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Employee Retention Strategies in the Quick Service Restaurant Industry

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Jason Andrew Gorham

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Employee Retention Strategies in the Quick Service Restaurant Industry

by

Jason Andrew Gorham

MS, Cardinal Stritch University, 2009

BS, Concordia University, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2021

Abstract

Organizations whose managers cannot retain their employees often experience additional hiring and training costs, a loss of continuity and productivity, and risk damaging employee morale. Some managers in the quick-service restaurant industry (QSRI) lack strategies to retain employees, thereby adding to an organization's expense. Grounded in the transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this single case study was to explore employee retention strategies in the QSRI. The eight participants were managers of two restaurants in the QSRI located in the Midwest who have successfully implemented employee retention strategies. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and a review of company documents relative to hiring, training, and employee scheduling. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Four themes emerged: family-friendly work environment, communication, knowledge sharing and training, and employee recognition and empowerment. A key recommendation for leaders in the QSRI is to implement training providing hands-on experience, watching videos, reading about a procedure, and watching others complete a task before attempting it. The implications for positive social change include the potential for improved employee retention, which may stabilize the QSRI workforce. As a result of a stabilized workforce, leaders of QSRI organizations can spend less money on recruiting, hiring, and training, thereby allocating money to support community events, fundraising efforts of local businesses, and lasting relationships with community entities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this accomplishment to my family. To my wife, Michelle Gorham, who I deeply love, appreciate, and admire, thank you for your support, patience, and tolerance. To my children Abigail and Alayna Gorham, who little did they know they gave me a purpose in my life and continue to motivate me to be the best I can be for them, thank you for being my daughters. Lastly, I dedicate this to my mother Audrey Gorham, who left us way too soon and always supported me no matter how foolish my behavior became.

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There is not enough room in this section to accurately reflect my true feelings for my doctoral committee members or my colleagues. I thank the colleagues with whom I have been on this journey because they have supported me, argued with me, and taught me so much about becoming a doctor. Most of all I want to acknowledge my chair Dr. Dina Samora, without whom this would have been an exercise in futility. You are such an amazing person, you are knowledgeable, firm, have a sense of humor, and because of your patience allowed me to grow both as a professional and a person. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

The greatest and often most expensive resource for an organization is the workforce (Pandita & Ray, 2018). Therefore, employee turnover hurts profitability in any industry. For a company to be successful, leaders must first learn and implement strategies to retain their employees (Ma et al., 2018).

The leadership of an organization plays a significant part in the retention of the workforce. According to Reina et al. (2018), employees cited their manager as a critical reason for their departure. Reina et al. suggested that leaders are responsible for creating an environment conducive to individualized attention and one that fosters a connection on an emotional level. Aside from the financial burden, employee turnover has other costs that are more difficult to measure, such as the loss of experience and organizational knowledge (Reina et al., 2018). Furthermore, when organizations experience turnover, there is a potential reduction in productivity and an adverse effect on customer service (Reina et al., 2018).

Without strategies to retain employees, leaders of organizations may struggle with consistency and maximizing profit (Narayanan et al., 2018). The development of sound employee retention strategies and consistency from the leaders in support of the workforce has a positive influence on employee retention (Narayanan et al., 2018). Retaining good employees coincides with an organization's success and minimizes extra time spent hiring and training replacements (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2016). In a quantitative study by Guha and Chakrabarti (2016), the researchers collected data from 420

employees of IT firms in India to discern the reasons for their departure from their previous job. According to Guha and Chakrabarti, strategies to retain employees are a challenge for all organizations. The development of robust retention strategies and culture is up to the leadership of the organization. The researchers concluded that competitive pay, lack of brand recognition of the organization, and lack of a position that fits their skills are the top three reasons the employees left (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2016).

Problem Statement

According to Carter et al. (2019), organizational leaders who lack the ability to retain employees experience an additional cost to their organization of about 20% of employees' salary. According to the United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2020), from October 2019 to October 2020 the total number of employee separations in the United States was 76.1 million. In the month of October (2020), there were 5.8 million employee separations in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2020). The general business problem is the lack of employee retention strategies negatively affects organizations' profitability. The specific business problem is that some managers in the QSRI lack effective strategies to retain employees.

Purpose Statement

I used a qualitative single case study to explore the strategies QSRI managers use to retain employees. The target population was the leadership of a chain of two quick-service restaurants. According to the owner, the leaders have demonstrated successful retention of the employees, thus providing insights into strategies that have resulted in successful employee retention. The restaurants are in Northern Illinois. The information

gleaned from this study may contribute to positive social change because satisfied employees may choose to purchase property and otherwise support local businesses in Northern Illinois. Moreover, when employees buy property in the community where they live, they may support local businesses and cumulatively help the community by enhancing tax revenues.

Nature of the Study

The methods of research considered for this study were quantitative, qualitative, and mixed. Quantitative researchers test a theory or hypothesis, identify and isolate variables, and examine the significance of correlations or causation (Park & Park, 2016). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because I did not test a hypothesis nor isolate variables, relationships, or group differences. According to Yin (2018), the use of questions and interviews to explore natural conditions in the field is an effective qualitative method. The qualitative approach was the best fit for this study because I used semistructured interviews to explore natural conditions in the field.

The qualitative research designs I considered were multiple case, single case, ethnographical, and phenomenological. The ethnography design is appropriate when researchers wish to explore a group (Yin, 2018). The current study was not intended to examine a group; therefore, the ethnographic design was not an appropriate fit. Researchers use the phenomenological design to gather the meanings of participants' experiences directly (Song, 2017). The phenomenological design was not suitable for the current study because I identified retention strategies from the managers and not the meaning of those strategies from the employees the managers supervise. According to

Harrison et al. (2017), a case study is a common qualitative research approach for exploring a phenomenon or event. The single case study design stems from the researcher's desire to discover a complex phenomenon's intricacies using different cases in the same organization (Harrison et al., 2017). The single case study design was best suited for this study because I explored the phenomena of employee retention in one organization in the QSRI.

Research Question

What strategies do QSRI managers use to retain employees?

Interview Questions

1. What are the most effective strategies to retain employees in the QSRI, in your experience?
2. What are the key barriers to retaining employees in the QSRI?
3. How do the leaders in your organization address the key barriers to implementing the strategies for retaining employees in the QSRI?
4. What retention strategies have you found most useful in retaining employees in the QSRI?
5. What ways besides retention, did the employees respond to the effective strategies you have implemented?
6. What other information would you share with me regarding the best strategies for retaining employees in the QSRI?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is the transformational leadership (TL) theory. Burns (1978) initiated the work on the concept of TL. Bass (1985) advanced the work and developed four components of TL. According to Bass, the components of TL include idealized influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personal and individualized attention. The transformational leader provides individual attention and influences followers to transcend their own goals for the organization (Bass, 1985). In support of TL's benefits, Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) found that leaders who display TL attributes increase the probability of an employees' willingness to remain in an organization. Therefore, the TL theory (Bass, 1985) potentially provides a lens to explore the leadership styles' effect on employee retention

Operational Definitions

Employee turnover: Employee turnover is when an employee of an organization separates themselves from the organization (Hom et al., 2017).

Employee retention: According to Singh (2019), employee retention involves organizational strategies that encourage employees to stay.

Transformational leadership: As defined by Burns (1978), TL characterizes a leader's ability to inspire employees to adopt the organization's expectations, perceptions, and aspirations.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

In this subsection, the purpose is to illuminate assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Researchers may experience limitations when conducting qualitative

research due to the results' immeasurability or an exact cause and effect conclusion (Queiros et al., 2017). According to Queiros et al. (2017), qualitative case studies are difficult to generalize and hard to define for all subject matter.

Assumptions

Assumptions are unproven beliefs individuals have regarding a topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that the participant is selected by the researcher, making it safer to assume the participant has something to offer. For the current study, I presumed the supervisors answered truthfully and have insight into what methods they have used to support employee retention. I assumed they wish to contribute and remained neutral when answering questions regardless of their beliefs. As the researcher, I considered the responses provided to be accurate and not grounded in what the participants believed to be the best answer.

Limitations

Limitations represent factors that could obstruct the study results and are out of the researcher's control (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The responses given by the participants, who are the leaders of the organization, make up the data collected and therefore the findings of the current study. The present study involves supervisors in two quick-service restaurants. When researchers capture leaders' perceptions and not followers', a limitation may exist because the research focuses on one perspective.

Delimitations

Delimitations are used in qualitative research to establish boundaries and ensure the project's scope remains manageable (Yin, 2018). For the current study, my actions

included interviews with supervisors, hiring managers, and the owner of two quick-service restaurants. I interviewed the leaders as described above to keep the collected data manageable.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

According to the United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2020), from October 2019 to October 2020 the total number of employee separations in the United States was 76.1 million. In the month of October (2020), there were 5.8 million employee separations in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics 2020). According to Muehleman and Leiser (2018), the average monetary cost of hiring a new employee is about 4 months of their salary. Therefore, leaders of organizations need to implement strategies to retain their employees. To remain sustainable, business leaders must first create an attraction to their company and implement effective employee retention strategies.

According to Singh (2019), employee retention positively affects many areas in an organization, including sustainability, the attraction of new hires, and partnerships with other companies. In the literature review conducted by Singh, the researcher suggested that employee retention will reduce the added expense associated with hiring new employees, which is extremely valuable to any organization's bottom line. Furthermore, several factors affect an employee's desire to stay with an organization, such as their relationship with their supervisor, competitive pay, and the feeling of support. Added value to a company exists in the implementation of strategies that leaders

use to increase employee retention. The implementation of retention strategies may improve the work environment and can support organizational growth and stability (Singh, 2019). Lastly, Singh suggested that leaders have a positive effect on creating a climate conducive to retention and must be at the forefront of employee retention strategies. Leaders could use the knowledge gained from this study to develop solutions to provoke leadership teams to evaluate and adjust their retention strategies, which could contribute to sustainable business practice and organizational success.

Implications for Social Change

The information derived from this study may enable leaders of organizations the flexibility to allow employees to participate or otherwise support community projects. The ability to participate in community projects may include the development of a partnership with other organizations to raise money for community-based philanthropic initiatives. Leaders of organizations who retain employees can establish long-term relationships with existing community entities, therefore providing consistent involvement on committees, boards of directors, and school districts.

Lastly, the information obtained from this study may help leaders create a better work environment, which could strengthen the customer experience. Satisfied customers usually return to organizations, which may help stabilize the local economy through increased tax revenues to benefit local citizens. Satisfied customers often refer others to the business, which not only supports the business but may support other organizations in the community.

Opposition to Transformational Leadership

There is evidence that TL may detract from organizational success in specific settings. For example, in a study done by Yang and Yang (2019), the leaders' transformational nature did not equate to positive organizational performance in the technology industry. Instead, transactional leadership was a better fit in organizational development (Yang & Yang, 2019). Yang and Yang distributed surveys to individuals across 251 organizations in China. Based on the results, Yang and Yang concluded that while organizations that employ transformational leaders are more prone to experience innovation, the connection between TL and organizational performance is not clear (Yang & Yang, 2019).

Yang and Yang (2019) also found a negative relationship between TL, innovation strategies, and firm performance, which stands in opposition to other studies. The findings by Yang and Yang allowed them to suggest that although TL historically associates with innovation and positive firm performance, the correlation may not be absolute. The work by Yang and Yang is relative to the work by Parveen and Adeinat (2019).

Parveen and Adeinat (2019) surveyed 250 employees from different banks in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. According to Parveen and Adeinat, the respondents indicated that when leaders exhibited TL attributes, they experienced an increased stress level. The workforce's higher stress level may be due to leadership pressure to go above and beyond to accomplish organizational goals. Furthermore, the researchers suggest that leaders of organizations need to be aware of the skill set of the workforce and consider other factors

such as work experience and family life in their attempts to retain employees (Parveen & Adeinat, 2019). Lastly, business leaders must create an atmosphere that reduces stress, aligns employees with their strengths, and takes into consideration the work experience of employees (Parveen & Adeinat, 2019).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

According to Palmatier et al. (2018), a literature review contains critical information regarding existing research and the commonalities of theme, results, and methodologies. Additionally, a literature review contains pertinent topics related to business problems (Palmatier et al., 2018). The current literature review includes research and information relative to leadership history and a review of the research regarding characteristics and traits of leaders. When an individual shares information corresponding to the existing body of work is how researchers advance knowledge and help other researchers understand the works in progress (Xiao & Watson, 2017). Researchers often use a literature review to demonstrate the background and previous research conducted to advance knowledge in a particular area.

The current literature review includes a breakdown of TL, initiated by Burns (1978), and further developed by Bass (1985), the four associated components designed by Bass, a review of the opposition to TL. I used the literature review to establish the complexities of leadership regarding employee retention, such as the dichotomy of establishing relationships with followers but not getting too personal in their connection. The overarching research question is: What strategies do QSRI managers use to retain

employees? The current literature review establishes the need for the present study and the importance of learning methods to retain employees in the QSRI.

The research databases used to gather the literature included Business Source Complete, Thoreau, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, Walden University Library, Google scholar, Scholarworks, and EBSCOhost. I also used government websites to gather research and data on labor and turnover and statistics specific to the QSRI. Furthermore, I searched seminal sources to collect information specific to the research question. I narrowed the research topics for the literature review by using specific terminology.

