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Strategies Used to Retain United States Veterans

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

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by

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MBA, George Fox University, 2008

BS, George Fox University, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

The United States has a 20% average overall turnover rate, requiring employers to absorb the additional costs related to employee turnover, which can exceed 300% of each departed employee's annual salary. Human resource leaders who lack strategies to retain veterans as employees experience increased turnover and replacement costs. Grounded in person organization fit theory and human capital theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies leaders in human resource departments use to retain United States veterans. The participants included three human resources leaders in Washington who developed successful retention strategies for veterans. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and supporting documents and analyzed with thematic data analysis. Four primary themes emerged: understanding the military mindset, cultural competency, recruiting and hiring programs, and resources and support for veterans. Recommendations included assisting human resource professionals in understanding the military experience, providing veteran mentoring programs, and developing and promoting veteran affinity groups. The implications for positive social change include the potential for reducing local unemployment rates, thereby strengthening the local economies.

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Dedication

I dedicate my doctoral degree to my family. My husband, CMDCM(SS) John Moore (Ret.), you have believed in me, supported me, and cheered me on to do anything that feeds my soul. I am in awe of the man you are and your dedication to our family. Thank you for the love and laughter in our lives. Our amazing daughters, Maile and Kamryn, I am so honored to be your mom, and I strive to be a woman you can be proud of. You are two of the very best parts of me. Thank you for the countless ways you pitched in to help, curling up in my office with me, and your love and endless hugs. I owe you a fry run! My late grandparents, Omi and Opi thank you for teaching me to work hard and love unconditionally. My dad, Marvin, for loving me and always believing I could do anything, encouraging me to invest in myself. I miss you beyond words. My mom, Gabie, for the love and untold sacrifices of a mother. Thank you for reminding me we are strong women and encouraging me to aim high and work hard for what I wanted in life, and then supporting me along that journey. My stepfather, Joseph, for his military service. Thank you for encouraging my academic pursuits, the doctoral advice, and supporting my journey. My sister, Kristen, you are my lifelong partner in crime, my constant companion, often the calm voice of reason in my head, and only occasionally the devil on my shoulder. Thank you for never leaving my side. My brother-in-law, Abed, you have such a quiet and compassionate strength. Thank you for your steady support and help when I need you. My mother-in-law Nancy, and my late father-in-law David, thank you for being my prayer warriors and for your constant love and encouragement. My sister-in-law, Lisa, thank you for your love, laughter, and support.

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"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." – John Fitzgerald Kennedy

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Organizational leaders are recognizing the unique attributes U.S. veterans possess, and many of those leaders are developing hiring programs to capitalize on their unique talent, creating a high-performance workplace (Schulker, 2017). As veterans transition from military service to the civilian workforce, one of their primary concerns is their ability to assimilate into a civilian workplace culture (Harrod et al., 2017). An understanding of the complex cultural transition from military community to the civilian workplace is needed to influence outcomes (Elnitsky et al., 2017). A core principle in the hiring process is to match the right person to the right job, including the alignment of the needs and values of the organization and the individual; this alignment can directly impact veteran retention (Ford, 2016).

There continues to be a lack of understanding within human resource leadership regarding the specific skill sets and experiences of veterans (Cooper et al., 2018), leading to potential unsuccessful hires because of the inability of the organization to evaluate veterans' skills accurately (Davis & Minnis, 2016). Though some veterans may find employment easily following their military service, many struggle to remain in their position (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018). Some employers continue to lack programs that are focused on retaining veterans (Harrod et al., 2017). More research needs to be done on the issues of managing and retaining veteran employees to understand and address the concerns with maintaining veteran employees (Ford, 2016).

Problem Statement

The United States has a 20% average overall turnover rate for employees in the general labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Organizations must absorb the additional costs related to employee turnover, which can cost 300% of each departed employee's annual salary (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019). The general business problem is that some human resource leaders are not adequately retaining employees, resulting in increased turnover and replacement costs. The specific business problem is that some human resource leaders lack strategies to retain U.S. veteran employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans. The specific population group was three human resources leaders who had been involved in developing successful retention strategies for veterans and whose companies were located in the downtown section of Seattle, Washington. The findings of this study may help educate human resource leaders regarding the variety of benefits when organizational leaders develop innovative approaches to retaining a complex and diverse workforce. The implications for social change include the potential for reducing local unemployment rates, thereby strengthening the local economies.

Nature of the Study

There are three research methods: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed (Yin, 2018). Researchers use quantitative methods to test hypotheses using defined variables (Sun et al., 2018). Researchers use qualitative research to explore a phenomenon more

comprehensively through the experiences of participants (Khan, 2014). Researchers using the mixed methods research utilize both qualitative and quantitative methods and require statistical analysis of defined variables (Khan, 2014).

I chose to utilize a qualitative research method for my study. Using the qualitative research method allowed me to thoroughly explore the topic of veteran retention strategies and allow for insights that might not be revealed through another method. Exploring the insights and experiences of the participants could provide thorough and comprehensive data to understand their experiences and the relevance of those experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I ruled out a quantitative method because I was not seeking to examine variables' relationships or groups' differences. The topic of my study was retaining veterans, and I explored diverse retention strategies; quantitative research would not yield the information about retention strategies that I was seeking. Mixed methods researchers utilize both qualitative and quantitative research methods requiring analysis of defined variables (Khan, 2014). I was not analyzing defined variables' relationships, so mixed method research would not have been appropriate.

I contemplated four qualitative research designs for studying retention strategies: case study design, phenomenological design, ethnography, and a narrative design (Yin, 2018). Researchers using a case study design explore the experiences of participants with experience in the problem being studied, to explore the phenomena (Yin, 2018). A multiple case study design was appropriate to study retention strategies, analyzing the information to identify any cases' commonalities or differences. Researchers using multiple case studies are able to conduct a more substantial analysis through the

exploration of the similarities and differences among the cases (Yin, 2018). I chose a multiple case design for this study.

Phenomenological research is appropriate to gather information on the main aspects and beliefs of participants who have personal experiences with the phenomena (Assarroudi & Heydari, 2016). A phenomenological approach did not fit the purpose of my study because I was collecting data on strategies and did not seek to explore the personal meaning or interpretation of the experiences of participants. Ethnography is used by researchers wanting to study cultural phenomena (Fine & Hancock, 2016). Ethnography was not appropriate for my study as I was not studying a culture. Narrative researchers seek to identify and explore participants' personal stories (Barabasch, 2018). A narrative approach focuses on individual personal experiences and perspectives and was not the best fit for my study because personal stories from the participants did not serve the purpose of my study.

Research Question

What strategies do some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans?

Interview Questions

1. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your organization's strategies for retaining veterans?

2. What strategies have been the most successful in retaining veterans?

3. What strategies have been the least successful in retaining veterans?

4. How, if at all, do your organization's successful veteran retention strategies differ from successful strategies for retaining non-veteran employees?

5. What key challenges have you faced implementing strategies to retain veterans?

6. How did your organization address the key challenges to implementing strategies to retain veterans?

7. What additional experience would like to share regarding your organization's strategies that you have used to retain veterans?

Conceptual Framework

In qualitative studies, researchers may use theory as a broad explanation for behaviors, or they may use theory as a lens to isolate the issues of primary importance to a given study (Jamali, 2018). The composite conceptual framework for this study consisted of person organization fit and human capital theory. Integrating both person organization fit and human capital theory enabled me to explore the insights from each theory in order to build a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, potentially discovering new insights when applied to this study. I expected person organization fit to be appropriate to explain the effects the culture of an organization has on employees, and expected human capital theory to facilitate an explanation for how employers investing in training and education can improve employee satisfaction.

Person organization fit theory was originally developed by Argyris (Argyris, 1973). Argyris' theory reflects the belief that organizational culture affects recruiting and hiring, increasing employee commitment and retention. Researchers use person-

organization fit to view the compatibility of employees and the organization (Argyris, 1973). Kristof (1996) noted person-organization fit is applicable for organizations and employees when one party supplies something the other party needs, concluding that the most positive situation was one that is mutually beneficial.

Becker was a theorist in human capital theory. Becker based his theory on the work of Schultz (Schultz, 1961), specifically return on investment (ROI) as it pertains to human capital (Becker, 1962). Human capital consists of the knowledge and skills that employees obtain through investments in their formal and informal education, on the job training, and other unique experiences. Becker viewed training and education as investments in human capital, with the possibility of positively affecting productivity and income (Becker, 1962). Human capital theory is well known and often accepted by human resource professionals (Weinberger, 1998). Investments in human capital can leverage the unique skill sets of veterans to meet organizational performance objectives, increasing employee satisfaction and commitment (Yanchus et al., 2018).

Operational Definitions

Culture gap: A term used to describe the gap between two social groups that have different cultures (Opengart, 2019).

Discharged or Released: The status of a servicemember after they leave active military service, having completed their military obligations (Veterans' benefits, 38 USC §101, 18).

Employee retention: A term used to describe the process used by an organization to retain its employees (Nica, 2018).

Talent management: A strategic process used by employers to attract, develop, and retain talented employees to achieve a competitive advantage (Narayanan et al., 2018).

Veteran integration: The process during which a veteran assimilates into the civilian workplace culture (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2020).

Veteran transition: The process during which a servicemember has fulfilled their military obligations and begins the transition to the private sector (Ford, 2017).

Workforce planning: A process used to ensure an organization has the ability to meet current and future human capital requirements effectively (Zoller, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts believed to be accurate but unable to be verified by the researcher that can impact the data and findings (Flannery, 2016). Researchers must acknowledge possible assumptions, including reflexivity, to have transparency and to minimize confusion. I assumed that the retention strategies of veterans were different than the strategies used to retain civilians and the participants would be truthful and transparent regarding their human resource process. I assumed I would be able to engage knowledgeable and willing participants. Finally, I assumed this study would help organizational leaders develop strategies to retain veterans.

Limitations

The limitations of a study are the constraints that impact the findings of the research (Morgado et al., 2017). As a military spouse, my own biases and the

participant's assumptions about my personal views could have provided a potential limitation. The political climate and changing views on the military could have made the study topic controversial for participants, creating additional limitations. Another limitation could have been the willingness of some participants to provide full disclosure regarding internal processes and practice.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries set for the study and the target population (Tanhueco-Tumapo, 2016). The intended scope of this study was limited to human resource leaders that had hired one or more veterans in the past year and were involved in developing successful retention strategies for veterans. This delimitation supported the identified study assumption that participants have had positive results from retaining veterans. In this study, I focused on successful strategies to retain veterans, another delimitation, to clarify business practices to educate organizational leaders who have not developed veteran employment initiatives in order to retain veterans.

Significance of the Study

Organizational leaders need innovative strategies to develop and obtain a competitive advantage; employees are a critical strategic asset for these organizations (Khattak et al., 2015). Realistic planning is used to identify sources and ways to mitigate turnover and replacement costs. The Department of Defense prioritizes the investment in developing and honing the skills, abilities, and commitment to duty held by all servicemembers (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2016).

This study may have significance for human resource leaders on strategies to develop and capitalize on strategies to maintain a diverse and highly skilled talent pool while improving and maintaining their bottom lines with reduced turnover and replacement costs. Human resource leaders have an opportunity to utilize strategies to gain a skilled workforce to meet strategic goals (Kalaiselvan & Naachimuthu, 2016). The implications for positive social change include reducing veteran unemployment rates, thereby improving local economies. Reducing veteran unemployment rates could also reduce the need for mental health services, nutrition assistance, and healthcare subsidies provided by local social service agencies.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans. Researchers write literature reviews to examine previous research, provide background on a topic, and establish a foundation for change (Baker, 2016). In the literature review for this study, I explored findings on related topics that align with the overarching research question: What strategies do some human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans? I sourced the items for this literature review primarily from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic studies, U.S. government publications/data sources, and scholarly books. This professional and academic literature review includes information on U.S. veteran employment, transition, and integration into the civilian workplace, U.S. veteran hiring initiatives, employee engagement, and satisfaction, as well as some strategies used to retain U.S veterans. The search for relevant literature resulted in the inclusion of 118

referenced works; of those, 110 (93%) were peer-reviewed articles, and 72 (61%) were published within the 5-year publication guideline, 2017 – 2021.

For this literature review, I utilized several databases, including Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, SAGE, Science Direct, and Pro-Quest, to obtain research materials. Keywords and terms used to search for relevant data included: *person organization fit theory, human capital theory, Schlossberg's transition theory, recruitment theory, U.S. veteran employment, U.S. veteran hiring initiatives, U.S. veterans' transition, U.S. veteran integration, employee engagement, employee satisfaction, turnover intention,* and *retention strategies*. I also researched several U.S. government websites to retrieve the most current data involving the employment of U.S. veterans: Defense Manpower Data Center, Department of Defense, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Management and Budget, Department, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. I organized the literature review into five subject categories: person organization fit theory, human capital theory, recruitment and hiring, transition and integration, and retaining veterans.

Researchers use literature reviews to provide a background and establish a foundation for change (Baker, 2016). Specific purposes include the following: to provide a framework for the study topic, to define important variables relevant for the study, to provide an integrated overview of current evidence to support new perspectives and reinforce assumptions, to identify the methodology and research techniques used, and to distinguish any gaps in the literature, highlighting the phenomenon and the need for further study (Baker, 2016).

