

2021

## Strategies to Retain Call Center Employees

Michele Boston  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Michele Boston

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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Strategies to Retain Call Center Employees

by

Michele Boston

MA, Webster University, 2016

BA, Coastal Carolina University, 2009

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2021

## Abstract

Call center executives who lack effective strategies to retain employees face a disruption in service, employee performance and productivity, as well as an increase in operational expenses. Ineffective retention strategies can negatively impact call centers by increasing cost, decreasing talent quality and loss of the customer experience. Grounded in Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore employee retention strategies that call center executives use to maintain employees within their organizations. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, company documents, and physical artifacts. The interview participants comprised five call center executives, managers, or team leaders in the Southeast region of the United States who have successfully created and implemented strategies to increase call center retention. Three themes emerged from thematic analysis of the data: focus on workplace morale, minimize employee stress, and establish motivational strategies. One key recommendation is to reduce employee stress through individualized support. The implications for positive social change include the potential to increase community wealth and employment by decreasing workplace stress and increasing job retention for community members who choose a career path in the call center industry.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this study to my husband Kireem Liles, my daughter Aminah Rose Liles, my parents Freddie and Genevieve Boston, my sister Lakisha Boston Egleton, and my brother Terrance Boston who each contributed in some way toward this journey. Their love, support, prayers, and dedication to me during this time are what made this achievement possible. I also dedicate this study to Black, indigenous, women of color. To BIWOC: I would like this accomplishment to motivate you to strive to reach your highest capacity just when you think that all odds are against you. To my ancestors who suffered, yet fought relentlessly against anti-literacy laws at which forbade them by penalties of whippings and/or death from self-educating or being educated by others, and to my ancestors who limited their education at a young age to work in the cotton fields and dedicated their lives to serving privileged families in order to provide for their own: I dedicate this study to you. Without your sacrifices and without your persistent fight for equality, I would have never been warranted this opportunity, and without the strength of my ancestors, I would have never courageously pursued, accepted, committed to, sacrificed, and succeeded in the challenge of obtaining the highest level of education, a Doctorate.

## Acknowledgments

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Call center managers face challenges with determining strategies that will be effective in retaining employees. Employees are valuable to call centers as they communicate with customers, solve problems, and conduct other customer-centered activities. Although it is easy to attract employees to call center jobs, it has been a constant challenge to keep them. Employee retention is one of the biggest challenges impacting call center organizations (Nelesh et al., 2018).

### **Background of the Problem**

The main business problem within call center organizations is employee retention (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Call centers function interactively using computer and telephone technologies that enable a fast-paced influx of incoming and outgoing calls to allow readily available staff to greet and assist customers and input and manage data. Specific call center positions vary in complexity and skill requirements. Call centers are characterized by high technology, high pressure, and overload, which result in stress, burnout, low attendance, low performance, and high turnover. Due to these issues, call center managers have the constant challenge of developing strategies to retain their staff (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Call center managers provide consistent employee monitoring and controlling through technology, training, and performance reviews. Managers who are effective in call centers are those whose skills include the ability to reduce turnover (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Turnover causes an increase in organizational operating expenses, along with a decrease in human capital and a disruption in organizational productivity. Reports have shown a 70% rate of turnover for the call center industry, causing an impact on the quality of services (Pierre & Tremblay, 2011). Employee turnover is not only costly to an organization, but can disrupt service and customer relationships, reduce performance, hinder organizational diversity, expand the workload of remaining employees, and finally, inspire other employees to quit (Lee et al., 2018).

### **Problem Statement**

Call centers have high turnover rates, causing an increase in organizational operating expenses, a decrease in human capital, and a disruption in organizational productivity (Nelesh et al., 2018). The average rate of turnover in U.S. call centers is 33%, exceeding turnover rates for most industries in the United States (Ro & Lee, 2017). The general business problem is that call center executives who do not engage employees may experience low retention. The specific business problem is that some call center executives lack strategies to retain employees.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies call center executives use to retain employees. The targeted population comprised three call center companies within the state of South Carolina who successfully retain employees. Study participants included call center managers, executives, and other qualified representatives who have demonstrated success in retaining employees at each company.

The implications for positive social change include the potential to decrease workplace stress and increase job retention for community members who choose a career path in the call center industry. An increase in career sustainability could impact the rates of employment and contribute to community wealth. Other implications for positive social change include enabling leaders to address corporate social responsibility, to contribute more through the potential to offer increased employment opportunities and the potential increase in financial resources available to be donated back to communities.

### **Nature of the Study**

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method are three methodologies that could be used in a research study. The qualitative researcher uses data collection in the form of interviews, observations, and reports to provide a more experience-based study of the phenomenon in question (Saunders et al., 2016). The quantitative research method is associated with a deductive approach that uses structured data collection techniques to test a theory or statistical hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2016). The quantitative researcher examines the relationships between the independent and dependent variables of the hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2016) and analyzes statistical data (Arnold, 2016), which was not appropriate for the study. The mixed method researcher uses numerical data collection while also including data to test variables' relationships or groups' differences (Saunders et al., 2016). The mixed method was not suitable because statistical analysis for testing variables' relationships is not necessary to address my study's purpose. The

qualitative method was selected for this study to provide a clear understanding of effective strategies call center managers use to decrease voluntary employee turnover.

There are several designs that could be useful when conducting research using the qualitative method. An ethnographic design is used to study a particular group's culture (Arnold, 2016). I did not intend to observe one particular cultural group, so the ethnographic design was not suitable. A phenomenological researcher studies the meanings of participants' experiences and identifies common themes (Major, 2016). I did not intend to limit the study to identifying the meanings of participants' lived experience; therefore, the phenomenological approach is not appropriate. A case study researcher explores a particular environment (Saunders et al., 2016). Using a case study design can facilitate understanding and identifying the actual characteristics and history of the environment (Saunders et al., 2016). The case study design strategy was selected to provide call center executives with a comprehensive understanding of effective retention reduction strategies. I selected the multiple case study design instead of the single case study design to explore perspectives and experiences from multiple businesses that may allow me to identify and verify strategies that increase retention of call center employees.

### **Research Question**

What strategies do call center executives use to retain employees?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What are the key effective strategies that were implemented in your organization to decrease voluntary employee turnover?



2. What are some supporting procedures put into place to help increase retention in your organization?
3. During exit interviews, what are some reasons your employees have stated for leaving the company?
4. What, if any, type of strategies does your organization use to increase employee satisfaction?
5. What type of strategies does your organization use to decrease employee dissatisfaction?
6. What type of incentives does your organization offer to encourage employee retention?
7. What were the key obstacles to introducing your effective strategies for increasing retention?
8. How does your organization address the key obstacles to implementing its effective strategies for increasing retention?
9. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of its strategies for increasing retention?
10. What additional information can you share regarding your organization's strategies to increase employee retention in call centers?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory, also known as the two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg listed two types of

factors that can determine employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction and impact voluntary retention: motivational and hygienic. Motivation factors cause job satisfaction and include (a) recognition, (b) achievement, (c) responsibility, (d) work, (e) advancement, and (f) opportunities for growth. Hygiene factors, whose absence causes dissatisfaction, include (a) working conditions, (b) salary, (c) personal growth, (d) company policies, (e) management, (f) job security, (g) employee-employer relationships, and (h) job status (Kotni & Karumuri, 2017).

I expected Herzberg's theory to be useful for understanding this study's findings because it provides an underlying foundation for the understanding and development of effective strategies that need to be implemented to increase call center retention.

Herzberg's motivator-hygiene factors identify causes of employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction that may result in an increase or decrease in voluntary retention.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Employee motivation:* an employee's willingness to exert effort and act toward the achievement of organizational goals, conditioned by the ability of those actions to contribute toward the employee's individual satisfaction (Sabbagha et al., 2018).

*Employee retention:* a strategic process or practice that is mutually beneficial to the employee and the organization, at which employees are motivated to remain with the organization (Ahmad et al., 2018).

*Employee turnover:* the annual rate, expressed as a percentage, at which employees leave an organization calculated by dividing the number of employees that

leave the company each year by the number of employees the company started with each year (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

*Intention to leave*: the subjective estimation of an employee to likely leave the company and seek future employment with another company, resulting from a mismatch in job-person fit (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

*Job dissatisfaction*: unpleasant conditions, such as being undervalued and underappreciated, that spark responses of exit intent, advocacy for change, acceptance of the status quo with no objection, or passive withdrawal (i.g., job neglect; Okeke & Mtyuda, 2017).

*Job satisfaction*: an employee's personality, attitude, and feelings towards his/her job and organization (Sabbagha et al., 2018).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions serve as the study's foundation by identifying factors that the researcher considers to be true without evidence (Ellis & Levy, 2009). There were four assumptions that impacted this study. The first assumption was that the qualitative case study was the best method to use in researching this topic. The qualitative approach was suitable as I was able to conduct interviews and review documentation to expose strategies. The second assumption was that the selected sample comprised call center managers who have strategically addressed the problem of low retention in the call center industry, and this assumption was confirmed. The third assumption was that the interview

participants were all honest in their answers and responses. The fourth assumption was confirmed in that the interview participants possessed the knowledge and experience needed to serve as qualified participants in this study.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are the weaknesses identified by the researcher that could potentially threaten the validity of the study (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Two limitations have impacted this study. The first limitation was that the findings are not generalizable due to the small sample size being used for research. The small sample size of five limited the findings to the specific industry in the Southeast region. Although participants had the right to leave the research at any time, no participants backed out of the interview process.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations identify boundaries established in the study (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Three delimitations affected this study. The first delimitation of this study was that research was conducted using a small sample size of the call center managers in the southeast Carolina. The second delimitation was that the research only included local call center managers who agreed to participate in this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

The potential significance of the study may be realized through call center organizations prospering from a decrease in operational expenses and an increase in human capital, production, and customer satisfaction due to leaders, managers, and executives having successfully implemented effective employee retention strategies.

Pierre and Tremblay (2011) identified the leading business problem for call centers to be retention, due to employees lacking a sense of engagement or involvement within the company and lacking the desire to stay. My findings could positively benefit call center organizations by providing call center executives with effective strategies to reduce their leading business problem.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The findings of this study may be significant to business practice by providing potential solutions to one of the call center industry's largest business problems through the identification of effective strategies to increase retention. The findings could serve as a guide to industry executives' understanding of the underlying factors that contribute to voluntary turnover and low rates of retention and support the development of strategies to address them. This study's findings may include information necessary to increase call center executives' understanding of the business phenomenon and identify effective strategies that may reduce the costs associated with low retention in the call center industry.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The study has implications for social change by potentially increasing retention, which helps to keep community members employed and contributes to economic growth for communities and organizations. Increased retention could also reduce costs of recruiting, hiring, and training initiatives, which could result in an increase of organizations' available cash for contributions to society.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Studies show that a decrease in voluntary employee turnover is largely due to executives' abilities to implement strategies that increase job satisfaction and decrease job dissatisfaction. To effectively implement these types of strategies, executives must understand the underlying causes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace. Herzberg understood these factors and outlined them in his two-factor theory. The literature review includes peer-reviewed research regarding strategies to retain employees and sources that evaluate and apply Herzberg's motivator-hygiene, the conceptual framework for this study.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies some call center executives could use to increase employee retention. Strategies I used to discover the pre-existing literature on my topic included a search of the Walden University database for previously published Walden dissertations that relate to my research topic. Also included in the literature review are peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and other sources regarding strategies to retain employees that evaluate and apply Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory, the conceptual framework for this study. Keywords used in this search were *employee retention*, *voluntary employee turnover*, *retention strategies*, *high turnover*, *call center turnover*, *call center retention* and *motivation strategies*. I used Google Scholar, Emerald Management, SAGE Premier, ProQuest Central, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. Most peer-reviewed studies and other sources have publication

dates ranging from 2016 to 2020. Table 1 shows the reference types used, along with their frequency.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Reference Types and Their Frequency*

Source type	Older	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total	%
Peer-reviewed journals	16	14	7	20	2	0	62	83%
Dissertations	2	3	2	0	0	0	7	9%
Textbooks	1	2	0	2	0	0	5	7%
Other	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1%
Totals	19	17	9	21	2	0	75	100%

In the literature review, I discuss previous and basic knowledge of the study's relevance and provide a brief synopsis of the existing research related to the topic. The literature review's subheadings include (a) The Relevant Theory; (b) Alternative Theories; (c) Turnover, Retention and Organizational Performance; (d) Job Satisfaction, Job Dissatisfaction, and Turnover Intent; and (e) Strategies to Increase Retention and Organizational Performance.

**The Relevant Theory**

The theory that comprises my conceptual framework is Herzberg's two-factor theory, also known as Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory. This theory has potential relevance to the study of strategies to increase call center retention. The theory supports an exploration into the contributions of motivator factors, as they contribute to employee

satisfaction but not dissatisfaction, and hygiene factors as they contribute to employee dissatisfaction but not satisfaction (Touch & Hornbaek, 2015). Executives who consistently implement tools that contribute to job satisfaction and aid in decreasing job dissatisfaction show an influential style of leadership and contribute to the retainment of employees (Jackson, 2014). Analyzing employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction is necessary to understand voluntary employee turnover and develop effective strategies to increase retention.

Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory is the conceptual framework for my research. The theory was useful to support the research and exploration of effective strategies to increase employee retention in call center industries. Herzberg's theory was inspired by Maslow's theory of motivation, which displayed a bottom-up approach of employee needs. The motivator-hygiene theory, or two-factor theory, was developed by psychologists Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman in 1959 (Combs, 2017). Herzberg argued that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction should be measured separately (Arnold, 2016). The tenets of Herzberg's theory include (a) motivator factors that, when in place, contribute to employee satisfaction, and (b) hygiene factors that, when not in place, contribute to employee dissatisfaction. He argued that job satisfaction is affected by motivation factors, which encourage a positive work experience, and that job dissatisfaction is affected by hygiene factors, which encourage a negative work experience (Wood, 2014). Hygiene factors in Herzberg's theory refer to the basic needs of the employee while motivator factors refer to higher level employee needs (Touch &



Hornbaek, 2015). Motivator factors consist of achievement, status, reward and recognition, advancement, responsibility, and work itself (Lee, 2017). Hygiene factors include working conditions, compensation and benefits, job security, quality of leadership, working relationships, policies and procedures, and work-life balance (Martin, 2016). Executives who consistently implement tools that contribute to job satisfaction and aid in decreasing job dissatisfaction show an influential style of leadership (Jackson, 2014). Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory was useful to guide the research.

Although most organizational leaders believe that employees are solely motivated by money, Herzberg took a more comprehensive approach by conducting interviews that required participants to discuss what they want the most in their jobs and what good and bad factors are a part of their jobs. Herzberg, as many other theorists, argued the importance of selecting the most motivated employees to participate in this study. He developed a questionnaire that consisted of 19 questions to ask participants (Zaheri & Moosavi, 2015). Herzberg's two-factor theory was developed after completing research in nine organizations comprising of over 200 participants in the accounting and engineering fields. The purpose of the research was to determine the factors that would contribute to goal achievement and consistent levels of motivation. Herzberg's research concluded with two types of employee needs that were independent of one another, which he called motivation and hygiene factors (Kotni & Karumuri, 2017). Some researchers have questioned the orthogonality of Herzberg's motivator-hygiene factors

and the invariance of the social-cultural and monetary aspects arguing that Herzberg's model should expand into three factors, to include a monetary factor as researchers consider additional needs of employees in various cultures (Vijayakumar & Saxena, 2015).

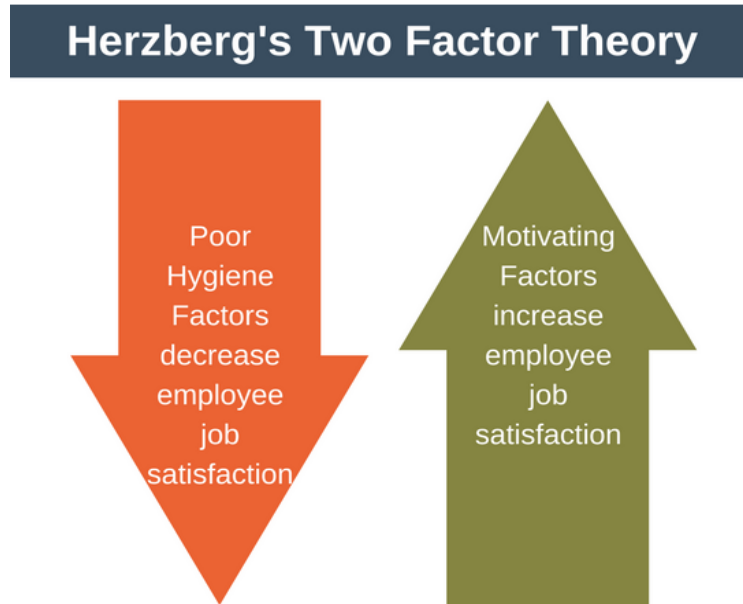
Herzberg argued that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction should be measured separately (Arnold, 2016). According to the theory, the presence of specific elements leads to job satisfaction and the absence leads to no satisfaction, while a different set of elements leads to dissatisfaction and the absence of those elements leads to no dissatisfaction. Thus, the idea was demonstrated that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as described in this theory, have no direct relationship with one another (Habib et al., 2017).

Herzberg's motivation and hygiene factors establish requirements for an organization to meet performance goals. Motivation factors are associated with employee achievement, whereas hygiene factors are associated with supervision practices. Motivator factors consist of achievement, status, reward and recognition, advancement, responsibility, and work itself (Lee, 2017). Hygiene factors include working conditions, compensation and benefits, job security, quality of leadership, working relationships, policies and procedures, and work-life balance (Martin, 2016). Herzberg's internal factors, or factors of employee satisfaction, have a greater level of importance than external factors, or factors of employee dissatisfaction (Elahe et al., 2018). The quality, responsibilities, and level of the job, as well as job security and compensation are the

highest contributors to employee motivation and performance. Training and performance evaluations are also necessary to increase employee motivation and performance (Elahe et al., 2018). Figure 1 provides a visual representation of Herzberg's two-factor theory.

**Figure 1**

*Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory*



*Note.* The two arrows represent the impact of job satisfaction factors uncovered by Herzberg. The arrow pointing downward represents the negative impact on job satisfaction when hygiene factors are poor. The arrow pointing upward represents the positive impact on job satisfaction when motivating factors are in place. Adapted from *Herzberg's Motivation Theory – Two Factor Theory*, by G. Denis, 2019, Expert Program Management (<https://expertprogrammanagement.com/2018/04/herzbergs-two-factor-theory/>).

## **The Alternative Theories**

Relevant alternative theories that were considered but not selected as the conceptual framework for this study are Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation, and Adam's theory of equity. These theories help to determine the factors of motivation that help to retain employees in the workplace. Although each of the alternative theories have potential relevance to the study, Herzberg's two-factor theory is the most relevant to the development of strategies to increase call center retention.

### ***Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs***

In 1943, Abraham Maslow argued that human needs are arranged based on their level of importance (Fisher & Royster, 2016). He underscored that one need is usually dependent upon the previous satisfaction of another more prominent need. The idea of this type of hierarchy can be never-ending because humans are developing new wants and needs. Maslow's ideas developed into his theory of a person's physiological needs as they entered a new stage of life (Fisher & Royster, 2016).

The hierarchy of needs theory was originally introduced by Maslow, an American psychologist, in 1943. The theory includes five levels of hierarchy: (a) physiological needs, (b) safety, (c) love/belonging, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization. The physiological needs fill the bottom of the pyramid as the most basic level of hierarchy and, proceeding upward, each level becomes more complex. Maslow describes Level 1, physiological needs, as the need for food, air, sleep, health, clothing, and other basic

needs which require money or resources to survive everyday life. Level 2, safety, is described as the need to improve or advance in the career through continued education, increased skills, or credentials. The job obtained due to the basic needs is vulnerable in some way and the need for safety is developed. Level 3, love/belonging, is described as the need to enjoy life and developing a happy environment. The income and overall quality of life have improved and the need to bring in additional income, retirement money, and protect interests such as family time, a peaceful working environment, and an enjoyable life and career become prominent. Esteem, Level 4 of Maslow's pyramid, is described as the motivation to further advance educationally or career-wise to become impressive to others. This could mean becoming an expert in the area of work and becoming notable within the field. This need is embodied by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Finally, Level 5 is self-actualization. This is described as the need to become a life-long learner, philanthropist, and/or mentor and obtain the financial security necessary for future retirement. This goal is attained by few (Schulte, 2018).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that each need must be met before a strong desire can be developed for a higher level of needs (Iman et al., 2016). This theory can be useful to evaluate the stages of a person's life as well as to evaluate retention. Although Maslow's hierarchy of needs can serve as a basis for analyzing retention, it does not contribute to the development of strategies to retain employees and therefore, was not selected as the conceptual framework for this study. Figure 2 is a visual representation of the hierarchy described in Maslow's theory.

**Figure 2***Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory*

*Note.* This triangle with five segments represents the stages of deficiency and growth needs discovered by Maslow in 1943, with employees' needs arranged in order of priority, beginning with the physiological needs as the first to motivate workplace behaviors, followed by safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and finally, self-actualization. Adapted from *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, by McLeod, 2018, Simply Psychology (<https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html#gsc.tab=0>).

***Expectancy Theory of Motivation***

In the 1960s seminal work, *Work and Motivation*, Victor Vroom presented the expectancy theory of motivation (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Vroom described the force of motivation as a result of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). It has been greatly debated whether the model can truly predict employees' work motivation and behavior (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Vroom believed that motivation is a process that governs choices based on what people believe will have the most desirable personal outcome (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018).

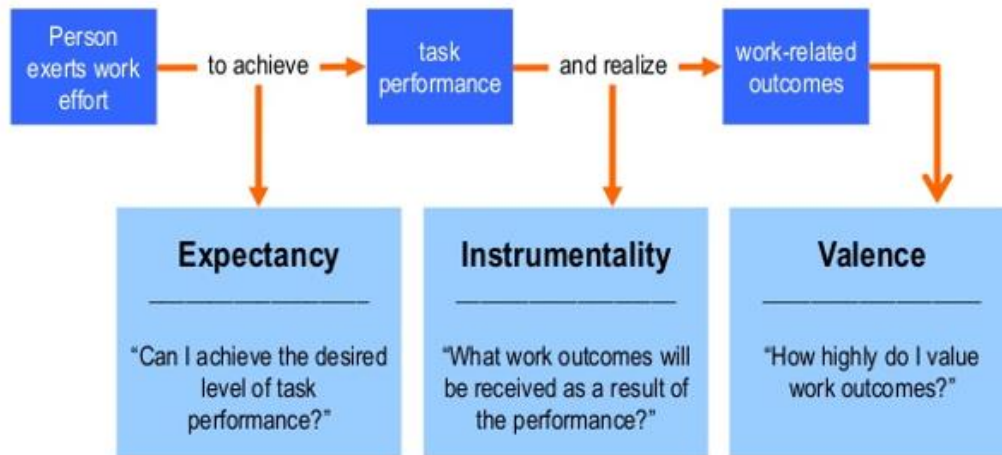
The expectancy-instrumentality-valence (EIV) model, also known as the expectancy theory of motivation, is a theory that analyzes the process of employee decision-making based upon a variety of behavioral alternatives. The model was designed to relate in mathematical form where performance ( $P$ ) is defined as the relationship of the result of motivational force ( $M$ ) and workers' ability ( $A$ ); Mathematically,  $P = f(M.A)$ . The EIV model suggests that motivation relies on the employees' expectations of their ability to perform and be rewarded as desired. The model serves as a demonstration of how motivation results from effort to expectancy, expectancy to instrumentality, and valence. Effort to expectancy, or performance expectancy ( $E \rightarrow P$ ), is the idea that employees perform more if they feel confident that their efforts will result in a desired outcome. Expectancy to instrumentality, or outcome expectancy ( $P \rightarrow O$ ) is the idea that employees perform more after they've received the desired outcome. Valence ( $V$ ) is the employees' appreciation of the desired outcome and results (Yehevis et al., 2016).

Vroom developed the following equation: Motivation = Expectancy \* Instrumentality \* Valence, to represent the emotional force that he believed to define workplace behavior. Each variable: expectancy ( $E$ ), instrumentality ( $I$ ), and valence ( $V$ ) was assigned a value:  $E$ : 0 to 1,  $I$ : 0 to 1, and  $V$ : -1 to 1. If any of the variables equal 0, then the motivational force is not present. If valence is negative, the employee wishes to avoid the reward and, in return, will underperform. The ability to determine behavior using Vroom's EIV Model depends on an employee's perception of each variable (Lloyd



& Mertens, 2018). According to Yehevis et al. (2016), this theory has received strong support from researchers.

Despite the theory's popularity and general agreeability, there has not been enough empirical evidence to determine its validity. According to Nimri et al. (2015), many scholars have criticized the theory, not fully rejecting it but requesting additions. The criticism has resulted in various new developments by researchers adding new elements to the theory. Nimri et al. (2015) discussed critics' concerns that the expectancy theory was too simple, did not include extrinsic and intrinsic factors, and did not accurately predict employee motivation in relation to reward. The expectancy theory was valuable but required an overwhelming amount of modifications (Nimri et al., 2015). Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation was not selected as the conceptual framework for this study because of the difficulty in determining its validity. The theory is based on the perceptions and various desires of employees. It also focuses on inspiring motivation through rewards but limits the exploration of other factors of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction, making it difficult to determine the most effective strategies to retain employees. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of Vroom's expectancy theory.