I used search terms such as *employee retention*, *employee retention strategies*, *employee turnover*, *transformational leadership*, *transformational leadership theory*, *organizational behavior*, *transformational leadership* and *employee retention*, and *positive social change*. Search terms also consisted of the *history of leadership*, *traits of influential leaders*, *opposition to transformational leadership theory*, and a *positive working environment*. I also used terms to locate opposition to the conceptual framework in this study. Those terms included *opposition to TL*, *when TL is ineffective*, and *when not to use TL*. In this qualitative single case study, my intent is to explore the strategies QSRI managers use to retain employees. See Table 1 for details of references.

Table 1*Details of References Used in the Literature Review*

Reference	Percentage	Total
Peer-reviewed articles	%92	115
Not peer-reviewed	%.02	2
2016-2021	%.90	114
Prior to 2015	%.03	4
Seminal works	%.05	7
Total references		126

Leadership

According to Reina et al. (2018), there is a positive correlation between leadership and employee retention. In the quantitative study by Reina et al., the researchers tested several hypotheses relating to employee retention and turnover. As a result of working with employees from the marketing department of a large financial services institution, the researchers could conclude a positive correlation between leadership, job satisfaction, and employee intent to stay (Reina et al., 2018). Effective and successful employee retention strategies remain elusive but are still one of the most critical parts of a leader's job duties (Reina et al.). In support of Reina et al., is the work by Lemoine et al. (2019) suggested that leaders who are authentic, ethical and conduct themselves in the spirit of servant leadership experience followers who have increased job satisfaction.

In work by Lemoine et al. (2019), the researchers conducted a literature review focusing on ethical, authentic, and servant leadership theories and the impact on followership. The leaders who are ethical, authentic, and servant by nature are said to be moral, thereby creating an environment that supports organizational performance. According to Lemoine et al. (2019), ethical, authentic, and servant leadership styles positively influence followers' willingness to stay with an organization.

History of Leadership Theories

In the following sections is information relative to the significance of effective leadership. Provided is a brief history of the development of leadership theories and research on leadership traits. I also provide a breakdown of transformational leadership, as developed by Bass (1985).

The Great Man Theory Mid 1800s (GMT)

According to Carlyle (1841), only certain individuals are born to lead and therefore possess specific leadership traits. Carlyle believed that a great leader was a gift from God and that those individuals had all the skills necessary to transform organizations toward success. The belief that leaders are a gift from God became known as the great man theory (GMT). According to Mouton (2017), while there is little scientific proof to suggest that only certain people can lead, the legend of the great man still exists. Furthermore, the idea of a strong leader still influences leaders and politicians, and typically great men meant intelligence rather than strength (Mouton, 2017). The work by Mouton, connects to the work by Spector (2016), in that, both researchers suggested that the GMT has little scientific evidence to demonstrate support but remains pertinent

today. Furthermore, Spector noted that there is enough evidence to suggest that leaders are different and that while the opportunity to be a leader is available to anyone, only certain individuals will stand up for the chance. Both Mouton (2017) and Spector (2016), suggested that although lacking scientific evidence, the notion of GMT remains pertinent because organizations continue to seek the hero that will save their organization. In the review of the GMT, Spector (2016) cautioned onlookers not to be too hasty in the leader's judgment based only on their progress. There is evidence to suggest that a connection between certain characteristics does equate to successful leaders and researchers began to explore traits of leaders.

As intimated by Carlyle (1841), that only a great man can lead organizations successfully, according to Parr et al. (2016), there is an association between leadership traits and successful leaders. Furthermore, the characteristics associated with successful leaders may not have been supported by research but by the level of success they accomplished (Parr et al., 2016). Researchers, when identifying successful leaders and their personality traits, seemingly only considered that the leaders were already successful (Parr et al., 2016). The predisposition of the successful leader may lead to inconsistent labels and inaccuracies in predicting a leader's success. Parr et al. targeted 2,461 leaders at the executive level from various organizations located in the United States to evaluate personality profiles. The researchers found six patterns relative to the target population: Unpredictable Leaders with Low Diligence, Conscientious, Backend Leaders, Unpredictable Leaders, Creative Communicators, Power Players, and Protocol Followers (Parr et al., 2016). The profiles helped the researchers categorize the traits

specific to the leadership atmosphere. The researchers concluded that of the six profiles, the Power Players performed well on all leadership performance factors (Parr et al., 2016).

According to Parr et al. (2016), the Power Players earned that title due to their charisma, emotional stability, agreeable conscientiousness, social skills, and strong business acumen. Power Players may attract followers due to their charismatic nature and social skills that allow for an emotional connection with the followers. Furthermore, Parr et al. found the top three leadership categories included Power Players, followed by Protocol Followers, and Creative Communicators. The Protocol Followers and Creative Communicators also scored well on leadership performance. The Protocol Followers attracted the workforce because employees respond well to emotionally stable leaders. Creative Communicators are socially skilled and develop a relationship with the followers and empower followers to make decisions (Parr et al., 2016). As a result of their work, Parr et al. concluded that for followers to remain dedicated to an organization, they must connect with their leader, believe their voice matters, and experience support.

Trait Theory

According to Kahn et al. (2016), the trait theory (TT) emerged in the 1930s. In the literature review by Kahn et al., the researchers indicated that the TT holds that certain individuals desire more responsibility and therefore pursue leadership roles. Furthermore, in the review by Kahn et al., the researchers suggested that according to the TT, the two abilities that make leaders effective are intelligence and personality. Regarding the traits,

as posited by Kahn et al., they are what makes the leader appropriate to be an effective leader.

Furthermore, Kahn et al. (2016), suggested that leadership goes beyond specific traits a leader may possess, and effective leaders are those with the ability to manage in various situations. Lastly, the review by Kahn et al. illuminated the fact that there are common traits among effective leaders, but the same characteristics also exist in ineffective leaders. The work by Kahn et al., is like the work by Matthews (2018) in that Matthews suggested that TT was a response to the GMT. According to Matthews, the TT assumes that leaders possess certain traits and behaviors. The TT intimates that leaders were born with distinct personality traits that propel their abilities (Matthews, 2018).

The notion that leaders are great men or women still exists today and typically comes from a long list of accomplishments, successful business endeavors, and even philanthropic efforts (Mouton, 2017). Researchers began to challenge the status quo of what had been the focus of research and started to look in a new direction.

Contingency Theories

Researchers began to evaluate leadership from the perspective of task and leadership behavior but still cannot clearly determine if certain leadership behaviors mean successful leadership. According to Vidal et al. (2017), there is no one way to lead, and leaders are measured on how they behave in every situation. Furthermore, researchers suggest that contingency theories, such as situational leadership, path-goal theory, and Fiedler's contingency theory, hold that leadership requires an evaluation based on the changing nature of the surrounding context. In work by Vidal et al., the

researchers worked with 175 owner-managers and 1218 employees, all involved in small businesses in Ecuador. In the quantitative study by Videl et al., the researchers concluded that a high level of direction but a low level of perceived support from the followers adversely affected job satisfaction. Additionally, followers expressed an elevated sense of loyalty when leaders demonstrated flexibility, a high level of direction, and high support (Vidal et al., 2017). Lastly, Videl et al. indicated that when the leaders allowed autonomy, delegated responsibilities, and adapted to change, the followers felt more supported and interested in staying with the company. The work by Vidal et al. (2017) connects to the work by Wright (2017) in that both researchers suggested that the leader needs to adapt to situations and provide direction that positively supports job satisfaction. Furthermore, each situation may require a different set of skills.

To be an effective leader, you must have an array of skills to deploy based on the given scenario (Wright, 2017). According to Wright, leaders often experience situations that require a variety of responses; the challenge becomes what leadership style to employ. In work by Wright, the researcher conducts a review of situational leadership theory and suggests that leaders learn through experience and implement appropriate leadership styles based on the situation. Additionally, the situational leader has a grasp of the followers' skills and will make decisions that might maximize the opportunities for success (Wright, 2017). The notion by Wright, that leaders can create solutions and address a multitude of situations based on their knowledge of the follower's skills, suggests that leaders must have the ability to develop a professional relationship with the followers. In support of Wright's work is a literature review by Lord et al. (2017).

In their analysis, Lord et al. (2017), suggested that the key to contingency theories is relative to the leader's development of a relationship with followers. Furthermore, Lord et al. suggested that leaders need to adjust their behavior and decisions based on each situation. Most researchers recognize contingency theories as an indication that no single leadership approach will work in all conditions. Researchers such as Lord et al., Wright (2017), and Vidal et al. (2017) all seem to suggest that the genesis of good leadership is the ability to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the followers, evaluate the landscape and adjust based on change, and put the best people on the most significant opportunity.

In work by Jiang et al. (2017), the researchers evaluated the relationship between transformational leadership, employee sustainability, and leadership relations. The researchers collected data from 389 questionnaires. The results of the data allowed Jiang et al. to conclude that transformational leaders positively influence followers' ongoing job performance and have a substantial effect on the development of relationships between followers and the leaders. Furthermore, the followers' performance is contingent on the ongoing support and bond with their leader (Jiang et al., 2017). The work by Jiang et al. suggested that the researcher's focus on the relationship, flexibility, and adaptability of leaders paves the way for more precise results from followers.

Authentic Leadership

According to Weiss et al. (2018), researchers believe that the theory of authentic leadership (AL) provides a perspective of the effect of leadership on followers and vice versa. According to Weiss et al., the growing number of corporate scandals is the impetus of ongoing work relative to AL. In work by Weiss et al., the researchers explored the

effect of a leader's perceived authenticity in their interactions with followers and the effect on the followers' emotional health. In the study by Weiss et al. the researchers used the quantitative approach to test assumptions of the effect of AL on the leader's and follower's emotional health.

Leaders who are authentic in their approach, experience a better relationship and interactions with followers than other forms of leadership (Weiss et al., 2018).

Additionally, the higher level of authenticity from the leader, the lower levels of anxiety and stress exists among followers. Furthermore, the higher level of realism from the leaders, the higher level of job engagement and performance from followers. The work by Weiss et al. suggested that leaders who are authentic experience lower levels of job-related stress and higher interactions with followers. In support of the work by Weiss et al. is the work by Hoch et al. (2018). Weiss et al. (2018) and Hoch et al. both agree that leaders who are authentic have a positive effect on the follower's relationship with leaders and lower levels of job-related stress for leaders. The strength of authentic leaders is the nature by which they conduct themselves (Hoch et al, 2018).

According to Hoch et al. (2018), the construct surrounding AL is the positive and ethical nature in which leaders conduct themselves. Furthermore, Hoch et al. suggested that authentic leaders incorporate their values and beliefs in their interactions. In the literature review by Hock et al., the researchers compared existing leadership types specific to perceived positive forms of leadership. The types of leadership styles used in the work by Hoch et al. were authentic leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, and ethical leadership. Hoch et al. suggested, based on their review, that the

effects of leaders who are genuine in their approach closely relate to the same positive results of leaders who are transformational.

Both Hoch et al. (2018), and Weiss et al. (2018), seemed to agree that leaders who are authentic experience followers who report an emotional connection to leaders, and a connection to the organization. The research by Hoch et al. and Weiss et al. also suggested that the leader's genuine and authentic nature inspires followers and positively effects performance outcomes. Lastly, more research is necessary to determine the measurability of authentic leadership and how leaders' honesty affects followers and their performance (Hoch et al., 2018).

Leadership Traits

Followers vary regarding preferred traits of leaders (Stodgill, 1948). According to Marques (2019), in the eyes of followers there are various characteristics associated with influential leaders. In the work by Marques, the researcher conducted a mixed methodology study involving MBA students from a university in Los Angeles. Moreover, Marques focused on traits in leaders most desirable and respondents provided several characteristics or attributes. Lastly, there is no determination that leaders are effective because they have specific characteristics.

In the 1940s, researchers began to focus on specific traits of leaders. By the end of the decade, there still was not enough information to determine a correlation between traits and effective leaders (Lord et al., 2017). In the literature review by Lord et al., the researchers suggested that leaders must be adaptable and possess various traits and skills to manage a range of situations. Like the observations by Marques (2019), Lord et al. also

suggested that leaders need to understand that there is no one best way to lead, and therefore specific traits or skills do not always translate to successful leadership. The observations by Stodgill (1948) align with the work by Lord et al. because both researchers suggested that research has yet to reveal a clear correlation between leadership traits and successful leaders. Interesting to note is that over the years between the work by Stodgill (1948) and the work by Lord et al., there is still no definitive answer regarding the traits of an effective leader. The lack of scientific correlation between leadership traits and successful leaders remains apparent today as opined by Stodgill initially, Lord et al., and by Karp (2018). Karp (2018) also suggested that research has yet to reveal a clear correlation between leadership traits and successful leaders. In fact, according to Karp, leadership is an imperfect topic of study due to leaders' imperfection.

The following sections outline a few of the traits identified by followers as desired in leaders. The characteristics listed do not make a fully comprehensive list. Researchers have found that a strong correlation exists between the positive effect of certain traits on job satisfaction, employee engagement, and employee retention.

Charisma

The focus of researchers specific to leadership and leadership traits before the last two decades separated charisma and transformational leadership. According to Lord et al. (2017), most researchers in the previous 20 years have focused on charisma and TL together, and much of the work suggests that transformational leaders also possess charisma in the eyes of followers. Charisma is how transformational leaders get more out of the workforce and appeal to the employees' sense of mission, vision, and values (Lord

et al.). Furthermore, Lord et al. intimated that individuals who are considered great leaders are said to possess specific traits, such as charisma and passion. Charisma is associated with developing a relationship with the followers and therefore creates a bond that motivates the workforce (Lord et al.).