The review of the literature led to a composite conceptual framework of person-organization fit theory (Argyris, 1973) and human capital theory (Becker, 1962) to build the conceptual framework for this study. In qualitative studies, researchers may use theory as a broad explanation for behaviors, or they may use theory as a lens to isolate the issues of primary importance to a given study (Jamali, 2018). I expected person organization fit to be appropriate to explain the effects the culture of an organization has on employees. In contrast, I expected human capital theory to facilitate an explanation for how employers investing in training and education can improve employee satisfaction. I used a composite of person organization fit theory and human capital theory as the conceptual framework for this study on strategies to retain U.S veterans to better understand the findings from my study.

Person Organization Fit Theory

Person organization fit theory (Argyris, 1973) describes how organizational culture affects recruiting and hiring, increasing employee commitment and retention. Researchers use person-organization fit to view the compatibility of employees and the organization (Argyris, 1973). Kristof (1996) noted that person organization fit is a theory that deals with compatibility between the employee and the organization, ultimately predicting employee engagement, job performance, and turnover intentions. Organizational leaders often make changes to their recruiting and hiring strategies to ensure the applicants are aligned with the mission and vision of the organization (Zhang et al., 2017).

To realize a successful person organization fit, organizations may adjust their recruitment strategies to attract candidates that reflect the culture and values of the organization (Ardıç et al., 2016). Human resource leaders have a unique opportunity to utilize strategies to gain a skilled workforce to meet strategic goals (Kalaiselvan & Naachimuthu, 2016). Researchers have found the existing literature indicates that person organization fit has a strong link to employee commitment (Ellis et al., 2017). It is essential to examine the person-organization fit before making a hiring decision as it may result in a better fit for the organization and higher levels of job satisfaction for the employee (Ardıç et al., 2016).

According to Ellis et al. (2017), many applicants are given vague or misleading information during the recruiting process, and they do not have an accurate assessment of the position or their potential fit within the organization. Organizational leaders must then look within their internal culture. Providing precise information during recruitment allows for the candidate to assess fit, and the candidate can then better predict alignment between their values and those of the organization (Ardic et al., 2016). Researchers use person organization fit theory as the framework for exploring the role person-organization fit has on employee retention through the development of employee engagement and job satisfaction (Jin et al., 2016).

Perkins et al. (2019) found that 60% of transitioning veterans secure employment within the first 3 months. Though some veterans may find employment easily following their military service, many struggle to remain in their position because of the added stress of a poor job fit and unease with the organization's culture (Keeling, Kintzle, et al.,

2018). A gap between military and civilian culture may occur when the community has had limited experience with the military and those who have served in the military (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016).

Employers do not always understand the specific need veterans have to be able to relate to coworkers (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018). Veterans view their work as a core tenant of who they are (Yanchus et al., 2018), and employers can improve job satisfaction by addressing the vital role cultural assimilation plays in retaining veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015). Aligning the values and needs with both the employees and the organization can be very complicated and should evolve from the matching of organizational and individual characteristics (Zhang et al., 2017). The association between individual and corporate characteristics can help select a good fit between the candidate and the organization by analyzing the compatibility of values and needs (Davis & Minnis, 2016).

Person-organization fit can also influence pride in the organization and is a strong predictor of turnover decisions and job satisfaction (Oo et al., 2018). Person-organization fit can lead to a strong sense of attachment to their organization because increased job satisfaction ensues, leading to reduced turnover intentions (Jin et al., 2016). As veterans transition from military service to the civilian workforce, one of their primary concerns is fitting in and their ability to assimilate into a civilian workplace culture (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2018). A core principle in the hiring process is to match the right person to the right job, to include the alignment of the needs and values of the organization and the individual; this alignment can directly impact veteran retention (Schulker, 2017).

Human Capital Theory

Becker was an American economist and a theorist in modern human capital theory. Becker (1962) based his theory on the work of Schultz (Schultz, 1961), elaborating on the original concept of investing in individual employees as part of a relationship between human capital development, the development of society, and the return on investment. Both Becker (1962) and Schultz (1961) looked at training and education as investments in human capital with the possibility of impacting productivity and income. Human capital consists of the knowledge and skills that employees obtain through investments in their formal and informal education, on the job training, and other unique experiences (Becker, 1962). Becker viewed training and education as investments in human capital, with the possibility of positively affecting productivity and income (Becker, 1962). When employees are valued and developed, they often remain committed and engaged, so it is vital to develop strong training and mentoring programs. Becker (1962) also noted that employees could leave an organization with the knowledge and skills obtained through the human capital investment of the organization. While controversial and sometimes criticized for focusing on the needs of the organizations as opposed to individuals, human capital theory is well known and often accepted by human resource professionals (Weinberger, 1998).

The Department of Defense prioritizes the investment in developing and honing the skills and abilities of servicemembers (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2016). In the military culture, the ability to develop new skills and abilities is seen as an earned benefit and increases the perceived status of the service member within their ranks (Cooper et al.,

2018). Additional investments in human capital can leverage the unique skill sets of veterans to meet organizational performance objectives, increasing employee satisfaction and commitment (Yanchus et al., 2018). Employers typically make hiring decisions based on the desire to utilize the skills of veteran applicants to fulfill strategic organizational goals (Davis & Minnis, 2016). An organization's human resources function most effectively when human resource leadership is part of the strategic planning process (Naznin & Hussain, 2016). Human capital development and the diversity of experiences were both factors in superior corporate treatment of military veterans (Blank, 2019).

Employers often view veterans as a source of highly qualified talent (Ford, 2016), and make hiring decisions based on the desire to utilize the skills of veteran applicants to fulfill strategic organizational goals (Davis & Minnis, 2016). It is also essential to assess cultural fit, knowledge base, aptitude, and path for growth and development when making hiring decisions (Mayer & Carroll, 2011). Unfortunately, some employers are focusing on recruiting veterans without developing a process to develop or retain veterans once they are hired (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018). Employers that invest in developing and mentoring skilled veterans to ensure they have the knowledge, skills, and experience will find the veterans are successful with additional responsibility and leadership roles (Kirchner & Minnis, 2018; Whitworth et al., 2020). This involvement and commitment from the earliest stages of recruiting will create a more substantial commitment to the organization (Fischerová & Půbalová, 2018).

As organizational leaders recruit more veterans into their workforce, they should be prepared to manage this talent pool throughout the employment life cycle (Ford,

2016). Unfortunately, multiple organizations' managers are focusing on recruiting veterans without developing a process to develop or retain veterans once they are hired (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018). Education can serve as a bridge between the veteran and the civilian employer (Perkins et al., 2019). Organizational leaders cannot rely entirely on their existing workforce and must anticipate a level of natural attrition; employers can use their human resource processes to develop educational programs that include training and development to increase the satisfaction and engagement of veterans, mitigating some turnover (Ford, 2016; Miller, 2017).

Employers can improve employee engagement and retention by providing employees the motivation and desire to come to work (Heisler & Bandow, 2018). Dirani (2017) noted that employers could improve feelings of engagement by finding strategies to help veterans learn new skills to help them be successful at work. Obtaining new forms of knowledge and skillsets can be of primary importance for some veterans during their career transitions (Davis & Minnis, 2016). Professional development opportunities can increase the engagement and retention of employees (Heisler & Bandow, 2018). Researchers have found veteran employees have unique characteristics, and organizational leaders can maximize their benefit to the organization by understanding their unique attitudes and behaviors (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2018).

Retention and Strategy Development

Employee retention continues to be a challenge for many employers; leaders in human resource management can improve employee engagement and retention by providing a more comprehensive approach to talent management. A strategic approach to

talent management can be used by employers to attract, develop, and retain employees to achieve a competitive advantage (Narayanan, et al., 2018). Workforce planning should include assessing cultural fit as well as the individual motivators of applicants (Norton, 2017). Knowledge of the core motives of applicants looking for employment is essential for attraction and retention strategy deployment (Koval et al., 2016). Hiring the right employees is vital to successful retention (Zoller, 2018). Leaders in human resources need to have a thorough understanding of human capital and culture to effectively hire and retain employees of any background (Delery & Roumpi, 2017).

Human resource leaders should address employee engagement to meet their retention goals (Memon et al., 2016). Onboarding is a strategic process that immediately follows recruiting and often includes hiring and integrating a new employee into the company culture; this process can have a positive impact on both engagement and retention (Norton, 2017). Previous studies reported that some employees do not receive onboarding opportunities (Ford, 2017), even though achieving early organizational commitment is vital to employee engagement and retention (Nica, 2018).

The organizational commitment of employees can be influenced by work-life experiences, job satisfaction, employee engagement, and organizational culture (Lin et al., 2017). Organizational commitment levels may also have an impact on how an employee perceives that they fit the culture of the organization, often viewed by employees as an effort to understand them (Nica, 2018). Employees who perceive they fit within the organizational culture are more engaged and tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction (Ford, 2017). Organizational commitment and job satisfaction are key factors

in employee retention (Memon, et al., 2016). High levels of job satisfaction can help mitigate an employee's intention to leave (Jin, et al., 2018).

Organizational leadership trying to keep their employees satisfied and retain them within the organization may allow their employees to explore various types of activities beyond their job requirements and may allow them to choose additional activities based on their skills and enjoyment, which can satisfy both the intrinsic and extrinsic needs of the organization (Jin, et al., 2018). Employees who have input into making important decisions and setting policies often find it difficult to leave the organization, and retention increases (Khalid & Nawab, 2018). Employers should develop an understanding of how to motivate employees and influence employee behaviors to have a positive influence on employee retention (Marsden, 2016).

Additional factors that can influence employee retention include recruitment, job fit, culture, work-life balance, training and mentoring, and compensation (Memon, et al., 2016). Employers who develop an understanding of retention strategies to address these factors may increase productivity and morale in the organization and improve retention (Khalili, 2014). Employers who develop and implement a strategic approach to retaining employees are more effective in retaining employees and building a competitive advantage than employers who do not use retention strategies (Delery & Roumpi, 2017).

Employers use retention strategies to address employee retention rates, as employers develop appropriate retention strategies for their organization, they should also understand what goes into creating effective strategies (Allen et al., 2010; Kirchner et al., 2021). A proactive approach to implementing retention strategies is more effective than

assessing why an employee left, reducing human capital cost to replace and retrain employees (Ford, 2017). Employers who use effective retention strategies are able to use human capital resources more efficiently (Allen, et al., 2010), and can potentially have a positive impact on the sustainability of their organization (Ford, 2017).

Recruiting and Hiring

Many large organizations seek the desirable skills veterans bring to an organization and they have developed comprehensive hiring programs (Shepherd et al., 2020). Organizational leaders need to understand the unique talent management factors that can affect veteran retention (Ford, 2017). Employers that are successful in developing strategies to retain veterans have aligned human resource processes to support a coordinated effort linking recruiting, hiring, and retaining veterans in order to ensure the candidates have a successful transition into the civilian workforce, directly impacting retention rates (Opengart, 2019). During recruiting and hiring it is essential that the veteran's military experiences and training match the civilian job requirements, in addition to ensuring the organizational culture is a good match for long term engagement in order to increase retention (Wewiorski et al., 2018).

With the unique challenges employers and veterans face translating military experiences and training, as well as adapting to the culture gap, human resource leaders should develop programs to train and educate organizational leadership about the differences in military experience, culture, and practices prior to implementing processes for recruiting and hiring veterans in order to increase retention (Ford, 2017; Harrod et al., 2017). When employers do not invest in the initial steps of internal education and

aligning the human resource processes to support a coordinated effort to provide veterans with a successful transition, there can be a negative impact on retention (Opengart, 2019).

Organizational leadership needs to develop innovative strategies to develop and obtain a competitive advantage; employees are a critical strategic asset for these organizations (Khattak et al., 2015). Employers can expect a considerable worker shortage over the next 20 years, and employers will need to source alternative talent pools for their skilled labor; this crisis needs to be addressed (Heisler & Bandow, 2018). Strategic recruitment and development of millennials are imperative to a long-term solution for the void that will be created when baby boomers retire from the workforce (Fischerová & Půbalová, 2018). Realistic planning helps to identify sources from which to recruit employees and ways to mitigate recruiting and hiring costs. Reliance on traditional recruiting methods to attract younger generations is no longer as effective as it once was (Khalid & Nawab, 2018).

Employers are recognizing the unique attributes veterans possess, and many of those organizations are developing hiring programs to capitalize on the competitive advantage veterans bring as a source of unique and skilled talent, creating a high-performance workplace (Ford, 2016; Schulker, 2017). Employers are establishing veteran hiring and recruitment programs more frequently than ever before, with most sharing four similarities in their development: recruitment, professional development/education, community outreach, and specific demographics (Kirchner & Minnis, 2018). These were reoccurring themes that emerged throughout the professional and academic literature review as well.

Creating relationships between employers that welcome veteran applicants and veterans who are seeking employment is not without difficulties. Employers often list requirements for job openings that veterans cannot apply for due to a lack of the civilian work experience required, essentially requiring the veteran to start over (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018). Some employers still believe combat skills are the primary skill set for veterans and overlook their soft skills or additional technical skills (Davis & Minnis, 2018; Dexter, 2020). Veterans might be able to help clear up misconceptions if they developed ways to translate their military skills and experience in a way that is understandable and applicable to a civilian workplace (Rice & Liu, 2016). However, some veterans fail to utilize transition programs that might help with skills translation and accurate resumes which can lead to poor hiring decisions by employers (LePage, 2020).

