beneficial to the researcher who chooses to explore a phenomenon in detail within multiple settings to better understand the *how* and *why* of the phenomenon (Stake, 2006). Further, multiple case studies are ideal for examining and assessing the study focus and are conducive to conducting an analysis that is supported by real-life contexts (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The objective of case study research includes using data acquired through the process of research regarding the issue being studied to garner a better understanding of the research question based on the participants' points of

view and experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). For this reason, the case study was well suited to workplace settings and the strategies managers of QSRs are using to address possible disruptions in their staff levels.

In contrast, researchers who want to understand individuals' lived experiences employ a phenomenological research design to further investigate patterns and relationships (Yin, 2018). Researchers who employ phenomenological research designs use interview techniques and other methods to collect data to address their research question (Smith, 2016). Because I was not seeking a detailed description of a phenomenon nor aiming to understand the lived experiences or relationships of my participants, this research design was deemed unsuitable for exploring strategies for hiring people with disabilities to prevent a skilled worker shortage.

Additionally, ethnographic research requires the researcher to conduct long-term studies of individuals within group settings and accumulate data by observing, interviewing, and evaluating cultural influences (Kriyantono, 2012). An ethnographic design is appropriate for the researcher who intends to study the beliefs, associations between individuals, and feels of individuals (Yin, 2018). Ethnographic research takes place over long periods of time with time restrictions, which made it inappropriate for this study.

Further, researchers elect to use grounded theory to generate a new theory (Bendassolli, 2013). Grounded theory is not intended to test theory but rather develop one (Patton, 2015). Grounded theory is useful for the researcher interested in studying behavior and change (Corley, 2015; Goulding, 2002). Grounded theory is also useful for

the researcher who wants a deeper understanding of problematic, detailed and little-known social phenomena but also willing to allow the theory to come from analysis of data sources (Gligory, Esmark, & Gölgeci, 2016; Mello & Flint, 2009). However, grounded theory was not appropriate for my study because I did not intend to develop a new theory.

Finally, the narrative design involves a chronological recollection of a research participants' story to further explore a subject (Jones, 2016). This research design is appropriate when participants have agreed to tell a story related to events that have occurred in their lives in a chronological way, which is then retold by the researcher (Khan, 2013; Potter, 2013). Narrative design was not appropriate for this study because I was not researching the experiences of participants in a chronological order to retell their story.

To achieve data saturation, a researcher must ensure that their study contains ample information that can easily be replicated by other researchers (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is reached when numerous data sources are examined but no new information is provided within those sources (Ando, Cousins, & Young, 2014). Data saturation is vital to qualitative research because it recognizes if the research has a thorough enough sample to prove reliability and validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To ensure that my study achieved data saturation I supplemented the semistructured interviews with a review of company websites, social media, and their published documentation, such as press releases and Annual Reports. These steps were repeated

until no new information was obtained. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), it is this repetition of the steps that allow for the researcher to obtain data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study was 14 restaurants within the same franchise within southern Ontario, Canada. From this population, a purposeful sample of seven QSR franchisee owners or managers were selected and consented to an interview. According to researchers like Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013), six to10 participants is a sufficient sample size for conducting a qualitative study. Further, a qualitative sample should characterize the diversity of the phenomenon under study within the target population, which can use a large sample group, though it is not the most efficient or logical approach (Jansen, 2010). Rather, a purposively chosen *diversity sample* that covers all the pertinent variations of the phenomenon will achieve data saturation (Jansen, 2010).

The primary area within the selected geographic region was the Greater Toronto, Hamilton Area (GTHA). This region was selected because it is my place of residence and career. The GTHA locations were selected because they provided ample restaurant locations to recruit participants from for the interviews and were used to investigate the main research question proposed in my study. Before I contacted any research participants, I formally requested and received approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I strictly adhered to the recommended ethical procedures to protect the human rights of the participants.

To identify locations within the GTHA I used Google, which provided numerous locations within the region for me to approach with the intention of recruiting research participants. The timeframe of a study can affect the sample size (Robinson, 2014), which was considered at the beginning my study because the nature of study has both a financial cost, in the form of tuition, and also a general completion date for my degree. But the quality of the sample is more important to the research findings than the size of the sample (Bradbury-Jones & Broadhurst, 2015). When a researcher works with a smaller sample size it can provide an identity and voice to each of the participants, which would be more challenging with a larger group of participants (Robinson, 2014).

Once the sample group of locations was selected, I visited each location to explain the purpose of the study and the reason for their requested participation in a semistructured interview. A qualitative study consisting of six-10 research participants was appropriate to identify, transcribe, examine, and synthesize the responses, relevant data across common themes of shared experiences (Binks, Jones, & Knight, 2013). Researchers who meet potential research participants in person are more effective at achieving participation in their study compared to those who only engage in electronic correspondence or phone conversations (Hershberger & Kavanaugh, 2017).

Ethical Research

The researcher must ensure that the research is completed in an ethical way (Yin, 2018). To ensure the research for this study was done ethically, I employed the basic principles for ethical research from the Belmont Report: respect for individuals, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of

Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). For the approval of my adherence to proper

ethical procedures and protection of the human subjects selected for this study, I sought

approval from Walden University's IRB. I was approved on December 12, 2020 and

provided a Walden University approval number: 12-10-19-0480292.

Before I contacted the research participants in person, I confirmed that phone

etiquette and interview protocols were in place to ensure that ethical or other potential

risks were understood and avoided. The study participants selected for this qualitative

multiple-case study were QSR franchise owners and their FLMs. In some instances, I

observed that owners at some locations held both the owner and FLM role, which, in

some cases, provided me one, instead of two participants, at a specific location.

Owners and FLMs who participated received an informed consent form and

informed them that their involvement was voluntary and did not include incentives,

reimbursement, or stipends for the time spent completing the interview. A copy of their

informed consent was also provided to each participant. Participants were made aware

that they can withdraw their participation at any time by contacting me via email or

telephone. Additional assurances were made to the participants to explain that their

involvement in the study is completely confidential and anonymous, and the interview

documentation did not include any identifying information. Wahyuni, (2012) argued that

it is the researcher's ethical responsibility to place the participant's confidentiality as a

priority and should remove any information that may identify the study participant.