Furthermore, Lord et al. (2017) noted a common theme that, in many cases, followers prefer charismatic leaders. Moreover, through the literature review, Lord et al. found appreciation from followers for leaders who have and share the vision for their company. According to Lord et al., followers reported an increase in loyalty toward leaders with whom they felt a genuine relationship. The positive effect of charismatic leaders, as revealed in the review by Lord et al., aligns with the conceptual framework of the current study, transformational leadership (Bass, 1985).

More specifically, the charismatic nature of leaders, as identified by Lord et al. (2017), aligns with Bass' idealized influence because of the desire of the followers to work toward an organization's vision. The second component of Bass' transformational leadership that the work by Lord et al. aligns with is individualized consideration, because of the development of a genuine relationship between leaders and followers. The development of an authentic relationship between leaders and followers is positively associated with exceptional performance and a strong sense of mission (Lord et al., 2017), again aligning with Bass' (1985), idealized influence. Through behaviors associated with idealized influence, as identified by Bass, a connection develops with the leader, and the follower is willing to forgo their personal goals for the good of the

company (Lord et al., 2017). In support of the work by Lord et al., it is necessary to recognize the work by El Toufaili (2018).

According to El Toufaili (2018), charisma includes genuineness and transparency and are the foundation for the relationship between leaders and followers. In the literature review completed by El Toufaili, the author reviewed the existing research on leadership and the subjective factors' influence relative to the TL style. According to El Toufaili, followers who feel connected to their leader are more apt to remain with the company, aligning with the conclusions drawn by Lord et al. (2017) and TL according to Bass (1985).

According to Bass (1985), individualized consideration is the attention given by the leader and the development of a personal connection. Through this connection, the leader serves in a mentor role helping the follower navigate their individual needs (Bass, 1985). Lord et al. (2017) and El Toufaili (2018) indicated that TL is an effective way for a leader to connect on an emotional level with the followers. The belief that TL is a vehicle to communicate with the workforce is related to Bass' individualized consideration, and both Lord et al. and El Toufaili note the importance of a relationship and connection with their leaders. The observations by El Toufaili also align with the conclusions drawn by Lord et al. (2017) because both intimated how charismatic transformational leaders are more effective at cultivating a relationship with the followers resulting in improved employee retention.

Just as Lord et al. (2017), and El Toufaili (2018), suggested that TL is necessary to develop a relationship with followers, which can positively affect job satisfaction and

retention, so too does Posner (2018). In work by Posner, the researcher used four specific leadership characteristics found most significant based on Kouzes and Posner (2017). The four components were competence, honesty, vision, and a passion for inspiring others. The over 18,000 respondents in the Posner study provided their rating, via a Likert scale, of the four leadership characteristics. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 56. Posner found age did not significantly differ regarding competence and passion for inspiring others. However, Posner noted that the older the respondent, the more critical honesty became. Furthermore, regarding ages 36-55, the respondents gave higher value to leaders who have a vision for the company and are willing to share that vision with followers. The interest of the 36-55 age group, in the vision for the organization, might indicate that as employees grow with a company, they are interested in the direction of the organization and how they may fit into its future.

Trust

The findings by Posner (2018), involving the follower's desire to be inspired and valued by their leaders, are consistent with the literature review conducted by Sy et al. (2018) because both researchers found that followers are looking for someone they can trust. A common theme uncovered in the study by Posner and the literature review by Sy et al., is that followers desire a leader who understands their role as a leader and provides clear direction, inspiration, and motivation toward organizational goals. Further support of Posner's ideas exists when Sy et al., identified, as a part of their review, that charisma is a trait in leaders that followers appreciate. The emotional connection that develops through the leader's charismatic nature also relates to the previously discussed work by El

Toufali (2018). El Toufali's conclusions also align with Posner, and Sy et al., because each researcher found that followers are attracted to leaders with whom they feel a connection and trust.

When a leader is charismatic, an emotional connection can form with the followers, which often will inspire a desire to perform (Sy et al., 2018). The connection and associated development of trust also encourages the follower to willingly forego their personal goals for those of the company (Sy et al., 2018). The positive relationship that Sy et al. referred to involves an element of an emotional link joining the follower and leader. Furthermore, both Posner (2018) and Sy et al. suggested that through trust and an emotional connection to the followers, leaders can maximize organizational performance through the relationship with followers.

According to Sy et al. (2018) a charismatic and trusted leader's overall effect is positive and often cultivates trust and a desire from employees to remain with an organization. Further support to this ideology, and the importance of a follower feeling connected with their leader, can be found in work by Lovelace et al. (2018). The review by Lovelace et al. (2018), involved the charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic (CIP) leadership model. The work by Lovelace et al., aligns with the work by Sy et al., because of the importance of an emotional connection and trust from followers. Sy et al., Posner (2018), and Lovelace et al., all agree that employees are engaged by leaders who can motivate them through an emotional connection to organizational performance. Furthermore, Lovelace et al. suggested that the followers' commitment comes from emotional excitement and alignment with the corporate mission. The individual

consideration and personal connection create admiration in the followers' eyes and, therefore, strengthen the organization's link and trust (Lovelace et al., 2018).

Passion

Sy et al. (2018) and Lord et al. (2017) identified a common theme that followers desire charisma, trust, and a connection with their leader, and Karp (2018), also found a similar idea. In the literature review conducted by Karp, the researcher found that followers value passion in their leaders. Karp suggested that passion motivates followers toward organizational goals, which aligns directly with the work by Lovelace et al. (2018). In both the work by Karp and Lovelace et al., the researchers suggested that followers value charisma, passion, and an emotional connection to their leaders. The points made by Karp, and Lovelace et al., regarding passion, is supported by the work by Caza and Posner (2018).

In work by Caza and Posner (2018), researchers also found passion as a trait that influenced followers to perform. In their research, Caza and Posner defined passion and perseverance as grit. The researchers collected data from over 3,700 leaders. The leaders measured themselves against The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The leaders responded to a series of questions that would reveal their typical behavior over two months (Caza & Posner, 2018). From their international sample, Caza and Posner suggested that a positive correlation between passion or grit and followership commitment exists. Furthermore, the higher the grit level, the more probable the followers were to challenge the status quo and focus on solutions, thereby creating a platform for constant positive change (Caza & Posner, 2018). Based on their findings,

Caza and Posner suggested that there exists enough evidence to suggest that overt passion motivates others.

A common theme emerged during a literature review by Williams et al. (2018). According to Williams et al. transformational leaders are charismatic and passionate. Williams et al., also indicated that followers desire charisma and passion in their leaders and if both traits are present, leaders who are transformational gain credibility. Furthermore, the findings from Caza and Posner (2018) and Williams et al. indicated enough of a correlation to justify furthering the research and advancing the exploration of the relationship between leadership passion and follower commitment. In work by Caza and Posner, and Williams et al., each set of researchers found commonality between a leaders' passion and the positive effect on followers. Lastly, Caza and Posner, and Williams et al. agreed that the positive effect is relative to job satisfaction, and inspiration toward positive performance, and a commitment to organizational goals.

Leaders' Passion and the Effect on Followers' Passion

Li et al. (2017) conducted a study that explored the connection between a leader's passion for work and the influence on employee's passion for work. A convenience sampling method was used in 51 firms, all located in China (Li et al., 2017). The participants, leaders, and followers completed a questionnaire designed to measure both followers' work passion and goals, and the leader's work passion and goals. A total of 380 participants completed the survey, and the results allowed Li et al. to conclude that a leader's work passion has a direct and positive influence on the follower's work passion. The positive correlation between a passionate leader and follower's work passion and

motivation, as found by Li et al., indicated that followers are more likely to be excited about their work, committed to the organization, and remain with a company when so too are their leaders. The work by Li et al. connects to the work by Caza and Posner (2018) and the work by Williams et al. (2018), in that all three sets of researchers suggested that a passionate leader inspires followers. Furthermore, an inspirational leader allows for the development of an emotional connection that can solidify the follower's organizational commitment. There are other studies that suggest a positive correlation between passionate leaders who empower followers and improved follower performance.

A study by Hao et al. (2018), further supports the positive effect of leadership passion and empowerment on follower performance. The researchers, in the work by Hao et al., found that followers who felt empowered by their leader had a stronger passion for their work. The researcher involved 69 teams and 266 employees. Hao et al. used a quantitative approach involving 17 firms that included pharmaceutical, manufacturing, and financial organizations in the People's Republic of China. The effect of empowerment and passionate leadership is the strengthening of an organizational commitment from the followers. Furthermore, a leader's work passion is contagious and followers desire empowerment and a sense of autonomy (Hao et al., 2018). The work by Hao et al. connected directly to work by Li et al. (2018) because both sets of researchers concluded that followers desire passionate leaders who empower the employees and are excited about the organization. Both Hao et al. and Li et al. agreed that passionate leadership is contagious, and followers are committed to organizations as a result.

Extroversion

Identified as a trait that followers desire in their leaders is extroversion (Clark & Waldron 2016). In Clark and Waldron's study, the researchers hypothesized that extroverted leaders are more prone to take risks and approach the organizational mission proactively. Clark and Waldron involved 243 MBA students in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The participants completed an online survey regarding their leadership characteristics and what they view as good leadership. The participants indicated an ability to work with others, motivation, energy, and a sense of creativity are essential attributes in leaders. According to Clark and Waldron, followers also value extroverted characteristics such as social skills, proactivity with planning, and healthy risk-taking to advance the organizational mission.

Leaders who are extroverted and vulnerable are more apt to develop an emotional link with the followers and connects to a common theme noted in a literature review conducted by Joseph et al. (2015). According to Joseph et al., a leader's ability to be vulnerable enough to connect on an emotional level creates a supportive atmosphere that motivates followers. An emotional connection may also prompt followers to go beyond expectations, focus on solutions, and put organizational goals ahead of their personal goals (Personal Communication, K. Monroe, August 2010). However, in the literature review conducted by Joseph et al., the authors noted that it was the emotional vulnerability and not necessarily extroversion in leaders that followers coveted most. Both, Clark and Waldron (2016), and Joseph et al., agreed that emotional vulnerability aided in the development of a connection which in both cases contributed to job

satisfaction; however, while Clark and Waldron found extraversion a significant trait that followers covet, Joseph et al. did not.

Although more research is necessary, Clark and Waldron (2016) suggested a positive correlation exists between follower support and extroverted leaders. Clark and Waldron identified a limitation in their study as the self-report by the respondents, but it appears there is enough evidence to support ongoing research. Clark and Waldron, and Lovelace et al. (2018), identified the importance of a leader being an extrovert, vulnerable, and willing to cultivate a connection with the followers; the work by Parr et al. (2016), also suggested that followers connect with extroverted leaders.

In the work by Parr et al. (2016), the researchers identified a target population of 2,461 executive-level leaders in the United States. Parr et al. used a secondary target population consisting of almost 6,000 higher and lower-level leaders in organizations from various industries. The subjects completed a personality inventory and observed the workforce during a typical day in an assessment center (Parr et al., 2016). The participants completed written and verbal activities to help determine the impact of personality on leadership. The findings allowed Parr et al. to support the notion that followers are looking for leaders who are outgoing and open and involve followers in the organizational mission. There are other characteristics that Parr et al. found significant.

Parr et al. (2016), found five main characteristics consistent in successful leaders. The characteristics identified by Parr et al. are emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Furthermore, Parr et al. also identified extraversion, and openness to change as characteristics of successful leaders. Parr et al. 's work and the identification of

followers who desire an extroverted leader are consistent with the work by Clark and Waldron (2016) and Lovelace et al. (2018) as all researchers identified extroversion as an essential way for leaders to connect with followers. The connection with followers continues to support the strengthening of the organizational mission and supports the concept of engagement and the follower commitment to an organization.

Ethical Behavior

According to Afsar and Shahjehan (2018), ethical leadership is socially acceptable conduct that involves interpersonal skills to develop relationships with followers. Also, ethical leadership includes support and reinforcement of the followers and establishes an example that all individuals in an organization should emulate (Afsar & Shahjehan, 2018). In the study by Afsar and Shahjehan, the researchers chose the construction industry in Islamabad, Pakistan. The construction industry was chosen because of the direct impact on others and the safety issues if the contractors cut corners (Afsar & Shahjehan, 2018). Employees and their immediate supervisors made up the target audience, and the companies in the study only work on large projects such as bridges, roads, and buildings. A total of 618 employees completed the survey (Afsar & Shahjehan, 2018). The researchers suggest, based on the results of the study, that not only do followers seek ethical behavior in their leaders, but that the ethical conduct of a leader increases the likelihood of moral choices from the followers (Afsar & Shahjehan, 2018). For leaders to be transformational and develop a connection with the followers, they must ethically conduct themselves.

Relative to the work by Afsar and Shahjehan (2018), is quantitative research conducted by Dust et al. (2018). In the quantitative work by Dust et al. the researchers found a positive correlation between ethical leadership and employee success. According to Dust et al., the relationship with the followers strengthens with empowering and ethical conduct from the leaders (Dust et al., 2018). Both the work by Afsar and Shahjehan and Dust et al. indicated the importance of leaders who conduct themselves ethically and the success of such behavior in developing a relationship with followers. Additionally, Afsar and Shahjehan, and Dust et al. aligns with the inspirational motivation component of transformational leadership (Burns, 1985). Furthermore, followers are more likely to behave ethically when their leaders do (Afsar & Shahjehan, 2018). Employees are more likely to stay with a company if they feel their ethical values align with the organizational value system (Dust et al., 2018). The expectation that leaders ethically conduct themselves aligns with Bass's (1985) transformational leadership specifically because when leaders are ethical in their decisions, their behavior supports the development of a relationship with followers.