Leaving military service creates a shift and begins a significant life transition which requires navigating changes such as finding employment, possibly acquiring a new home, new roles, and new cultural norms (Weiss et al., 2019). The integration of veterans into the civilian workplace is commonly accepted for many as very important for both veterans and society as a whole (Wewiorski et al., 2018), with the first job after separation seen as a significant milestone (Yanchus et al., 2018). Cultural competency training that targets the military/civilian cultural gap is valuable in engaging veterans and should be targeted to human resource professionals and civilian employers (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018).

While there has been an increase in veteran hiring initiatives, many organizational leaders are focused on recruiting without developing a comprehensive plan to manage or

retain veterans after they have been hired (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018). Some organizations have programs to hire veterans, but many of those employers do not have activities that focus on maintaining employment (Harrod et al., 2017). However, organizations who have a comprehensive veteran hiring initiative including effective recruiting, professional development, and mentoring can help mitigate some of the challenges veterans face and increase their engagement and satisfaction (Whitworth et al., 2020).

There is not a legal definition for "veteran-friendly organization" or best business practices for human resources and hiring managers to follow when developing a new veteran hiring initiative (Miller, 2017). Some employers create successful veteran-based programs by seeking, and including, direct input from veterans (Ford, 2016). Veterans who have transitioned into the civilian workforce can provide valuable insight into their concerns, experiences, and needs for support (Davis & Minnis, 2016). Ford (2016) and Keeling, Kintzle, et al., (2020) found that when organizational leadership was able to create a framework that aligned with organizational objectives successfully, the employees flourished. When organizational values align with the personal values of their employees, it leads to pride in the collaboration, reinforcing the role person organization fit plays in organizational pride (Oo et al., 2018).

Many organizations consider veteran employment programs a social responsibility that builds goodwill due to positive perceptions of servicemembers (Kirschner, et al., 2021). In addition to the goodwill earned by hiring veterans, an organization can profit financially from developing a veteran hiring initiative by utilizing

federal government incentives and tax credits (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015), which can range from $1500 to $9600 per year, for each new hire (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016). The U.S. government and members of Congress developed tax incentives to increase veteran employment rates (Schulker, 2017), leaving many veterans to question if it is more of a public relations consideration than that of a corporate value (Kirchner & Minnis, 2018). The range and type of veteran programs vary substantially, often shaped by the needs and strategic goals of the organization (Ford, 2016).

Researchers have found that developing employee participation is vital to successful employment, and when it is encouraged, there was a correlation with increased employee retention (Khalid & Nawab, 2018). Onboarding is a pivotal point in veteran integration (Davis & Minnis, 2016) and the quality of the process can determine if the transition into the organization will be successful. Three specific onboarding practices have been commonly seen as successful: using a buddy system, partnering a veteran with another veteran (Elnitsky et al, 2017), inclusion in veteran focused affinity groups (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2020), and mentoring and partnering the veteran with an organizational advisor (Ford, 2016).

Each year from 2010 through 2014, an average of 309,000 uniquely skilled service members will leave military service, increasing the number of veterans who are transitioning into the civilian workforce (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015). Separating from military service and beginning the transition to civilian employment is a comprehensive process with many challenging adjustments (Harrod et al., 2017).

Keeling, Kintzle, et al. (2018) showed there were five main themes that had an impact on the ability of a veteran to find their first job after military separation: the type of discharge, a lack of support during the transition, starting life over, negative experiences with support services, and perceptions of employer stigma and discrimination.

One key area of concern both employers and veterans face are the challenges in translating the unique skills and experiences of veterans. Many veterans are not appropriately matched with job openings they may be qualified for. Human resource professionals often have difficulty translating the experience and education of veterans (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013), resulting in miscommunications (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Employers who engage in military culture training that also include skills translation could increase retention rates (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018). Ensuring clarity in roles and responsibilities could have a positive effect on person organization fit (Tao & Campbell, 2019).

Employers should be educated on the nuances of the culture gap to properly evaluate candidates (Hammer et al., 2017). Some employers appear to have misconceptions about veterans and the skills they possess. Some employers believe veterans have lower education levels than their civilian counterparts (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013) even though many veterans have utilized various programs during their military service to obtain degrees (Rumery et al., 2018). Research conducted by Shepherd et al. (2020) indicated that veteran underemployment had increased between 2010 and 2019. Kirshner et al. (2020) opined that the majority of all veterans currently in the workforce are underemployed. Employers can miss out on qualified veterans because they are

looking for civilian benchmarks for qualifications. Hiring veterans for roles with

responsibilities similar to their military roles can increase the likelihood of a successful

hire (Dexter, 2020). Some veterans have institutional-based education through military

training and often experience challenges with securing credentials, such as certificates

and state licensures (Schulker, 2017).

Barriers to employment for veterans include mental and physical health problems

(Wewiorski et al., 2018). While the majority of employers have positive perceptions of

veterans, stigmas are still common in the workplace (Kirschner et al., 2020). Some

employers are concerned that mental health issues and the rate of Post-Traumatic Stress

Disorder (PTSD) can make veterans unstable and even unsafe in some situations (Tsai &

Rosenheck, 2013). Veterans often face challenges due to negative biases and assumptions

made by employers (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2018); any discrimination concerns, and

the effect discrimination has as an employment barrier should be investigated by a

governing agency (Keeling, Kintzle et al., 2018).

Transition and Integration

The grief and loss experienced by veterans during the transition and career change

may have a negative impact on their confidence, leading to difficulties managing the

process (Robertson & Brott, 2014). Leaving military service creates a shift and begins a

significant life transition for veterans which requires navigating changes such as finding

employment, possibly acquiring a new home, new roles, and new cultural norms

(Whitworth et al., 2020). The loss of friendships forged through unique shared

experiences and the forfeiture of a tight military community is a difficult challenge for

many veterans to overcome and often causes fear and anxiety (Cooper et al., 2018; Hammer et al., 2017). Managing the changes during the transition process from active duty to veteran is difficult; the outcomes are connected and impact the overall transition (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016). The challenges faced because of transitioning will be the most difficult right after separating, while the military culture is still fresh for most veterans (Tao & Campbell, 2019). Assimilation into the civilian community impacts how well veterans manage the transition (Kirchner & Minnis, 2018).

Researchers have found transitioning out of the military can cause a unique source of significant stress for service members and their families (Elnitsky & Kilmer, 2017; Keeling, Woodhead et al., 2016), there have been limited academic studies published focused on the transition process or the factors linked to veterans' successful transitions into the civilian workplace (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016). Developing programs to support veterans so that they transition successfully is viewed as a priority by many individuals who are responsible for research and public policy (Perkins et al., 2019; LePage, 2020). Some organizational leaders are starting to view employee retention as a benchmark for success (Khalid & Nawab, 2018).

A comprehensive understanding of the complex cultural transition from military community to civilian is needed to influence outcomes (Whitworth et al., 2020). The military/civilian gap experience felt through the transition can lead to a communication breakdown and create misunderstandings, and leave veterans feeling like they do not fit into their civilian communities (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016; Weiss et al., 2019). Understanding the transition process enables organizational leadership to serve the needs

of the organization as well as the veteran through program development (Ford, 2016).

Military identities are developed in unique and often hostile conditions and environments

and rooted in their rank, and specific skill sets, forming strong military cultures and sub-

cultures aligned with those identities (Cooper et al., 2018; Vanderschuere & Birdsall,

2018). Dedication to a culture that includes rigid hierarchy and commitment to following

orders can have a negative impact on a veteran's ability to take initiative or act

independently (Shepherd et al., 2020). Cultural competency training that targets the

military/civilian cultural gap is valuable and should be targeted to human resource

professionals and civilian employers to be the most effective (Keeling, Kintzle, et al.,

2018).

In cases where the service member was forced to leave the military due to medical

grounds or failure to promote, the transition can be especially traumatic because the

preparation for their separation is often abrupt and limited, stripping them of their identity

and community with little notice (Cooper et al., 2018). Veterans who separate suddenly

often try to hold on tightly to their military cultures and identities, causing the separation

to be more difficult (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018). Veterans often view their workplaces

differently than their civilian coworkers, and the lack of cohesion can have a negative

impact on veteran job satisfaction (Harrod et al., 2017); it is crucial to understand the

unique perceptions veterans hold to develop the proper process to address retention

(Miller, 2017; Yanchus et al., 2018). Veterans and civilians are very different groups, and

organizational leaders should take that into consideration (Blank, 2019).

The integration of veterans into the civilian workplace is commonly accepted for many as very important for both veterans and society as a whole (Wewiorski et al., 2018), with the first job after separation seen as a significant milestone (Yanchus et al., 2018). Embracing major change can be a challenge, but it also provides an opportunity to learn and grow (Bright et al., 2018). Several programs exist solely to assist veterans with support services and securing employment as they transition to the civilian workforce (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015); these resources can also help veterans integrate into the civilian workplace (Perkins et al., 2019).

Veterans often participate in deployments during their time in service; the time spent away and the intensity and potential trauma experienced during their deployments can have a profound impact on veterans (Elnitsky et al., 2017) and may be viewed as a negative by some employers (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013). Veterans will have to reevaluate the strong alpha identity that is fostered in the military to successfully transition into a gentler civilian workplace (Cooper et al., 2018). The rank of a military member signifies status and value to the military; veterans who were well respected in the military often find themselves disregarded in the civilian workplace, creating feelings of being demoted (Harrod et al., 2017). Some veterans are better able to make plans for the future and prepared for their eventual military separation while other veterans did not make preparations; researchers found that the veterans who prepared for their separation had more successful transitions to civilian life (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2020).

Disability compensation paid through Veterans Affairs can be a disincentive for some veterans to seek employment after separating but work incentives and vocational

rehabilitation can increase the likelihood those veterans will seek employment (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013). Veterans with mental health concerns, cognitive impairments, and brain injuries were most likely to face barriers to employment after leaving the military (Elnitsky & Kilmer, 2017), often finding more success when seeking employment with organizations that hold veteran employment as a core value rather than a strategic asset (Twamley et al., 2013).

A well thought out inclusive veteran hiring initiative that includes effective recruiting, professional development, and mentoring, as well as other support programs, can help mitigate the challenges veterans face and increase engagement and retention (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016). Kirchner and Minnis (2018) noted that veterans are more likely to be engaged and trust an organization that shows a strong history of military affiliation. Many veterans have a strong need to find meaning and a purpose in the choices they make for their lives. Former service members tend to develop and maintain the firm belief and commitment of "service to others" in their civilian life as a goal or mission (Miller, 2017; Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016).

Veterans often expect higher levels of fairness and equality than their civilian coworkers during the hiring and advancement processes, highlighting the need to bridge the culture gap (Yanchus et al., 2018). Military members take pride in their rank as it distinguishes them from others in terms of leadership, responsibility, and authority; veterans who were well respected in the military often find themselves disregarded in their civilian roles creating feelings of being undervalued (Cooper et al., 2018; Harrod et al., 2017). Some veterans experiencing difficulties with the culture gap turn to heavy

alcohol use to help with their anxieties and depression, often causing termination of employment by the veteran or the employer (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018). Yet, some veterans will not identify themselves as veterans, do not utilize veteran-focused programs, and do not want employment they feel is offered as a handout or offered for positive public relations because of their military service (Ford, 2016). The perception by an employee that there was a lack of justification for their efforts may increase their turnover intentions (Khalid & Nawab, 2018).

Despite the success some veterans have at transitioning into the civilian workplace, some veterans will continue to have chronic employment issues long after they separate from the military. (Harrod et al., 2017; Whitworth et al., 2020). Organizations that utilize veteran programs often use three forms of interaction: anticipation, maintenance, and sustainability (Ford, 2016). The transition process from the military workforce to the civilian workforce is an ongoing process more than it is a single event, the inevitable evolution of a veteran's career. Human resource professionals should consider ongoing veteran-focused career planning as a strategy to help with job alignment and retention concerns beyond the initial hiring (Ford, 2016; Miller, 2017). Many employers are beginning to view employee retention as a benchmark for success (Khalid & Nawab, 2018).

Retaining Veterans

The United States has a 20% average overall turnover rate for employees in the general labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Organizations must absorb the additional costs related to employee turnover (Marsden, 2016). Organizational leadership

trying to keep their employees satisfied and retain them within the organization may allow their employees to explore various types of activities beyond what is on their job requirement and may allow them to choose additional activities based on their skills and enjoyment, which can satisfy both the intrinsic and extrinsic needs of the organization (Jin et al., 2016). Employees who have input into making important decisions and setting policies often find it difficult to leave the organization, and retention increases (Khalid & Nawab, 2018).

Each year from 2010 through 2014, an average of 309,000 uniquely skilled service members transitioned out of military service, increasing the number of veterans who are transitioning into the civilian workforce (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015). Separating from military service and beginning the transition to civilian employment is a comprehensive process with many challenging adjustments (Harrod et al., 2017). Research done by Keeling, Kintzle, et al. (2018) showed there were five main themes that had an impact on the ability of a veteran to find their first job after military separation: the type of discharge, a lack of support during the transition, starting life over, negative experiences with support services, and perceptions of employer stigma and discrimination.

There has been a large show of support just recently given to veteran hiring initiatives (Schulker, 2017), leaving veterans and others to question if it is more of a public relations consideration then that of a corporate value (Kirchner & Minnis, 2018). A well thought out proactive and comprehensive veteran hiring initiative including effective recruiting, professional development, and mentoring as well as other support

programs can help mitigate the challenges veterans face and increase engagement and satisfaction (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016; Whitworth et al., 2020). Kirchner and Minnis (2018) noted that veterans are more likely to trust an organization that shows a strong history of military affiliation.