**Figure 3***Vroom's Expectancy Theory*

*Note.* The three large boxes represent the variables of the EIV model, and the three small boxes with arrows demonstrate the process of employee motivation according to Vroom in 1943. The steps shown are effort based on expectancy, then task performance based on instrumentality, followed by the outcome and valence of that outcome. Adapted from Expectancy theory - psych 484: Work attitudes and job motivation, by Lingle, 2015, *Confluence* (<https://wikispaces.psu.edu>)

*Adam's Theory of Equity*

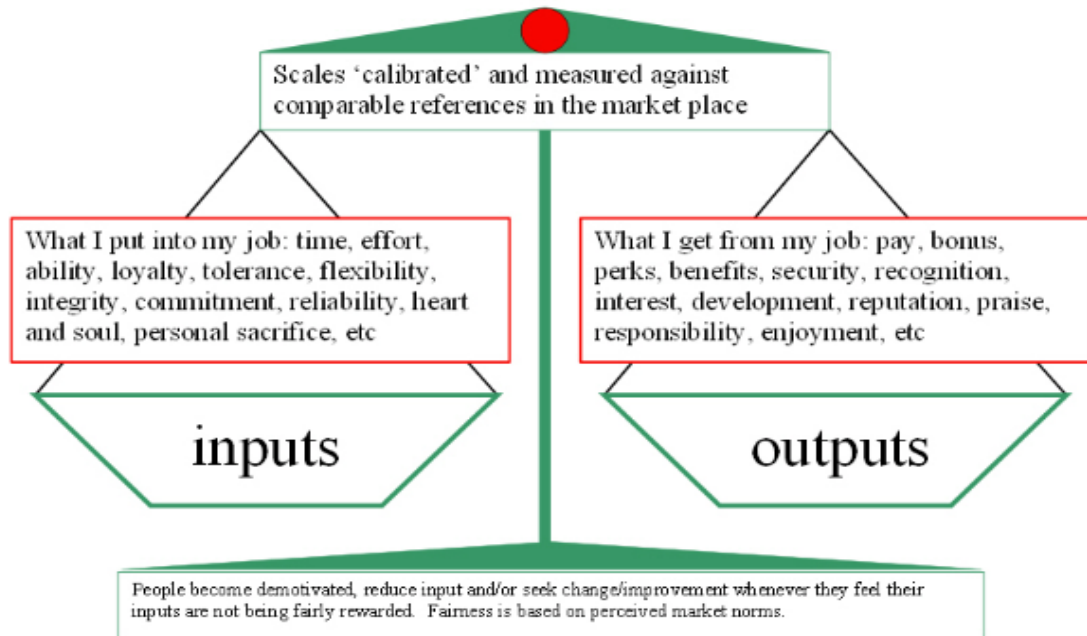
In 1963, workplace behavioral psychologist, John Stacey Adams, developed the Adams equity theory, or equity theory of motivation (Spencer & Sommer, 2018). The equity theory is a management-based theory to demonstrate fairness in exchanges as perceived by the employee (Spencer & Sommer, 2018). Employees who feel like their input is greater than their output, or like they are giving more than they are receiving, are

less likely put effort into their job performance. Adams specified that equity is based on subject perceptions which motivate behavior (Spencer & Sommer, 2018).

If employees feel there is fair equity within the exchange relationship, they become content, resulting in positive perceptions and behaviors. For example, employers must acknowledge employee outputs as contributors to company performance, through compensation or appreciation, which may motivate continued employee productivity (Burrai et al., 2015). When there is no perception of equity, a desire evolves to take immediate action to make the situation equitable. The model also acknowledges that there is a difference in individuals' definition of rewards (Burrai et al., 2015).

The terms *equity*, *equality*, *fairness*, *justice*, and *social comparison* are concepts introduced by the equity theory that can be perceived differently, which complicate motivation (Holbrook & Chappell, 2019). Equity is the comparison of the ratio of inputs and outputs to that of others. Equality is the act of treating people the same. Social comparison is the examination of outputs received by others. Justice is the moral requirements and fairness is the response as a result of the perceptions of the requirements (Holbrook & Chappell, 2019). All of these are factors that influence work motivation. In equity, as long as contributions are different, the rewards can be different. For example, someone who studies longer might make higher grades than someone who studies less. Fairness is gauged through social comparison. When employees feel like they are being treated fairly, motivation stays high and performance is as expected and desired. When employees feel that they are being treated unfairly it results in undesirable

behaviors to restore fairness (Holbrook & Chappell, 2019). The equity theory was not selected as the conceptual framework for this study because the validity relies on the perceptions of employees and that does not contribute to the development of effective strategies to increase retention. Figure 4 gives a visual representation of Adam's equity theory.

**Figure 4***Adams's Theory of Equity*

*Note.* The scale displays the balance of inputs and outputs to maintain employee work motivation, as described by John Stacey Adams in 1963. The input pan shows all that is included in an employee's job input and the output pan shows what the employee gets in return. Employees decrease their inputs when they begin to feel like the outputs being received are unfair. Adapted from Equity theory- psych 484: Work attitudes and job motivation, by Redmond, 2016, *Confluence* (<https://wikispaces.psu.edu>).

## **Turnover, Retention, and Organizational Performance**

According to the research by Bhatnagar (2007), 46% of managers consider employee turnover a leading issue and concern. Studies have shown that the highest rate of turnover begins directly after training. Sixty percent of call center industry employees are expected to leave 6 months after they start (Bhatnagar, 2007). Organizations invest in employee recruitment, training, and development more with time. Losing valuable employees affects direct and indirect costs and causes a loss in human and social capital (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018). When an organization's most valuable talents leave the company, it can cost organizations 1.5 times the previous employees' salary to find a replacement. The replacement expense includes recruiting, hiring, and training new employees. Turnover costs up to 40% of an organization's annual earnings. Often, an employee does not only leave with his or her knowledge, skills, and expertise, but also leaves with networks and relationships that were built to increase production and efficiency (Cross et al., 2018).

The problem of low retention is a challenge for call centers because replacing employees with newly hired employees increases the organization's operational expenses due to the cost of recruiting and training new hires (Ahmad et al., 2018). Retention is a voluntary strategy by an organization to develop an environment that keeps employees engaged for the long term (Ahmad et al., 2018). Retention policies are centered on identifying employees who are committed and retaining them for as long as it is mutually beneficial. Factors of retention include implementing growth opportunities through

training and development, employee-manager relationships, and job characteristics that increase job satisfaction. Increasing job satisfaction reduces employee turnover (Sabbagha et al., 2018). Organizational leaders need to retain employees and ensure that they contribute toward organizational success to receive a return on their investment. A relationship exists between intention to leave and call center retention factors (Nelesh et al., 2018). There is also a relationship between the lack of employee motivation and engagement and employee intent-to-leave (Nelesh et al., 2018).

### **Job Satisfaction, Job Dissatisfaction, and Turnover Intent**

Gorde (2018) defined a call center as an organization that operates virtually or physically in which employees conduct company business via telephone using computer-automation. The call center industry has remained without change of the past decade (Gorde, 2018). Employees suffer from high pressure, low empowerment, high stress, consistent monitoring, low motivation, and the intent to leave; but facing challenges in doing so (Gorde, 2018). Gorde questioned whether call center leaders have a vision to enhance the environment for employees as well as for customers. Customers struggle with understanding and using automated services and battling with agents who do not possess the appropriate skills needed to resolve their issues. Employees who cannot resolve customer issues will attempt to transfer the call in an effort to maintain daily performance goals or call quotas and, in return, maintain their bonus compensation (Gorde, 2018). The constant changes in technology have allowed people to enjoy services that are speedy, efficient, and low in cost. Communication has expanded to emails, text

messages, and social media methods. Customer expectations have increased due to these environmental changes (Gorde, 2018). Call center managers have to develop coping strategies, due to the increased demand, which have often been at the expense of the employees. Changes within the procedures have been implemented without them being thought through and this results in added stress to employees.

The characteristics of the call center industry described by Gorde (2018) include high stress, high turnover, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction. Call centers are characterized by a high level of job dissatisfaction due to the low skill requirement of the industry. Call center employees have to work long hours, often work night shifts that are not susceptible to change, meet high target performance goals, and struggle with a loss of identity (Gorde, 2018). The employees have to sit for several hours a day and conduct scripted conversations with customers who are sometimes upset and irate. Managers record employee time, measure performance, and automatically input into performance trackers for praise or disapproval on a consistent basis. Employees must learn how to juggle listening, watching, and speaking without breaks. These factors of call center work life contribute to employee stress and dissatisfaction. Call center employees suffer attrition in the industry due to health risks such as sleeping disorders, voice loss, hearing problems, digestive disorder, and vision problems, which also effect performance and job satisfaction (Gorde, 2018). Due to the importance of customers being able to access someone within 24 hours when needing services, call center employees deal with high and conflicting demands from the organization, their supervisors, as well as their



customers. Gorde (2018) conducted research that showed feelings of low job control, low job complexity, and high uncertainty within call center employees. Working conditions have a negative impact on employees in the call center industry because they suffer from emotional dissonance, exhaustion and low job satisfaction (Gorde, 2018).

Call center managers who seek to transform their call centers and improve the organization as a benefit to customers as well as employees, should first understand the true value of call center employees and how they impact the customer. This understanding will inspire them to seek effective strategies to increase retention and progress as a company (Gorde, 2018). Employee turnover has been classified into two variables: voluntary turnover and involuntary turnover (Abouria & Othman, 2017). Voluntary turnover is described as the employee individually making a decision to part from an organization, to include retirement. Involuntary turnover refers to the decision to part from the employee by the organization, including termination, layoff, discharge and other methods of parting ways. At times, involuntary turnover might anticipate or prevent voluntary turnover. Researchers found that job satisfaction is the largest determining factor of the intent to turnover. The process of turnover intention begins with the consideration of parting from the existing work situation, juggling the possibility of gaining a new working opportunity, and engaging with the intent to desist (Abouria & Othman, 2017). Call center managers who do not implement the right strategies to reduce turnover suffer the consequences of managing employees who become increasingly frustrated with the organization and develop the intent to turnover (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Turnover intention is the employee's pending decision to depart from the organization and pursue an employment opportunity elsewhere (Dhanpat et al., 2018). This decision is prompted by employee job dissatisfaction, which can stem from: unsatisfactory working conditions, a lack of or limited implementation of work-life balance, low compensation, low opportunity for growth, poor supervision, and the work itself not being fulfilling; all working conditions at which commonly characterize the call center environment (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Studies showed that a decrease in voluntary employee turnover is largely due to executives' abilities to implement strategies that increase job satisfaction and decrease job dissatisfaction (Iman et al., 2016). To effectively implement these types of strategies, executives must understand the underlying causes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace (Iman et al., 2016). Herzberg understood these factors and outlined them in his two-factor theory. Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011), defined intention to turnover as an employee's behavioral attitude to depart from an organization, and defined turnover as the actual departure from the organization. The authors argued that job satisfaction has a strong impact on turnover intention. Employees that have a higher level of job satisfaction contribute to the organization's ability to reach performance goals and organizational objectives. Employees are no longer working strictly for compensation, but they desire fulfillment, challenge, advancement opportunities, training, work-life balance, fair wages, and more. Failure to comply leads to employees' intent to turnover. Some call center managers are unable to meet those high demands of employees because

they must first understand the reasoning behind employees' intent to leave in to develop effective strategies to change their intentions (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

By implementing effective strategies to decrease employees' intent to leave, call center managers also decrease the cost associated with turnover (Dhanpat et al., 2018). The largest investment of any organization is the staff, so it is important that managers take on the task of motivating employees to perform at peak levels (Iman et al., 2016). Staff members who are motivated have job satisfaction and perform well. Job satisfaction is necessary to attract and retain top performing employees (Iman et al., 2016). Abouraia and Othman (2017), analyzed the relationships between job satisfaction and employee turnover intent. Job satisfaction has become a diverse theory in management literature and is most commonly interpreted as the degree to which an employee is content or unsatisfied with their work. Job satisfaction consists of intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements stem from rewards for accomplishments, recognition, skill improvement, and increased job responsibility. Extrinsic elements originate from healthy employee-manager relationships, positive working environments, negotiation, techniques and service treatments (Abouraia & Othman, 2017). Job satisfaction reflects the feelings that employees have regarding the job (Fareed & Jan, 2016). Job satisfaction is an employee's overall attitude regarding their job (Fareed & Jan, 2016). An employee will have a positive attitude about a job if there is a high level of job satisfaction. Bakotic (2016) analyzed the relationship between job satisfaction and work performance. The most effective organizations are mostly effective due to having employees who are

satisfied with their jobs (Bakotic, 2016). Job dissatisfaction not only had a negative impact on organizational effectiveness, but also on customer satisfaction and employee turnover (Bakotic, 2016). Job satisfaction positively impacts performance, employee engagement, organizational profit, workplace accidents, and customer satisfaction, market performance, financial performance, higher return on assets and increased earnings per share. Contributors to job satisfaction are knowledge and skill enhancement opportunities, and the presence of expertise. Other factors of job satisfaction, as described by Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011), were those directly related to the employee, such as (a) loyalty toward the organization, (b) work experiences, (c) age and gender, and (d) education. Employees retain their jobs longer when they have job satisfaction. Loyalty towards employees gives satisfied employees a sense of obligation to stay with the company. Work experiences impact the employee because they determine how the employee responds to their work. Age is a factor because authors argued that older employees are found to be more satisfied and content with their jobs than younger employees (Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011). The authors added that women had a higher rate of job satisfaction than men, making gender a factor in employee job satisfaction (Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011). Education contributes to job satisfaction because authors observed that graduates of career-centered studies had a higher rate of job satisfaction than other graduate employees (Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011). Job satisfaction has a significant impact on employee motivation, engagement, and quality.