Ethical Leadership and Employee Success

In work by Dust et al. (2018), the authors tested two hypotheses; how ethical behavior in leaders affects employee success and future employee success and whether employee exhaustion disrupts the effect of ethical leadership in followers. The first study completed by Dust et al. required the participants to complete a survey and invite their respective supervisors to finish a similar survey. The 219 participants completed the questionnaires on a private website, making the information confidential. The employees

rated their supervisors on ethical leadership standards, psychological empowerment, and emotional exhaustion they were experiencing at work. The supervisor survey asked the respondents to measure the employees' current success and evaluate their future success.

In the second study, 186 individuals completed a survey that asked respondents to assess their initiative at work (Dust et al., 2018). Afsar and Shahjehan (2018) suggested followers will make ethical decisions provided their leaders do the same, Dust et al. found a positive connection between psychological empowerment, ethical leadership, and employee success. The conclusions by Dust et al. and Afsar and Shahjehan, suggested that employees respond positively to ethical leadership behavior, and there is a long-term benefit for employees when leaders are ethical in their actions. Lastly, the conclusions drawn by Dust et al., and Afsar and Shahjehan, align with TL and Bass' (1985) notion of creating an idealized influence.

According to Dust et al. (2018), based on the results from the second study, there was a positive relationship between the motivational influence of ethical leadership and follower success. Also, Dust et al. concluded that ethical behavior in leaders motivates followers to make ethical decisions, pursue and accomplish their fundamental responsibilities, and make decisions and take actions that align with organizational values (Dust et al., 2018). Dust et al. and Afsar and Shahjehan (2018) indicated that to maximize follower performance toward the corporate mission, leaders need to behave ethically. Dust et al. suggested that organizations with leaders who behave ethically will attract followers whose value system aligns with the companies. Lastly, Afsar and Shahjehan compare ethical leadership to TL because of how both forms of leadership support job

satisfaction, job performance and have a positive effect on employee culture. The postulation that ethical leadership, its relationship to TL, and the positive effects on job satisfaction and employee culture by Afsar and Shahjehan, and Dust et al. supports Bass's work (1985) on TL.

Effect of Ethical Leadership on Follower Morality

To further support the work by Dust et al. (2018) and Afsar and Shahjehan (2018), specific ethical behavior from leaders and the corresponding positive influence on followers is the work by Moore et al. (2019). The alignment of values contributes to job satisfaction and retention, as found in work by Dust et al., and aligns with the theory of TL as the influence on followers may induce inspirational motivation. In conducting four quantitative studies, Moore et al. found a correlation between leaders' ethical behavior and followers' moral disengagement: meaning the more ethical the leaders conduct themselves, the less likely the followers were to make unethical decisions. Moore et al. indicated that the alignment of moral values and ethical decision-making from leaders attracts ethical followers to organizations.

In the first of the four studies by Moore et al. (2019), the researchers employed a snowball sampling method. For extra credit, a set of undergraduates submitted contact information for an employee, a co-worker of that employee, and the employee's immediate supervisor. In response, 252 employees, 202 co-workers, and 193 supervisors completed the survey. As a result of the first study by Moore et al., the researchers indicated a negative relationship between ethical leadership and moral disengagement. The negative relationship means that employee nonconformity is not affected by ethical

leadership (Moore et al., 2019). However, the work by Belschak et al. (2018) contrasts with the first study done by Moore et al., in that Belschak et al. found the opposite to be true. In work by Belschak et al., the researchers noted that the ethical leadership style mediated unethical actions in followers. Belschak et al. employed a quantitative approach and engaged 159 employee-supervisor combinations in the Netherlands. The participants completed a survey requiring them to consider their experience and leadership preferences. The conclusions by Belschak et al. align with the work by Moore et al. from the perspective that both researchers found that when ethical leadership was high, follower unethical decisions and behaviors were low.

The second of four studies done by Moore et al. (2019) is a follow up to the first study. Since the researchers noted evidence in the first study that leaders who behave ethically experience a low rate of unethical behavior from followers, the researchers designed the second study to support ethical leadership and the impact on followers (Moore et al., 2019). In the second study by Moore et al., 245 individuals participated in an online survey split into two categories. The first category subjected the participants to high ethical leadership, and the second category subjected the participants to low ethical leadership, and both scenarios involved insurance claims adjustments. The first category participants were encouraged to think about what is right for the customers and make fair decisions. The second category participants were encouraged to make decisions based on what is best for the company (Moore et al., 2019). Both groups received scenarios from their supervisors with unethical or ethical information and used the information to make decisions to either accept or reject the insurance claims. Moore et al. found that the group

with poor ethical leadership were more likely to deny insurance claims and support the company's bottom line. Moore et al. suggested that if an ethical workforce exists in an organization, leaders who behave ethically must be present.

The work by Babalola et al. (2019) supports the work by Moore et al. (2018), in that both sets of researchers found a similar correlation between ethical leadership and follower behavior. In work by Babalola et al., the researchers defined practices and decisions designed to support the company and all stakeholders as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The quantitative study by Babalola et al. involved multiple industries in Nigeria, and the authors collected data through questionnaires from 300 participants. As a result, the researchers found that when the leaders were perceived to have low ethical standards, the followers were more likely to behave inconsistently with OCB (Babalola et al., 2019). The conclusions made by Babalola et al. supports the conclusions of Moore et al., in that, both suggested that the higher the ethical standards set by leaders, the more likely the followers will conduct themselves ethically.

The second study conducted by Babalola et al. (2019) involving 103 participants included a modified scenario with two ethical leadership propositions. One was a rigid ethical leadership style, and the second a flexible ethical leadership style. The researchers described the relaxed ethical leadership style as ensuring the parameters and expectations are clear to the followers and allowing them to make decisions (Babalola et al., 2019). As a result of their second study, Babalola et al. found that followers were more prone to act in a manner consistent with OCB when leaders were flexible in their ethical leadership style. The fact that followers were more apt to function in support of the organization

when they feel they have a voice, and understand the parameters and expectations, suggests that followers desire flexibility in their decision making. To further support the work by Babalola et al. is a study done by Kimura and Nishikawa (2018).

In their research, Kimura and Nishikawa (2018) collected data from senior, middle, and entry-level managers in Japan. The participants completed a survey to determine their perspectives on ethical and unethical leadership styles. The conclusions made by Kimura and Nishikawa, align with Babalola et al. (2019), because both found that ethical leaders provide direction, encourage inclusion from followers, and clearly define expectations or policy. The conclusions made by Babalola et al. and Kimura and Nishikawa suggested that leaders need to behave ethically and share their vision for the company with the followers to improve organizational performance. The sharing of the company's vision, along with ensuring clarity with policy consistently, also serves the other desire from followers to have a voice. Furthermore, Kimura and Nishikawa found that followers were more likely to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to organizational goals when leaders behaved ethically and incorporated an element of accountability in their approach. The conclusions by Kimura and Nishikawa, in conjunction with the conclusions drawn by Babalola et al., suggests that followers admire leaders who behave ethically, desire clarity of expectations, and are committed to organizations whose values align with their own.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, introduced by Burns in 1978, suggested that the connection between the leader and follower exists through trust, respect, and a mutual

understanding of the organizational vision. Through charisma, the sharing of the corporate vision, and the development of individual relationships, transformational leaders inspire employees to adopt the organization's expectations, perceptions, and aspirations (Burns, 1978). Bass (1985) advanced the theory of TL to indicate that the defining factors include trust, admiration, and respect for the leaders from the followers and vice versa.

According to Akbari et al. (2017), transformational leaders create a collaborative atmosphere through a socially supported and transparent culture. The literature review by Akbari et al. measured the effectiveness of TL on an organization's internal promotion and culture. Transformational leadership is a valuable leadership style and leaders who are transformational create a work environment conducive to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational productivity. A collaborative atmosphere empowers and involves the workforce, which lends itself to employee retention and strengthens follower commitment (Akbari et al., 2017). The literature review by Akbari et al. examined the relationship between TL and an organization's internal marketing strategy. An organization's ability to be transparent contributes to the follower's commitment. When the followers are aware of the organization's vision and mission, they feel a part of something greater (Akbari et al., 2017). The conclusions by Akbari et al. suggested that the level of transparency will also allow followers to evaluate how the organization's goals align with their own.

Other researchers have demonstrated that leaders who are consistently transformational in their approach experience a more satisfied workforce engaged and

invested in organizational performance (Breevaart, & Zacher, 2018). A study conducted by Breevaart and Zacher connects to the work by Akbari et al. (2017). The study by Breevaart and Zacher involved Dutch employees working at a large international brewery. The researchers employed a weekly diary methodology and invited 286 employees to participate. Of those invited, 59 completed the weekly diary for three weeks. The data collected by the researchers measured trust, which includes reliability, integrity, faith in and loyalty to the leader, perceived leader effectiveness, leader enthusiasm, and passion (Breevaart & Zacher, 2018). Breevaart and Zacher suggested that transformational leaders attract a higher rate of loyalty, confidence, trust, and engagement from their followers. Akbari et al. also concluded that followers develop a positive relationship with transformational leaders, and such an approach is positive for employee engagement and organizational commitment. Additionally, followers report a higher level of job satisfaction due to their leaders' transformational nature (Breevaart & Zacher, 2018). Lastly, according to Breevaart and Zacher, organizations whose leadership is transformational in nature experience a more satisfied workforce engaged and invested in organizational performance.

The Positive Effects of Transformational Leadership

Bass (1985) suggests that the transformational leader inspires, motivates, challenges, empowers, and intellectually stimulates followers. The work by Breevaart and Zacher (2018), and Akbari et al. (2017), connects to a study done by Hawkes et al. (2017). In work by Hawkes et al., the researchers examined the relationship between TL and employee engagement. A total of 277 workers from various industries such as

engineering, health services, community, public services, retail, and sales in Australia, completed surveys (Hawkes et al., 2017). TL is about leadership that creates positive change in the followers, whereby they take care of each other's interests and act in the group's concerns. Hawkes et al., because of their findings, suggested that followers who have leaders who are transformational, develop a relationship, connect to the organization, and report experiencing support and feeling engaged at work.

The work by Hawkes et al. (2017) connects to the research by Korejan and Shahbazi (2016). Both sets of researchers suggested that it is essential for leaders to develop a connection and a professional relationship with their followers. In their analysis of transformational leadership, Korejan and Shahbazi intimated that transformational leaders develop a strong relationship with the followers. Furthermore, working toward organizational goals strengthens the follower's motivation and encourages their creativity because of the leaders' positive relationship. Employee retention, job satisfaction, and increased productivity result from a positive relationship between leader and follower (Korejan, & Shahbazi, 2016).

Additionally, because of the leader's relationship, it is more probable that the follower will forego their personal goals for the organization's goals. Moreover, a transformational leader must be ethical, considerate, and employ a leadership approach that considers the various followers (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). Lastly, through their evaluation of TL, Korejan and Shahbazi suggested that leaders must develop effective strategies to address trends proactively, the changing landscape of the respective industry, and establish an openness to companywide change.

Further support of the work by Hawkes et al. (2017), and Korejan and Shahbazi (2016) exists in work by Dong et al. (2017). In work by Dong et al., the researchers suggested that TL can improve organizational strength by developing a healthy workforce culture that encourages creativity, is transparent and establishes a positive work-life quality. In the study by Dong et al., the researchers collected data from eight high-technology companies in China. The target population of team members, team leaders, and supervisors provided information through surveys. A total of 171 individuals across 43 teams and eight different companies participated (Dong et al., 2017). The groups gave information specific to their leaders' behaviors, sharing of knowledge, and teamwork. The leaders responded to questions designed to assess the skill development and creativity of the team members. As a result of the work, Dong et al. concluded that transformational leaders provide individualized attention, cultivate creativity amongst the followers, and the group support of co-workers enhances individual skills. Furthermore, the researchers asserted that a necessary part of transformational leadership is developing an atmosphere that encourages creativity in the workplace (Dong et al., 2017). When leaders can create an environment of support, individualism, and accountability through the collective followership, it removes barriers and fosters the creation of new solutions (Dong et al., 2017).

The theory of TL involves the premise that accomplishing tasks or goals is what inspires followers. Additionally, TL holds that followers' motivation toward organizational goals or tasks comes from the relationship developed with the leader. The work by both Dong et al. (2017), and Korejan and Shahbazi (2016), connect through the

common theme that leaders who are transformational promote an atmosphere that is conducive to follower growth and creativity and is advantageous to realizing organizational goals. Furthermore, Korejan and Shahbazi and Dong et al. also suggested that through the creation of a supportive environment, leaders cultivate a culture that followers appreciate.

According to Bass (1985), it is the use of the four components of TL that allow leaders to develop a relationship and engage followers. The components serve as a guide for leaders to follow and provide an element of structure to leadership. According to Bass, the four components are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

The Components of Transformational Leadership

The sections to follow contain the four components of TL, as outlined by Bass (1985). The four parts are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Each component is essential to the theory of transformational leadership and, combined, are associated with motivating followers toward the common goals of an organization (Abelha et al., 2018).