As the researcher, I was the only person who knew each participant's identity and

their responses to the interview questions, and all names were converted to Participant 1

(P1), Participant (P2), etc. All online information pertaining to the participants has been stored in a password protected electronic folder, which will only be accessible by myself, the researcher. The deletion of computer-stored data will occur 5 years after completing the study using the Internet-based shredder program, CCLEANER.

Data Collection Instruments

Researchers are the primary data collection instrument in qualitative studies and can influence data collection (Draper & Swift, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). As the researcher of this multiple case study, I was the primary data collection instrument. Mishra (2015) stated that the researcher should consider the various tools available for data collection that is free from bias. The potential for bias in this study was reduced by selecting participants from legitimate QSR franchisees and their managers. Additionally, each participant that was contacted, and subsequently agreed to be interviewed, was previously unknown to the researcher. Elo et al., (2014) and Wiewiora, Murphy, Trigunarsyah, and Brown (2014) highlighted that there are various instruments that a qualitative study could employ such as semistructured interviews, document review, archived data, observations, focus groups, or a combination of one or more of these research methods. Each interview in is this study was conducted using face-to-face semistructured interviews.

In case study research, data from various sources is used to support research findings (Himmelheber, 2014). This study consists of semistructured interviews and reviewed company and archival data. I began the data collection process by first, making contact with prospective study participants in-person or by phone and providing a brief

explanation of my study and asking if they would be willing to participate. Second, after confirmation of participation, I hand delivered a copy of the informed consent letter, which clarified the purpose of my research, permissions, and their anonymity and confidentiality throughout the process, my contact information (email address and personal phone number), and the interview questions (Appendix A). Finally, I conducted the semistructured interviews based upon the previously scheduled appointments. The interview protocol (Appendix B) was followed to ensure that the process was consistent and did not violate ethical standards established in the Belmont Report and the conditions of the Walden University IRB approval #12-10-19-0480292.

The data collected was validated by triangulation. Methodological triangulation involves using multiple data sources in the process of examination to glean a better understanding (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). Asynchronous data collection will be supported by the triangulation of study findings with previous research collected for the purpose of supporting this study. This included interview question responses, company and archival documents, and peer-reviewed academic journal articles, and relevant Seminal works.

The method of revisiting an interview or examined data related to a research participants response is known as member checking, and is used to validate, verify, or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Doyle, 2007). After the interviews were completed, and the contents transcribed, I followed up with each of the participants to validate their responses and ensure that my interpretations of those responses were accurate and adhered to the method of member

checking. Houghton et al. (2013) suggested that conducting member checks can provide assurances that the data collected is accurate prior to beginning analysis. Member checking can enhance the academic rigor of a study (Simpson and Quigley, 2016). Following the verification of the participant responses through the member checking process, I began the final step in data verification and prepared all data for coding and input using NVivo 12 software.

Data Collection Technique

The research process for this study began upon receiving IRB approval, which involved selecting appropriate QSR owners and/or mangers for participation in the study. I began the data collection process by first, making contact with prospective study participants in-person or by phone and providing a brief explanation of my study and asked if they would be willing to participate. Second, once each individual agreed to participate I hand delivered a copy of the informed consent letter, which clarified the purpose of my research, permissions, and their anonymity and confidentiality throughout the process my contact information (email address and personal phone number), and the interview questions (Appendix A), Finally, I scheduled the interviews with the participants at times that were convenient to each individual. The interview process followed the interview protocol described in Appendix B.

Face to face, semi-structured, interviews with participants were the primary source for data collection in this study, which has both advantages and disadvantages. Fitzgerald, Platt, Heywood, and McCambridge (2015) noted that an advantage to conducting semi-structured interviews are that they can provide valuable information

specific to the participant's personal experiences. Onwuegbuzie and Byers (2014) noted

that face-to-face interviews enable the researcher to observe non-verbal cues that can

assist the researcher in understanding what is being expressed by the participant. Another

advantage is that engaging in a face-to-face interview provides the researcher and

participant to explore a subject or issue and develop a clearer understanding (Taylor et

al., 2015). Conducting face-to-face interviews also allowed the participants in this study

to express their feelings and share information, which provided additional and valuable

information beyond the established research questions. Disadvantages of face-to-face

interviews relate to potential influence, or intrusive approach, by the researcher on the

participant, excessive time commitment required, and the possibility that responses given

by the participant were done so to please the interviewer (Yin, 2018).

Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed the audio-recorded interview

responses, and conducted member checking. Member checking is used in qualitative

research to increase the trustworthiness of the findings and reduce the chance for

misinterpretation of data (Andraski et al., 2014; Anney, 2014). The collected data was

validated by triangulation. Triangulation involves using multiple data sources in the

process of examination to glean a better understanding (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999).

Employing a methodological triangulation of data can add depth to the collection process

(Fusch & Fusch, 2015). Asynchronous data collection was supported by the triangulation

of study findings with previous research collected for the purpose of supporting this

study. This included interview question responses, company and archival documents, and

peer-reviewed academic journal articles, and relevant Seminole works.

Using company documentation can provide the researcher additional credible information related to their study (Yin, 2018). Hyett, Kenny, and Dickson-Swift (2014) stated that using company documents in case study research can be advantageous and triangulation is probable. However, there are disadvantages related to using company documentation; specifically, if the researcher is studying older documents which may provide inaccurate information pertaining to the current state of an organization's policies, practices and other essential data required for a current and fulsome understanding of the business.

Yin (2018) described pilot studies as a preliminary process used to assure larger case studies are feasible related to the questions, scenario, and overflow. An advantage of conducting a pilot study is that is can provide the researcher an opportunity to explore the delimitation criteria of a study which could affect the collection of data that is confirmable and reliable (Doody & Doody, 2015). Another advantage of conducting a pilot study is they can provide the researcher the ability to identify potential problems or deficiencies in the research instruments and protocol before engaging in a full study (Hassan, Schattner, & Mazza, 2006). According to Cope (2015) a disadvantage of pilot studies is they are not capable of calculating sample size or response rates because they are generally based on a small sample size. Another disadvantage is that including data from a pilot study may not be appropriate to use in a researcher's primary study (Cope, 2015; van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). A pilot study was not be performed in this qualitative multiple case study.

Data Organization Technique

Data organization is an essential part of conducting a research study. Various sources are available to researchers for capturing and organizing data (Yin, 2018). Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2014) noted the importance of digital files and usefulness of employing naming conventions, which can assist the researcher in tracking data and protecting the confidentiality and privacy of research participants. Researchers conceptualize their approach to how they will organize their data, the technique used, which includes, naming convention, documentation, storage platform, access, and management (Marshall, O'Bryan, Na, & Vernon, 2013).