In cases where the service member was forced to leave the military for medical reasons, or failure to promote, the transition can be especially traumatic because the preparation for their separation is often abrupt and limited, stripping them of their identity and community with little notice (Cooper et al., 2018). Veterans who separate suddenly often try to hold on tightly to their military cultures and identities, causing the separation to be more difficult (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018). Veterans often lack the basics to secure a job, such as networking skills, which can be a significant barrier when looking for employment possibilities (Yanchus et al., 2018).

Some employers have begun to develop veteran hiring initiatives (Kirchner & Minnis, 2018); yet there continues to be a lack of understanding of the skill sets and experiences of veterans (Cooper et al., 2018), leading to potential unsuccessful hires due to poor skills match or the inability to evaluate their skills accurately (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Human resource professionals often have difficulty translating the experience and education of veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015); there is often miscommunication, and employers must be educated to properly evaluate candidates (Hammer et al., 2017).

Veterans often expect higher levels of fairness and equality than their civilian coworkers during the hiring and advancement processes, highlighting the need to bridge the culture gap (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2018; Yanchus et al., 2018). Some veterans

also have difficulty relating to and communicating with coworkers and peers, which can lead to challenges in maintaining employment (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018). Many veterans view their workplace differently than their civilian coworkers, and the lack of cohesion can impact veteran satisfaction (Harrod et al., 2017); it is essential to understand their perceptions to develop the proper process to address retention (Miller, 2017; Yanchus et al., 2018).

The strong alpha identity that is highly valued in the military may be a source of dissonance as the veteran transition to a civilian workplace that may not value the same mindset (Cooper et al., 2018). In addition, military members often participate in deployments with potentially harmful and traumatic effects that can have a profound impact on veterans (Elnitsky et al., 2017) and may be viewed as a negative by some employers (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013). The military has a strong reliance on unique acronyms and military-specific terminology, which can make it very difficult for employers to understand the background and experiences of veterans and how that may benefit their organization (Blank, 2019). The rank of a military member signifies status and value to the military; veterans who were well respected in the military often find themselves disregarded in the civilian workplace creating feelings of being demoted (Harrod et al., 2017). Some veterans will not identify themselves as veterans, do not utilize veteran-focused programs, and do not want employment they feel is offered as a handout or as a public relations topic because of their military service (Ford, 2016). The perception by an employee that there was a lack of justification for their efforts may increase their turnover intensions (Khalid & Nawab, 2018).

Veterans and civilians are very different groups, often coming from very different cultures, and employers should take that into consideration (Schulker, 2017). Veterans often deal with negative biases and assumptions made by civilian employers (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2018); discrimination concerns and the role it plays as an employment barrier should be investigated (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018). Employers often make assumptions regarding the educational level of veterans, with some employers believing that veterans have lower levels of education than their civilian counterparts (Stone & Stone, 2015). However, many veterans have utilized educational opportunities available during their time in service or sought additional education after separating (Rumery et al., 2018). Mental and physical health can provide additional barriers to employment (Wewiorski et al., 2018), and veterans should address these needs to have long term successful employment (Gillums Jr, 2016). Employers may not know how to accommodate the potential mental health issues or PTSD concerns that veterans often face, and some employers have concerns about the mental stability and safety of veterans (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013; Shepherd et al., 2020). Human resources fill a crucial role in employment policy and strategies for many employers. Human resource professionals should consider veteran focus career planning as a strategy to help with job alignment and retention concerns (Ford, 2016). Developing a veteran hiring initiative can be challenging for organizational leaders, and an understanding of the veteran experience is fundamental to a successful program (Blank, 2019; Stone & Stone, 2015). Most job applicants search for jobs by the title posted, assuming the experience and education required by the title (Uhm et al., 2017). Additional concerns include credentials. Some

veterans have institutional-based knowledge through military training and often experience challenges with securing credentials, such as certificates and state licensures (Schulker, 2017). Employers who engage in military culture training to include skills translation could increase retention rates (Davis & Minnis, 2017; Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018; Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018).

Ford (2016) found that organizations hiring veterans often find it challenging to retain them for several reasons including: difficulty translating previous military work experience and skills to a job in a civilian workplace, unique methods of communicating learned in the military culture is a challenge for civilian coworkers and supervisors, the onboarding process used by many employers is not inclusive of the unique needs of veterans, the realization that civilian employers have a general lack of understanding of mental and physical impacts that can occur during military service and how it can impact their performance in the civilian workplace.

Research shows that one of the most prominent challenges veterans face when they are looking for employment after the military is the translation of the skills and experience they gained during their military service (Harrod et al., 2017). In spite of the training and skills held by many veterans, many veterans are not appropriately matched with job openings they may be qualified for. Human resource professionals often have difficulty translating the experience and education of veterans (Perkins et al., 2019; Stone & Stone, 2015), resulting in miscommunications (Davis & Minnis, 2017). Employers who engage in military culture training that also include skills translation often increase retention rates (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018).

Accurately matching the job requirements with the qualifications of the veteran improves engagement and retention (Ford, 2016). Many veterans are not appropriately matched with job openings they may be qualified for because employers often lack the ability to translate their military skills into civilian terminology. Human resource professionals often have difficulty translating the experience and education of veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015). Employers who engage in military culture training that also include skills translation could increase retention rates (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018). Employers can also seek training on the nuances of the culture gap to properly evaluate candidates (Hammer et al., 2017). Determining the environment the veteran is comfortable working in may also help to identify jobs that are a good fit (Harrod et al., 2017).

A veteran hiring initiative that includes effective recruiting, professional development, and mentoring, as well as other support programs can help mitigate the challenges veterans face and increase engagement and retention (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016). Veterans value opportunities for professional development, often stemming from the formation of their military identities; they view the process of training as transformational, helping to ground new identities in their skills (Cooper et al., 2018). There are many programs used for developing veterans, but mentoring programs are one of the most common initiatives for professional development offered by organizations with veteran hiring programs (Kirchner & Minnis, 2018).

Recently, employed veterans paired with newly hired veterans were found to be an essential element in retaining veterans; a comprehensive understanding of the complex

cultural transition from military community to civilian is needed to influence outcomes (Elnitsky et al., 2017; Whitworth et al., 2020). Understanding the transition process enables organizational leadership to serve the needs of the organization as well as the veteran through program development (Ford, 2016). Human capital development and the diversity of experiences were both aligned with the superior corporate treatment of military veterans (Blank, 2019).

Researchers found that affinity groups, or employee resource groups, can help ease the culture clash many veterans feel in their civilian workplaces by providing camaraderie and shared experiences, often supporting each other in managing frustrations with the civilian workplace (Elnitsky et al., 2017; Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2019). Employers can develop additional programs to support positive outcomes from a culture clash. Employers who have veteran hiring programs can develop cultural competency training to educate and raise awareness for the cultural and often subtle needs of veterans in a civilian workplace. Some veterans also have difficulty relating to and communicating with coworkers and peers, which can lead to challenges in maintaining employment (Harrod et al., 2017).

Employers do not always understand the acute need veterans have to be able to relate to coworkers (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018); veterans often view their work as a core aspect of their identity (Yanchus et al., 2018), and organizations can improve employee job satisfaction by addressing the role cultural assimilation plays in retaining veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015). Many veterans view their workplace differently than their civilian coworkers, and the lack of cohesion can impact veteran satisfaction (Harrod

et al., 2017); it is essential to understand the perceptions of veterans to develop the proper process to address retention (Yanchus et al., 2018).

Researchers found that developing employee participation is vital, and when participation is encouraged, there was a correlation between the increased participation and increased employee retention (Khalid & Nawab, 2018). Onboarding is a pivotal point in veteran integration (Davis & Minnis, 2017), and the quality of the process can determine if the transition into the organization will be successful; three specific onboarding practices have been commonly seen as successful: using a buddy system, partnering a veteran with another veteran (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018); inclusion in veteran focused affinity groups (Elnitsky et al., 2017); and mentoring, partnering the veteran with an organizational advisor (Ford, 2016).

Veterans who face mental health concerns, cognitive impairments, and brain injuries were most likely to face additional challenges and barriers to securing employment after leaving the military (Elnitsky et al., 2017), often finding more success when seeking employment with organizations that hold veteran employment as a core value rather than a strategic asset (Ford, 2016; Twamley et al., 2013). Mental and physical health can provide barriers to employment for veterans (Wewiorski et al., 2018). Employers are often concerned that mental health issues and the rate of PTSD can make veterans unstable and unpredictable (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013). Veterans are very aware of these concerns and it may exacerbate the challenges they have fitting in to the workplace (Shepherd, 2020). There is a need for employers to become more educated on the benefits of providing accommodations for disabled veterans (Cooper et al., 2018).

Employers can consider adding strategies to help identify PTSD and flexible work roles and optimizing their immediate work environment may be successful in retaining disabled veterans (Harrod et al., 2017).

Person organization fit can also influence the pride employees have in their workplace and is a strong predictor of job satisfaction and retention (Zhang et al., 2017). Person organization fit can also lead to a strong sense of attachment employees have toward their organization because increased job satisfaction ensues, leading to reduced turnover intentions (Jin et al., 2016). Community outreach programs are considered an important component of a successful military hiring program (Kirchner & Minnis, 2018). As veterans transition from military service to the civilian workforce, one of their primary concerns is fitting in and their ability to assimilate into a civilian workplace culture (Harrod et al., 2017; Perkins et al., 2019). A core principle in the hiring process is to match the right person to the right job, to include the alignment of the needs and values of the organization and the individual; this alignment can directly impact veteran retention (Ford, 2016).

Transition

Section 1 of this qualitative multiple case study included details on the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, significance of the study, and review of the professional and academic literature. From the review of the literature, I identified some of the challenges human resource leaders face as they address rising labor costs and widespread

labor shortages. The literature review included person organization fit, human capital theory, strategies used to retain workers, strategies used to retain skilled veterans, workforce planning, and the benefits of hiring veterans.

Section 2 of the study includes details on the role of the researcher, participants, the research method and design, population and sampling, ethics in research, data collection and analysis, and the reliability and validity of the study. Section 3 of the study includes the presentation of findings, application for professional practice. I also present the implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research in section 3.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 of the study includes details on the role of the researcher, participants, the research method and design, population and sampling. This section also includes details on ethics in research, data collection and analysis, and the reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans. The specific population group was three human resources leaders whose companies hired one or more veterans in the past year and who had been involved in developing successful retention strategies for veterans in the downtown section of Seattle, Washington. The findings of this study may help educate human resource leaders regarding the variety of benefits when organizational leadership develops innovative approaches to retaining a complex and diverse workforce. The implications for social change include the potential for reducing local unemployment rates, thereby strengthening the local economies.

Role of the Researcher

The primary role of a qualitative researcher is to comprehensively explore a phenomenon (Laumann, 2020). Exploring the insights and experiences of the participants could provide thorough and comprehensive data to understand their experiences and the relevance of those experiences for the participant (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). My role as a researcher included collecting, analyzing, and recording the data. The four principles of data collection, according to Yin (2018), include: using multiple sources as evidence,

developing a database, maintaining a chain of evidence, and using social media cautiously. Researchers can apply these principles to the six sources of case study evidence to ensure valid and reliable data. A key concern for any research is the reliability of the information (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). I adhered to ethical research practices as outlined in the *Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979), and in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) online training I completed in 2018. In order to apply these ethical standards, I used an informed consent form, ensured all participants understand their rights, risks, and responsibilities as volunteers (including their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty), and protected the confidentiality of all participant data collected. I also ensured the participant's wellbeing by submitting my proposal to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting interviews.

Almalki (2016) opined that it is critical that the researcher select the method most appropriate for their study and best utilizes their skill set. I utilized semistructured interviews with open-ended questions, as well as document review. I used document review to help corroborate the findings of the interviews with the additional insight and data. Using multiple sources of evidence supports a primary reason for utilizing case studies, to provide an in-depth and comprehensive examination of the phenomenon in a real-life situation (Yin, 2018). A case study database provides an organized way to store the case study data in a format that allows for easy retrieval, further ensuring reliability.

Yin (2018) noted that a chain of evidence shows appropriate processes and procedures on the path from the research question(s) through the findings found in the database.

It is essential for researchers to be aware of the biases and assumptions they hold because it could influence their choices as they select an approach and design the research methods they will use in their study (Assarroudi & Heydari, 2016). As a military spouse researching a topic related to veteran employment, I was aware this was something I needed to consider. A primary objective for researchers conducting interviews is to continue asking questions until no new data is found (Lowe et al., 2018). I utilized semistructured interviews with open-ended interview questions (Appendix A) and documentation review (Appendix B) to gather my data, adhering to defined protocols (Appendix C). Developing an interview protocol is important because researchers can use the protocol as a method to increase the reliability of a case study (Yin, 2018). Exploring the insights and experiences of the participants can provide thorough and comprehensive data so those experiences, and the relevance of those experiences for the participants, can be better understood (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Semistructured interviews are a commonly used type of interview and allow researchers to explore data that may not have been initially considered (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I used both methods of data collection to validate my findings and mitigate potential bias. Data triangulation occurs when findings from one study are supported by different sources of data for the same phenomenon, strengthening the construct validity of the study (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers often use triangulation

as a method to validate their findings by utilizing multiple lenses. Using triangulation enhances the reliability of the results and the saturation of data (Flick et al., 2018).