Idealized Influence

Idealized influence is the notion that leaders are respected and admired role models, who are trusted by their followers (Bass, 1985). Bass suggested that idealized influence is when leaders put the needs of the followers first and not the leaders' personal goals. The followers' commitment and support are what solidifies the relationship and strengthen the follower's desire to perform. According to Langat et al. (2019), there is a

direct, positively significant connection between idealized influence and follower job performance. In the study by Langat et al., the researchers chose the insurance industry in Kenya. The researchers used random sampling to select their target population, and 245 lower-level managers participated from 52 insurance companies. Leaders who are transformational and overtly value the employees experience a higher level of job performance from followers (Langat et al., 2019). The researchers used charisma, ethical leadership, and trust as measuring factors of the leaders for this study. According to Langat et al., charismatic leaders open the workforce's opportunity to develop a relationship with the leader. The relationship with the employees serves as motivation for the follower to perform above expectations. Ethical leadership behavior encourages employees' ethical choices and influences job performance, as does trust in the leaders (Langat et al., 2019).

Further support of the positive effect of idealized influence exists in the work by Yin et al. (2020). In work by Yin et al., the researchers asserted that leaders who inspire followers and develop a relationship with the employees seem to have trust and respect from followers. Furthermore, leaders who are perceived to encourage followers through idealized influence have a higher rate of attraction from the workforce because of the positive example the leader displays (Yin et al., 2020). The work by Yin et al. (2020) aligns with the work by Shafi et al. (2019), in that both sets of researchers suggested that idealized influence is when leaders act as a role model and inspire followers to help push the organization toward a common goal. In the quantitative study by Shafi et al. (2019), the researchers worked with 31 software firms in Pakistan and collected data from

employees and supervisors. Shafi et al. (2019), concluded that idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation positively influence follower's innovation. Moreover, when leaders are transformational there is a positive influence on employee creativity (Shafi et al., 2019).

Inspirational Motivation

According to Bass (1985), inspirational motivation suggests that a leader is a visionary and shares ideas with the workforce in an engaging and motivating manner. Furthermore, leaders inspire followers to work toward organizational goals and generate enthusiasm toward goal completion (Bass, 1985). To further support the importance of inspirational motivation and the positive effect on followers is the work by Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016). In the literature review by Yahaya and Ebrahim, the researchers evaluated Bass' transformational leadership components and identified inspirational motivation as a skill used by leaders to inspire subordinates to be diligent in their work while focusing on organizational goals. The inspirational leader inspires followers by giving meaning to their work and creating an atmosphere that recognizes the work they are doing is a part of something larger than themselves (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The inspirational nature of a transformational leader also encourages and empowers teamwork when applicable and recognizes subordinates' accomplishments (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The emotional aspect of leadership elicits followers' willingness to forgo their personal goals for the good of the organization.

The work by Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) connects to the work by Jiang et al. (2018) in that both sets of researchers identified the positive result of inspirational

motivation and TL. According to Jiang et al., the inspirational aspect of leadership relates to the leader's ability to motivate followers to accomplish goals they may have previously been unable to reach. The broader point of inspirational motivation is the clarity of purpose provided by the leader, which allows the workforce to understand the bigger picture. At the same time, followers carry out their daily work-related tasks and put the organizational goals ahead of their personal goals (Jiang et al., 2018). Both, Jiang et al., and Yahaya and Ebrahim, suggested that the leader must create a socially conducive environment that encourages relationships and inspires the workforce through commitment toward a shared vision. In work by Jiang et al., the researchers targeted 273 dyads of employee-supervisor combinations that involved 302 employees in a private company in China. The target population completed a questionnaire designed to capture followers' perspectives regarding the inspirational behavior of the leaders and decision-makers (Jiang et al., 2018). As a result of the work by Jiang et al. the researchers concluded that when employees feel empowered and a part of an organization's vision, they demonstrate a willingness to challenge the status quo and seek solutions, they may not otherwise propose (Jiang et al., 2018). Furthermore, Jiang et al. suggested that when followers feel supported and have a clear understanding of the organizational goals of which they are associated, they are more likely and willing to help others accomplish their work-related goals (Jiang et al., 2018).

Intellectual Stimulation

Bass (1985) identifies intellectual stimulation as a leader's ability to provide a framework for followers to recognize their connection to the organizational structure,

mission, vision, and goals. The connection Bass (1985) refers to also includes a link to the follower's peers and how this connection relates to goal completion. According to Hawkes et al. (2017), intellectual stimulation is the degree to which a leader challenges the employees to put solutions into action. In work by Hawkes et al., the researchers collected data from 277 participants working in various industries in Australia. The findings of Hawkes et al. connected to the work by Bass (1985), in that both researchers intimated that intellectual stimulation is what engages, motivates, and challenges the followers to perform. Furthermore, Hawkes et al., suggested that intellectual stimulation plays a significant role in followers' creativity and engagement.

Additionally, in work by Hawkes et al. (2017), the researchers measured followers' engagement through their connection to the leaders, including areas such as follower perception of support and recognition. Hawkes et al. suggested that through intellectual stimulation, followers feel challenged and, therefore, engaged. The conclusions included the demonstration of a positive correlation between transformational leadership and high job engagement (Hawkes et al., 2017).

The work by Hawkes et al. (2017), connects to the work by Hetland et al. (2018), who completed a study with 107 participants from various industries in Norway. The participants completed a diary questionnaire focusing on leadership interactions, validation, and preparation for promotion. The participants' information also revealed their perception of the relationship with their immediate leader (Hetland et al., 2018). In work by Hetland et al., the researchers concluded that better work-related results occurred when transformational leaders challenged the workforce to take ownership of the work

environment. Placing the responsibility of the work's outcome and the nature of the work environment on the employees empowers them and creates a sense of ownership (Hetland et al., 2018). As a result of their work, Hetland et al. asserted that the followers feel connected to their leaders and are intellectually stimulated to perform through transformational leadership. Furthermore, employees focus on work engagement and performance when the environment is challenging, and resources are available to support their work (Hetland et al., 2018).

Individualized Consideration

According to Bass (1985), the transformational leader needs to provide individualized attention to followers and develop an emotional connection with the followers while helping them navigate their individual needs. Individualized attention involves a teaching approach that focuses on the follower and their skills, knowledge, and life goals (Bass, 1990). Additionally, individualized attention includes mentoring and the overt recognition of the individual's contribution to the greater good. Creating an atmosphere of appreciation, coaching, and mentoring will fulfill the employee's need for self-worth and self-fulfillment (Bass, 1990). The observations by Bass (1985, 1990) suggest that the individualized attention and support provided to followers contribute to their willingness to perform above expectations and inspires creativity and growth.

The work by Bass (1985, 1990), is like the work by Mencl et al. (2016), in that both researchers support the positive influence of individualized consideration. In the study by Mencl et al., the researchers selected 291 participants from organizations in the USA. Mencl et al. suggested, because of the findings, that there is a positive correlation

between leadership engagement (individualized consideration) of followers and follower job satisfaction. Moreover, individualized consideration is how a leader connects to the follower and serves as a support mechanism. The connection fulfills the follower's need for recognition and validates the employee's value to the organization (Mencl et al., 2016). The work by Mencl et al., connects to the work by Lacap (2019) as both researchers supported the positive effect of individualized consideration and TL on employee engagement and intention to quit.

In the study by Lacap (2019), the researcher collected data from 155 employees of higher education institutes in the Philippines. Lacap used a quantitative approach to test hypotheses involving the effect of TL and the four components therein on employee engagement and intent to quit. Furthermore, Lacap suggested that followers need empowerment and support from their leaders, so too does Mencl et al., (2016) suggest that followers perform at higher levels when they feel empowered and connected to their leaders.

According to Jong and Ford (2020), individual consideration means that followers feel supported and valued by their leaders, resulting in a sense of autonomy and loyalty. Additionally, the followers experience independence and care from the leaders due to their inclusive nature (Jong & Ford, 2020). In work by Jong and Ford, the researchers tested eight hypotheses related to the effect of individualized consideration on followers in large state governments in the United States. More specifically, Jong and Ford measured follower perceived autonomy, defined as a sense of freedom in making choices about their tasks: the researchers also measured the workforce's apparent task

performance. Jong and Ford concluded that individualized consideration positively correlated to follower's performance and perceived freedom in decision making.

Furthermore, the amount of autonomy a manager can allow is relative to the nature of the follower's job. Still, managers need to be aware of the employees' preferences regarding autonomy (Jong & Ford, 2020).

Transformational Leadership and Leader Health

In a study by Zwingman et al. (2016), the researchers suggested that leaders who are transformational experience adverse effects on their personal lives over the long-term. In work by Zwingman et al., the researchers surveyed work conditions and occupational health among employees in a services company in Germany. Zwingman et al. collected data from a total of 2,594 followers and 76 leaders (Zwingman et al., 2016). Zwingman et al. concluded that transformational leaders did experience emotional exhaustion. The exhaustion appeared to be due to the passionate connection they have with followers and the commitment to the organization (Zwingman et al., 2016).

Additionally, the leaders reported a decrease in organizational support. Additional factors involving the long-term emotional stress of transformational leaders need to include the general nature of the workforce. Support of the work by Zwingman et al. (2016), exists in work by Lin et al. (2019). In both studies, Lin et al. and Zwingman et al., intimated that the workforce's nature played a role in the transformational leader's adverse health and emotional exhaustion.

In the study done by Lin et al. (2019), the researchers collected data from 130 pairs of leaders and followers throughout various industries. The industries included

banking, communications, education, healthcare, and manufacturing (Lin et al., 2019). Lin et al. suggested that due to the high expenditure of commitment and high stress toward positive organizational outcomes, transformational leaders were negatively affected and experienced emotional exhaustion. Lastly, Lin et al. also suggested that turnover intention exists among transformational leaders over the long-term. According to Zwingman et al. (2016), and Lin et al., the motivation, skills, and commitment of the workforce contribute to the emotional exhaustion and turnover intention in transformational leaders.

Tribulations of Leadership

Regardless of the leadership style, leaders must contend with developing a relationship, individually and collectively, while holding all employees accountable to the same standards. According to Yang et al. (2019), leaders who are paradoxical in their approach may experience a higher return on investment from the workforce regarding performance. Additionally, paradoxical leaders may also experience a higher degree of creativity in the workforce because of the flexibility offered (Yang et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the paradoxical leader faces the challenge of connecting with their followers while maintaining a professional distance; and finding a way to treat followers with individuality while creating an environment of equality for the entire workforce (Yang et al., 2019). In the work by Yang et al. (2019), the researchers suggested that leaders who deploy paradoxical leadership behavior (PLB) face the challenge of creating follower autonomy, workplace creativity, and an atmosphere that allows the employees to thrive at work. Furthermore, leaders who exercise PLB must allow follower flexibility

while enforcing expectations of the work required, focus on the goals of followers while pursuing their objectives, and develop a relationship with followers while maintaining professional distance (Yang et al., 2019).

In work by Yang et al. (2019), the researchers collected data from full-time employees and their immediate supervisors across four companies in China. The researchers assembled data from 180 employees and 25 leaders. The results of the quantitative study allowed Yang et al. to suggest that leaders who demonstrate PLB positively affect employee creativity. Furthermore, the creation of an environment that balances work requirements, follower psychological safety, and allows for individualization not only meets the basic needs of individuals but allows employees to thrive in creativity and productivity (Yang et al., 2019). In support of the work by Yang et al. is the work by Barnes and Spangenberg (2018). As a leader, one must maintain control of their ego and not allow personal aspirations or feelings to interfere with decisions or interactions with the workforce (Barnes & Spangenberg, 2018). Leaders may feel threatened by the followers and may, therefore, stifle growth or otherwise abuse followers (Barnes & Spangenberg, 2018).

According to Barnes and Spangenberg (2018), a leader may feel threatened by followers who are high performers and therefore, might hold the employee back from promotion or other work-related perks. In the qualitative study done by Barnes and Spangenberg, the researchers found a leader withholding information from followers due to the leaders' insecurity and a lack of trust. In work by Barnes and Spangenberg, the researchers surveyed 156 employees, to which ten indicated having experienced an

abusive scenario from their leader. Barnes and Spangenburg conducted interviews with four of the ten. In each case, the respective leader either withheld pertinent information from the follower or treated the follower in a manner beyond the micromanagement of an employee (Barnes & Spangenburg, 2018). The four respondents indicated a lack of trust for their leader principally because the leaders professed to have the company and the workforce's best interest, yet their actions were contradictory.

Managing Change

Leaders face the challenge of managing change and, if not handled correctly, can interfere with employee retention. According to Neves and Schyns (2018), leaders must manage opposition from the workforce in the face of change while allowing for creativity. Additionally, leaders need to ensure they listen to the voice of the employees. In work by Neves and Schyns, the researchers shared their review of four studies, all of which associate change and destructive leadership. Based on their review, the researchers suggested that destructive leaders not only experience resistance to change from followers but have poor organizational performance (Neves & Schyns, 2018).

Furthermore, Neves and Schyns (2018), suggested that the workforce may not fully understand the need for change and view the behavior as destructive and inexcusable. The lack of communication and clarity regarding the pending change may negatively affect the culture and potentially negatively affect productivity and relationships (Neves & Schyns, 2018). Relative to the work by Neves and Schyns is the work by Usman (2020).

According to Usman (2020), leaders need to assess the implementation strategy for change carefully. When organizational leaders make large organizational changes, it can be counterproductive to the workforce culture, and employee retention and culture are better supported if leaders communicate the need and reasons for the change (Usman, 2020). Additionally, leaders must be clear regarding the organizational path for change and ensure the workforce understands the long-term goals. Lastly, Usman asserted that leaders need to establish a reportable method to measure the changes' success and adjust, as necessary.

Usman (2020), indicated that transformational leaders reinforce the change, recognize employees' successes, and ensure clarity regarding progress. To manage change effectively, Usman also suggests that organizations create an environment that allows their leaders to be transformational, which will strengthen the relationship between leadership and the workforce. The positive culture established through transformational leaders will fully support the stages of change (Usman, 2020).