The data collected for this study was transcribed and loaded in NVivo software and used for analysis. In addition, I maintained a notebook containing any observations or important circumstances that occurred during the semistructured interviews, and company and archival document review. The results were analysed to ensure that the interviews achieved validity, feasibility, confirmability, and transferability. I used NVivo software to assist in the process of coding of the responses. Coding can make searching the data easier, allow for comparisons, and assist in identifying patterns and themes that could warrant further investigation (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012).

Researchers can use various methods of coding to decipher information from the individualized responses of the participants to gather broader meanings and themes (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Oliveira, Bitencourt, Zanardo dos Santos, and Teixeira (2016) highlighted that NVivo provides digitally coding texts or images that allows the user to organize evidence and create rich data records in a methodological way.

Furthermore, NVivo has a range of benefits for researchers that can include, managing

data in one location, including text, spreadsheets, video, audio or images, and allow the

researcher to record ideas in the form of memos (Oliveira et al., 2016).

NVivo software was used as the data storage portal to code and organize the data

by themes and patterns that can be used to aid researchers with the synthesis and

presentation of their findings (Davidson, Paulus, & Jackson, 2016; Ivankova, 2014).

Comparable options for qualitative analysis computer software exist such as, MaxQDA,

Atlas.ti, and dedoose; however, NVivo was selected because of previous familiarity with

the software and ease of use. NVivo was used to code and organize the data by themes

and patterns. Data was organized by grouping codes from the phrases, statements or

specific words that most often appear in the interview question responses to the research

questions.

Davidson et al. (2016) noted that while there are definite advantages of using

qualitative analysis software there are also disadvantages such as, the potential learning

curve required to become proficient with the software program. To ensure proficiency

with the software, extensive practice using test data was employed. Additionally, Kaefer

et al. (2015) noted that the cost and potential licensing fees could also be viewed as a

disadvantage in this context. All data for this study, including the names and email

address of participants, has been password protected and kept on the researcher's internal

hard drive of which only he has access to the information. Additionally, research

materials stored on NVivo have been saved on a password protected external thumb drive

and locked in file cabinet in my home office for a period of 5 years. After the 5-year

period, in accordance with the recommendations from Walden University related to storage, the data will be deleted and or destroyed along with all data collected for this study.

Data Analysis

The primary purpose of analysis, according to Elo et al. (2014), is to answer the main research question. The main research question for this study is: what strategies do restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages? Once the research data was received, in its entirety, the data analysis process adhered to Yin's (2018) five step procedure for qualitative data analysis: compile a database, disassemble data, reassemble data, interpret data, and conclude the process. Furthermore, data was organized, and a methodological triangulation was used as the primary analytic method employed in this study. Methodological triangulation allows the researcher the opportunity to compare findings from multiple cases and data sources (Denzin, 2012). The four types of triangulation are (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Comparing different data sources is useful to the researcher because it can assist in their understanding of events (Yin, 2018).

Upon all data being collected, the analysis began. Coding in qualitative research comprises of identifying words or phrases that capture certain aspects of the data content for further analysis (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pedersen (2013) stated that to ensure that an accurate analysis of one's data is achieved, reliable coding techniques are necessary. NVivo software can provide a benefit to

researchers in the coding process and can help improve the quality of qualitative studies. (Edwards, 2014; Zamawe, 2015). The coding process involves examining the collected data to achieve credible results (Chowdhury, 2015). Primary analysis of the interview responses began by producing the preliminary coding categories within the responses prior to the next step in the process, which involved identifying themes and trends.

NVivo was used to coordinate and facilitate coding the data in specified themes. The identified themes were grouped and compared into clusters and correlated with themes discovered during the process of writing the literature review and used for further analysis. Upon completion of these steps, any themes that emerged from the data were used to develop conclusions and comparisons to research published after the writing of the literature review.

Reliability and Validity

A researcher must provide information that is correct, accurate and beneficial to a study. Publishing findings that are inaccurate can be harmful and diminish the value of the research, and potentially, the researcher. Several steps were taken in the research process to ensure that the research is accurate and useful to audiences, including other researchers. Subjectivity is more prevalent in qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research (Yin, 2018). The nature of subjectivity in qualitative research requires that, as the researcher, I place close attention to the reliability and validity of my findings. Conducting a qualitative inquiry requires that the researcher conducts research to attain trustworthiness in their findings that are, reliable (dependable), credible (valid), confirmable, and transferable (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Hill & Bundy, 2014). Leung

(2015) described dependability related to the level replicability exists in the results or findings in research.

Reliability

Reliability can be achieved in the process and findings of qualitative research through the use of comprehensive data, continuous data comparison, inclusion of the deviant case, refutational analysis, and the use of tables (Seawright, 2016; Silverman, 2009). Ponelis (2015) observed that some qualitative studies are comfortable using common terminology common in quantitative research, while others prefer terminology that better reflects the nature and differences with qualitative research. One such example is the usage of the term, dependability rather than reliability. McNeil et al., (2015) argued that qualitative researchers should aim to achieve dependability, opposed to reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that dependability of qualitative research rests on the quality of data collection and examination. Elo et al., (2014) equated dependability to the stability of data over time under a range of conditions. Rigorous adherence to qualitative research practices lends some qualitative researchers to elect to use the concept of dependability for concept of reliability, which is the preferred concept in quantitative research (Lewis, 2014).

Validity

Eiras, Escoval, Grillo, and Silver-Fortes (2014) determined that qualitative researchers use validity to ensure the research instrument measures what the researcher specifically intended to measure as it relates to the perspectives of participants and potential audiences of the study. Validity in qualitative research is comprised of

confirmability, and transferability. Ensuring the measures are followed provides the

reader the opportunity confirm the findings are a truthful and accurate reflection of data

and experiences, not bias and subjectivity influenced by the researcher (Ponleis, 2015).

Validity in research refers directly to how accurately a study captures actuality (Morse,

2015).