Participants

Exploring the insights and experiences of the participants can provide thorough and comprehensive data to understand their experiences and the relevance of those experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Given my focus on the strategies used by human resources leadership, business leaders involved in human resources were the most appropriate choice for interviews. To meet the criteria for participation in this study, participants must have been leaders in human resources, represented an organization located in the downtown section of Seattle, Washington, and had been involved in developing successful retention strategies for veterans.

Researchers using a case study must recruit participants with experience in the problem being studied (Yin, 2018). I looked for potential study participants through my Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) membership connections, as well as appropriate connections from my LinkedIn human resource networks. Once I received IRB approval to conduct the intended study, I contacted the participants who meet the eligibility criteria by phone or email and explained the intended study, confirmed eligibility, and determined their willingness to volunteer to participate in the study. I emailed potential participants a participant recruitment letter to provide the details in writing (Appendix D). After receiving consent from the participants, I emailed instructions, a consent form to sign and return, and scheduled an in-person interview that will be conducted utilizing a developed interview protocol found in Appendix C.

Researchers carry the responsibility to shape the interview, and those first few moments of the interview set the tone (Yazan, 2015). To ensure that the participants aligned with the research question, I selected human resources leaders from organizations that had retention strategies for veterans. Criteria for being prepared to conduct an interview include being knowledgeable about the topic, outlining the procedure that the interview will follow, having clear and simple questions, and controlling the flow of the interview. It is also helpful to remain polite and mitigate any concerns that may arise. Taking notes can show the value the researcher places on their input, which helps to build trust and rapport (Yin, 2018). It is essential to build rapport in ways that will not inject bias. Interviewers must allow interviewees to tell their story while remaining neutral and non-judgmental (Bolderston, 2012).

Research Method and Design

I selected a qualitative method for this study. I selected a multiple case study design for this qualitative study on strategies used to retain U.S. veterans. Researchers using a qualitative multiple case study design have an opportunity to gather information from participants, while also engaging in measures to determine common themes (Yin, 2018).

Research Method

There are three primary research methods: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed (Yin, 2018). I chose to use a qualitative research method for my study. I used a qualitative research method to explore the practices used by participants to identify retention concerns, address veteran transition issues, as well as build more effective

alignment with veterans and their civilian job positions. Qualitative research is used to explore a phenomenon more comprehensively (Laumann, 2020). Exploring the insights and experiences of the participants can provide thorough and comprehensive data to understand their experiences and the relevance of those experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Quantitative methods are useful for researchers testing hypotheses when the framework is built on quantifiable data (Sun et al., 2018). Quantitative methods are useful for researchers who are looking at an experiment, cause and effect, or a correlation between variables (Sun et al., 2018). Quantitative research would not yield the depth of information I was seeking. Researchers using mixed methods use both qualitative and quantitative research methods and would require analysis of defined variables (Khan, 2014). I was not analyzing defined variables, so mixed method research was not the most appropriate approach for my study.

Research Design

I contemplated the following four qualitative research designs for studying retention strategies: case study design, phenomenological design, ethnography, and narrative design. Researchers using a case study design explore the experiences of participants with experience in the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). A multiple case study design was appropriate to study the objective experiences of multiple human resource leaders, analyzing the information to identify any commonalities.

Phenomenological research is more appropriate to gather information on the lived experiences and beliefs of participants (Assarroudi & Heydari, 2016). A

phenomenological approach was not suitable for my study because my intent was not to explore the participants lived experiences. Researchers use ethnography when they want to study cultural phenomena (Fine & Hancock, 2016). I was researching strategies to retain veterans, so ethnography was not appropriate for my study. Narrative researchers tell a story from the personal perspective of the participant (Barabasch, 2018). A narrative approach was not appropriate for my study because I was not exploring the life stories of participants so it would have provided limited information.

Multiple case studies allow for a more substantial analysis through the exploration of the similarities and differences between the studies (Yin, 2018). Data triangulation occurs when findings from one study are supported by different sources of data for the same phenomenon, strengthening the construct validity of the study (Jentoft & Olsen, 2017). Researchers using a qualitative method often use triangulation as a method to validate their findings by utilizing multiple lenses. Using triangulation enhances the reliability of the results and the saturation of data (Flick et al., 2018).

According to Fusch and Ness (2015), the process of data triangulation used to enhance the reliability of the findings is also a means of attaining data saturation, the point where no new information is garnered from the additional collection of evidence. How data saturation is conceptualized and when that point has occurred, will differ by study and the type of research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In addition to using data triangulation, I asked questions during interviews until no new data or commonalities was discovered. I also confirmed data saturation during the data analysis process.

Population and Sampling

I selected purposeful or selective sampling for this study because researchers using this method can target informed participants holding unique and specific data, particularly relevant to a study question. The sampling method is essential to determining the quality of the study as data saturation only occurs when the researchers have gained a thorough understanding of the research problem, including identifying participants who can provide the most useful data (Vasileiou et al., 2018). A primary objective for researchers conducting interviews is to continue asking questions until no new data are found (Lowe, et al., 2018). Researchers utilizing a purposeful sampling method strive to acquire a thorough understanding of the experiences of participants (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Researchers should prioritize selecting an appropriate sample size to reach data saturation, rather than a specific number of participants (Vasileiou et al., 2018). I selected three participants from three different organizations who had been involved in developing successful retention strategies for veterans. The possibility existed that additional interviews may have been conducted to ensure data saturation. The point of data saturation can vary by study and makes planning difficult (Blaikie, 2018). Exploring the insights and experiences of the participants can provide thorough and comprehensive data so those experiences, and the relevance of those experiences for the participants, can be better understood (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

I focused on strategies used by human resources leadership for this study, so individuals involved in human resources were the most appropriate choice for interviews.

To meet the criteria for participation in this study, participants must have been leaders in human resources, represented an organization located in the downtown section of Seattle, Washington, and had been involved in developing successful retention strategies for veterans. The chosen multiple case study was appropriate to study the objective experiences of human resource leaders who had developed and implemented successful retention strategies for employees who identify as U.S. veterans.

Ethical considerations should be paramount for researchers (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The primary purpose of an IRB is to ensure the ethical treatment of research participants (Sabati, 2018). Once I received IRB approval to conduct the intended study, I contacted the participants who met the eligibility criteria by phone or email and explained the intended study, confirmed eligibility, and determined their willingness to volunteer to participate in the study. After receiving consent from the participants, I emailed the instructions, a consent form to sign and return, and scheduled a time for an in-person interview that was conducted utilizing a developed interview protocol. I maintained transparency regarding concerns about confidentiality and privacy. Protecting the privacy of research participants is a core value in research ethics (Morse & Coulehan, 2014).

Ethical Research

The primary purpose of an IRB is to ensure the ethical treatment of research participants (Sabati, 2018). Ethical considerations should be paramount for researchers during all phases of research (Frost et al., 2019). Chappy and Gaberson (2012) noted the IRB process addresses several specific provisions to protect participants: ensuring consent is voluntary, ensuring participants understand the risks and benefits of the

research and ensuring that participants have the right to stop participating at any time without repercussion. I did not begin data collection until after I received Walden University's IRB approval to conduct the intended study. The IRB approval number for this study is 12-08-20-0628332 and it expires 12-07-2021. I then contacted the participants who met the eligibility criteria by phone or email and explained the intended research, confirmed eligibility, and determined their willingness to volunteer to participate in the study.

After receiving consent from the participants, I emailed the instructions and enclosed a consent form to sign and return. After I received the consent form from the participant, I scheduled a time for an in-person interview that was conducted utilizing a developed interview protocol (Appendix C). The consent form contained an assurance that participants may withdraw by email or phone call at any time without penalty. No incentives or monetary compensation were offered to participants.

Morse and Coulehan (2014) noted that confidentiality could be addressed by removing identifiers prior to presenting data. I used pseudonyms in place of the participant's names and the organizations where they are employed. I stored all data gathered during my study in a locked cabinet in my home office to protect the confidentiality of the participants and their employers. Protecting the privacy of research participants is a core value in research ethics (Morse & Coulehan, 2014). I will store the data in this manner for 5 years, and at the end of this period, I will destroy all stored data.

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The four principles of data collection, according to Yin (2018), include: using multiple sources as evidence, developing a database, maintaining a chain of evidence, and using social media cautiously. These principles can be applied to the sources of evidence gathered during data collection to help ensure valid and reliable data. My role as a researcher included collecting, analyzing, and recording the data.

I utilized semistructured interviews with open-ended questions and documentation review to gather my data. Semistructured interviews are the most common type of interview and often allow the researcher to explore insightful data that may not have been considered initially (Jamshed, 2014). I conducted semistructured interviews using a strict interview protocol (Appendix C). To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, I utilized member checking by requesting each participant review their interview summary for accuracy in the interview interpretations, also ensuring reliability. Stake (1995) opined that to meet ethical responsibilities, researchers must strive for credible interpretations.

Qualitative researchers often use triangulation as a method to validate their findings by utilizing multiple lenses. Data triangulation occurs when findings from one study are supported by different sources of data for the same phenomenon, strengthening the construct validity of the study (Yin, 2018). Using triangulation enhances the reliability of the results and the saturation of data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Data Collection Technique

The primary data collection technique for this multiple case study was semistructured interviews conducted in a virtual face-to-face format, such as ZOOM or other videoconferencing, utilizing the protocol and interview questions included in Appendixes C and D. Semistructured interviews are commonly used and allow the researcher to discover insightful data that may not have been considered (Jamshed, 2014). Face-to-face interviews have the additional advantage of assisting in establishing rapport, increasing the likelihood of the participants providing relevant and detailed answers to complex questions (Nandi & Platt, 2017). However, interviews can provide some challenges as well; participants can provide an overabundance of data that can be challenging to analyze (Cleland, 2017); participants can be shy or otherwise difficult to interview, and there can be logistical issues with coordinating schedules and traveling (Bolderston, 2012).

Interviewers must allow interviewees to feel comfortable to tell their story while remaining neutral and non-judgmental (Bolderston, 2012). I took detailed notes and audio recorded each interview session to ensure accuracy. I used member checking. I arranged a time to conduct a second interview with the participants to review their responses to the interview questions. I ensured the information I recorded was accurate. Through the interviews I was able to confirm data saturation occurred.

After I completed the interviews, I utilized secondary sources to gather additional data, including the review of available human resource documentation on veteran employment and retention, as well as press releases, veteran landing pages, and data on

veteran employee resource groups, which can be used as a form of confirmatory research (Zahle, 2019) and helped to validate the findings. Documentation review followed the protocol included in the Appendix B. During documentation review, I examined all relevant and available human resource documentation on veteran employment and retention, as well as press releases, veteran landing pages, and data on veteran employee resource groups to help corroborate the information gathered during the interviews. Using multiple sources of evidence enables methodological triangulation and provides an in-depth and comprehensive examination of the phenomenon in a real-life situation (Cleland, 2017). Disadvantages of reviewing documents and other secondary data can include inadequate amounts of relevant documents, biases, out of date information, as well as the data or documents being unavailable (Grossoehme, 2014). I attempted to mitigate some of these disadvantages by analyzing the secondary data for accuracy and validity. I reviewed publications dates when applicable, reviewed the credibility of the source, and considered the original purpose of the data. I managed the data collected from the interviews and any secondary sources with QSR NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

Data Organization Technique

Proper data organization is vital to the accuracy of maintaining the details of the raw interview data (Yin, 2018). I recorded each participant during our interview session using an audio recorder. Being prepared with multiple recording devices and power sources as back up options will help maintain the integrity of the process and ensure the

data is captured as planned (Grossoehme, 2014). Ethical considerations should always be paramount for researchers (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

I downloaded the completed interview recordings, as well as any notes taken, onto my personal password-protected laptop to transcribe and code the data. All raw data and documentation collected from interviews and secondary data sources were captured and stored in Microsoft Word and Excel files. I used Nvivo software to help organize, code, and identify themes and patterns in the data.

Protecting the privacy of research participants is a core value in research ethics (Morse & Coulehan, 2014). I consistently followed all IRB requirements for data collection and storage. I used alphanumeric coding to ensure the participants' confidentiality in the files. I maintained a coding sheet and any physical copies of data sources in a locked drawer in the desk of my home office. When I completed the data analysis, I downloaded all relevant data files to a thumb drive and deleted the original files from my laptop. The thumb drive will be secured in a locked drawer, with the physical data collected, for a period of 5 years. At the end of the 5-year period, the data collected will be destroyed. Proper data storage contributes to ensuring ethical research (Yin, 2018).

Data Analysis

During the analysis of data collected for case studies, the researcher must use a systemic approach to appropriately organize and classify the meaning of the data through thematic coding (Vaughn & Turner, 2016) and the organization of text data (Booth, 2016). During data analysis, researchers utilizing a case study approach also confirm the

data collected during the interviews aligns with secondary sources (Yin, 2018). Amalki

(2016) noted that using triangulation enhances the transferability and reliability of the

findings. I used methodological triangulation for this study, gathering data from multiple

sources; to include interviews, company documents such as relevant and available human

resource documentation on veteran employment and retention, as well as press releases,

veteran landing pages, data on veteran employee resource groups, and any appropriate

archival records.

The data analysis process began with transcribing and studying the interview

sessions, as well as reviewing any handwritten notes I took. I used a coding system for

the interview data to look for patterns and themes that related to the research question.