Transition and Summary

Employees of organizations have a direct effect on profitability and performance. Managers' strategies in the QSRI are critical to helping businesses minimize costs associated with employee turnover. The supervisors and managers of quick-service restaurants have a positive effect on retaining employees and are responsible for creating an environment conducive to retention. Due to high turnover, there is a significant demand for entry-level employees to work in quick-service restaurants, and leadership must manage the environment and relationship with employees. Previous researchers

have conducted studies that provide indications for solutions to improve employee retention.

Retention strategies revealed in the current literature review include leaders who are transformational, develop a relationship with employees, and the review of desirable traits in leaders. Desirable features consist of trustworthiness, ethical behavior, passion, and charisma. Other retention strategies uncovered include rewards and recognition, empowerment, and caring leaders.

In section one, I presented the research question, the nature of the study, the conceptual framework, and a breakdown of transformational leadership. I developed a comprehensive literature review, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Moreover, section one included the significance of the study and operational definitions.

In section 2 is the role of the researcher, research design and method, population and sampling, and ethical research. Lastly, section 2 includes data collection and organization techniques, as well as reliability and validity.

Section 2: The Project

I used the qualitative single case study design to explore the strategies to retain employees in quick-service restaurants. I collected data by completing semistructured interviews with the leadership team of two quick-service restaurants. I collected data by reviewing documents provided by the restaurants and exploring current compensation packages, shift schedules, relationship development, and the potential effect on employee retention. Exploration of the phenomena of employee retention may assist the efforts made by leaders in the QSRI.

The mixed methods approach is when the researcher uses qualitative and quantitative data sets to make conclusions beyond one method (Guetterman et al., 2019). A mixed method is appropriate when researchers use qualitative and quantitative research methods to test a hypothesis or theory. I did not test a theory and, therefore, did not use the quantitative approach, and consequently, the mixed method was not an appropriate fit. I used the qualitative method to discover and explore the retention strategies of leaders in the QSRI.

Purpose Statement

I used a qualitative single case study to explore the strategies QRSI managers use to retain employees. The target population was the leadership of a chain of two quick-service restaurants. According to the owner, the leaders have demonstrated successful retention of the employees, thus providing insights into strategies that have resulted in successful employee retention. The restaurants are in Northern Illinois. The information gleaned from this study may contribute to positive social change because satisfied employees may choose to purchase property and otherwise support local businesses in Northern Illinois. Moreover, when employees buy property in the community where they live, they may support local businesses and cumulatively help the community by enhancing tax revenues.

Role of the Researcher

The goal of the researcher in a qualitative study is to explore and obtain the participants' lived experiences (Park & Park, 2016). According to Peterson (2019), a researcher uses the qualitative approach to gather data, make assumptions based on results, and understand the participants' lived experiences. I followed the norms of researchers and conducted interviews to collect the experiences of the target population. The researcher's purpose is to strive to understand the meaning of the respondents' answers, ask follow-up questions as necessary to get clarity, neutralize and eliminate biases when obtaining data, and receive the data ethically (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019). According to Bansal et al. (2018), qualitative researchers collect data and use inductive reasoning.

To avoid bias, the researcher must not become overly connected to the participants. According to Jorgenson et al. (2016), one way to mitigate bias is to use the same protocol during the interview process for all interviews. To avoid bias, I used the same protocol for every conversation and neutralized and eliminated discrimination by acting professionally. Lastly, to avoid bias, I kept the format consistent for each participant and maintained focus on my interview purpose.

Although I conducted my research in the same city where I live, the city is not where I am employed. Additionally, I have never worked in the QSRI, which makes my association with the topic limited. The lack of familiarity regarding the participants and the company may serve to minimize bias.

A researcher expects to develop a professional rapport with the participants and clearly and concisely present the interview questions (Park & Park, 2016). To help build a professional relationship with the participants, I provided background information regarding my research, including its significance and the associated positive social implications. I used my therapeutic, counseling, and leadership skills to develop a rapport with the participants and ensured their comfort before the interview began. I used a proactive approach regarding the conversation and provided information in advance for additional support. I clarified their understanding of the research process with the target population, including the opportunity to decline participation. I ensured all participants understood all aspects of the research, including the method for recording the conversation. The participants were informed that their involvement in the study will remain anonymous, including the company's name.

I adhered to all ethical protocols established in The Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I maintained ethical standards by operating within the fundamental principles identified in The Belmont Report, personifying ethical action, respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. As a researcher, I took the necessary steps to observe all ethical principles. I disclosed potential risks and benefits of the study, provided fairness in selecting participants, and clarified that they could choose not to contribute.

This study was a qualitative, single case study. The qualitative method is designed to capture a broad perspective on the topic of research (Yin, 2018). When researchers interview participants, they can ask follow up questions. During the interview process, the opportunity to ask follow up questions affords researchers the assurance of capturing the participants' views on their experiences. The qualitative approach is conducive to this study because the qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore the strategies QRSI managers use to retain employees.

Through the qualitative method, I conducted semistructured interviews and gathered applicable information regarding retention strategies. Participants shared their perceptions of their experiences in an individualized manner. In qualitative research, the interview process involves open-ended questions allowing for an open discussion and free exchange (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). I evaluated the information collected.

Participants

I gained access to the participants through my existing relationship with the owner. Qualitative researchers must identify the target population best suited to provide

answers to the research and interview questions. Researchers must consider the participants when conducting interviews to collect data (Raheim et al., 2016). The researcher must make certain assumptions relative to the participants, such as their willingness to share their experiences and their desire to be honest (Raheim et al., 2016). Background information regarding the study's purpose and outline was provided to the participants electronically to demonstrate transparency in advance of the interviews.

I interviewed the leadership team who work in two quick-service restaurants associated with the same chain. I interviewed the owner, general managers, hiring managers, and supervisors. This target population was best suited for this study as they directly impact the hiring and retention of employees. The target population was also best suited for this study because, according to the owner, the leaders have demonstrated success and experience a lower turnover rate than the national average.

According to McGrath et al. (2019), the researcher needs to prepare for the interview process by reading literature that supports the topic and connect the existing research to the research question. Furthermore, the meetings with the participants must be at times that are convenient for them and take place in a comfortable environment. Lastly, building rapport with the participants is key to ensure the richness of the data collected (McGrath et al., 2019). To establish a working relationship with the participants, I created a comfortable environment free of distractions. I maintained a professional demeanor, reviewed the consent form, and ensured the participants fully understood the process and goal. Furthermore, to establish trust and maintain professionalism, I provided reminders of the nature of the consent and the confidential nature of the information collected.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

I used the qualitative research method to explore the strategies QRSI managers use to retain employees. The qualitative approach is conducive to this study because the qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore the strategies QRSI managers use to retain employees. Through the qualitative method, I conducted semistructured interviews and gathered applicable information regarding the strategies QRSI managers use to retain employees. Participants shared their perceptions of their experiences in an individualized manner (see Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, the interview process involves open-ended questions allowing for an open discussion and free exchange (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). I evaluated and coded the information collected.

Research Design

The methods of research considered for this study were quantitative, qualitative, and mixed. Quantitative researchers test a theory or hypothesis, identify and isolate variables, and examine the significance of correlations or causation (Park & Park, 2016). The quantitative method is not appropriate for this study because I did not test a hypothesis, nor did I isolate variables, relationships, or group differences. The qualitative approach was the best fit for this study because questions and interviews to explore natural conditions in the field were the appropriate choice for discovery (Yin, 2018).

The mixed method mixes qualitative and quantitative data sets to make conclusions beyond one method (Guetterman et al., 2019). A mixed method is appropriate when researchers use qualitative and quantitative research methods to test a

hypothesis or theory. I did not test a theory and, therefore, did not use the quantitative approach, and consequently, the mixed method was not an appropriate fit. I used the qualitative method to explore the strategies QRSI managers use to retain employees.

The qualitative research designs I considered were multiple case, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative. The ethnography design is appropriate when researchers wish to explore a group (Yin, 2018). The current study was not intended to examine a group; therefore, the ethnographic design was not an appropriate fit. Researchers use the phenomenological design to gather the meaning of participants' experiences directly (Song, 2017). The phenomenological design was not suitable for the current study because I identified retention strategies from the managers and not the meaning of those strategies from the employees the managers supervise. Researchers use the narrative design for obtaining participants' stories regarding the historical nature of a phenomenon (Stride et al., 2017). The current study was not about gathering participants' personal stories; therefore, the narrative design was not applicable.

According to Harrison et al. (2017), a case study is a common qualitative research approach for exploring a phenomenon or event. The multiple case study is used when the researcher attempts to discover a complex phenomenon's intricacies using different cases or even businesses (Harrison et al., 2017). The single case study design was best suited for this study because the exploration of the phenomena of employee retention in the QRSI involves the leaders in the same organization. Lastly, qualitative research allows the researcher a broader perspective in data collection because of the dialogue with the target population (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018).

The research design for this study is a single-case study. According to Yin (2018), the case study design allows the researcher to investigate a phenomenon and provide information relative to the current setting. Additionally, the case study design is a useful tool when the goal is to explore the participants' lived experiences (Yin, 2018). Through the case study design, a researcher can establish objectivity, reliability, and generalizability.

It is up to the researcher to ensure data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurs when information begins to repeat itself and no new information surfaces (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I conducted comprehensive semistructured interviews, asked probing questions, and allowed for open discussion to obtain data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population for the current study was the store supervisors, general managers, hiring managers, team, shift leaders, and owner of a chain of two quick-service restaurants. According to Yin (2018), if participants are within the same setting, then a qualitative single case study is an appropriate design. The participants were selected justifiably so, for two reasons: they are directly involved in the hiring and retention of employees, and according to the owner, they have found success in their retention strategies. To take part in this study, the participants must have direct influence over the retention of employees in Company A.

In a qualitative study, the sample size is about the quality and richness of the data obtained and not necessarily focused on the number of participants (Hennink et al., 2017). In most cases, qualitative researchers rely on purposeful sampling and not a

probability (von Rijnsoever, 2017). According to von Rijnsoever (2017), the goal of the selection process is to select sources that will provide data saturation addressing the research question.

Purposeful sampling is appropriate for qualitative research. According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposeful sampling provides an opportunity, if applicable, for a smaller target population with a greater focus on the study's goals. Purposeful sampling is often used to gain accurate information regarding the research question and avoids randomization, thus strengthening the data collected (Campbell et al., 2020). Purposeful sampling is appropriate for this study because it maximizes the selection of qualified individuals. The criteria for eligibility and participation in this study were the individuals had to be in a management role and directly impact the hiring and retention of employees. The criterion ruled out non-supervisory personnel from the study.

I reached data saturation through semistructured interviews with supervisors, managers, the owner, team leaders, and shift leaders, along with my review of the documents specific to the stores hiring and retention efforts. I analyzed the data collected and evaluated for repetition. I continued to collect information until no new data surfaced.

Ethical Research

The qualifying participants received a packet containing pertinent information regarding the study. The packet contents included a letter inviting them to participate in the interview process and outlined the study's purpose and background. Once the participants agreed to participate, the informed consent was provided, and all participants

signed accordingly. According to Melville and Hincks (2016), there is an increase in the probability that participants will feel more comfortable when written information, such as questions, nature of the study, and their input value, is available in advance. The participants signified their understanding of the research and willingness to participate by signing the consent form.

According to Burr and Gibson (2018), informed consent provides education and details regarding the study. Participants have the right to be treated with respect and the freedom to choose not to participate (Burr & Gibson, 2018). For the current research, the consent outlined the participant's rights, risks, and benefits of participation and clarified confidentiality. Furthermore, according to The Belmont Report (United States Department of Health and Welfare, 1979), participants have the right to choose what they will do or not do. Additionally, for participants, the informed consent should address information regarding the study, a complete understanding of the events to take place, and the voluntary nature of their involvement (U.S. Department of Health and Welfare, 1979).

The participants understood that their participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time with no consequence. The participants understood that the conversation was recorded, and the recordings will remain in my possession for a minimum of 5 years to ensure confidentiality. The participants did not receive compensation, nor was there an incentive for their participation. The informed consent included language that clearly outlined that the participants were not eligible for compensation). The participants had access to the summary of their interview. The

review of the summary of the interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to review for accuracy.

I obtained permission from Walden University and the IRB (Institutional Review Board) before contacting the participants. The IRB approval number is *05-10-21-0674194* and was included in the Informed Consent. I recorded the interviews and transcribed the information into a Microsoft Word document for coding. The data is and, after 5 years, will be destroyed. The data is saved on my personal and password-protected laptop and backed up on a USB drive for safekeeping.

The coding of the data protects the identity of the participants. The coding is numeric, and the letter P precedes the number to signify each participant. Each participant has a designation as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9. A similar coding system exists for the company for which the participants work, and the company is Company A.

Data Collection Instruments

As a researcher, I am the primary collection instrument in this qualitative study. I conducted semistructured interviews for this qualitative single case study as a direct way to gather lived experiences. The advantage of the qualitative case study design is collecting data from several sources, such as interviews, raw data, and documents, and when possible unobtrusive observation (Yin, 2018). I recorded the interview sessions. By recording the interviews, the validity of the collection process remains intact. I secured the collection process's validity by recording the interview sessions.

To strengthen validity, I used member checking. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking includes returning the information gleaned from the interview to the participants. Member checking is a method of validation often supported by researchers (Birt et al., 2016).