Credibility

Porter (2007) noted that for a study to be considered credible, it must consider all

of the perspectives of the participant. Credibility specifically implies that something is

believable from the perspective of a participant in an event (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008;

Yin, 2018). To achieve credibility in this qualitative study, triangulation, using multiple

sources of information was used to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the

phenomena (Patton, 1999). Varaki, Floden, and Kalatehjafarabadi, (2015) noted that a

researcher's understanding of a problem increases by the triangulation of multiple

sources and methods. Triangulation requires that a researcher employ multiple data

sources to compare information and determine that it is aligned with the objective of the

research. The use of data triangulation establishes credibility and increases the

dependability of the data collected (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Denzin, 2012).

Participant responses were triangulated to QSR documents, and website, and examined

for consistency and truthfulness of responses, which can determine credibility (Wilson,

2015).

Member checking was used to further ensure credibility at various stages during

the collection and analysis to ensure that the participant interview question responses

captured the essence of the phenomena (Robinson, 2014). Member checking is an interpretive process that requires the researcher to reflect and mechanically coordinate with participants to verify the accuracy and validity of interview responses (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). This is achieved by providing the participant the opportunity to provide additional information to confirm the accuracy of the collected data or affirm the accuracy of the study findings (Green, 2015; Harvey, 2015).

Confirmability

Qualitative researchers use member checking to summarize and confirm information obtained from participants for correctness of understanding and interpretations. Researchers use member checking to establish confirmability in qualitative studies (Wang, Duan, & Yu, 2016). Confirmability occurs when another researcher can corroborate the findings contained within research (Morse, 2015). I used member checking to review and validate the interview responses to assure research credibility and dependability. Each participant was provided the opportunity to confirm their responses for accuracy of themes and edit, alter, add, or delete words or entire portions of their transcribed interview. However, each of the 7 participants interviewed was comfortable with their initial responses and therefore, no changes were made to the original transcription.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the level that the research has made it possible for the reader to apply the findings in another context (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morse, 2015). Cope (2014) posits that transferability occurs when the results

of a study provide meaning to those who were not involved in the research itself. The transferability of this study involved the transfer of the findings, including recruiting strategies to hire people with disabilities should there be any, to other businesses. To ensure transferability of the study findings, I achieved data saturation through the use of various sources of data and correlated any identified themes to the conceptual framework. This ensured that I have collected the information and provided a fulsome account of all available information. To address transferability in this study, I recruited participants who are owners and or managers responsible for recruiting and hiring at the same brand of QSR franchise to address the main research question being studied.

Transition and Summary

The key elements in section 2 of this study included the restatement of the purpose of the study, the research and method of design selected, and the role of the researcher. This section also included a detailed explanation of the methodology and design of this study, and the rationale for selecting the methodology. My role as researcher required that strict ethical guidelines, and techniques to collect and analyse data were followed. Once the research process completed, I provided reliable and valid insights and observations that address strategies for hiring people with disabilities to prevent a skilled worker shortage. The intent: to transfer the findings to assist other businesses improve their strategies to proactively address the issue of retiring baby boomers by proactively developing recruiting strategies for an often-overlooked talent pool. In Section 3 I have provided the details of the research, including the themes and recommendations, related to ways QSRs could subvert a worker shortage through

strategic and inclusive recruiting efforts that can be implemented to ensure staff levels

and competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages. The sample comprised of a combination of seven owners, managers, and assistant managers from locations of the same franchise. The participants were selected based on their experience recruiting people with disabilities and the strategies they implemented to prevent a labor shortage at their QSR. I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews at the individual franchise locations within southern Ontario, Canada. During the data analysis process, I compared transcriptions from each interview, handwritten notes taken during each interview, company documentation, and I reviewed the franchisor's website specific to their recruiting and hiring process and adherence to the province of Ontario's AODA to support validity and reliability within this study.

Data analysis suggested that the owners and managers responsible for hiring at their QSR have exhibited authentic leadership techniques aimed at providing a positive workplace environment. Additionally, FLMs understood and were competent on accessibility legislation, though there were knowledge gaps on the participants' familiarity with available employment resources and assistance available to them on recruiting people with disabilities. Finally, the results suggested that hiring people with disabilities was viewed as a positive experience for the managers personally, the business, employees and customers. Section 3 includes the study findings, how they can

apply professional practice, recommendations for action further research, and implications for social change. In the final part of this section I discuss my personal reflections and research study conclusions.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question in this study was "What strategies do restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages?" Data were collected from the following sources: semistructured, face-to-face interviews, observational notes, and a review of company documents such as training manuals and videos specific to onboarding new employees. Additionally, the franchisor's recent Annual Plans, company website, and news articles related to the QSR were examined to enhance the triangulation of data for this research.

Though a purposeful sample of seven participants was achieved, 14 separate locations within the population of southern Ontario, Canada were approached to obtain the participants required for this study, of which seven declined to participate. Recruiting potential candidates occurred following IRB approval. After researching the locations that fit the study population criteria, I contacted the QSR by phone and arranged a time to meet with the owner and/or manager responsible for hiring. All potential candidates were met in person at their location where the study was explained in addition to their rights as a participant, their protection and confidentiality, and the option to withdraw their participation at any time even after the interview had taken place. Prior to conducting the interviews, all seven participants signed the study consent form and were provided a copy for their records. Participants were interviewed separately, in private, at their respective

QSR locations with the exception of two participants who chose to be interviewed offsite.

The audio recording files of the interviews were converted to written transcripts within 24 hours following each the interview. Transcribing soon after the interview takes place can assist the researcher in identifying similarities and differences in participant responses and recognize analytical structures within the data (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019). Once all the interviews were transcribed, each participant was provided the opportunity to review the interview transcript for accuracy and given the opportunity to correct interview content. This process of verification is known as member checking and can provide the researcher additional insight, understanding and trustworthiness of interview responses (FitzPatrick, 2019). Member checking affirmed the authenticity of each interview transcript and led to the further understanding the data and the development of three themes, and study conclusions.