It is important to concentrate on both the motivation and hygiene factors as they have both been discovered to positively and significantly relate to increased levels of job satisfaction (Khanna, 2015). Job satisfaction is essential for organizations because it could result in behaviors that determine the efficiency development of the organization. The determination of job satisfaction can be a reliable forecaster of turnover intentions in the workplace (Abouraia & Othman, 2017). Employees who have job-satisfaction feel as though they have succeeded (Iman et al., 2016). Human resources managers play a major role in creating and implementing strategic HR practices that help to build trust within the workplace and increase job satisfaction (Bakotic, 2016). The awareness of team members' goals to quit allows managers the ability to regulate, avoid behaviors, and overturn the decision. Organizations with high intent-to-turnover are less productive and less profitable. Researchers have reported considerable relationships between job satisfaction and the intent to turnover (Abouraia & Othman, 2017). Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) further argued that human resources managers who are committed, innovative, productive and motivated to address employee job satisfaction, work, and organizational commitment are key factors that can make a difference in a negative working environment leading to job dissatisfaction and intent to turnover. Managers who are fully committed to the development of their employees, encouraging engagement and organizational commitment ensure the success, survival, and ability to compete as an organization. The scholars conducted a study to gain increased understanding of the

relationships between employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment and the intent to turnover.

Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) identified the results of job dissatisfaction to be absenteeism, turnover, low production, early retirement, and decreases in organizational commitment, overall health, and life satisfaction. Absenteeism impacts the organization because employees begin to miss days of work or report to work late, resulting in decreased production. Turnover is a direct result of job dissatisfaction because employees who are unhappy with their jobs eventually depart from the organization. Employees who feel that they are being treated fairly and would be unable to find a job that offers the same type of satisfaction are more likely to stay, while employees who examine the well-being of the economy and believe that there are better opportunities out there will develop the intent to turnover. Early retirement is a factor because if employees have developed a negative attitude in regards to their job and have already established the means to retire, will make the decision to retire early. Employees who are unhappy in their jobs also become unwilling to put forth effort into their work. These employees are less committed to investing into the organization. The mental and physical health of employees declines due to job dissatisfaction and could result in decreased ability to learn new skills and an increased risk of work-related accidents. The authors continued by identifying the positive relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction, arguing that as one of the variables decline, so does the other (Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011).

Ajayi (2018) focused on the relationship between stress and job satisfaction to highlight the common result of voluntary employee turnover. The scholar identified stress as a common and rising challenge for employers due to its negative impacts on production and contributions to error rates, poor quality in work, high turnover, absenteeism for various reasons, and decreased employee and organizational performance. Components of job dissatisfaction and stress include a lack of support from managerial staff, high work load and increased demand, workplace relationships, lack of work-life balance, superior reprimand for poor performance, and more. Stress is often unavoidable and effects almost all industries and professions. Change is often a cause of stress and it is much more common in employees on the low in of the organizational structure due to lack of control in relation to their working circumstances. Positive circumstances, such as promotions, transfers, and more can also result in job stress. Ajayi (2018) described stress in accordance to various scholars as the condition of an employee when confronted with possibility, limitations, or demands in relationship to their desires and at which the result is both unclear and important. Ajayi (2018) added that stress is the result of assigned job duties that have a negative impact on employees. Workplace stress is harmful to the organization because of the adverse effects on employee performance. Researchers determined that work stress and job dissatisfaction have a destructive force on employee performance, which highly contributes to turnover intent. Baseman et al. (2018) investigated call centers around the United States and how the stress of learning new technologies and procedures impacted employee retention. The authors discovered

that taking on new initiatives within a workforce that is already high in stress will increase stress, decrease work performance, decrease employee retention, and negatively impact workplace morale with the development of negative coping strategies. Human resources managers have to understand the organizational risks that are involved when taking on new initiatives within the presently stressful call center industry (Baseman et al., 2018).

Echchakoui (2016) explored the impact of personality traits and workplace identification on the intent to turnover of inbound versus outbound call center agents. The author identified a lower level of organizational identification in inbound call center employees than in outbound employees. The author also found that turnover intent was lower in inbound call center employees than outbound call center employees. Emotional stability and conscientiousness were determined to be two personality traits that positively influence organizational identification and can improve call center manager's recruiting and selection strategies for all call center positions.

### **Strategies to Increase Retention and Organizational Performance**

Pierre and Tremblay (2011) identified the call center retention rates as being over 70% with retention being the leading business problem for call centers today, and continued to mention that call center employees have no desire to stay and do not feel a sense of involvement or engagement within the industry. The authors explored factors to increase retention within the call center, to include: recruited population, relations with clients, material conditions, rhythm and schedule, interest and diversity of tasks,



managerial control, future prospects, salary, appreciation, and call center image. Human resources management is the most important contributor to organizational success. Tied with innovation, commitment, imagination and faith, human resources managers can discover the best tools and strategies to increase employee motivation and performance. Providing such an organizational environment consists of effective factors of employee motivation as described in Herzberg's two-factor theory such as training, fair and competitive compensation and the regulation of career paths (Somaie et al., 2017). Bozionelos (2008) tested the relationship between motivation, opportunity, and ability using various models to uncover the answers to increasing call center retention. The author discovered results showing that knowledge-sharing and the lack of time allotted in the call center environment for knowledge-sharing can cause challenges in employee motivation, opportunity and ability. Bozionelos (2008) also determined that if motivation and ability lacked, knowledge-sharing often did not occur; and if there was no time for knowledge-sharing, motivation and skill were irrelevant.

Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) added a few suggestions to increase employee job satisfaction and contribute to strategies to retain employees. The scholars mentioned factors analyzed in Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory, to include pay wages, supervision, advancement opportunities, the work itself, colleagues, and the working environment. They discussed the importance of compensation in relation to job satisfaction by explaining that money contributes to employees basic and advanced needs to obtain satisfaction. Nelesh et al. (2018) added that compensation is the highest

contributor toward intention to leave in the call center environment. Dhanpat et al. (2018) analyzed strategies to increase retention and began with compensation as the leading concept. Compensation plays a large role in attracting employees as well as retaining them and increasing their commitment to the organization. Compensation is not just the hourly or salary pay that is given to the employee in return for their contributions to the organization, but it also includes benefits such as bonuses, commission, overtime, profit-sharing, tuition reimbursement and more. Compensation could also include non-cash benefits such as an employee car or house paid for by the organization, stock options, insurance, retirement, and more. A characteristic of the call center industry is low pay and authors added that the industry comprised younger generation employees who are in the early stages of employment. Low compensation usually results in job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and employee turnover (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Researchers, Sinha and Trivedi (2014), mentioned that the key to the success of an organization lies in employee engagement. High levels of employee engagement result in increased rates of retention, improved performance, and increased customer and stakeholder loyalty and satisfaction. According to the authors, employee engagement is determined by intrinsic and extrinsic factors of workplace satisfaction, such as Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (Sinha & Trivedi, 2014). Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) further explained that supervision is a key factor because employees who deem their supervisor to be approachable and more responsive in reaction to problems within the workplace are more transparent, leading to better manager-employee relationships.

Advancement opportunities contribute to job satisfaction because adverse behavior occurs when employees do not see the possibility of promotion within a company. Dhanpat et al., (2018) also identified the need to provide opportunities for employees to advance in their careers (Dhanpat et al., 2018). This is important because when employees feel valued by the organization, they in turn remain committed. Employees desire the ability to apply the skills and knowledge that they spent time to acquire. They also want to be equipped with the right knowledge and skills necessary to exceed their performance goals with effectiveness, and are satisfied with the idea of knowing what they are doing in relation to their jobs. Promotional frustration increases negative attitudes of employees toward the organization (Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011). The contribution of the work itself to job satisfaction is based upon Herzberg's mention of the need to have a job that is fulfilling.

Gorde (2018) also provided suggestions to increase job satisfaction for call center employees. The researcher discussed the need to offer and require various trainings to include: procedural training, product-knowledge training, effective communication training, knowledge-based training, as well as training on increasing employees' soft skills. Gorde (2018) added that these types of trainings will increase job performance and improve the rate for call resolution and abandonment. The author added that employees should strive to beat boredom by developing new projects and challenges, mentoring colleagues, cross-training, building positive relationships, and keeping things in perspective. In conclusion, Gorde (2018) mentioned that although call center employees

largely influence customer satisfaction, the level of call center employee satisfaction is increasingly low. The author continued to stress the importance of keeping employee job satisfaction high in an effort to decrease the rate of turnover in the call center industry and emphasized that factors of job satisfaction in the call center industry included the organizations commitment to employee development, employee independence, work-life balance, minimized and managed workplace stress, a positive working environment, and peer and managerial support (Gorde, 2018). Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) emphasized the importance of colleagues in the workplace and mentioned that employees who feel isolated from certain social groups in the workplace become dissatisfied with their job. The authors added that physical working conditions and work-life balance help employees to work in comfort and enjoy flexibility while feeling valued as individuals.

Zito et al. (2018) also examined the roles that contribute to call center turnover intentions. Researchers studied emotional dissonance, job autonomy and supervisory support in relation to job satisfaction and turnover intention. Study results confirmed that job satisfaction is the mediator between job resources and employee turnover. Emotional dissonance decreases job satisfaction and increases employee turnover. Feyerabend et al. (2018) found a relationship between emotional satisfaction and turnover in all industries, but specifically focused on the turnover affect within the call center industry. Study results revealed that emotional intelligence positively impacts job satisfaction within the call center industry and emotional intelligence served as a mediator between job satisfaction and employee turnover. Scholars added leadership and development practices

that call center executives could implement to increase emotional intelligence. Call center work can be repetitive, lack innovation, creativity and flexibility, which are also factors of job content that could lead to stress and boredom. The authors, Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011), identified job content as an influencer on employee intent to leave and emphasized the importance of the overall nature of the job. For example, an employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities may not match the requirements of the position that he or she holds within the organization. This can lead to workplace stress, frustration and dissatisfaction, which could directly impact the intent to turnover. The call center industry is also driven by specific goals and targets that are consistently monitored by managers. Agents require almost perfect scores related to the number of calls that are taken, accuracy and efficiency in performance, as well as resolving customer issues positively even when the callers are a bit verbally abusive (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Ajayi (2018) acknowledged that there are strategies organizational managers could use to reduce work stress and manage stress when it occurs. The author suggested role clarification, a fair and sensible workload, and a focus on work-life balance are all ways to reduce workplace stress that causes low performance and voluntary employee turnover. The author added that effective employee management, positive manager-employee relationships and communications, healthy working environments and effective work are other factors that may contribute to the limitation of workplace stress. Ajayi (2018) recommended that managers should be proactive in minimizing stress by providing satisfactory support to subordinates, minimizing on-the-job conflict, improving

the efficiency of work-loads, effectively managing expectations, offering adequate training, rewards and counseling to employees in an effort to increase their job performance and job satisfaction.

Another characteristic of the call center industry is the lack of growth opportunity which directly impacts employees' intent to leave (Dhanpat et al., 2018). The scholars continued to address the need for effective and positive supervision within the call center industry. Call center industries are also noted for the management styles that are implemented. Managers listen in on recorded phone calls and keep detailed records that leave employees feeling uncertain, uncomfortable, and emotional during work, resulting in job dissatisfaction. Employees need support from their direct managers in reference to performance, rewards, recognition, constructive criticism, and more. Feedback that is frequent and done the right way helps to retain employees because they feel a sense of support from their supervisors. It builds a sense of trust that increases employees' willingness to perform at their very best. Supervision reduces workplace stress and makes employees feel a sense of belonging. Building an effective and positive manager-employee relationship shifts the concentration from monetary factors to other factors of employee satisfaction, such as organizational support (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Dhanpat et al. (2018) identified career advancement as an important tool for increasing retention in the call center industry. This refers to the organization's commitment to the implementation of practices that increase the knowledge and skills of the current employees and increasing job security. Offering career advancement not only

benefits the employees but it helps the organization to develop and maintain competitive advantage within the industry. The authors described two types of career advancement (a) internal career advancement, and (b) external career advancement. Internal advancement is the development of the employee that increases their commitment to the organization. External advancement is the giving of new benefits such as raises, promotions, and other forms of advancement that keep the employee motivated and committed. Employees who believe that they have a chance of advancing within the organization perform at their best this could lower the chances of them developing turnover intentions. Employees are not often happy or content being in the same job for an extended period of time. This is where call centers struggle. Call center work is routinised and does not require specific acquired skills to advance from one role to another. Having a lack of growth opportunity, employees become dissatisfied with their jobs and begin to seek more of a challenge elsewhere.