The researcher should be the primary analyst only using data software as a tool (Cypress,

2019); the researcher can search for patterns and themes that could address the research

question as a starting point for the analysis (Yin, 2018) while looking at the conceptual

framework and related literature review to develop a rich understanding of the data. I also

used mind mapping in the data analysis. Mind mapping uses keywords to create a visual,

and it can be a powerful tool in classifying information, intensifying associative thinking,

and keeping a balanced approach (Leeds et al., 2018). Mind mapping can also provide a

means to ground data within theory and provide explanations for a phenomenon

(Wheeldon & Ahlberg, 2017)

I used Nvivo qualitative data analysis software to assist in organizing, coding, and

categorizing the data. Researchers use data coding to break down relevant data from

interviews into common themes among the respondents to help them understand and

interpret the research findings (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). I used the textual data to generate an initial set of codes within Nvivo software in order to identify emerging patterns in themes in the data, including specific words and phrases. While data analysis software is a tool and should not be viewed by researchers as a method of analysis, Nvivo is the most used qualitative, and mixed methods, data analysis software tool used by academic researchers, and it contributes to rigor, efficiency, and time savings when used appropriately (Cypress, 2019).

<div align="center">**Reliability and Validity**</div>

Researchers use reliability and validity to evaluate the quality of research (Yin, 2018). Reliability and validity, while independent factors, are both core concerns in research and help to ensure findings are credible (Jordan, 2018). If research has both reliability and validity, the academic and business communities are more trusting of the findings (Yin, 2018).

Reliability

Reliability measures the consistency of the findings; that is, the results can be replicated (Roberts et al., 2019). Researchers often use triangulation as a method to validate their findings through the use of multiple lenses, enhancing the reliability of the results and the saturation of data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I gathered data from multiple sources, to include interviews, company documents, and archival records in order to address reliability. Dependability indicates research, under the same constraints, will get the same results (Yin, 2018). I utilized member checking by requesting each participant

review their interview summary for accuracy in the interview interpretations, also ensuring reliability.

Validity

Validity is used by researchers to determine the soundness of their study (Yin, 2018), is a key concern for researchers, and is dependent on trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, conformability, and data saturation (Saunders et al., 2017). I utilized member checking according to an established protocol (Appendix E) to help establish credibility. I emailed each participant a summary of their interview and scheduled follow up interviews to confirm accuracy and ensure data saturation. When the researcher and the participant's interpretation of accuracy align, it helps establish credibility (Noble & Smith, 2015). I collected data according to established protocols to document procedures (Appendixes C and D). Detailed documentation of processes used in case study findings can allow other researchers to make decisions regarding the transferability of the study in relation to other studies (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, detailed descriptions can add to the validity of the findings. Researchers ensure confirmability by providing an audit trail of the research process, ensuring accuracy of the data (FitzPatrick, 2019). Utilizing NVivo data analysis software served to further enhance the confirmability of the findings of my study. Data analysis software allows the researcher to address confirmability by establishing an audit trail, providing transparency in how the interpretations and findings came from the collected data (Cypress, 2019). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), the process of data triangulation used to enhance the reliability of the findings is also a means of attaining data saturation, the point where no new information is garnered from the

additional collection of evidence. How data saturation is conceptualized and when that point has occurred, will differ by study and the type of research (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Transition and Summary

Section 2 of this qualitative study included a review of the purpose statement, a description of the role of the researcher, and a description of the eligibility requirements for selecting study participants. Participants in this study were leaders in human resources and represented organizations located in the downtown section of Seattle, Washington that utilized veteran retention strategies. Participants participated in semistructured interviews as the primary method of data collection for the study. I audio recorded each of the interviews. I identified and justified the research method and design selected. This section also included details on ethical research, including consent, confidentiality, and the rights of the participants to withdraw from the study. I described and justified the data collection methods, data organization, and data analysis to include the use of mind mapping and NVivo software. I also addressed reliability and validity concerns.

Section 3 begins with an introduction that includes a brief review of the purpose of the study, followed by a presentation of the findings. This section also includes application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, reflections from the researcher, and the conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans. Four themes emerged to indicate strategies some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans. The first theme that emerged was the need for organizational understanding of the military mindset. The second theme that emerged was the role company culture plays in the retention of veterans. The third theme that emerged was how the development of recruiting and hiring programs impacts the successful retention of veterans. Finally, the fourth theme that emerged was the positive effect resource and support services for veterans have on retention rates.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question for this study was: What strategies do some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans? I applied a composite conceptual framework, consisting of person organization fit and human capital theory, to explore the strategies some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans. I began collecting data to answer this research question by conducting semistructured interviews with three participants in a virtual face-to-face format; participants were identified as SP1, SP2, and SP3. To meet the criteria for participation in this study, participants must have been leaders in human resources, represented an organization located in the downtown section of Seattle, Washington, and had been involved in developing successful retention strategies for veterans.

After I completed the interviews and confirmed my interpretations through member checking, I utilized secondary sources to gather additional data, including the review of available human resource documentation on veteran employment and retention, as well as press releases, veteran landing pages, and data on veteran employer resource groups. I imported the data collected into Nvivo qualitative data analysis software to organize, analyze, and identify thematic findings. After analyzing the data, four primary themes emerged: understanding the military mindset, cultural competency, recruiting and hiring programs, and resources and support services for veterans. I compared these findings with prior peer-reviewed studies presented in the literature review and discussed the relationship between the findings of the study and the person-organization fit and human capital theory composite conceptual framework. The initial data codes used to create the primary themes, the percentage of participants who provided data for each code, and the number of data excerpts included in each code are listed in Table 1. Table 2 indicates the four primary themes formed from the initial data codes, and the occurrences of data per participant.

Table 1

Initial Codes

Initial code	% of participants included	# of data excerpts included
Strategies	100	36
Unsuccessful strategies	100	31
Lack of comprehensive strategy	100	17
Landing page	66	5
Lack of commitment or support	100	14
Successful strategies	33	5
Resources and support	100	28
Recruiting and hiring programs	66	34
Company culture	100	34
Evaluation methods	100	13
NPS quantitative analysis	33	4
Hire Vet Medallion	66	5
GI Jobs Magazine	66	2
Challenges	100	30
Understanding military mindset and culture	100	30
Underemployment	100	15
Biases	100	15

Table 2

Summary of Primary Themes

Themes	Occurrences
Understanding the military mindset	SP1, SP2, SP3
Cultural Competency	SP1, SP2, SP3
Recruiting and Hiring Programs	SP1, SP2, SP3
Resources and Support Services for Veterans	SP1, SP2, SP3

Theme 1: Understanding of the Military Mindset

The first theme that emerged was the need for organizational understanding of the

military mindset to successfully retain veterans. The findings of this study suggest that

human resource professionals and employers seek education and understanding of the military experience and culture to mitigate challenges in retaining veterans. Employers need education and understanding of the military mindset to mitigate challenges in retaining veterans. A comprehensive understanding of the complex cultural transition from military community to civilian is needed to influence outcomes (Whitworth et al., 2020). To understand how veterans adjust to their transition out of the military it is crucial to understand the entirety of the military experience (Shepherd et al., 2020). Researchers have found the existing literature indicates that person-organization fit has a strong link to employee commitment (Ellis et al., 2017). It is essential to examine the person-organization fit before making a hiring decision as it may result in a better fit for the organization and higher levels of job satisfaction for the employee (Ardıç et al., 2016).

Most HR professionals, hiring managers, and corporate leaders are civilians with little to no exposure to the military. This lack of exposure leads to a lack of knowledge regarding the skills that are acquired during the military experience, and a lack of knowledge about how military-acquired skills might apply to employment outside of the military. Findings regarding this theme are consistent with Dexter's (2020) findings that employers often lack an understanding of the skills and expectations veterans bring when integrating into the civilian workforce. The understanding of the military mindset was discussed by all three participants (SP1, SP2, and SP3), and findings were consistent that a lack of understanding contributed to biases, underemployment concerns, and challenges to retaining veterans. The initial data codes used to create the understanding the military

mindset and culture theme, the percentage of participants who provided data for each code, and the number of data excerpts included in each code are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Understanding the Military Mindset and Culture Theme Based on Initial Codes

Understanding the military mindset and culture theme based on initial codes	% of participants included	# of data excerpts included
Understanding military mindset and culture	100	30
Biases	100	15
Underemployment	100	15
Challenges	100	30

With the unique challenges employers and veterans face translating military experiences and training, as well as adapting to the culture gap, human resource leaders should develop programs to train and educate organizational leadership about the differences in military experience, culture, and practices before implementing processes for recruiting and hiring veterans in order to increase retention (Ford, 2017; Harrod et al., 2017). When discussing the need to understand the military mindset to retain veterans, SP1 stated,

> … there is less understanding out in the private sector that they just don't understand and if they don't have somebody in there that is the voice that can walk, you know, walk the walk and be able to connect those values and that culture then that company typically misses out on the entire veteran market until they decide to get some mentorship and figure out either hiring somebody that is veteran themselves or they decide to really take the time to learn about the culture and the misconceptions…

The lack of awareness of military mindset among civilians and the increasing culture gap between civilians and the military community may contribute to a reliance on stereotypes to understand veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015). These stereotypes often include beliefs that veterans are less educated than civilian applicants, veterans have PTSD, and often engage in violent behaviors. The general lack of knowledge about veterans' experience and abilities and apprehension that veterans will not be a good fit for the existing culture can contribute to additional challenges (Shepherd et al., 2020). Biases may still create concerns about the veteran's ability to adapt and be successful beyond their initial hire. Discussing biases formed from a lack of understanding: SP3 stated,

> We're also implementing solutions to better educate managers, leaders, even non-veteran peers, on what a veteran experience really is, kind of perception versus reality, when you serve in the military, we don't all put on uniforms and go blow things up like in Call of Duty, you know?

A core principle in the hiring process is matching the right person to the right job, to include alignment of the needs and values of the organization and the individual; this alignment can directly impact veteran retention (Ford, 2016). Hiring veterans who had responsibilities in their military roles that are close to the responsibilities in the civilian position often have a higher chance of being successful (Dexter, 2020). Discussing how biases could impact underemployment when organizations poorly match veterans with roles in the organization: SP 3 stated,

> What you tend to see is veterans often end up in those "soft skill" based roles in the civilian sector, even if they do have the tech skills or they could be successful

moving into development engineers or technical product manager or technical program manager type roles.

SP2 made a similar statement about their concerns when there is a lack of understanding of the military mindset, "What has been frustrating and has not been as successful is getting them into accounting or financial or even human resource type rolls, even though I know they do it in spades." SP1 shared their concerns with the impact of biases "Underemployment is a huge problem in the veteran community right now. I think it is something like 45% of a 2019 study of asking veterans that are in the workforce right now say that they are underemployed." SP3 explained,

> …as many as 40% of veterans choose not to self-identify when they take a role
> because they are concerned about being stereotyped as having PTSD or some
> other type of- of trauma that will negatively impact their ability to be successful
> and to promote… just trying to continue to change the common perceptions and
> misperceptions of what a veteran is and continuing to educate others on some of
> those barriers that veterans face that I think a lot of people aren't aware of.

Theme 2: Cultural Competency

The second theme that emerged was the role company culture plays in the retention of veterans. Cultural competency training to examine the military/civilian cultural gap is valuable. The findings of this study suggest human resource professionals and employers audit their company culture and evaluate whether the organization has programs to help veterans assimilate into the civilian workplace and address the employment needs of veteran and transitioning military candidates. To maximize and

retain veteran talent, employers must first look at the alignment with their company culture. Cultural competency training that targets the military/civilian cultural gap is valuable and should be targeted to human resource professionals and civilian employers to be the most effective (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018).

Veterans view their work as a core tenant of who they are (Yanchus et al., 2018), and employers can improve job satisfaction by addressing the vital role cultural assimilation plays in retaining veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015). Employers do not always understand the specific need veterans have to relate to coworkers (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018). Employees who perceive they fit within the organizational culture are more engaged and tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction (Ford, 2017). The importance of company culture was mentioned by all three participants (SP1, SP2, and SP3) and was supported in the document review. The initial data codes used to create the cultural competency theme, the percentage of participants who provided data for each code, and the number of data excerpts included in each code are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Cultural Competency Theme Based on Initial Codes

Cultural competency theme based on initial codes	% of participants included	# of data excerpts included
Company culture	100	34
Hire Vet Medallion	66	5
Lack of comprehensive strategy	100	17
Successful strategies	33	5

The recommendations that emerged from the findings include auditing company culture, including opportunities that need to be filled and consider whether the

organization's culture matches the military culture and employment needs of job-seeking veteran and transitioning military candidates. Simultaneously, avoid making assumptions about individual candidates based on their military affiliation. This also could include examining how veteran and military candidates are perceived and how they are assessed within the organization, both before and after they are hired.

Though some veterans may find employment easily following their military service, many struggle to remain in their position because of the added stress of a poor job fit and unease with the organization's culture (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018). Additional factors that can influence employee retention include recruitment, job fit, culture, work-life balance, training and mentoring, and compensation (Memon et al., 2016). Employers who understand retention strategies to address these factors may increase productivity and morale in the organization and improve retention (Khalili, 2014).

SP1 explained the role they believe company culture has in retention,

> It's all about the company culture and I would keep going back to that is that if they are good at retaining employees you kind of look at the employee tenure when you go to something and you see and see what it is. If a company is retaining people that typically means they have good pay, they have good benefits, and they care about their employees and their employees are first, so I think it directly correlates to that.