Following the validation of the transcript from each participant, I transferred the transcript files to NVivo and began coding. Using NVivo to assist in the collection and analysis of data provided a greater level of understanding of the research data acquired for this study. Two cycles of coding were conducted to ensure richer meanings, categories, themes, and concepts from my data (Saldaña, 2013; Theron, 2015). During the process of data analysis, I focused on themes that were relevant to the central research questions and conceptual framework of my study. Codes were assigned to keywords and phrases within the participant transcripts which led to the identification of the three themes identified in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency of Keywords and Phrases for Theme Identification

Themes	Frequencies
1. Authenticity, communication, and creating a positive workplace environment	32
2. Hiring manager and knowledge of accessibility legislation and employment resources	30
3. Recognizing the strategic advantage of hiring people with disabilities	26

Theme 1: Authenticity, Communication, and Creating a Positive Workplace Environment

The first theme to emerge from the data was how employing leadership qualities such as authenticity and frequent communication contributed to a positive working environment and retention of staff. Hiring new employees is an essential aspect of HR that includes recruiting, processing, eliminating, and selecting candidates for positions (Durrani & Rajagopal, 2014). All participants emphasized the increasing demand for labor and their struggles recruiting potential employees to their business and the effort required to recruit and retain employees. Each of the participants indicated that they have experience with recruiting and currently employ staff who identified as having a disability—cognitive, physical or both. However, the interviewees indicated that recruiting strategies at their locations are intended to attract from the largest talent pool possible and not specifically focused toward candidates with disabilities or another demographic.

Maintaining consistent staff levels was identified as close to equal as recruiting in terms of the challenges experienced by participants. This finding was not surprising because the QSR industry has traditionally had high rates of turnover (DiPietro et al., 2007; Murray et al., 2017). The most often cited reason for concern was related to the costs associated to training new recruits and the impact that workforce instability has had on their business. Additional issues identified by the participants was how retention affected their business in other ways including low morale and appearance to stakeholders such as customers and current and potentially future employees. The inability to recruit and retain employees is reason for concern as the direct and indirect costs related to recruiting and retaining staff can result in unfavorable consequences for a business (Gill et al., 2013). When staff members resign businesses incur direct costs such as advertising, reviewing and selecting candidates, interviewing, hiring, training the newly hired employees and indirect costs associated with education spending, fostering employee self-confidence, and managing job-related stresses of the existing team members (Al-Mamun & Hasan, 2017; Atef, El-Leithy & Al-Kalyoubi, 2017).

The participants interviewed expressed that recruiting and retaining employees at a QSR is challenging. But the FLMs believed that being accessible, treating staff fairly, and frequent communication was essential to their strategy to maintain staff levels. This is consistent with research by Čančer, and Žižek (2017), who found that when leaders understand the value of their employees and their vital role to organizational success it can position them to address these challenges with positive results.

The HRM practices of the FLMs emulated the traits of the authentic leader and the strategic imperative discussed by the participants to create a positive workplace to reduce labor shortage. Authentic leaders are considered to promote ethical conduct, discourage nefarious behaviour, value communication, and promote ideals aligned with modern society consistent with ethical behaviour in the workplace (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Lyubovnikova, Legood, Turner, & Mamakouka, 2017). Authentic leadership qualities exhibited by interviewees was evident in their responses. Participants P2, P5, P6 and 7 expressed the importance of their employees as people and not just as employees, not following a traditional management approach such as giving orders focused solely on the business. In contrast, these FLMs shared the value derived from creating an environment that promotes openness between manager and staff, communication, empathy, and flexibility. Doing so, according P2, P5, P6, can foster retention and encourage potential candidates to seek employment opportunities at their location. This approach to management is consistent with the core values espoused by both the FLMs and company documentation reviewed for this study. P2 explained,

> Positive reinforcement is at the center of my strategy and my objective when I'm dealing with employment. This is especially important and something I discuss when I'm with my leadership team. I mean, we put a lot of effort into training employees, new and current, and we do this because we want to make them feel welcome, feel good, and make them feel they are part of the team. You know, never demoralize their position, and always provide positive reinforcement. I find when you give them [staff] the opportunity to share their experiences they have a

comfort level and participate more. So that's my motivation, I am constantly

teaching the team about positivity, follow through, follow up, and constant

communication.

P5 had a similar approach to creating a positive work environment:

Our goal is to keep people. Like, if someone does not like doing a particular kind

of job anymore, I do whatever I can to switch them to something else that they

may be interested or like more. The key is that the communication lines are open

and they [staff] feel comfortable to come and talk to me or another manager and

tell us the issue. They know that they can have a sit down with us and explain

why they don't want to do something and know we won't get upset or freak out.

P6 expressed that the challenge of recruiting is always present in the QSR

industry; however, they try to highlight the advantages of working at their franchise

location over the competition. For instance, unlike many restaurants in the fast food

industry, employees at this QSR brand receive basic health benefits. Though quick to

point out that these have recently been reduced, it does matter to potential job candidates

and can contribute to recruiting and retaining employees who consider their role a career

choice. Additionally, P6 stressed the importance of creating a family-like atmosphere for

employees where staff feel that their opinion is both welcomed and valued.

The relationship between a business' attractiveness to potential job seekers is

well-documented in academic literature. Evaluating the relationship between work

environment and employee loyalty characteristics can result in further understanding of

employee satisfaction (Valaei & Rezaei, 2016). The organization that can compensate

employees and provide additional benefits such as healthcare can not only attract talent, but also contribute to their retention (Adnan, Rahman, & Ahmad, 2018; Brett, Bransetter, & Wagner, 2014; Saleh, 2017). Many business sectors are currently facing challenges in the labor market and will need to address inefficiencies in their recruitment and retention strategies (Reilly, 2018). However, when HRM practices are aligned with management behaviour such as communication, positive reinforcement, empathy, and the ethical treatment of employees, evidence indicates positive outcomes for both employee and organization. For example, Khan and Malik (2017) found that when employees have a good relationship with their manager, they often have a positive opinion of the organization.

All seven participants exhibited an approach to management that is consistent with authentic leadership. Each expressed the importance of being genuine in their approach to leading teams, especially those directly in contact with the customer. Leaders with a combination of hard and soft skills can be employed to assist in the navigation of the workplace, manage staff, and inspire performance (Lippman, Ryberg, Carney, & More, 2015). These skills were apparent in P2 who summarized her approach to leadership: "I care about my employees, who they are as people, their well-being, you know, I cannot think of a better way to promote your business as a good place to work at."

Theme 2: Hiring Manager Knowledge of Accessibility Legislation, and Employment Resources

All participants indicated that their recruiting practices do not discriminate and are in adherence with the labor and human rights laws and legislation of Canada and the province of Ontario, including the AODA. A recent study showed that when employers are knowledgeable about a country's disability legislation and have experience working with people disabilities, they have a tendency to be more open to accommodating these employees at their business (Telwatte, Anglim, Wynton, & Moulding, 2017). Company documentation from the franchisor's website provided evidence that they promote and adhere to the AODA. The FLMs interviewed for this study provided evidence of manager and staff training videos and manuals that outline the AODA, its' purpose, the rights of individuals with disabilities, why it is important, and the organization's adherence to legislation.