In addition, Dhanpat et al. (2018) stressed the importance of work-life balance. The researchers referred to work-life balance as the balancing of work and family life without conflict. They continued to describe work-life balance as the integration of work responsibilities and non-work responsibilities. Work-life balance has a positive influence on employees' intent to leave. Employees who are provided a healthy work-life balance feel a stronger sense of commitment to their organizations because they believe that their employers care for them personally. Flexibility in a work schedule is important for employees to tend to the needs of their families or of themselves. The authors advised

that there should be policies in place that allow for time away from work. Call centers are additionally characterized by the longer work hours required to meet deadlines that conflict with the ability to have a healthy work-life balance. It leaves employees exhausted and developing the intent to turnover. Call center agents have to have a sense of hardiness and career adaptability to comply with the time demands of the call center environment, which is not likely for many employees (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Dhanpat et al. (2018) discussed the need to not only seek individuals with the right skills needed to work in the call center industry, but to follow up with strategies to keep those individuals from leaving and take the appropriate measures to keep employees satisfied. Developing innovative strategies to retain employees, creating a positive and healthy working environment, offering competitive benefits and compensation, and limiting micro-management help call center organizations to gain a competitive advantage in the industry. In addition, the implementation of training and development, trustworthy manager-employee relationships, fair performance feedback, and succession planning help to increase retention. Job security is another strategy identified by Dhanpat et al. (2018) to help retain employees in the call center industry. The scholars identified short-term contracts as an additional characteristic of call center organizations. They added that employees with a more permanent contract are more likely to commit to the organization for a longer period of time. The authors went on to emphasize that while implementing creative retention strategies will help to increase job satisfaction and motivation of employees, it is not guaranteed to make an employee stay with the



company. Other factors could play into an employee's intent to leave, such as negative feelings toward a co-worker or manager (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Ataliç et al. (2016) examined the effect of fully applying Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene factors in the workplace and how it contributes to employee motivation. The authors analyzed the effects of applying motivator and hygiene factors through the collection of data using several statistical procedures. The authors determined findings that hygiene and motivator factors contributed to job satisfaction. Ananthram et al. (2018) discovered that high performance working systems positively impact job satisfaction, employee engagement, and employee well-being. The researchers also identified that job satisfaction positively impacts presenteeism. With this discovery in mind, along with the challenges of call center retention, the researchers suggested that the adoption of a more strategic method of human resources management through high-performance working systems could be a potential solution. This approach could enhance employee perceptions and positively impact employee retention. Matei and Abrudan (2016) suggested that theories of employee motivation often neglect cultural factors. Cultural values impact employee behavior and workplace motivation because they shape the way situations are perceived interpreted by the individuals. Although Herzberg's two-factor theory is based on the American culture and does not take other cultures into consideration, the theory is valid in that the sources of workplace satisfaction and dissatisfaction are different.

Deasy et al. (2016) evaluated the relationship between mental status prior to call center employment and employee retention after the first six months of employment. The

results and findings of the test revealed a relationship between the age of employees and retention after six months of employment. Studies show that employees 25 years and older tend to be early-leavers in the call center industries. This demonstrates that there is room for further research to uncover the reasons employees starting at that age do not tend to maintain a career within the call center industry. Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory, or two-factor theory, can be used to increase awareness of the reasons these particular employees to become early-leavers (Deasy et al., 2016). Call center managers should aim to only hire employees that meet the long-term needs of the company as they are 87% less likely to resign than the others (Bhatnagar, 2007). Palwasha et al. (2018) added that finding a good job-person match is a good method to avoid the impact of high turnover.

### **Transition**

In Section 1, I presented a problem of low call center employee retention for further research, discussed the choice of the qualitative multiple case study research method and design, outlined specific interview questions and criteria for study participants, identified Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory as the theoretical framework for the study, and presented a thorough review of the literature on this topic. In Section 2, I provide the basis for research along with a detailed plan for data collection and analysis, and a description of strategies that I used to ensure reliability and validity in the research. In Section 3, I present the research outcomes with a presentation of findings, implications for social change, and recommendations for further research on the topic.

## Section 2: The Project

The focus of my study was on strategies to retain call center employees. Call centers' extreme turnover rates demonstrate poor people-management practices and the unwillingness of managers to compromise, negatively affecting the quality of customer service (Nelesh et al., 2018). Turnover rates also indicate high levels of stress and employee burnout. For call-center managers to develop strategies to retain employees, it is essential for them to understand these factors (Nelesh et al., 2018). In this section, I describe the selected approach for exploring strategies to retain call center employees. Key topics discussed in Section 2 are the role of the researcher, the participants, the research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, and data collection instruments, techniques, and analysis.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that call center executives use to retain employees. The target population comprised three call center companies within the state of South Carolina that successfully retain employees. Study participants included call center managers, executives, and other qualified representatives who have demonstrated success in retaining employees at each company. The implications for positive social change include the potential to decrease workplace stress and increase job retention for community members who choose a career path in the call center industry. An increase in career sustainability could impact the rates of employment and contribute to community wealth. Other implications for positive change

include increased job opportunities to enhance individual financial independence while increasing organizational profitability which may encourage company leaders to give back to communities in terms of charitable donations.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My primary role as the researcher was to collect and analyze data from research participants. Cumyn et al. (2018) identified the researcher as a thoughtful practitioner, technician, and the protector of research participants. The researchers' perception of their role and their understanding of the stipulations mandated by research ethics boards are paramount in determining the ethical conduct of the research (Cumyn et al., 2018).

Although I have previously worked as a processing specialist in a call center, I did not have any business affiliations with the research participants or organizations. I avoided bias and remained neutral while conducting research and analyzing data by objectively choosing research participants and selecting companies and departments that I have not worked for in the past. To ensure that data collection remained unbiased and participants were calm and uncoerced during interviews, I used a specific interview protocol for all participants that I did not deviate from. Cumyn et al. (2018) described member checking as one of the most common methods to verify data accuracy. I applied member checking following data collection to ensure that I had the intended interpretations of participants' responses.

The *Belmont Report*, which was finalized in 1979, serves as the ethical basis for conducting research and protecting the rights of human research participants using the

following three guidelines: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Miracle, 2016). In compliance with the *Belmont Report* protocol, data collection began only after the receipt of approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees ethical compliance. The role of the researcher in relation to ethics and the principles of the *Belmont Report* is to provide accurate and efficient information to prospective participants and give them the right to make their own decision and have that decision respected. It is also the researcher's responsibility to have safeguards put in place to protect the right of children, patients and mentally ill persons to make an individual decision. The researcher must not harm participants and must ensure that research conducted increases benefit and decreases potential harm. If there is potential harm affiliated, participants must be made fully aware and must make an informed decision to participate, confirmed by a written notice of understanding and consent. Lastly, the researcher must ensure that all participants are treated fairly and not discriminated against (Miracle, 2016).

### **Participants**

The eligibility criteria for selecting interview participants were as follows: (a) participants must be call center executives, managers, or team leaders; and (b) participants must have successfully created and implemented strategies to increase call center retention. I used purposive sampling as a strategy to identify a minimum of four call center leaders who have successful retention strategies within a minimum of four distinguished call center companies. Purposive sampling means the researcher uses their

own best judgement to select samples that can be used to answer the research question (Saunders et al., 2016).

To establish a working relationship with the identified participants, I received a letter of cooperation from each organization that provided me with access to call center executives, managers, and team leaders who have proven to implement successful retention strategies. I provided prospective participants with the interview protocol to look over in advance to increase comfort and understanding. Flick (2018) emphasized the importance of clearly defining the context of the investigation by preselecting the procedures as well as developing narrow and specific questions. The researcher should develop an interview protocol that serves as a guide for specific open-ended questions that will be asked by the researcher to increase knowledge on the question of research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Prior to conducting interviews and following the approval of the IRB, I studied each of the participants' nature in reference to the phenomenon in question to guarantee that they met the criteria of eligibility to participate in this study.

### **Research Method and Design**

The validity of a study largely relies on the researcher's ability to select the most appropriate research method and design. The research method and design are the researcher's general and specific plans for how to answer the research question (Saunders et al., 2016). The approach selected usually depends on how well the research question can be fully investigated (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Therefore, it is the research question that gives researchers an idea of how the study should be defined (Flick, 2018).

A researcher should never modify the question of research to make it suitable with the desired approach, but instead the approach should be selected by analyzing the best way to address the question of research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The three research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Saunders et al., 2016).

### **Research Method**

The use of the qualitative method was appropriate to answer the central research question in this study. The qualitative method offers a subjective, interpretive, and insightful method of examining the question of research (Barnham, 2015) and exploring a phenomenon from the perspectives of research participants by analyzing their feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). The qualitative method involves critical thinking of the conceptual methodology and reflection of information gained from study participants (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). As such, the qualitative method reflects the constructivist paradigm, which is based on the subjective analyses of the actual realities of research participants based on their multiple perspectives (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). By contrast, Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) described the quantitative method as a reflection of the postpositivist paradigm. The quantitative method is based on the idea that the research question can be answered through logical inferences made following direct observation. The quantitative researcher uses a hypothesis and a theory to test by analyzing the relationships between specific variables. In the quantitative method, the researcher examines cause and effect and aims to either prove a theory correct or disprove the theory (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). However, this study did not require the

examination of relationships between specific variables and did not require numerical evidence to test a specific theory, so the quantitative method would not have been appropriate. The mixed method of research is the combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques and procedures (Saunders et al., 2016). Mixed method researchers use numerical data analysis followed by explorative analysis. The use of numerical analysis would not allow the full exploration of the phenomenon; therefore, the mixed method was not appropriate for this study. The only appropriate research method for this study was the qualitative method.

### **Research Design**

Common and traditional designs for the qualitative approach include narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Narrative research is the study of the actual lives of individuals and the re-writing of those stories by the researchers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Narrative design allows exploration of individual perspectives but does not explore the specific phenomenon of the organization and, therefore, was not appropriate for this study. Ethnography is the examination of learned behaviors and patterns in a particular cultural group (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). The study of group behaviors and patterns would not have answered the research question for this study, so it was not the appropriate design to use. Phenomenology is a research design in which the researcher attempts to gain a deep understanding of the experiences of participants by gathering descriptions from the individuals and separating their own personal experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). This design was not



appropriate for this study because the purpose of my research was to learn strategies that increase retention in the call center industry.

The most appropriate design to explore strategies to retain employees in the call center industry is the case study design because there was an exploration of the specific phenomenon of low retention in the call center industry and strategies used to increase retention. Case study design allows a variety of data—including an individual, organization, community, institution, venture, and more—to be integrated into a study for researchers to explore a phenomenon (Flick, 2018). Whereas a single case study focuses on one company, a multiple case study focuses on replication of findings to produce strong support (Saunders et al., 2016). I selected a multiple case study to explore strategies to increase retention in companies within the call center industry to gain data saturation. I ensured data saturation by focusing on replication of findings and conducting interviews and member-checking until I gained minimal new information to address the research question. Saunders et al. (2016) described data saturation as an occurrence when data being collected provides little to no new information to the study.

### **Population and Sampling**

Conducting a multiple case study may result in an increase in the study's strength and support with the production of similar results across cases (Saunders et al., 2016). The selection of five call center leaders in the Southeast region was necessary and appropriate. The criteria for selecting interview participants were as follows: (a) participants must be call center executives, managers, or team leaders; and (b)

participants must have successfully created and implemented strategies to increase call center retention. A case study should be rigorous, trustworthy, and confirmable, resulting in higher research quality (Hollweck, 2015); therefore, the size of the call centers in this study's population should also vary to give the study a more unrestrained quality of research. I sampled small call centers as well as large call center corporations in this study to provide the trustworthiness that is necessary in the data.

In this study, I used a purposive sampling method by selecting four call center leaders, each from a different call center company, that have successfully implemented strategies to retain employees. I determined that participants have successfully implemented strategies to retain employees by asking pre-qualifying questions that include a request for the company's current rate of retention. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, is the use of the researcher's own judgment to select the appropriate cases that will meet the goal of answering the research question (Saunders et al., 2016). In qualitative research, theoretical sampling is used, in which ideas for sampling are developed logically throughout the data collection process based upon the information that is still needed (Flick, 2018). I used purposive sampling with the flexibility of using theoretical sampling if information was still needed following data collection.

I used purposeful sampling to explore real-life experiences as they were revealed. I selected a sample to represent the larger population in the pursuit of establishing generalization of the study's findings (Flick, 2018). The organizations selected to

participate in this study were call center companies of all sizes. It is important that the researcher selects key participants who hold the information necessary to provide insight into the question of research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Therefore, the only participants selected for this study were individuals who had experience with the phenomenon in question and have successfully implemented strategies to retain call center employees.

The interview setting should be a place that is neutral, private, and limits distractions to make participants comfortable enough to provide quality feedback (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). I used a quiet and comfortable setting to conduct interviews private and with minimal noise to ensure quality recording. Behaviors were also monitored during interviews. Researchers can reduce bias by refraining from making comments, non-verbal sounds or gestures, and remaining polite and listening attentively during the interview (Saunders et al., 2016).

### **Ethical Research**

Researchers must always first obtain the informed consent of potential interviewees prior to conducting interviews (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Consent gives the researcher permission to access the human subject for the purpose of research and ensures that research is voluntary (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Prior to obtaining this consent, researchers should discuss with potential interviewees the purpose of the interview, the time that will be required, when findings should be received, and clarify questions regarding anonymity while ensuring confidentiality (Hancock & Algozzine,

2016). I ensured confidentiality and minimal risk for interview participants as well as stressed the ability to withdraw from study participation at any given time by email request. I explained to participants that their decision to join the study was strictly voluntary and, should they change their mind later, they could stop at any time without penalty by simply requesting to withdraw. Should a participant have chosen to withdraw, information received would have no longer been used in the study.