SP2 also believed company culture was a crucial factor in retaining veterans, claiming,

We're not going to be able to compete apples to apples, but we can beat you in

how we treat you in the culture and how we work around your own family life too

and those were the things that helped delineate us from the rest.

Theme 3: Recruiting and Hiring Programs

The third theme was how the development of recruiting and hiring programs

impacts the successful retention of veterans. Leveraging available resources and offering

veteran-specific recruiting and hiring programs increase the retention of veterans. A well

thought out inclusive veteran hiring initiative that includes effective recruiting,

professional development, mentoring, and other support programs, can help mitigate the

challenges veterans face and increase engagement and retention (Suzuki & Kawakami,

2016). The findings of this study suggest human resource professionals and employers

adjust their recruiting and hiring strategies to attract candidates that align with the

organization's culture and values, providing accurate and precise information during

recruiting so the veteran can assess their fit with the organization. These findings align

with Ardic et al's (2016) findings that to realize a successful person organization fit,

organizations may adjust their recruitment strategies to attract candidates that reflect the

culture and values of the organization. Strategic workforce planning so that recruiting,

hiring, onboarding, retaining, and developing veteran hires are budgeted for and

prioritized is also crucial.

Kirchner and Minnis (2018) noted that veterans are more likely to be engaged and

trust an organization that shows a strong history of military affiliation. Regarding the

need to show a committed approach to recruiting and hiring veterans, SP1 stated, "Show

you are commitment and in return you get tied into the transition assistance program

which means every transitioning veteran is going to be able to see that you're a veteran

friendly employer." SP2 also discussed the need for commitment, "You know, I get the "I

support the veterans and spouses" I am like okay then hire one of them, talk to one of

them, don't just look at their resume and ignore them." The initial data codes used to

create the recruiting and hiring programs theme, the percentage of participants who

provided data for each code, and the number of data excerpts included in each code are

listed in Table 5.

Table 5

Recruiting and Hiring Programs Theme Based on Initial Codes

Recruiting and hiring programs theme based on initial codes	% of participants included	# of data excerpts included
Recruiting and hiring program	66	34
Landing page	66	5
Evaluation methods	100	13
GI Jobs Magazine	66	2
Hire Vets Medallion program	66	5

To realize a successful person-organization fit, organizations may adjust their

recruitment strategies to attract candidates that reflect the organization's culture and

values (Ardıç et al., 2016). Leaders in human resources need to have a thorough

understanding of human capital and culture to effectively hire and retain employees of

any background (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). This involvement and commitment from the

earliest stages of recruiting will create a more substantial commitment to the organization

(Fischerová & Půbalová, 2018). Developing recruiting and hiring programs was

mentioned by all three participants (SP1, SP2, and SP3) and was supported in the
document review.

According to Ellis et al. (2017), many applicants are given vague or misleading
information during the recruiting process, and they do not have an accurate assessment of
the position or their potential fit within the organization. All three participants discussed
their belief that it is essential to have employees who are veterans participate in the hiring
process so that they can articulate their experiences to job candidates. Providing precise
information during recruitment allows the candidate to assess fit, and the candidate can
then better predict alignment between their values and those of the organization (Ardic et
al., 2016). This is congruent with person-organization fit ideologies. SP2 shared their
experience,

> One of the things I did with my own team is hiring veterans to do recruiting so
> that we would have some more commonality because I found myself more in the
> administrative and more in the management side than actually recruiting.
> Eventually the culture became where we would just not only have a commonality
> of service, but we have the camaraderie, like similar to military, not quite like it.
> It just created a different dynamic but that took time, it was not an overnight
> success.

The study findings confirm the importance of building networks and using resources
available to employers who employ veterans: SP1 shared,

> SHRM has a great certificate, Veterans at Work, its 10 hours of time and any HR
> staff, any recruiters can take this and it's no cost to them, it's offered by SHRM

for no cost. And then really the Hire Vets Medallion program, show your

commitment… But show you are commitment and in return you get tied into the

transition assistance program um which means every transitioning veteran is

going to be able to see that you are a veteran friendly employer.

When discussing utilizing the resources and programs available to employers, SP2 stated,

"The Department of Labor has this Hire Vets Medallion program and as first-year rolls

out we receive the gold medal. That is a telltale sign because retention is a key

component in order to be successful to receive medal."

The study findings showed when veteran and military hiring is conducted

strategically, specific actions and resources can be more effectively allocated toward

recruiting, hiring, onboarding, retaining, and advancing veteran hires. HR professionals

can play a pivotal role in communicating the value of veteran and military-connected

employees by communicating to senior leadership the value of veteran and military

employees while also providing a communication bridge between veteran and military-

connected job candidates and prospective hiring managers so that military-acquired skills

are effectively translated to relevant roles within the organization. Successful veteran

hiring programs need "buy-in" by organization leadership. Regarding obtaining the

support of leadership: SP2 stated,

Yeah, so, it was delivering information to not only the executives, but we also

then filtered it down to the senior leadership and managers. I took some of the

information and I put a presentation together and I presented it to the executives,

and we did some in depth emotional intelligence discussions to really highlight
and exemplified their own experiences.

Developing a veteran hiring initiative can be challenging for organizational
leaders, and understanding the veteran experience is fundamental to a successful program
(Blank, 2019; Stone & Stone, 2015). Unfortunately, some employers focus on recruiting
veterans without developing a process to develop or retain veterans once they are hired
(Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018). Human resource professionals should consider veteran
focus career planning as a strategy to help with job alignment and retention concerns
(Ford, 2016).

When discussing the processes to help retain veterans, SP 2 explained, "What
we've found is the ambiguity that exists around a lot of our roles, you know, our
promotion processes, transfer processes, things like that can you know, negatively impact
retention efforts." SP3 also addressed dealing with challenges in retaining veterans,

> You know, one of the common things you hear is that "oh veterans struggle
> because it's- because when they transition, they just struggle at their first job after
> transition, right?" That's true, but it's also true that veterans struggle even after
> the third or fourth civilian role at other companies as well. So, doing the research,
> supporting it with science to kind of prove and disprove some of these groupthink
> hypotheses that are out there, that allows us to build better solutions.

Theme 4: Resources and Support Services for Veterans

The fourth theme to emerge was the positive effect resource and support services
for veterans have on retention rates. Leadership support and infrastructure for resources

and support services for veterans can enhance the veteran-friendly recruiting and hiring programs and mitigate challenges to retention efforts during the employee lifecycle. Findings from the study show mentoring and professional development to be essential retention strategies. These findings are consistent with Kirchner et al's (2021) findings that a common reason veterans leave their jobs is due to a lack of professional development, these findings align with the human capital theory concept of investing in employees.

The effects of employee resources and support services were mentioned by all three participants (SP1, SP2, and SP3) and were supported in the document review. The initial data codes used to create the resources and support for veterans theme, the percentage of participants who provided data for each code, and the number of data excerpts included in each code are listed in Table 6.

Table 6

Resources and Support for Veterans Theme Based on Initial Codes

Resources and support for veterans theme based on initial codes	% of participants included	# of data excerpts included
Resources and support	100	28
Hire Vet Medallion	66	5

Organizations with a comprehensive veteran hiring initiative that includes professional development and mentoring can help mitigate some of the challenges veterans face and increase their engagement and satisfaction (Whitworth et al., 2020). In the military culture, the ability to develop new skills and abilities is seen as an earned benefit and increases the service member's perceived status within their ranks (Cooper et

al., 2018). Employers that invest in developing and mentoring skilled veterans to ensure they have the knowledge, skills, and experience will find the veterans are successful with additional responsibility and leadership roles (Kirchner & Minnis, 2018; Whitworth et al., 2020).

Additional investments in human capital can leverage veteran's unique skill sets to meet organizational performance objectives, increasing employee satisfaction and retention (Yanchus et al., 2018). Findings showed that many employers have found that having an employer resource group or affinity group is helpful, and it should be as inclusive as possible. For example, the employee resource groups should be open to all employees regardless of veteran status. The only requirement should be the interest to participate positively. These kinds of groups create a place for veterans to collaborate and act as a retention tool.

Onboarding is a pivotal point in veteran integration (Davis & Minnis, 2017), and the quality of the process can determine if the transition into the organization will be successful. Onboarding should ensure veteran employees develop an understanding of the civilian workplace culture (LePage, 2020). Military and civilian workplace cultures are drastically different, and the expectations of the veteran and the employer may be different as well (Tao & Campbell, 2019). Several specific onboarding practices have been commonly seen as successful: using a buddy system, partnering a veteran with another veteran (Keeling, Ozuna, et al., 2018); inclusion in veteran focused affinity groups (Elnitsky et al., 2017); mentoring and partnering the veteran with an organizational advisor (Ford, 2016).

The findings of this study indicate mentoring, sponsorship, and regular opportunities to connect to business and employee resource groups for those exemplars are examples of how employers can institutionalize these opportunities. In addition, employers can connect veteran employees to senior leader sponsors through the groups. Employee resource groups, or affinity groups, can extend the reach of existing recruiting efforts, as they may encourage engagement among current veteran and military employees while also strengthening recruiting efforts to the extent that current veteran employees can bring more veterans to the organization. When discussing affinity groups, SP3 stated,

> Being part of the affinity group does also help as far as fostering that sense of community for veterans and giving them somewhere they can go to speak with people who understand the struggles they're going through or understand some of the backgrounds they come from. It is helpful in terms of having that support network for them that they wouldn't have otherwise.

SP2 shared their approach was one of a mentor and group approach, stating,

> So, once we brought folks into the workforce, they had a mentor, and they would shadow them and made it clear about the veteran resource group and we would have asked for those who wanted to participate but to participate and we started off with quarterly meetings but as we grew quickly that we needed to do more.

> When discussing the impact of mentors, SP3 stated, "We find mentorship is by far one of the biggest influencers in retention rates." Findings indicated an onboarding support system of mentors and peers, customized coaching and training opportunities,

and ongoing performance monitoring for our veterans' first 12 months led to a positive impact on veteran retention. When discussing the impact on retention if employers do not make resources and support services available, SP1 stated,

> They're not getting connected to the right resources, the right mentorship, and the right leadership, and then they end up in the underemployed situation, and they end up leaving pretty shortly after because typically it's a lot of those are toxic environments for veterans especially when they're working with people that are just you know quite frankly don't have the experience in the leadership that they do, and they just feel like they are spinning their wheels in those positions.

The four themes that emerged during my data analysis were congruent with the composite framework used for this study and the ideologies of personal organization fit and human capital theory. As veterans transition from military service to the civilian workforce, one of their primary concerns is fitting in and their ability to assimilate into a civilian workplace culture (Harrod et al., 2017; Perkins et al., 2019). When organizational values align with their employees' values, it leads to pride in the collaboration, reinforcing the role person-organization fit plays in organizational pride (Oo et al., 2018).

Person-organization fit can influence the pride employees have in their workplace and is a strong predictor of job satisfaction and retention (Zhang et al., 2017). Person organization fit can also lead to a strong sense of attachment employees have toward their organization because increased job satisfaction ensues, leading to a positive impact on retention (Jin et al., 2016). The findings indicated that when employees are valued and developed, they often remain committed and engaged, developing strong training and

mentoring programs has a positive impact on retaining veterans. Veterans value opportunities for professional development, often stemming from the formation of their military identities; they view the process of training as transformational, helping to ground new identities in their skills (Cooper et al., 2018). Helping veterans develop and build new identities while still honoring aspects of their military culture within an organization that values veterans and fosters organizational pride can ease the challenges of transitioning to a civilian workplace and positively effect veteran engagement and retention rates.

Applications to Professional Practice

Employee retention continues to be a challenge for many employers; leaders in human resource management can improve employee engagement and retention by providing a more comprehensive approach to talent management. The findings of this study may help educate human resource leaders regarding the variety of benefits when organizational leaders develop innovative approaches to retaining a complex and diverse workforce. Aligning the values and needs with both the employees and the organization can be very complicated and should evolve from matching organizational and individual characteristics (Zhang et al., 2017).

Several strategies for retaining veteran employees were identified during the data collection and data analysis processes. Human resource leaders and employers can provide training about the military experience and culture to mitigate challenges faced when hiring and retaining veteran employees. Employers can audit the organizational culture to develop programs to assist veterans with assimilating into the civilian

workplace. Human resources leaders can ensure accurate and precise information during recruiting to allow veteran candidates to better assess their fit with the hiring organization. Employers may offer resources and support to new veteran employees such as a *peer buddy*, inclusion in affinity groups or employer resource groups, mentoring, and organizational advisors to encourage engagement, all of which are vital components of successful retention programs (LePage, 2020). The peer buddy process allows newly hired employees to "gain familiarity with the company`s everyday life" (Maksymiuk, 2017, p. 127). Findings from the study show mentoring and professional development to be essential retention strategies.

The findings of this study may also provide employers who have not developed veteran retention strategies the tools to review their internal processes and develop a comprehensive approach to veteran employment. In addition, the findings of this study could assist human resources leaders in applying aspects of this study to organizations wanting to engage, develop, and retain a diverse workforce within an inclusive culture.