The participants' understanding of accessibility legislation indicated competency; however, their individual knowledge of the employment resources available to them related to hiring people with disabilities varied between managers. Though all the participants have been trained on AODA legislation and Canadian Human Rights Laws, the interviewee data indicated that a knowledge gap existed related to employment resources available to employers specific to hiring people with disabilities. For example, two of the participants indicated that they were not aware of their options or even who to contact regarding government programs and recruiting assistance. For example, P4 has hired individuals with a disability and currently has two on staff but explained that they

were not specifically targeted for recruitment. P4 expressed both surprise and interest at

the possibility of having access to government and nongovernment (NGO) programs

aimed supporting the costs associated with training eligible candidates with disabilities

who can and are willing to work.

Within the province of Ontario, various options are available to match employers

with people with disabilities who can and want to work with a range of career options,

including QSRs. For instance, programs such as the Discover Ability Network created, in

association with Ryerson University in Toronto, a job matching platform called Magnet

that provides job candidates an opportunity to post their resumes and employers can post

job ads (Discover Ability Network, 2020). The network also offers employers

information on best practices related to employing people with disabilities and options on

how to make their business more inclusive. The province of Ontario's Disability Services

Program is designed to provide income support for people with disabilities in financial

need. The program provides services and supports that assist clients with disabilities find

and retain employment and advance their career (Ministry of Children, Community and

Social Services, 2020).

In reference to the employment resources available to businesses to hire people

with disabilities, P1 stated their organization has used these organizations to hire people

with disabilities in the past but said the process can be time consuming for the employer.

P1 one added, that in their opinion as an employer, the provincial and federal government

need to take more action with respect to employee and employer assistance programs aimed

at hiring people with disabilities, including reducing the "red tape" involved in the applying

for these kinds of programs P2 has had similar experience with government and NGO

employment assistance programs and stated that,

> I think that the government should be playing our role in this. In, you know,
>
> bringing it forward to businesses, and giving them opportunities and easy access
>
> to the information of how we can go about hiring people with disabilities, and the
>
> government should be kicking in to, you know, help the people that are disabled
>
> to get a job, and retain a job.

> In a related finding, P3, and P6 indicated that they are aware of these agencies but

have only limited knowledge and experience with them. This was not the case for P5 who

indicated that as a manager with a learning disability, they felt enormously grateful for

being given an opportunity through an agency placement through their high school;

having now been with the same QSR for over 12 years P5 credits the managers at the

location for providing leadership, understanding, and patience. The participant stressed

that their managers at the time gave them extra time to learn, assigned less stressful

situations, and provided encouragement and rewards. Additionally, P7 indicated their

location has worked with the March of Dimes, and other agencies.

> Sometimes the agency reaches out to us directly and says, hey we have a
>
> candidate with a disability who wants to work at your location. If we need
>
> someone, which we usually do, they send us references, the resume and if the
>
> person is suitable, we hire them. Sometimes, if we need staff, we go to them and
>
> ask if they have anyone.

> The majority of participants indicated that while they do not actively work with

agencies or explore resources pertaining to employer support to hire people with disabilities, they are open and willing to hire anyone who is capable of performing the job. For example, P2 explained that they are a very community focused company and that they want to hire people from their community.

> Occasionally, we might get people looking for jobs from local community centers, schools, 'cause we can take them as young as 14 [years old]. So really, as far as those looking for a job who are handicapped or disabled who want to work with us, they can apply. Sometimes we will even take a recommendation from a customer or someone we know.

P2 added, that the reaction they receive from both staff and customers, has been overwhelmingly positive.

Theme 3: Recognizing the Strategic Advantage of Hiring People with Disabilities

Consistent with previous research in the field of the hospitality industry, when businesses hire people with disabilities the results have been favorable not only in terms of profits, but how their stakeholders view the organization (Kalagarou and Volis, 2014). All seven of the participants' indicated that their experience hiring and working with people with disabilities has been positive. P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, and P7 expressed that one of the most common outcomes related to the people with disabilities they employ has been the positive response received from stakeholders such as customers and the employees who work alongside these individuals. This finding is consistent with a studies conducted on CSR and customer satisfaction in hotels and restaurants that found that while an organizations CSR activities may not result in a definitive positive or negative

result to a business; it can, circuitously impact the organization's ability to achieve competitive advantage, which indicates that possible factors may mediate impacts of CSR activities on firm performance (González-Rodríguez, Martín-Samper, Köseoglu, & Okumus, 2019; Lee, Heo, 2009; Ottenbacher, Kuechle, Harrington, & Kim, 2019).

Freeman (1984) posits that according to stakeholder theory, CSR activities can be beneficial for a business's stakeholders including, patrons of the organization and the employees, shareholders, and suppliers. In a recent study on the factors that can lead restaurant success, stakeholders and factors related to management skill were prominent factors that resulted in positive outcomes for the business (Chen, 2018). This was evident in many of the responses provided by the participants. For example, P3 stated, "I can honestly say that anyone we have hired that has some sort of disability benefited us because of their willingness to work. And you know, kudos, because that's what we want you to do, you know?" P1 expanded of the same experiences had at their location: "We had a worker [with a disability] that worked here for years - everybody loved her. She had Down Syndrome and was a very hard worker; she was fantastic!" P3 also indicated that while there have been some reservations about hiring a candidate with a disability, the results have been encouraging:

> The kid turned to be a fantastic, loyal, you know? A lot of people [judged him at first] because he just had a bit of a different walk to him, but he had his own pace and he got things done.

Freeman (1984) argued that a firm can create profit through various means on the path to value creation. Hiring an individual with a disability, as indicated by the participants

interviewed, has contributed to the value of their business, and positively benefited their reputation with their stakeholders. P7 described the current employees with disabilities at their restaurant and indicated that hiring a person with a disability can also have a meaningful effect on the hiring manager. P7 explained,

> Look, there's loyalty [from the employee with a disability]. There's also the feel good. I hate to say it like that, but you do feel good [as a person] if you employ people and are able to maintain them [as an employee]. You know, give them a second chance or get someone who can fit in your organization.