I then delivered a letter of request to the participants that, upon signature of acceptance, allowed me to include the selected participants in my research. I requested the participants' permission to be interviewed and established a working relationship by preparing participants for the interview in advance. One of the rules of remaining ethical while conducting qualitative research is that the researcher establishes a relationship with study participants that is built upon trust (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). I gained the trust of study participants by complying with the protocol of Walden University's IRB. The IRB governs research involving human study participants, provides specific guidelines for conducting research, and ensures voluntary participation, privacy, confidentiality, minimal likelihood of subject harm, and compliance (Walden University, 2019). I offered no incentives for participation in this study. I protected the identities of the study participants and organizations by refraining from the release of individual's or organization's names or any other identifiable information. This study did not include names or other identifiable information of participants or their organizations. Therefore, I used pseudonyms in this study to keep participant identities confidential. I will keep

confidential participant information in a safe location for 5 years and always keep data organized and separate. In accordance with the Walden University policies and procedures, all data will be kept and safely guarded to protect participants for 5 years and then destroyed. Each participant will receive a complimentary summary of the final doctoral manuscript, which will indicate the Walden University IRB approval number 11-30-20-0741302.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

For this qualitative multiple case study, I collected data by conducting interviews with participants from four call centers, which were my primary sources. Qualitative interviews can be structured, semistructured, or unstructured; however, semistructured interviews are the most appropriate for case study research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). I used semistructured interviews. Researchers who use semistructured interviews may apply pre-determined interview questions with the flexibility of using probing follow-up questions to invoke further explanation of the phenomenon in question from the participants' perspectives (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) and secondary data by collecting and reviewing documents showing retention rates, policies, procedures that increased the validity of this study. Advantages of using secondary data are the minimizing of time consumed in data collection as well as the ability to collect data inconspicuously (Saunders et al., 2016). A disadvantage of secondary data collection could be that the data collected does not suite the purpose of the study or differs from the question of research (Saunders et al., 2016).

Interviews should not be conducted specifically to get questions answered, but should be conducted with the purpose of understanding the actual lived experiences of participants and the actual meanings of those experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Advantages of using face-to-face interviews are the ability to capture the significance of participants' experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). A disadvantage is the potential bias that this in-depth understanding of participants' experiences might create. Qualitative interviews are a process that includes asking open-ended questions, listening, requesting interpretation, and remaining unbiased (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). The interview questions were pre-developed and scripted to ensure that all participants are asked the same questions and given the same response opportunities with removed bias. I collected and examined the data from each company's employee retention reports to analyze the results of the company's call center retention strategies. Although the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, other instruments might include surveys, forms and documents, observations, and more as multiple methods can help to achieve triangulation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The researcher is responsible for making the study trustworthy by ensuring that it is creditable, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Amankwaa, 2016). I used strategies such as triangulation, peer debriefing, and member-checking to develop a trustworthy study.

Interview responses should be noted and recorded electronically for future review and analysis (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). During interviews, I introduced the interview protocol (see Appendix B). I ensured the accuracy of data collected by playing back

interviews on the recorder, and conducting member-checking by asking the participant to verify the accuracy of the interpretation of data received. Member checking is defined as a separate second interview to confirm that the researcher's interpretation of each participant's data is accurate (Birt et al., 2016).

### **Data Collection Technique**

The data collection technique that I used was face-to-face interviews with study participants using a recorder and notepad to capture data. Hancock and Algozzine (2016) emphasized the importance of less talking and more listening by the researcher during face-to-face interviews to capture the experiences of the study participants and accurately analyze the phenomenon from their perspectives. I used face-to-face interviews which captured tone, facial expressions, feelings and other significant observations. Data was collected using an electronic recorder for interviews, a reflective journal for notes and data gathering, and the collection of other relevant documents to be used as secondary data. A reflective journal can be used as a researcher's diary to encourage reflective thinking that helps to close gaps or raise the need for further questioning (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). Hancock and Algozzine (2016) mentioned that the collection of notes should be done right away during an interview to ensure that important details are not left out. Member-checking was used as a method to eliminate bias. Member-checking is a data validation technique used by increase study credibility by asking participants to check the accuracy of the data collection results (Birt et al., 2016).

### **Data Organization Technique**

Data management plans force the researcher to pay attention to ethical issues and ensure good practice (Neylon, 2017). I kept up with all forms of data collected as well as incorporated distinct coding and labeling to ensure differentiation between participants of the study. I labeled data with date, location, participants, and other relevant information and then safely stored away. I transcribed recorded data and stored them on Microsoft Excel software protected by a password that I will not share to ensure data confidentiality. In accordance with Walden University's data retention policy, and to protect participant privacy, data will be securely stored for five years before being destroyed (Walden University, 2019).

### **Data Analysis**

The collection of data using multiple data collection instruments such as the researcher, observations, interviews, relevant forms, and documents helps to validate the findings of the study through methodological triangulation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Triangulation is the use of several sources of data to ensure that research findings are credible (Saunders et al., 2016). I analyzed interview responses and findings from secondary data collected to address the research question and determine the most effective strategies to increase call center retention.

The process of analyzing data requires examining and reexamining data collected, addressing evolving questions that arise, adjusting processes as appropriately necessary, eliminating less relevant data collected, and keeping track of it all (Hancock &



Algozzine, 2016). I followed these steps by beginning data analysis during the data collection process. Saunders et al. (2016) mentioned that data analysis begins during the data collection process to allow the researcher to recognize specific patterns and themes and help direct the process. There are many resources available to aid in the interpretation of data. NUDIST and The ethnographs are computer software systems that allow large amounts of data to be categorized (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016), as well as Microsoft Excel. I used Microsoft Excel to transcribe the data as it was collected. Transcribing data collected from interviews can be time-consuming because researchers not only have to transcribe the words of the participants but the non-verbal language as well (Saunders et al., 2016). To reduce time, I used data sampling, which is only transcribing the data that is relevant to this study. I searched relevant code words and phrases used and categorize them into distinct themes. Lastly, I organized and summarized my findings.

### **Reliability and Validity**

#### **Reliability**

Reliability is the ability of the research design to be replicated and still consistently result in the same findings being achieved (Saunders et al., 2016). Hancock and Algozzine (2016) mentioned that reliability is achieved when different experiments result in the same or comparable findings. Dependability is a criterion for reliability. Saunders et al. (2016) described dependability as the process of properly recording all changes in the research design to ensure a proper account of the results. I enhanced the reliability of this study by using the four-stage interview protocol refinement strategy

suggested by Castillo-Montoya (2016). This strategy includes asking questions that align with the research question, listening to the participant, and driving the protocols to maintain the focus of the conversation and eliminate bias (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I also collected multiple sources of data to address the research question and do member-checking, asking participants to confirm the accuracy of the data collected, to enhance the reliability of the study.

### **Validity**

Validity refers to the accuracy of the data analysis, the use of appropriate methods of measurement, and the ability of the study's findings to be generalized (Saunders et al., 2016). Criterion of validity are credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Saunders et al. (2016) defined credibility is ensuring that research participants are being represented in the way that they intended. This can be done by building trust between the researcher and the participant and by member checking. Compliance with ethical rules in qualitative research requires the building of rapport and trust between the researcher and participant (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). Hancock and Algozzine (2016) defined member-checking as allowing research participants to judge the credibility of the data. I enhanced credibility by building a trustworthy relationship with research participants to allow for the collection of the most accurate data and by member-checking to ensure that the data collected was accurate.

Transferability is when the researcher is transparent about the full study, providing descriptions of the question of research, selected method and designs, data

analyses, findings and more to allow the study to be conducted in another setting for interested researchers (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Sharing the research design demonstrates to researchers the methods, samples, and procedures that are being used to address one central research question (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Conformability is described as authenticity found when the data and the interpretation of data are fair and make sense (Saunders et al., 2016). Transferability and conformability were achieved by using triangulation and member checking. Triangulation is the use of multiple data collection sources to increase validity (Saunders et al., 2016). My triangulation process was to collect data from participant interviews as well as from company retention reports, and then complete member checking. Member checking is often listed as a strong technique for increasing validity (Birt et al., 2016). Researchers can do member-checking by showing participants data collected and stored and allowing them to correct it (Birt et al., 2016).

Data saturation is achieved when no new information is revealed from research participants (Saunders et al., 2016). I ensured data saturation by selecting a large enough sample of the population to enhance generalization. I also ensured data saturation by using the triangulation method, which is the collecting of data from various sources to gather as much information as possible in relation to the question of research until there is no new information to be gained. I used the interview protocol refinement framework to ensure that I was asking the right questions that aligned with the research question to gain data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, I restated the purpose statement and described the data collection process, including the role of the researcher, a description of the participants and criteria, the research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and technique, data organization techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity. In Section 3, I present the research outcomes with a presentation of findings, implications for social change, and recommendations for further research on the topic.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies call center executives use to retain employees. The findings of this study support the conceptual framework, Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), which identifies factors that contribute to employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction and impacts employee retention. Motivator and hygiene factors identified by Herzberg in 1959 match the key takeaways from participant interviews, public documentation and artifacts exploring strategies to increase retention. Lee (2017) listed Herzberg's motivator factors as (a) recognition, (b) achievement, (c) responsibility, (d) work, (e) advancement, and (f) opportunities for growth. Many of these were also identified in my study as ways to increase workplace morale, increase employee satisfaction, and keep employees encouraged and motivated to come to work and perform well. Martin (2016) listed Herzberg's hygiene factors as (a) working conditions, (b) salary, (c) personal growth, (d) company policies, (e) management, (f) job security, (g) employee-employer relationships, and (h) job status. Many of these were also identified in my study as ways to decrease employee dissatisfaction and decrease voluntary turnover. I separated strategies to increase employee satisfaction and decrease employee dissatisfaction into themes for the purpose of analyzing data collected in participant interviews and additional research pertaining to this study.

## **Presentation of Findings**

The research question for this study was “What strategies do call center executives use to retain employees?” Interview participants suggested several strategies for increasing employee satisfaction and decreasing employee dissatisfaction, which I divided into three themes: Theme 1 – focus on workplace morale, Theme 2 – minimize employee stress, and Theme 3 – establish motivational strategies. These themes are supported in the conceptual framework, Herzberg’s motivator-hygiene theory, in which Herzberg identified and defined specific motivator and hygiene factors to target employee retention. The findings of this study were derived from participant interviews, documentation, physical artifacts, and align with the conceptual framework and the literature review.

### **Theme 1: Focus on Workplace Morale**

Participants discussed many strategies that were attempts to decrease employee dissatisfaction by focusing on building workplace morale, beginning with addressing the working conditions. Participants 1 and 3 emphasized the importance of satisfactory working conditions to decrease employee dissatisfaction and increase employee retention. Participant 1 listed several ways to improve working conditions at the work site, such as (a) periodic company celebrations and gatherings, (b) team luncheons paid for by management to allow for team engagement opportunities, (c) games such as scavenger hunts and other fun team-building activities, (d) podcasts that employees could participate in or listen to at work, and (e) creating comfortable workspaces by providing

café-like lunch areas, pool tables, gyms, game tables, outdoor tracks, and more to keep the work environment enjoyable. Participant 3 focused on building workplace morale during the current circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic, requiring many companies to operate remotely, by suggesting Zoom meetings/parties to increase employee morale and excitement while showing support and compassion during such tough times. These findings confirmed the literature stating that a positive working environment is an element of employee satisfaction (Abouriaia & Othman, 2017). Gorde (2018) also identified in previous literature that a positive working environment is a factor of employee satisfaction that contributes to a decrease in voluntary employee turnover. Additionally, Dhanpat et al. (2018) mentioned that improving the working environment helps call centers gain a competitive advantage in the industry. These findings also show direct linkage to the conceptual framework. Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory lists "working conditions" as one of the hygiene factors, which encourage a negative work experience when not in place (Wood, 2014). Herzberg described hygiene factors as one of the basic needs of the employee (Touch & Hornbaek, 2015). It can be determined from these findings and their analyses that developing a positive working environment contributes to employee retention by decreasing employee job dissatisfaction in the call center environment.