Findings support that employers need a foundation of education and understanding of the military mindset and cultural competency to mitigate challenges in retaining veterans. Cultural competency training that targets the military/civilian cultural gap is valuable and should be targeted to human resource professionals and civilian employers to be the most effective (Keeling, Kintzle, et al., 2018). Findings show that a commitment to person organization fit is essential to meeting the needs of each phase of the employee lifecycle to retain veterans.

A core principle in the hiring process is to match the right person to the right job, including the alignment of the needs and values of the organization and the individual; this alignment can directly impact veteran retention (Ford, 2016). According to Ellis et al. (2017), many applicants are given vague or misleading information during the recruiting process, and they do not have an accurate assessment of the position or their potential fit within the organization. The findings indicate that it is vital to have employees who are veterans participate in the recruiting and hiring process so that they can articulate their experiences to job candidates. Providing precise information during recruitment allows the candidate to assess fit, and the candidate can then better predict alignment between their values and those of the organization (Ardic et al., 2016).

The findings show that organizational support and framework to provide resources and support services for veterans can enhance employee engagement and mitigate challenges to retention efforts. Study findings confirmed employers have found having an employer resource group is helpful, and it should be as inclusive as possible. Organizations with a comprehensive veteran hiring initiative that includes professional development, employer resource groups, and mentoring can help mitigate some of the challenges veterans face and increase their engagement and retention (Whitworth et al., 2020). The association between individual and corporate characteristics can help select a good fit between the candidate and the organization by analyzing the compatibility of values and needs (Davis & Minnis, 2016). As evidenced throughout the findings, when employees are valued and developed, they often remain committed and engaged,

developing strong training and mentoring programs has a positive impact on retaining veterans.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study could help employers develop comprehensive veteran employment programs, potentially improving retention rates. Veterans frequently face higher levels of unemployment compared to nonveterans (Shepherd, 2020) and the implications for social change include reducing veteran unemployment rates. Reducing veteran unemployment rates may potentially strengthen the local economies by increased spending on goods and services. Reducing veteran unemployment rates may also reduce the need for mental health services, nutrition assistance, and healthcare subsidies provided by local social service agencies.

The United States relies on an all-volunteer military to defend and protect the population, contribute to national disaster relief, and provide support for the current global pandemic, among other calls to serve. Recent trends in troop reductions could exacerbate the unemployment rates of recently separated veterans. Servicemembers volunteer to serve for various personal reasons, but employers must engage our service members as they transition back to civilian roles (DePremio, 2006). Applications of aspects of this study may lead to the development and improvement of veteran employment programs and policies to engage, develop, and retain veterans in the workforce, mitigating some challenges to the successful hiring and retention of transitioning veterans. The additional implications for social change could include growing a larger talent pool of individuals who are qualified and willing to serve in the

military, knowing they will have a reasonable chance at employment opportunities when they separate from their military roles.

Recommendations for Action

The first theme that emerged was the need for organizational understanding of the military mindset to successfully retain veterans. I recommend human resource professionals and employers seek education and understanding of the military experience and culture to mitigate challenges in retaining veterans. The second theme that emerged was the role company culture plays in the retention of veterans. Cultural competency training to examine the military/civilian cultural gap is valuable. I recommend human resource professionals and employers audit their company culture and evaluate whether the organization has programs to help veterans assimilate into the civilian workplace and address the employment needs of veteran and transitioning military candidates. Seek out cultural competency training for employees throughout the organization and address any culture gaps.

The third theme was how the development of recruiting and hiring programs impacts the successful retention of veterans. A well thought out inclusive veteran hiring initiative that includes effective recruiting and hiring programs increases veterans' retention. I recommend human resource professionals and employers adjust their recruiting and hiring strategies to attract candidates that align with the organization's culture and values, providing accurate and precise information during recruiting so the veteran can assess their fit with the organization. I also recommend strategic veteran and

workforce planning so that recruiting, hiring, onboarding, retaining, and developing veteran hires are budgeted for and prioritized.

The fourth theme to emerge was the positive effect resource and support services for veterans have on retention rates. Leadership support and infrastructure for resources and support services for veterans can enhance the veteran friendly recruiting and hiring programs and mitigate challenges to retention efforts during the employee lifecycle. Findings from the study show mentoring and professional development to be essential retention strategies, and I would highly recommend both. Resources and support offered through partnering a veteran with a peer, inclusion in affinity groups or employer resource groups, mentoring, and organizational advisors encourage engagement and are also vital components of successful retention programs, I recommend human resource professionals and employers review their needs and seek to implement the approaches that provide the best fit for their organization.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans. The specific business problem is that some human resource leaders lack strategies to retain U.S. veteran employees. When employers fail to implement strategies to retain veterans, the employers will face challenges with turnover and replacement costs. When employers develop a strategic approach to talent management, they can retain a diverse and skilled talent pool, providing the organization with a competitive advantage. The results from this study portray some challenges with veteran employment and the strategies some HR professionals, hiring managers, and corporate leaders use to overcome challenges and

retain veterans. Employers may use these findings to develop and implement a more strategic and comprehensive approach to talent management. Employers and human resource leaders should consider the findings of this study before they develop veteran employment programs or if they want to improve current veteran retention rates. I expect to publish this study through ProQuest, and I also plan to publish this study through peer-reviewed human resource and veteran journals following graduation. I also hope to present this study to my local Society for Human Resources (SHRM) chapter and other human resource training groups where I can share the themes and strategies presented in the findings.

Recommendations for Further Research

The limitations of a study are the constraints that impact the findings of the research (Morgado et al., 2017). As a military spouse, my own biases and the participant's assumptions about my personal views could have provided a potential limitation. I addressed any potential biases or preconceived ideas by strictly adhering to methodological triangulation, interview protocol, and member checking as described in Section 2. The political climate and changing views on the military could have made the study topic controversial for participants, creating additional limitations. A future study could be conducted in a more stable political climate. Another limitation could have been some participants willingness to provide full disclosure regarding internal processes and practice. While I believe my participants provided full disclosure regarding internal processes and practice, future researchers exploring the topic in other organizations and geographic locations might identify additional veteran retention strategies.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some leaders in human resource departments use to retain U.S. veterans. Participants in this study were leaders in human resources and represented organizations located in the downtown section of Seattle, Washington, that utilized veteran retention strategies. The primary expectation was the findings would help organizational leaders develop strategies to retain veterans. Further research could include a study that incorporated the veteran perspective on successful retention strategies. Other recommendations include exploring retention strategies specifically for; female veterans, length of service, and amount of time since discharge (1 year out vs. 5 years out). Based on the finding of the study, future research could focus on employing and accommodating disabled veterans; with the bias and misconceptions held by some employers, the findings of these future studies could provide valuable data for leaders in human resources and leaders in diversity and inclusion.

Reflections

When I attended my first Walden residency, I knew I wanted to complete a study on veteran employment. I quickly found out that my initial focus was considered a social issue and not appropriate for a business study. I wrote versions of my initial problem statement for three days during our residency and continued to work on various options on the flight home. I was committed. As a human resource professional and a Navy wife, I was all too familiar with the complexities and challenges for military veterans as they transition into the civilian workforce. My initial thoughts were to do a study on the difficulties of transitioning. I then focused in on developing comprehensive veteran

employment initiatives. After I began working with my committee, strategies to retain veterans emerged as the focus of my study.

I am so grateful for the five of us that met at that first residency, arranged to attend our second residency together, and provided support to one another even though our doctoral journeys took different paths and operated on different timelines. I had no idea the commitment and dedication I would need to meet the inevitable challenges and barriers throughout this process. My doctoral journey has been an incredibly challenging yet deeply rewarding experience.

The participants who volunteered for the study were all veterans and were invested in the answers they provided during the interview process. The participants were knowledgeable about developing cultural competency and the strategies employers used to create a work environment that encouraged veteran retention. I am passionate about the need to address veteran employment concerns, which could have posed potential biases or preconceived ideas based on my opinions. I addressed any potential biases or preconceived ideas by strictly adhering to IRB protocols and data collection and analysis techniques discussed in the study. Conducting the research for this study provided a great learning experience that allowed me to have a deeper understanding of veteran employment and the strategies human resource leaders use to retain veterans.

Conclusion

Employee retention continues to be a challenge for many employers; human resource leaders can improve employee engagement and retention by providing a more strategic and comprehensive approach to talent management. The findings of this study

may help educate human resource leaders to develop innovative approaches to retain veterans as part of a skilled and diverse workforce. The transition from the military workforce to the civilian workforce is an ongoing process; when employers fail to implement strategies to address this process, the employers will face challenges with retention rates and replacement costs with veteran employees. Veterans often possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that are transferable to and beneficial for civilian employers. As evidenced throughout the study, when veterans are valued and developed in their civilian roles, they often remain committed and engaged, thereby providing the organization with a competitive advantage.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your organization's strategies for retaining veterans?

2. What strategies have been the most successful in retaining veterans?

3. What strategies have been the least successful in retaining veterans?

4. How, if at all, do your organization's successful veteran retention strategies differ from successful strategies for retaining non-veteran employees?

5. What key challenges have you faced implementing strategies to retain veterans?

6. How did your organization address the key challenges to implementing strategies to retain veterans?

7. What additional experience would like to share regarding your organization's strategies that you have used to retain veterans?

Appendix B: Document Review Protocol

Document Review Protocol

- Name or type of document: (Insert)

- Description of document: (Insert)

- Relevance to study: (Insert)

- Additional notes: (Insert)

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Interview participants will be Human Resource leaders who have developed and implemented successful retention strategies for employees who identify as U.S. veterans.

- I will connect to a ZOOM or other video conferencing meeting on a designated date and time.
- I will thank the participant for their time and assistance in the study. I will then introduce myself and state the purpose of the study. I will inform the participant that the interview will consist of seven questions and take approximately 30 minutes to complete. I will also reassure them that I will be considerate of their time.
- I will ensure I have done what I can to make the participant comfortable. I will explain to the participant that I would like to record our interview so that I may capture anything I might miss in my notes to ensure accuracy, I will then ask for their permission to record the interview. I will explain to the participant that the interviews and all of the materials collected will only be used for the study, and the data will be kept confidential. I will then reassure the participant that I will maintain confidentiality by removing all identifying information and using an alternate identifier such as SP1, SP2, SP3.
- I will ask the participant if they are ready to begin and if I may start the recording. After being granted permission, I will turn on the recording device or open the recording feature in the ZOOM or other video conferencing meeting. I will introduce myself as the researcher conducting the study. I will then introduce the participant by their assigned alternate identifier and state the date and time of the interview.
- During the interview, I will carefully observe the participant. I will watch for body language, ambiguity, and other nonverbal clues. I can then ask additional questions to achieve the desired details from the interview if necessary.
- At the conclusion of the interview, I will ask if the participant has any additional information they would like to share, or if there were any documents that were available to help me understand the retention strategies that have been successful in retaining employees who identify as U.S. veterans.
- I will thank the participant for their time and explain the importance of participating in a prompt member checking process, emphasizing the need for the data to be as accurate as possible.

- I will email the participant a summary of the interview within 48 hours of our meeting and request that they return the summary with their approval, or any additions or clarifications they may have.

Participant: (Insert)

Date and Time of Interview: (Insert)

- Greet participant.

- Ensure conditions provide privacy and comfort.

- Review informed consent form with participant.

- Invite any questions or concerns.

- Turn on recording equipment.

- Begin interview questions.

Questions:

1. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your organization's strategies for retaining veterans?

1. What strategies have been the most successful in retaining veterans?

2. What strategies have been the least successful in retaining veterans?

3. How, if at all, do your organization's successful veteran retention strategies differ from successful strategies for retaining non-veteran employees?

4. What key challenges have you faced implementing strategies to retain veterans?

5. How did your organization address the key challenges to implementing strategies to retain veterans?

6. What additional experience would like to share regarding your organization's strategies that you have used to retain veterans?

7. What additional experience would like to share regarding your organization's strategies that you have used to retain veterans?

- Invite participant to provide any documentation related to their experiences.

- Arrange to collect documentation from participant and verify they have my contact information in case of questions or any additional documentation.

- Confirm approval to contact the participant for the member checking process.

- Thank participant for their time and assistance.

Appendix D: Participant Recruitment Letter

Date: (Insert)

Re: Request to Participate in a Research Study

Dear (Recipient):

My name is Lucy Moore; I am a Doctoral Candidate at Walden University. I am conducting a study exploring the strategies used by leaders in human resource departments to retain U.S. veterans, with the goal of helping improve retention rates for veteran employees. You are an ideal candidate because of your position within an organization that has developed strategies to retain veterans. To meet the criteria for participation in this study, participants must be 1) leaders in human resources, 2) represent an organization located in the downtown section of Seattle, Washington, and 3) have been involved in developing successful retention strategies for veterans

If you choose to participate, your identity and any identifying information will be kept confidential. I will contact you to provide additional details regarding the study, as well as your rights during the study. We can then arrange a convenient time to begin the interview process, via Zoom or other video conferencing. The interviews will be conducted during November and December 2020, the process will take approximately 30 minutes.

Respectfully,

Lucy Moore

Doctoral Candidate, Walden University

Appendix E: Member Checking Protocol

Member Checking Protocol

- Send participant a summary of the initial interpretations.

- Request feedback for the following questions:

    1. What aspects of the interpretation do you feel are the most accurate, based on your experience and the data you provided?

    2. What aspects of the interpretation do you feel are incorrect, based on your experience and the data you provided?

    3. Having read the interpretations, you have any additional comments or clarifications?

- Send a thank you note and remind participant they will receive a summary of the final study.