Similarly, P3 stated,

> There's feel good thing with your customers and people like that. They tend to gravitate to it; it's almost like it's socially responsible thing to do and how you portray yourself to your customers. However, I would never hire anyone just for the sake of, well we don't have anybody with that disability so let's put them on the team. No, [the hiring process] it's still based on merit and our needs and stuff like that. But there's, you know, you feel good about it [hiring a person with a disability] thing. I always feel good when I help people succeed.

While the findings suggested that some managers hired employees with disabilities for altruistic reasons, at least initially, their opinion did change over time after observing the character, dedication to work, loyalty to the business, and the positive impact these staff members had on their customers and staff. For instance,

> P6 recalled one particular employee with autism, "The guy was brilliant! He taught me things; you know?"

As common as these responses were within the data, they did not translate to any current or future strategy or plans to recruit more people with disabilities. This finding was puzzling based on the positive results each hiring manager has had with staff who have a disability and the unilateral and ongoing challenges all participants indicated they have recruiting and retaining employees. However, these responses are similar to a number of studies related to the exclusion of people with disabilities from the labor market and a correlation to the social organization of the labor market and not necessarily related to an individual's disability (Barnes and Mercer, 2005; Lindsay, et. al., 2015; Lindsay et al, 2019).

Applications to Professional Practice

The study findings, conclusions, and recommendations could provide QSR managers with information and possible strategies they could employ to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages. Additionally, managers can use and apply the information within this study to professional practice in (a) developing HRM strategic initiatives to recruit people with disabilities, (b) educating and training existing and new QSR managers on HRM best practices, (c) employment agency options and assistance offered by government specific to people with disabilities, and (d) the value of authentic leadership and communication between manager and staff.

Various studies exist on the challenges businesses face across sectors; however, how these businesses have adapted their strategies, if at all, to address labor shortages in their organization can differ not only from business to business but from QSR location to location. Not surprisingly, these inconsistencies can directly affect how well a company

can attract or retain talent, including people with disabilities; this not only adds additional stress on essential resources such as staff and management but can also lead to a reduction in profitability and productivity. From the data assembled, three prominent themes emerged: (a) authenticity, communication, and creating a positive workplace environment, (b) hiring manager and Knowledge of accessibility legislation and employment resources, and (c) recognizing the strategic advantage of hiring people with disabilities.

The results of this study indicated that managers use authentic leadership skills as a technique to retain employees, have an understanding and are competent with the accessibility laws and legislation in Canada and the province Ontario, and support hiring people with disabilities. However, the findings revealed that the participants could benefit from exploring the government and employment agency resources available to them to recruit people with disabilities. Business owners and their FLMs responsible for recruiting should explore options with their provincial and federal governments and community-based NGOs for available employment resources directed to recruiting people with disabilities. These resources not only offer support, including supplementing the costs associated with hiring and income support for candidates with a disability, for some programs, but can provide information and best practices for employers interested in these programs. My goal is that the findings from this study provide QSR and other business managers and leaders a different lens for which to view recruitment and the intrinsic and instrumental benefits that can result from hiring people with disabilities.

Implications for Social Change

Modern societies face a variety of challenges including, environmental pollution, education, social inequality, and public health crises (Stephan, Patterson, Kelly, & Mair, 2016). Business leaders, including those with the responsibility of CRM and HRM, can play a critical role in how their organization can address these issues within their business and the communities they operate within. Various peer-reviewed academic studies have provided evidence that suggested that organizations that integrate CRM and HRM strategies the results have been positive from a range of stakeholders (Cha et al., 2016; Epstein & Buhovac, 2014; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). Integrating CSR and HRM into strategic plans for recruiting people with disabilities and educating hiring managers on the options available to them to acquire non-traditional candidates, such as people with disabilities, can contribute to social change for businesses, individuals, and the communities in which they reside. When business leaders develop CSR and HRM strategies designed to improve a firm's financial results, it has the potential to contribute to improved outcomes for all of their stakeholders, including their staff, community and society. An additional consequence of these actions is how they can contribute to improvements for those who currently are or aim to be employed at a business.

Aside from the work-related benefits, integrating people with disabilities into the workforce can create a significant impact on society (Ellinger, Naidoo, Ellinger, Fillips, & Herrin, 2020). Employing a person with a disability has the potential to change long held opinions based on misconceptions, prejudice, and lack of education related to a non-traditional talent pool that is often eager, skilled and capable of providing value to a range

of organizations. When a business commits to hiring a person with a disability, they provide a means of independence and meaning for that employee. This commitment can also have positive implications for social change, such as altering public misconceptions, prejudice, and lack of education concerning the employability of people with disabilities who represent a talent pool who are eager, skilled, and capable of providing value to a range of organizations.

Recommendations for Action

Three recommendations for action are provided that can assist restaurant managers, franchisees, franchisors, and HR professionals further their knowledge and understand the importance of developing strategies to recruit and hire people with disabilities to address worker shortage. They are (a) understanding the importance of communication between FLM and staff, (b) for the franchisor to develop education and training programs aimed at the options available to QSR franchisees to recruit people with disabilities, and (c) that the franchisor use national and provincial accessibility laws as a guide when developing their organizations HRM strategies. Those responsible for management and HR at their organization may recognize challenges and themes relevant to their own experience recruiting, retaining staff, and the benefits associated from hiring people with disabilities. The information shared in this research may also contribute to positive changes in how managers approach their leadership style, how important authenticity and communication are to maintaining and contributing to staff loyalty, the importance of knowledge of accessibility laws and employment resources available to assist and educate businesses to hire people with disabilities.

The first recommendation is to understand the importance of communication with staff at their QSR. When FLMs practice authenticity, evidence has shown that staff members respond positively. When employees feel their leader is genuine, they feel comfortable, respected, and valued as an individual and contributor to the business as a whole. This approach is consistent with the traits of an authentic leader, which is well suited to creating positive and diverse workplaces that promote diversity and inclusion and encourage the best from employees and teams (Boekhorst, 2015). Some participants studied exhibited authentic leadership and have made communicating to their staff how each person is valued, and their efforts appreciated by them as a leader and as an individual.

The second recommendation is for franchisors to develop education and training programs aimed at the options and government and agency employment resources available to QSR franchisees to recruit people with disabilities. While the findings indicated positive benefits for the participants and stakeholder response to hiring people with disabilities, some participants exhibited little understanding of the resources and recruiting assistance available to them from government and agency employment services. Developing a specific strategic plan that includes the exploration of available government and NGO resources to recruit and hire people with disabilities is recommended. This recommendation could benefit QSR hiring managers that are experiencing frustration with recruiting and retention at their location that lack the experience or HRM skills to develop and execute a specific strategy to hire people with disabilities.