According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data collection from different resources helps with the triangulation of data and supports a comprehensive grasp of the lived experiences. To triangulate data, I conducted semistructured interviews and reviewed supporting documentation regarding hiring practices, the training regimen for leaders, and other onboarding procedures. The interview process consisted of six open-ended questions designed to glean information relative to the participants' experiences (see Appendix).

Data Collection Technique

The interview questions align with the research question. The qualitative study requires the researcher to collect data through an interview process (Park & Park, 2016). I conducted semistructured interviews and followed the appropriate interview techniques. I scheduled the interviews in advance, and conducted them face-to-face, and in a common area or public space to maximize the participant's comfort. The participants had access to the interview questions in advance of the interview and had general knowledge of the study's background. I ensured that each interview lasted no more than 60 minutes but will be longer than 30 minutes. I continually observed and assessed the participants' comfort, considering body language and emotional response during the process.

To confirm the data collection is successful during the interview process, I minimized the opportunity for malfunctions by having two recording devices on hand and ensured that both were working correctly. I did not respond to answers while the interview process unfolded and kept my facial expressions neutral. I asked only one question at a time and confirmed that the participant was ready to move on before introducing the next question.

According to Park and Park (2016), the semistructured interview process allows the researcher to dig deeper into the participants' experiences because a dialogue can occur expounding on the subject. According to Cassell and Bishop (2019), another advantage of the qualitative research approach is that researchers can accumulate data to explore and make sense of the findings. Furthermore, researchers use coding to facilitate and help validate data interpretation (Cassell & Bishop, 2019). The qualitative approach allows for more discussion and a broader scope of data to be collected. A discussion encourages an exchange, leading to a more full and rich data set.

There are disadvantages to the semistructured interview process. A problem with the semistructured interview process is the inability to determine if the participants are honest with their responses (Yin, 2018). Another disadvantage of the semistructured interview process is the coordination of the interviews and ensuring the questions will maximize data collection (Bearman, 2019).

I used member checking to validate the accuracy of the reported data. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking allows the target population to review the interview transcripts' summary and ensure accuracy and intent. Additionally, member

checking can also include a follow-up interview allowing participants an opportunity to modify their responses (Birt et al., 2016). It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure compliance with institutional standards prior to any collection of data from participants.

I obtained permission from Walden University and the IRB (Institutional Review Board) before contacting the participants. I reached participants via email to inform of the study's purpose and review the interview process. I obtained a signed informed consent from all participants prior to beginning the interviews. I ensured the participants understood there is no compensation for their participation and that they may withdraw from involvement at any time.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers must create an efficient data organization system before initiating the collection (Yin, 2018). The alphanumeric assignment given to each participant will protect their identity. The letter P precedes the number to signify each participant. Each participant has a designation as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8. I have designated the organization's identity for which the participants work as Company A.

According to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), coding the data after collection is necessary to reduce a large amount of data into manageable themes for analysis. Furthermore, through the coding process, the data is easily organizable, accessible, reflects the participants' opinions, and strengthens validity (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). I recorded the interviews as identified earlier and transcribed the information into a Microsoft Word document for coding, as outlined in this paragraph. The data will be

kept confidential for at least 5 years before being destroyed. The data will be saved on my laptop and backed up on a USB drive for safekeeping.

Data Analysis

According to Lester et al. (2020), qualitative research is the researcher's opportunity to explore an in-depth view of a trend. Furthermore, analyzing data when using the qualitative approach must be thorough and in-depth. Lastly, thematic coding analysis is an acceptable manner that allows the researcher to analyze the data and discover emerging trends (Lester et al., 2020). I used thematic analysis to evaluate the data collected after first affixing codes to decipher trends.

According to Natow (2020), triangulation of data occurs using various procedural methods. Methods such as interviews, observation of activity specific to the research question, and the review of supporting documents provided are valuable qualitative tools researchers use to explore the participants' lived experiences. The current study's data collection method consisted of semistructured interviews with leadership, and the review of human resource-related documents.

I used the data from the interviews, employee training guides, handbooks, and other documents. For this single case study, I evaluated the data for common themes. I used explanation building, which, according to Yin (2018), involves the researcher's requirement to find a link between the various points of collection. The thematic coding approach helped me find the links.

To effectively evaluate the data for common themes, I used the manual thematic analysis approach. According to Roberts et al. (2019), the researcher needs to repetitively

review the data, including the documentation provided, and begin the coding process of any consistent themes that are apparent. In support of Roberts et al., Williams and Moser (2019) state that to have validity with data analysis, the data collection must be precise and repeatable. I followed a manual thematic analysis approach and prepared and organized the data captured through interviews and the review of documents provided. I condensed the data into themes and narratively present the data as discovered.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

In qualitative research, the researcher must secure reliability and validity to neutralize bias. According to Cypress (2017), validity, reliability, and truth are a concern for qualitative researchers, and the researcher is responsible for solidifying all three. There are questions regarding the trustworthiness and authenticity of the results reported by qualitative researchers (Cypress, 2017). Merriam (1995) suggests that when a study's findings are repetitive, the more substantial the results are, increasing the reliability.

Validity

Validity is the ability to trust the accuracy and truthfulness of the researcher (Cypress, 2017). The qualitative study must be consistent and hold the same nature for all participants (Cypress, 2017). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), to help ensure reliability and validity, the researcher needs to work toward data saturation. To reach data saturation, the interviews of participants need to include the same questions.

Dependability

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), dependability means consistency and aligning the analysis process with acceptable practices. To ensure dependability, I used member checking to secure the accuracy of the reported data. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking allows the target population to review the interview transcripts' summary and ensure accuracy and intent. Additionally, member checking can also include a follow-up interview allowing participants an opportunity to modify their responses (Birt et al., 2016). The member checking process enables researchers to consider the necessity to pursue follow up information and solidify a rich data set.

Credibility

Member checking is another tool to support credibility in qualitative research (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Furthermore, extended time with the participants, as well as triangulation, will strengthen credibility. Transcript review associated with member checking will enhance the data's credibility because it serves as another method to clarify answers and information provided (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Furthermore, to strengthen the data's credibility in this study, I used multiple sources and methods of collection. The semistructured interviews and document review process will strengthen the accuracy of the data collected.

Transferability

According to Moon et al. (2016), transferability is the ability of the results obtained by a researcher to be relevant in other settings. Furthermore, researchers are responsible for demonstrating how findings are transferable to other organizations and

even industries. Lastly, due to the lack of ability to generalize qualitative research, it falls upon the researcher to demonstrate transferability (Moon et al., 2016). The suggestions by Moon et al. align with the suggestions by Kalu and Bwalya (2017) as both indicated that for qualitative research to contribute to scientific society, the results must be generalizable. Furthermore, qualitative research focuses on the depth of the data and the ability for the findings to transfer to other situations (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). This research may transfer practically to any environment as I gathered data on employee retention strategies. The strategies discovered may be useful across many disciplines.

Confirmability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability occurs when the participants and not the researcher shape the findings. The views of Lincoln and Guba align with the views of Korstjens and Moser (2018) because they both suggested that confirmability is related to the researcher's ability to remain neutral. Lastly, the data interpretation must be free of the researcher's preferences, personal views, and preconceived notions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Using thematic coding and remaining professional, I ensured confirmability and avoided assumptions until I reviewed all data. Furthermore, the organizational impact of employee retention strategies will translate to the QSRI and many other disciplines. Lastly, my lack of experience or exposure in the QSRI will strengthen my ability to remain neutral.

Transition and Summary

In section 2, I explained the methodology and design for the current study based on the phenomenon of the strategies QRSI managers use to retain employees. I used a qualitative single case study to explore the strategies QRSI managers use to retain employees. In Section 2, I provided the data collection instruments, methods for analyzing the data, the target population, and guidelines for ethical research. I shared the implications for social change, the roles in business practices, and the overall positive effects of employee retention.

I completed a review of the existing literature on the essential topics of leadership, leadership traits, transformational leadership, the four components therein, opposition to transformational leadership, and the effect of leadership on employee retention. The previous researchers have presented information on transformational leadership and the positive influence on employee retention. Previous researchers have also explored and examined the effect of transformational leadership on employee retention in several different industries, such as the QSRI, banking, information technology, construction, and other professional environments. I report the findings of this study in Section Three.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the employee retention strategies used by managers in the QSRI. The data collected were a result of semistructured interviews with leaders of a quick-service restaurant in Northern Illinois. According to the participants, the data revealed four effective strategies for retaining employees in the QSRI. The four themes were creating a family-friendly environment, communication, knowledge sharing and training, and employee recognition and empowerment. The findings suggested that leaders directly affect employee retention, and this study revealed the importance of the relationship between leaders and followers.

The participants have demonstrated the use of effective strategies to retain employees. I used the purposeful sampling strategy to select eight leaders in a quick-service restaurant located in Northern Illinois. The participants are directly involved in the retention of the employees and are knowledgeable about the employee retention strategies that are most effective. All participants have been with the same restaurant for a minimum of 5 years. Of the participants, their years of service consist of 40, 25, 20, 12, 20, 5, 8, and 8, respectively. All participants met the criteria of being in a leadership position and having influence regarding employee retention. Regarding the theme of creating a family-friendly environment, the participants emphasized the positive effect of creating an atmosphere in which employees feel welcome, supported, and valued. The participants indicated that they treat employees like family and take a genuine interest in their hobbies and interests outside of work.

The theme of communication repeated throughout the interviews as the participants expressed their commitment to making sure the employees understand the expectations. The expectations are made clear throughout the training process and reviewed in preparation for each shift. The participants indicated that communication is vital during the busy times of the shift, as it is crucial to make sure employees are getting the support, they need.

The theme of knowledge sharing and training repeated itself as participants stated that they attempt to connect the employee's work to contribute to the greater good and restaurant performance. Furthermore, the participants shared that they develop the training regimen for employees based on how the employee learns.

Lastly, the theme of employee recognition and empowerment repeated itself through the discussions with the participants. The participants suggested that another key to employee retention is to listen to the employees regarding ideas, training opportunities, or changes in processes. Furthermore, the participants intimated that they make every effort to recognize the employees for solid work performance and accomplishments outside of work, such as graduations, birthdays, and other important events.

In Section 3, I present the findings of the data collected. I analyzed the results and the relationship to the conceptual framework of TL as developed by Bass (1985). Lastly, I provide evidence to support the information presented in the literature review and how the findings support professional practice.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question for this study was the following: What strategies do QSRI managers use to retain employees? The conceptual framework for this study is the TL theory, as developed by Bass (1985). I used Bass's TL theory to analyze what leadership strategies were most effective in retaining employees. To answer the research question, I interviewed eight leaders working in a quick-service restaurant who have demonstrated successful retention of employees. I used an alpha-numeric designation for all participants and indicated P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8. To ensure the organization's anonymity, I used the designation of Company A. To ensure triangulation of data, I was allowed access to company documents. The documents included the interview and hiring process, the training plan for employees, the training videos employees are assigned to watch upon hire, and the strategies used in the scheduling of employees.

Documents Reviewed

The documents provided for review by Company A for this study included the hiring process, the training regimen for employees, a review of the training videos used, and the employee scheduling system. Other documents and procedures included the ongoing training system for all employees. In the assessment of the documents, it was clear that the leadership of Company A is willing to adjust the training regimen based on the needs of the employees. The leaders attempt to use flexibility when scheduling shifts and always try to accommodate day-off requests. A few leaders suggested that a rotating

weekend schedule would support employee retention even further, but a few obstacles exist with the rotation plan at this time.

The hiring process is consistent and includes more than one interview. The leaders of Company A conduct the interviews in the restaurant. The leaders responsible for hiring communicate with the existing employees and consider their feedback before selecting. Each leader develops an individualized training plan, incorporates support from existing high-performing employees, and makes every effort to connect the new hire to the team as quickly as possible.

Participant Background

In conducting the semistructured interviews, I followed the Belmont Principles for the ethical treatment of human subjects. The participants in this study were all leaders in Company A who influence employee retention. The participants have been in their leadership role for Company A from 5 to 40 years. Of the participants, the longest employee was P1 with 40 years of experience, and the least was P6 with 5 years (see Table 2).

Table 2

Participant Years of Service With Company A

Participants	Years of service
P1	40
P2	25
P3	20
P4	12

P5	20
P6	5
P7	8
P8	8

Themes

For new researchers coding data, Saldana (2021) suggested the use of a generic system. I used first and second-cycle coding based on Saldana. Initially, I pre-coded the data and used the records to organize information for analysis. I used member checking to ensure the summary of the interview was accurate. After printing out the summarizations of the interview data, I followed Saldana's suggestion to circle keywords and phrases. According to Saldana, In Vivo coding focuses on the voice of the participant. Using In Vivo Coding, I split the information and keywords in the order they appeared. I then went back through the transcripts. Initially, I listed the keywords or phrases as they arose; with the second cycle focused coding, I placed the codes in alphabetical order to help further organize the data. The In Vivo Coding process allowed me to assemble the data in groups based on similarities of the initial coding. Once in their respective groups, I re-evaluated the accuracy of each assigned group to discern if a code belongs in more than one group. I placed the categorical codes in order of significance based on the reports from the participants.

I identified the following four themes: (a) a family-friendly work environment, (b) communication, (c) knowledge sharing and training, and (d) employee recognition and

empowerment. In the following section, I evaluate these themes and how they relate to the conceptual framework of TL.