Participant 1 also addressed employee dissatisfaction by emphasizing the need to create a diverse and inclusive culture. Company policies is another hygiene factor found in the conceptual framework that directly contributes to employee dissatisfaction when

not in place (Kotni & Karumuri, 2017). Participants identified the following reasons for leaving that some former employees have given during exit interviews: (a) dissatisfaction with diversity policies or a lack of them, (b) unfair or unethical treatment, or (c) racism or other social issues in the working environment. Being proactive in adjusting company policies to create a fair and inclusive environment for diverse employees is a key to decreasing employee dissatisfaction in the call center industry. Participant 1 added that strategies implemented to address this issue included that (a) company leaders began having difficult discussions with their team members about diversity and inclusion, ethics and discrimination, and (b) policies were updated to include diversity and inclusion. These implemented strategies created opportunities for the promotion and advancement of minority and nonprivileged employees of all ages. The open discussions allowed employees to feel like a part of the business and the decision-making process by allowing them to bring their ideas to the table for discussion and potential implementation. Participant 4 also discussed the importance of creating a culture that drives diversity and inclusion and makes customer service representatives feel as if they have a voice. Participant 4 added that listening to, and implementing, the ideas of employees makes them feel like they are not being overlooked, and it gives the employees a sense of protection over the business as if it is their own. This practice aligns with research emphasizing that a focus on listening-centered communication positively impacts employee retention because it builds a sense of understanding and trust between managers and employees, reduces workplace conflict, and helps with maintaining a



positive working environment (Chakravarti & Chakraborty, 2020). These strategies also fall in line with two of Herzberg's hygiene factors: (a) working conditions and (b) policies and procedures, whose absence cause employee dissatisfaction (Kotni & Karumuri, 2017). Diversity and inclusion policies and procedures should be in place to improve working conditions and help decrease employee dissatisfaction. Documents and artifacts found from the company of Participant 3 stress the importance of diversity and inclusion as well as provides percentages of veterans, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, women, and people of color who are employed with the company and percentages of those who were newly hired. The company documents also provided the percentage of the company's budget applied to diversity and inclusion strategies.

Compensation and benefits are another key factor of decreasing employee dissatisfaction that was identified in Herzberg's two-factor theory (Martin, 2016). Whereas Participants 1, 2, 3, and 5 all suggested an annual, performance-based pay increase, Participants 1 and 3 suggested several other strategies to address compensation and benefits within the company: (a) merit increases for top performers, (b) financial incentives for individual performance, (c) opportunities for overtime compensation, (d) home-buyer programs to assist employees who are interested in home-ownership, and (e) tuition reimbursement for education in the employee's line of work. Participant 3 continued by suggesting hourly incentive bonuses in addition to overtime pay for those who elected to work overtime, and Participant 1 added other financial benefits such as free mental health, family life, and financial counseling to keep employees from

becoming dissatisfied with their compensation. In the literature review, a leading practice for increasing call center retention was compensation (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Compensation is a significant factor in attracting and retaining employees and increasing employees' commitment to the organization, not just the hourly rate or salary pay, but other benefits such as bonuses, commission, overtime, and tuition reimbursement, similar to the strategies identified by the participants. While most participants did not mention commission besides the annual performance-based pay increases, Participant 4 discussed the importance of having employees who are driven by money and allowing them to take the business into their own hands by selecting as many commission-based clients as they can take on at one time. In using this strategy, employees are responsible for their own financial success. The literature added that compensation could also include non-cash benefits such as an employee car or house, stock options, insurance, retirement, and more (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Participant 1 emphasized the company's pension and 401(k) plans as one of the factors that contributes to the retention of tenured employees. Low compensation is identified as a characteristic of the call center industry that usually results in job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and employee turnover (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Nelesh et al. (2018) added that compensation is the highest contributor toward intention to leave in the call center environment. Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) further explained that money contributes to employees' basic and advanced needs to obtain satisfaction. Burrai et al. (2015) suggested that employers must acknowledge employee outputs as contributors to company performance

through compensation or appreciation. Rombaut and Guerry (2020) also aligned with these findings as the scholars suggested that compensation is found to positively impact retention for the entire population.

Personal growth is another hygiene factor identified in the conceptual framework which, when absent, causes employee dissatisfaction (Kotni & Karumuri, 2017). Participant 3 suggested strategies centered on personal growth to include executives and leaders being supportive of employees' personal goals by implementing policies to make tuition reimbursement, credit and financial counseling, and home-buyer programs available to interested employees. Participant 3 continued by stating that executives also recognize employees company-wide, through social media websites and pages for their accomplishment, such as becoming home-owners and for completing continued education programs. Participant 3 suggests that these types of programs and recognition strategies encourage employees to continue working hard to obtain their personal growth objectives.

Participants elaborated further on the importance of management and the roles that they play in increasing employee retention. Management is another hygiene strategy identified by Herzberg's two-factor theory (Kotni & Karumuri, 2017). Participant 1 shared that leaders who are successfully retaining call center employees maintain transparency with employees, keep an open environment for employees to collaborate and share business ideas, and make employees feel like they belong. Participant 1 additionally discussed strategies including (a) writing corporate letters to employees from

HR to keep them informed on company changes and statuses, (b) having monthly breakfasts or lunches paid for by management to give employees a chance to discuss their needs, and (c) focus-training managers on practicing empathy for employees when handling various situations. Managers are held accountable when these practices are not followed. Participants also highlighted ways to address feedback, often emphasized in manager training. One example given by Participant 5 was the sandwich method. In practicing the sandwich method, managers begin conversations with employees by highlighting the things that they are doing well, giving them an opportunity to improve, and then ending with something positive. All participants shared that they give employees engagement surveys monthly, quarterly, or annually to rate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the company and its leadership, and to express what they would like to see changed or implemented within the company. Engagement surveys are run by outside companies and taken anonymously to get to the heart of employees' concerns. Leadership then finds ways to address that feedback by observing, talking with coaches or team leaders to see if information from surveys match coach feedback, implementing changes, and checking results by determining attitude and performance changes of employees as well as observing changes in turnover after strategy implementation.

Employee-employer relationships is another important strategy identified by Herzberg's two-factor theory (Kotni & Karumuri, 2017). Participant 2 identified the following ways to maintain employee-employer relationships: (a) get to know employees personally and build personal accountability, (b) actively listen and empathize while

remaining professional, (c) maintain an open-door policy that allows employees to talk to management at any time with no fear of rejection or backlash, and (d) make collaborative efforts to be supportive, negotiate or meet employees halfway. Participant 3 identified additional strategies, which included (a) having off-the-record conversations to help build trust, (b) remaining compassionate, (c) holding focus-group meetings with each team to allow members to address dissatisfaction with manager support, and (d) doing pulse checks throughout each day to see how representatives are feeling. Participant 3 emphasized the need to address behaviors immediately with employees instead of allowing those behaviors to become a trend. Participants 1, 2, 3 and 5 highlighted the importance of having an open-door policy so that employees could feel comfortable discussing their issues or concerns in a safe zone. Participant 1 shared that the organization has an offsite HR department to which employees can report their problems without having to share internally. Similarly, Participant 5 stated that employees have access to a compliance hotline through which they can call the employee relations department regarding their dissatisfactions with a zero retaliation policy, meaning there will be zero tolerance for retaliation when employees report their complaints, and that all employees, including management, can be subject to coaching and corrective or progressive actions. Participant 1 emphasized the need to discuss survey results one-on-one with employees to give them a chance to contribute ideas for organizational change. Participant 1 continued by suggesting time to have off-the-record conversations between managers and employees not only to discuss survey results, but to build trust, have free

conversations and discuss disagreements. Findings confirmed the literature, which suggested that effective employee management, positive employee-employer relationships and communications, and healthy working environments are factors that help limit employee stress and dissatisfaction (Ajayi, 2018). Additional research introduced a listening-centered communication strategy to address a lack of listening and understanding between managers and employees as a leading cause of voluntary employee turnover (Chakravarti & Chakraborty, 2020). A listening-centered communication strategy helps by creating a sense of acknowledgment and security and keeping employees motivated. Engaging with employees, understanding their ideas without bias, and providing feedback following active listening are required to increase employee retention. While the study findings confirm the importance of healthy manager-employee relationships, the new literature suggests that there is more to learn on the subject of listening-centered communication and how it relates to employee retention (Chakravarti & Chakraborty, 2020).

Documentation and artifacts collected from the companies of Participants 1 and 5 support the Theme 1 findings by emphasizing the need to offer competitive compensation and benefits to retain employees, recognizing the importance of corporate leadership's roles, and emphasizing the need for good corporate citizenship to ensure that employees trust and value the company's brand. The study findings confirm the research by Abouraia and Othman (2017) that defined the extrinsic elements of employee satisfaction

as healthy employee-manager relationships, positive working environments, negotiation, techniques, and service.

### **Theme 2: Minimize Employee Stress**

Participants discussed many strategies that involved attempts to decrease employee dissatisfaction by focusing on minimizing workplace stress. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 heavily discussed the importance of implementing work-life balance strategies to minimize workplace stress. Work-life balance is a hygiene factor which, when not in place, causes employee dissatisfaction (Martin, 2016). Participants 1, 2 and 3 implement work-life balance by creating flexible scheduling through varying work hours for employees. Participant 2 added that they offer work from home opportunities and the option to work a half day or take time off and make it up on another day. Participant 4 stressed the importance of leisure time away from phones and time for peer-to-peer mentorship to allow call center representatives time to alleviate the stress of dealing with customers all day. Participant 3 emphasized that work-life balance allowed call center executives to easily transition employees into work-from-home roles during the current 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, which affected many businesses and industries. Dhanpat et al. (2018) stated that voluntary employee turnover could stem from several reasons, to include a lack of or limited implementation of work-life balance. Employees are no longer working strictly for compensation, but they desire several other components, including work-life balance. Dhanpat et al. continued by explaining that employees are more committed to organizations that have work-life balance because they believe that

their employers care for them personally. Flexibility is important for employees to take care of the needs of themselves and their families. Call centers are characterized by long work hours which leaves employees exhausted and developing the intent to turnover, and the authors advised that there should be policies in place that allow for work-life balance. Ajayi (2018) also added that a lack of work-life balance is a component of stress, and that an increase in work-life balance can cause a decrease in workplace stress, which directly impacts performance and voluntary employee turnover. Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) further explained that the implementation of work-life balance helps employees to work in comfort, enjoy flexibility, and feel valued as individuals. Documents and physical artifacts from the companies of Participants 1 and 2 support Theme 2's findings by identifying the importance of flexibility to give employees a positive work-life balance and help with retention.

Job security is another key to decreasing employee dissatisfaction by minimizing employee stress. Job security is one of Herzberg's hygiene factors (Kotni & Karumuri, 2017). Participant 1 discussed the need to treat employees as essential workers, accommodating them when they have life issues, which has been especially helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic, and helping employees position themselves to maintain their employment. During the pandemic, employees have faced unexpected emergency situations, whether it's been tested positive for the Covid-19 virus, having a family member test positive, needing to work from home, having to home-school their children, or childcare facilities closing down, leaving parents to stay at home with their children or



seek childcare elsewhere. Giving employees job security has been especially beneficial during this time. Participant 3 expressed the need to check on employees personally before leading up to disciplinary actions, coaching employees and giving corrective or progressive actions to refrain from having to terminate employees. Participant 5 added that to avoid having to terminate employees immediately due to quality issues in the call center environment, executives keep policies public. Giving employees access to policies allows them to double-check their work or access policies at any time to defend their work if they need to and maintain job security. Dhanpat et al. (2018) identified job security as a strategy to help retain employees in the call center industry. The scholars stated that short-term contracts are a characteristic of the call center industry and added that employees with a more permanent contract are more likely to commit to the organization for a longer period of time.

### **Theme 3: Establish Motivational Strategies**

Research participants discussed many strategies that included attempts to increase employee satisfaction by focusing on employee motivation and emphasized the importance of employee recognition strategies. Recognition is one of Herzberg's identified motivation factors, which increases employee job satisfaction when in place (Kotni & Karumuri, 2017). Participant 1 shared recognition strategies varying from award programs being offered that give employees the opportunity to electronically nominate co-workers for monetary or physical gifts, recognizing employees for good attendance, and recognizing high-performing employees who score well on customer

surveys, quality, and production with rewards. Participant 1 added strategies to motivate employees by recognizing employee work anniversaries, giving door prizes, and handing out monetary awards for attendance. Types of recognition and rewards shared by Participant 2 included monetary bonuses based upon performance, additional flex days or time off, gift cards, ecards recognition, prizes for employees that work during the holidays, meals to those working on Thanksgiving, company-wide email recognition, as well as national recognition within the company. Participant 3 included work-life balance as a type of reward, suggesting opportunities to work from home or have time off for good performance. Participant 4 added prizes such as restaurant gift cards, free lunches, shopping gift cards, free TVs or grocery gift cards, as well as company-wide recognition. The study findings confirmed the assertion by Abouraia and Othman (2017), identifying recognition to be one of the intrinsic elements of job satisfaction.

Participant 4 stressed the importance of the work itself, emphasizing the need to set work expectations early during the hiring process to be sure that the right candidates are being selected for employment within the call center. The work itself is another motivator factor identified in Herzberg's two-factor theory (Martin, 2016). Participant 5 added that although call center leaders with successful retention strategies strive to maintain employee satisfaction, they also recognize that it is impossible to completely satisfy every call center representative. Therefore, the importance of starting early in the employer-employee relationship by finding candidates who are a good fit for the position, job duties, and the work culture continues in retention strategies. Participant 4 further

explained that candidates must already enjoy working in the customer service industry, must be driven and self-motivated, and must value what they do. Once qualified candidates are brought into the company, coaching with tenured representatives and daily check-ins help to make sure that representatives maintain satisfaction by having an understanding of their job duties and expectations, and access to the tools necessary to learn how to succeed in those positions. In the literature review, authors mentioned that employees could become unsatisfied if the work itself is not fulfilling (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) further explained that the contribution of the work itself to job satisfaction is based upon the need to have a job that is fulfilling. The study findings also confirm the literature stating that call center managers should aim to only hire employees that meet the long-term needs of the company (Bhatnagar, 2007). Finding a good job-person match is a good method to avoid the impact of high turnover Palwasha et al. (2018).