The third recommendation for the franchisor to use national and provincial accessibility laws as a guide when developing their organizations HRM strategies. This proactive approach to HRM and accessibility is related to, and depends upon, the education and understanding of current accessibility legislation and best practices in HRM. For instance, further education regarding what constitutes a disability, understanding the true costs of accommodation, misconceptions regarding what a person with a disability can offer, and how some disabilities, such as autism, can provide unique value to some roles at an organization. For businesses experiencing the challenges associated with low retention rates and increasingly sparse options from traditional labor pools, it makes good business sense to develop a strategy to attract candidates from the largely ignored talent pool of people with disabilities. Adopting these through the recommendations could minimize worker shortage and improve an organizations' ability to recruit and retain employees.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages. Popular QSRs franchisees, such as the one studied, are generally fast paced, stressful environments that can make it challenging for managers, who often have various responsibilities, to direct resources towards one aspect of their operation, such as recruiting. Recommendations for further research include examining the roles of the QSR manager and the viability and effectiveness of their HRM competency and skill level; exploring how authentic leadership at the franchisor level can

affect the franchisee's leadership style; and how hiring people with disabilities has been received by stakeholders and the financial outcomes prior to and following the hiring of these individuals. A limitation in this study was that the population and sample size was small and focused on multiple locations of the same franchise. Future researchers can address this limitation by expanding the population, sample size and examine multiple QSR franchised brands. By exploring the phenomena through the experiences of numerous organizations one can gather a multi-perspective and in-depth understanding of the findings (Basisas & Pollalis, 2018).

Reflections

Having worked in a business environment for over 20 years, one of the most prevalent issues I encountered as both a manager and team member, was the need for organizations to acquire individuals that possess both managerial and leadership skills. This 'issue' inspired me to pursue my doctorate and explore leadership from the perspective of the manager and academic researcher. While this was my initial inspiration, I discovered that the pursuit of my doctorate provided an opportunity to explore a topic in greater detail than I had previously in my education and career. My experience during the DBA process was both challenging and rewarding. I learned more about the challenges and discrimination people with disabilities encounter that prevents them from employment, independence and many aspects of life most people take for granted.

During my time at Walden University, I have been fortunate enough to have worked with many great professors, chairs, and committee members that offered the

guidance and support needed to complete this study. For that, I will always be grateful. During my first residency, a member of Walden's contributing faculty told me to try to enjoy the academic journey of doing a doctoral degree. Most of the time, I enjoyed the journey, sometimes not so much; however, my classmates, chair, and the skills developed were well worth any of the frustrations. I firmly believe that having the ability to push oneself through adversity makes one a better version of themselves. As a father and husband, it is important for me to represent myself as a person who believes in myself and the greatness of others. Leading by example, being authentic, empathetic, and encouraging others to be the best version of themselves is who I believe I am and who I will continue to be as an individual, father, husband, son, and professional.

Conclusion

The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages. The general business problem was that restaurant managers are reluctant to explore nontraditional employee recruitment options, such as hiring people with disabilities to fill positions of retiring baby boomers, based on misconceptions about accommodation costs and applicants' skill levels (Schur, et al., 2014). The specific business problem was that some restaurant managers lack strategies for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages. The central research question was: What strategies do restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages?

My findings revealed that QSR managers could improve and build upon their knowledge of accessibility legislation and the employment resources available to them to recruit people with disabilities. The experiences shared by these managers related to previous and current staff with disabilities have been positive for the QSR's stakeholders. Customers have reacted favorably to the business to recognize that people with disabilities have a right and desire to work, employees have communicated their support, and managers have been impressed with the loyalty, work ethic, and dependability of these staff members. Some managers expressed that hiring a person with a disability has been intrinsically valuable and made them feel they are providing another human being an opportunity to work, develop skills, independence and participate in their community.

Seven participants, consisting of QSR managers or owners with experience hiring people with disabilities, consented to face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Each participant provided in-depth responses to the questions based on their knowledge and experience related to recruiting people with disabilities and the challenges they are encountering related to worker shortage. The participation and experience of these owners and managers, at times, highlighted the gaps in their HRM skills; however, they expressed interest in exploring employment services offered by the government to recruit people with disabilities. QSRs experiencing challenges related to recruiting and retaining employees face detrimental issues to their business, including low productivity, growth, instability in their workforce, and additional stress on the workforce.

Managers who understand the importance of creating value for all of their stakeholders and develop and execute HRM strategies that are inclusive and open to all

candidates can position themselves to attract and maintain adequate staff levels. Managers who embody the skills of the authentic leader can create work environments where those seeking employment want to join and retain those already on staff. QSRs that adopt approaches such as CSR and inclusive and fair HRM practices, such as hiring people with disabilities, can produce stakeholder value and position a firm to achieve positive brand reputation, competitive advantage, and contribute real and meaningful social change.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The interview questions are:

1. What strategies do you use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages?

2. What experience do you have with hiring people with disabilities?

3. In terms of recruiting for vacancies within your organization, what are the main activities, skills, and experience required to obtain employment?

4. What trends have you observed at your organization's location related to employee retention?

5. How have you been addressing the key challenges to implementing your organization's strategies for maintaining an adequate level of employees in your business?

6. Currently, what do you view is the greatest challenge in attracting employees to work at your business?

7. What benefits have you observed related to the hiring people with disabilities in your business?

8. What additional information you would like to share regarding strategies restaurant managers use to recruit and hire people with disabilities to prevent or address skilled worker shortages?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Format: Semistructured Interview

The setting, sequence and series of interview questions will apply to each interview in this study. Face-to-face and telephone interviews will be conducted, and member checking will be used to confirm the accuracy of interpretations of participant responses.

Protocol

1. Introductions to study and researcher.

2. Obtain signed informed consent form, review for completeness, and schedule interview.

3. Prior to commencement of each interview, inform the participant that the interview will be recorded for later transcription. Begin recording and state the location, date, time and coded identifier of the participant.

4. Conduct the interview using the approved interview questions.

5. Ask additional probing questions based upon participant responses.

6. End interview or discussion.

7. Thank participant for their participation and remind them that you will provide a copy of the responses for their review and verification.