Participants highlighted the need to focus on employee achievement strategies. Achievement is another motivation factor identified in the conceptual framework (Martin, 2016). Achievement strategies such as celebrating work anniversaries and increasing advancement opportunities for ethnically diverse or age diverse individuals, suggested by Participant 1, have been implemented by call center managers to increase employee satisfaction, directly contributing to the increase of employee retention. In the literature review, it was suggested that employee motivation factors are directly associated with employee achievement (Lee, 2017).

Advancement strategies were also a key topic for participants. Advancement was identified as a factor of motivation in Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (Martin, 2016). During company exit interviews, all participants mentioned that employees have turned over due to a lack of promotion opportunities, not being informed of promotion opportunities, or not being considered for promotion opportunities. According to the participants, call center employees are more satisfied and more willing to stay with a company when they are not tied to one position or one pay rate for the duration of their employment. Confirming the findings in the previous literature, authors emphasized that employees desire fulfillment, to include advancement opportunities and failure to comply leads to employees' intent to turnover (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Advancement as an important tool for increasing retention and organizations must remain committed to advancement practices to give employees more job security (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Offering career advancement not only helps to retain employees, but it helps organizations to develop and maintain a competitive advantage within the industry. Found in the literature review, two types of career advancement was identified: (a) internal career advancement, which is developing the employee to increase their commitment to the organization, and (b) external career advancement, which is providing the employee with new financial benefits or other advancement benefits that keep them motivated (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Employees perform their best when they believe that they have an opportunity to advance with an organization. This could lower the chances of them developing turnover intentions. Employees are not often happy or content being

in the same job for an extended period of time. Call centers companies struggle with this because they are characterized by routine work that does not require specific skills to advance. Authors added that adverse behavior occurs when employees do not see the possibility of promotion within a company (Aydogdu & Asikgil, 2011). Promotional frustration increases negative attitudes of employees toward the organization.

Addressing promotional frustration leads to the topic of opportunities for growth. Participant 1 explored this strategy by emphasizing the need to keep technology updated with consistent IT updates and the availability of technical support and other information when desired. Participant 5 expressed the importance of ensuring that associates have permanent access to updated training records, training manuals for all positions, and shared information on the company's internet allows employees the opportunity to grow. Participant 5 also highlighted the need to stay in tune with employee endeavors to present opportunities that will gear them toward their career goals. Strategies include increasing education and job-specific training, offering training classes that are geared towards supporting employee growth and goals, and cross-training. Documentation and physical artifacts from the company of Participant 5 support these findings with focus on professional development through access to a variety of training and development opportunities, including educational assistance, that would grant employees the opportunity to attain advanced positions within the organization and foster retention. The findings confirm assertions by Gorde (2018), which provided suggestions to increase job satisfaction for call center employees that included: procedural training, product-

knowledge training, effective communication training, knowledge-based training, as well as training on increasing employees' soft skills. Gorde also added the need to beat boredom by cross-training, mentoring, and giving employees new projects and challenges. Dhanpat et al. (2018) mentioned that if there is a lack of growth opportunity, employees become dissatisfied with their jobs and begin to seek more of a challenge elsewhere. Opportunities for growth is a key factor of employee motivation (Martin, 2016).

Research by Hadiyat et al. (2020) states that the role of job satisfaction is to significantly decrease voluntary employee turnover, which aligns with the Theme 3 findings by emphasizing that strategies to increase employee satisfaction include recognition, achievement, responsibility, the work itself, advancement and opportunities for growth. Rombaut and Guerry (2020) discussed the importance of targeting the right strategies with the right employees, emphasizing that while compensation and recognition are found to positively impact retention for the entire population, training and flexibility do not. While the findings of this study confirm the importance of compensation, recognition, training, and flexibility in employee retention, the recent literature suggests that there is room to extend the knowledge on the topic of targeting specific employees with specific retention strategies. The findings align with the conceptual framework because all topics, except "job status" and "responsibility" identified in Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory, were mentioned and discussed during data collection. Although there is room to extend the knowledge on the "job status"

hygiene factor and the “responsibility” motivator factor of the conceptual framework, the findings of the study confirm the conceptual framework by addressing factors that decrease employee dissatisfaction and increase employee satisfaction to provide effective solutions to address the leading business problem in the call center industry, employee retention.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The findings of this study are relevant to improved business practice because they provide effective strategies to increase employee retention in the call center industry. The leading business problem in the call center industry is low retention. Low retention directly increases operational expenses for call center companies and decreases quality talent, human capital, and production. Employee turnover negatively impacts the quality of services, customer experiences, employee performance and workplace morale. Executives must have the ability to identify factors and contributors of voluntary turnover and low retention, as well as have the knowledge of and access to the most effective strategies to prevent them. This study identifies the key factors of employee satisfaction and employee dissatisfaction and provides effective strategies to increase employee satisfaction through motivation and decrease employee dissatisfaction by reducing stress and improving workplace morale. The strategies identified in this study, (a) focus on workplace morale, (b) minimize employee stress, and (c) establish motivational strategies, when applied, demonstrate an increase in call center retention. The findings of this study contribute to improved business practice by providing call center executives

with information on how to effectively resolve one of the call center industry's leading business problems, low retention, and to reduce the many impacts associated with it.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The findings of this study could result in tangible improvements for individuals, communities, institutions, cultures, organizations, and societies. Call centers employ many community members and keeping community members employed contributes to economic growth. This implication for social change is the result of an increase in employee motivation and organizational morale, and a decrease in employee stress. Increasing employee retention decreases call centers operational expenses, allowing call center companies to have more available cash to contribute to the welfare of their employees, the community, and society, as well as more available cash to contribute to the implementation of successful retention strategies. Having more available money allows call center managers to focus on strategies to increase workplace morale emphasized in Theme 1, such as paying tuition for employees who desire to grow educationally. A focus on strategies to decrease employee stress, such as those discussed in Theme 2, will encourage individuals to retain employment within the call center industry, allowing them to provide for their families as well as contribute to the community by giving money back through daily purchases, living expenses and more, which contributes to the local economy. Having a more available cash flow also allows call center managers to implement strategies that increase employee motivation emphasized in Theme 3, such as offering increased compensation, financial bonuses, and



more overtime. These financial contributions not only offer tangible improvements to communities and institutions but also allow individuals to grow educationally as well as professionally within their companies. Employees who grow educationally and professionally are then able grow within the company to positions that give them the financial flexibility to give back to their communities and contribute intellectually and professionally to local organizations, culture, society, and more.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Recommendations for action begin with call center managers and executives implementing strategies to increase workplace morale, minimize employee stress and motivate employees. Suggested steps begin with having discussions on policy and procedure changes. Policies and procedures should include diversity and inclusion and work-life balance strategies, and programs should be developed and implemented that support employees' personal growth, advancement, achievement, and opportunities for growth within the company. Managers and executives can continue by developing an employee reward and recognition program, which can include a focus on compensation and other financial benefits that would increase employee retention. Next, managers should conduct manager training to learn the roles of management in the retention of the employees, how to practice empathy with employees, and the most effective strategies to build trust and effective employee-employer relationships. Strategy development can begin in a conference setting so that call center leaders can work together to develop a plan. This plan should be developed with the feedback from employee engagement

surveys in mind so that leaders can select strategies that specifically address employee concerns within their companies and departments. The plan should be disseminated through computerized training and executive meetings until everyone has an understanding of the strategies and their roles in implementation. Call center leaders would need to learn the most effective ways to implement new strategies within their particular departments or teams and gain an understanding of the roles that each manager needs to play to make strategy implementation a success. Once everyone has a clear understanding of their roles, strategy implementation should begin. It is recommended that only a few strategies are implemented at a time so that the results of each strategy's implementation can be directly analyzed and reviewed afterward. Call center executives should circle back in 30 days to analyze the results by conducting engagement surveys, and then begin adjusting or making plans to roll out the next strategy to increase retention based upon those results.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Recommendations for further research would be to study more about the roles of management in retaining employees. Although this study provides knowledge on employer-employee relationships in Theme 1's findings and demonstrates the major role of management in relation to call center retention, new literature suggests that there is more information to be obtained to include the incorporation of active listening strategies (Chakravarti & Chakraborty, 2020). The limitations of the study were that the findings may not be generalizable due to the small sample size and participants may not provide

the most accurate account of information to best assess the strategies needed to increase retention in the call center industry. These limitations can be addressed by increasing the sample size used for research on this topic so that findings may be more generalizable.

### **Reflections**

My experience within the DBA Doctoral Study process has allowed me to gain new insight on call center retention strategies. Previously working in a call center, I had a preconceived idea that most employees were just not happy doing the same thing repeatedly every day at work and that employers did not care about losing employees. I thought that, within the call center industry, employers viewed employees as disposable. My preconceived ideas had no effect on interview participants as I remained neutral as the researcher, followed specific interview protocol, remained on topic, and avoided any bias. This allowed me to gain more insight into the effects of low retention on call center companies and the strategies that are necessary to increase retention. This study changed my thinking because I now understand the importance of retaining employees in the call center industry, the lack of understanding by leadership as it relates to factors of employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and the need to identify the best strategies to successfully retain employees.

### **Conclusion**

Increasing call center retention directly relies on leadership's understanding of motivator and hygiene factors, as identified by Frederick Herzberg, how those factors impact employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction when in place or not in place, and

learning the best strategies based upon that information to increase the rates of retention in the call center industry.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. During exit interviews, what are some reasons your employees have stated for leaving the company?
2. What type of growth opportunities does your organization offer to retain employees?
3. What type of benefits does your organization provide to retain employees?
4. What type of rewards/incentives does your organization offer to retain employees?
5. What are other effective strategies that were implemented in your organization to decrease voluntary employee turnover?
6. What are some policies and procedures that were put into place to help increase retention in your organization?
7. What were the key obstacles to introducing your effective strategies for increasing retention?
8. How did your organization address the key obstacles to implementing its effective strategies for increasing retention?
9. How did your organization assess the effectiveness of its strategies for increasing retention?
10. What additional information can you share regarding your organization's strategies to increase employee retention in call centers?



## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

## Interview Protocol Form

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee (Title and Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Topics Discussed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Documents Obtained: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Post Interview Comments or Leads:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Introductory Protocol

*This interview is for the purpose of uncovering the best strategies to retain employees in the call center industry. The criteria for selecting interview participants are as follows(a) participants must be call center executives, managers, or team leaders, and (b) participants must have successfully created and implemented strategies to increase call center retention. I will ask a few background questions to ensure that you qualify for*

*participation prior to conducting the interview. I will use a quiet, comfortable, and neutral setting to conduct interviews privately, limiting distractions to obtain quality feedback. To collect data for future analysis of the information provided in this interview, I will take notes. To enhance the accuracy of the data collected, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. Directly following the interview, I will play back the recording to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of the data collected. I guarantee confidentiality by refraining from the release of company and participant identifiable information outside of span of the researchers for this project. In accordance with the Walden University policies and procedures, all data will be safe-kept and guarded to protect participants for 5 years and then destroyed. If at any point you no longer wish to participate in this study, you may withdraw. In addition, you must sign a letter of cooperation in compliance with our Walden University Institutional Review Board, which governs the study of research participants. The document includes that: (1) all information collected will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time that you feel uncomfortable, and (3) no harm will be inflicted. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.*

*I have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions to cover. For that purpose, I will be monitoring time. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you to push forward and complete the assessment. If at any point I need to gain clarity or expand on key ideas, I will ask addition probing questions.*

## Introduction

You have been selected to interview today because you have been identified as a call center executive, manager, or team leader who has successfully implemented strategies to retain call center employees. My research project focuses on the improvement of call center retention by increasing the awareness within industry leaders of strategies that have proven to be effective. My study does not intend to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Instead, the goal is to learn about effective strategies that help improve overall call center retention.

### A. Interviewee Background

1. How long have you been in your present position? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been with this institution? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your highest degree? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your field of study? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Briefly describe your role as it relates to call center retention strategies.
  - Probes: How are you involved in strategies to increase retention here?

### B. Interview Questions

6. During exit interviews, what are some reasons your employees have stated for leaving the company?

7. What type of growth opportunities does your organization offer to retain employees?
8. What type of benefits does your organization provide to retain employees?
9. What type of rewards/incentives does your organization offer to retain employees?
10. What are other effective strategies that were implemented in your organization to decrease voluntary employee turnover?
11. What are some policies and procedures that were put into place to help increase retention in your organization?
12. What were the key obstacles to introducing your effective strategies for increasing retention?
13. How did your organization address the key obstacles to implementing its effective strategies for increasing retention?
14. How did your organization assess the effectiveness of its strategies for increasing retention?
15. What additional information can you share regarding your organization's strategies to increase employee retention in call centers.