Theme 1: Family-Friendly Work Environment

The first theme that emerged from the participants in this study was the leaders' commitment to creating a family-friendly work environment. According to Yusliza et al. (2021), a supportive environment as perceived by the employees is conducive to employee retention. Yusliza et al. found that when leaders create an atmosphere in which employees feel supported, the workforce performed and tended to stay with the organization. A priority made clear from each leader who participated in the current study was the importance of creating a family-friendly work environment. All eight participants indicated they treat the employees as a person first and an employee second. The participants identified the importance of creating an atmosphere that is like that of family. "I work mainly with teenagers on my shift, and I treat them like my own children," said P4. "As a matter of fact, my daughter works here, so it is family," added P4. In this study, the behavior of the leaders to create an atmosphere of support aligns with the findings from work by Yusliza et al. in that the employees tend to stay with an organization where they feel supported by leadership.

All participants indicated they treat the employees as their own family and make them feel comfortable. "I try to get to know what they are like outside of work, their interests, their family, and what they like to do," said P5. "I bought a PS4 game for one employee because I know he is a gamer, and so am I, so I bought one for him and one for me, it gives us something to talk about and another topic to connect over," added P5.

Additionally, P8 stated that they refer to those they work with as their sister or nephew, and “sometimes I will check in with my sister, well she is not my actual sister, but I treat her like I treat my sister,” said P8. Moreover, P8 added, “I was training an employee on how to build certain sandwiches and told him he reminds me of my nephew, and I have started calling him my nephew ever since, because of that he has shared more with me and has opened up at work.”

The participants revealed that they take the time to understand how the individuals work, their strengths and weaknesses, and how best they learn. They stated they try to build a training plan that fits the employee and covers the different ways people learn, such as hands-on experience, watching videos, reading about a procedure, and watching others complete a task before attempting it. All eight participants stated that the respect, individualization, and family friendly work environment support employee retention. Furthermore, the leaders, in this study, believe that the employees are more likely to perform all tasks as assigned if they feel comfortable and supported in the work environment.

In summary, the participants expressed the need to create an atmosphere of comfort, support, and familiarity. An atmosphere of comfort and support helps the employee look forward to coming to work each day knowing their leaders care. According to Naz et al. (2020), leaders should seek to create a supportive work environment. The study conducted by Naz et al. took place in the fast-food industry. There was a positive correlation between a supportive work environment and the employee’s desire to stay with an organization (Naz et al., 2020).

Theme 2: Communication

The second theme that emerged from the participants was communication. According to Chakravarti and Charkraborty (2020), employee retention is positively affected when leaders actively listen to the employees. Active listening includes communication strategies that consider the life of the followers outside of work. Demonstrating communication through active listening supports a positive work environment and allows for a connection between leaders and the workforce. Furthermore, Chakravarti and Charkraborty suggested that when leaders actively listen and communicate, a congruent relationship forms between leadership and the workforce, further supporting employee retention.

Each participant referenced the importance of touching base with the employees regarding the work routine and ensuring a clear shift plan. The participants indicated the significance of giving the employees the chance to ask questions, provide feedback, and be a part of the process. As described by the participants, the communication with the employees includes clarity of direction, assigned tasks, status checks on their life outside of work, and soliciting feedback as applicable. Furthermore, the participants in this study emphasized the importance of connecting with the employees personally.

According to P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8, they like what they called “check-in” with the employees several times throughout the shift, especially before the busy time begins. Moreover, P1, P2, and P3 suggested that the “check-in” allowed the workers to share their opinion regarding the process or protocol. According to P8, it also allows the employee to “ask questions and demonstrate they understand their assigned tasks when it

gets busy, and the line of cars wraps around the parking lot.” The leaders all believed that communication and follow-up are keys to helping the employee get familiar and comfortable with the tasks. The participants all shared how, for each shift, they “prepare” the crew for what they know to be busy times. The lunch and dinner rush require communication to be at its best, and the participants anticipate that need.

In summary, the participants believe it is essential to communicate with the employees about their tasks and who they are as individuals. The participants took pride in knowing something about each employee personally and believed the relationship is more significant than the job. According to Tian et al. (2020), leaders who listen to the employees and use the feedback to enhance their decisions and behavior experience improved employee retention. The work by Tian et al. aligns with the behavior and the participants’ decisions in this study because the leaders try to listen, communicate, and adjust training or other protocols based on feedback from the workforce. The positive effect on employee retention and performance can be found in work by Kalogiannidis (2020).

According to Kalogiannidis (2020), upward communication allows the employees to share ideas, express concerns, and seek a better way. Moreover, open two-way communication can build trust with the workforce, which supports employee retention. The work by Kalogiannidis aligns with Tian et al. (2020) in that both sets of researchers emphasize the positive effect of communication on employee retention and performance. Additionally, the current study also aligns with Tian et al. and Kalogiannidis, as the responses by the participants highlight the importance of communication.

Theme 3: Knowledge Sharing/Training

The third theme that emerged was knowledge sharing and training. The participants emphasized the training of employees as a part of knowledge sharing. According to Ratan et al. (2020), knowledge sharing is essential to helping the employees feel they are a part of the organization on a more significant level; it allows for communication and the exchange of ideas. Therefore, knowledge sharing supports employee retention and job satisfaction (Ratan et al., 2020). The current study uncovered similar themes relative to the positive effect of knowledge sharing and training.

The participants in the current study shared their view of the importance of making sure the employees understand the processes, pressures, routines, and protocols associated with the different jobs in the restaurant. Additionally, P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P8 stated that knowledge sharing and training must go beyond the standard operating procedures and include the bigger picture. According to the participants, the bigger picture means how the employees' work affects their co-workers, customer service, and the organization. According to P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, and P8, how the employees' work fits into the organization makes a difference in connecting to others and their performance. The participants also shared that they do not begin introducing the employee's work related to the big picture in the first week. Further evidence of the positive effect of knowledge sharing and the big picture on retention and job satisfaction, as identified by Ratan et al. (2020), is found in work by Singh et al. (2021).

According to Singh et al. (2021), organizations need to create a social environment that supports knowledge sharing from the leaders and employees. Moreover,

Singh et al. (2021) indicated that sharing knowledge amongst employees positively affects customer service and supported learning amongst all employees. The researchers in work by Singh et al. (2021) found a positive relationship between the open process of knowledge sharing and innovation from the workforce. The work by Singh et al. (2021), and Ratan et al. (2020), connect to this study because the leaders in the current study expressed the importance of ensuring the workforce understands their duties and the impact on the bigger picture.

According to P8, "I try to learn how each employee works as quickly as possible by talking to them and observing." Additionally, P7 stated, "I think it is important to learn how they learn and then use that information to share ways to complete the required tasks." Among the participants, P1, P4, P5, P7, and P8 stated that providing practical hands-on training in conjunction with how best the employee absorbs information maximizes their confidence and skills while lowering their anxiety. Many participants said they try to ascertain what the employees need relative to the job tasks and personally. Moreover, P3, P4, and P6 indicated that they would use other employees to help train, and the leaders recognize that their style might not be the best for everyone. More specifically, P4 indicated that his approach was to connect employees with experienced employees who are good at specific tasks and "have the employee shadow that person" to learn specific duties.

In summary, the knowledge sharing and training were very prominent in this study's participants' minds. Each leader in this study strongly supported the notion of a precise training regimen for employees and connecting the work to the larger picture.

According to the participants, sometimes, the larger picture meant the effect of other employees during a shift. In support of the notion that knowledge sharing is an effective tool to retain employees, strengthen the work environment, and ensure employees understand the expectations is the work by Swanson et al. (2020).

In work by Swanson et al. (2020), the researchers suggested that sharing knowledge is essential to obtaining organizational productivity. Furthermore, successful organizations create a vehicle where the workforce can learn from each other, resulting in skills, training, and valuable information shared openly. Lastly, according to Swanson et al. (2020), sharing knowledge supports trust and creates employee organizational commitment. The work by Swanson et al. (2020) connects to Singh et al. (2021). Both sets of researchers agreed that knowledge sharing, and the exchange of information are most conducive to employee retention. Additionally, the information gleaned from the current study found support in the positive effect of knowledge sharing and knowledge exchange in the context of training.

In summary, the participants in the current study identified the positive effect of knowledge sharing as it relates to making sure the employees understand the big picture. The information collected in this study aligns with research by Singh et al. (2021) and Swanson et al. (2020). A positive environment was created in all three instances when leaders established an atmosphere that allows for information to be shared with all employees. Furthermore, it was clear that the participants dedicate time to ensuring the employees understand their job duties and that the training regimen focuses on individuality. All participants believed that their hands-on approach to training, the

sharing of knowledge, and how it relates to the big picture are significant factors that positively affect employee retention.

Theme 4: Employee Recognition and Empowerment

The final theme that emerged from the participants was employee recognition and empowerment. The participants shared their approach to empowering the employees to be involved in some of the decisions regarding the training of employees, customer service ideas, and other topics that might maximize efficiencies. Furthermore, P1, P2, P3, P5, and P8 stated they like to listen to the employees as they work or train others and often consider suggestions the workforce makes. Specifically, P5 noted that he had changed processes in the past when employees have suggested better ways to accomplish job related tasks.

According to P5, "I prefer to do the hands-on training of employees, and they see how it works, I see they see what is going on, and we both see together that this is how it works, and this is how it does not work. We kind of figure it out together." The employees "might see something or feel something about it, and once you think about it, you go, wow, that is a better idea than the company has," said P5. The participants shared the common theme of recognizing the employees for their hard work, creative solutions, customer service, and other ways they have gone above and beyond. Additionally, P1, P2, P3, P5, and P8 stated they provide recognition to employees for non-work-related events, such as birthdays, graduations, family events, and other personal accomplishments. The participants all agreed they see the employee as a person first and a worker second, and they can tell the positive impact of recognizing even the tiny things

in an employee's life. The participants reported seeing a difference in the employees when they are recognized for good work performance and significant events outside of work. Furthermore, P4, P5, P6, and P8 all reported a notable difference amongst employees when the leaders empower them to make decisions and use their best judgment.

Additional support of the positive effects of empowerment and employee recognition is also in work by Steiner et al. (2020). In work by Steiner et al. (2020), the researchers stated that employees at a global energy business reported a more substantial organizational commitment when the leaders were genuinely concerned for their welfare. Furthermore, the employees reported feeling a stronger sense of loyalty when recognized for their work. The work by Steiner et al. (2020) and the current study connect as in both cases, the researchers found a positive connection between empowerment and recognition and employee commitment. The participants in the present study suggested that their recognition of employees and their willingness to allow the employees a say strongly contribute to the retention of employees. Further support of the importance of recognizing employees and the positive effect on employee retention exists in work by Sharma and Tomar (2020).

In work by Sharma and Tomar (2020), the researchers found a positive correlation between retention and employee recognition. Leaders of organizations need to implement a strategy to reward and recognize employees for their work performance, which profoundly affects the individual and the other employees. In work by Sharma and Tomar (2020), the researchers found that employees desire recognition for their work and that

recognition motivates employees. Furthermore, the employees strive to perform at a high level and seek new challenges (Sharma & Tomar, 2020). The current study connects to the work by Sharma and Tomar, and Steiner et al. (2020) because in all three studies, the researchers found employee retention and loyalty were higher when leaders overtly recognized the employee for their work and were allowed some level of independence. Lastly, Malik et al. (2020) further supports the positive effect of employee empowerment and employee retention.

In work by Malik et al. (2020), the researchers found that employee empowerment had a strong and positive effect on employee retention. According to Malik et al. (2020), employee retention increases when employees believe they are supported and valued by their leaders. Lastly, there is a connection between the current study, the work by Steiner et al. (2020), Sharma and Tomar (2020), and Malik et al. (2020) because all researchers found a positive association between empowerment, employee recognition, and employee retention.

In summary, several studies have found evidence demonstrating an increase in employee retention when organizational leaders establish an atmosphere of support, empowerment, and a vehicle to recognize the workforce for their performance. Furthermore, leaders need to develop a process where employees can share their opinions and discuss alternative approaches to improve systems and processes. Lastly, the participants in the current study believe in the power of recognition and listening to the employee and indicated that is why people stay with Company A.

The Connection to Transformational Leadership

According to Bass (1985), the four components of transformational leadership are individual consideration, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation. The emerging themes uncovered in the current study link to three of the four components of transformational leadership. The emerging themes from the present study link to individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.

Family-Friendly Work Environment and Communication: Individualized Consideration

The first two common themes: theme one, family work environment, and theme two, communication, align with individualized consideration because the leaders treat the workforce as people first and employees second. According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders provide individualized consideration to their employees and develop a relationship conducive to retention. The commitment of the leadership of Company A to get to know the employees on a personal level and treat them like family aligns with individualized consideration because the leaders take time to develop a relationship with the employees. All participants shared their belief that the family atmosphere and developing a relationship with the employees are why they want to return to work each day. The leaders in this study indicated they want to know the employees' strengths, weaknesses, and the best way they learn and use the information to individualize their training regimen. The participants' behavior in this study is reflective of observations made by Avolio and Bass (1995). According to Avolio and Bass (1995), leaders must understand the nature of those they lead and use that knowledge to

formulate a plan for their growth and professional development. Furthermore, the actions of the leaders in the current study align with the observations made by Avolio and Bass (1995) because the additional personal support from leaders to the workforce encourages a direct approach to employee development.

The willingness of the leaders to listen to the employees and clear communication regarding processes or training allows a relationship to form based on mutual respect. The participants shared the importance of knowing the employee's interests, passions, and work mannerisms, which helps individualize the communications strategy. The participants shared the importance of ongoing communication with the employees and that it is crucial to "check in" with the employees.

The individualized consideration demonstrated by the participants in this study aligns with observations made by Jong and Ford (2020). According to Jong and Ford (2020), individualized consideration means that followers feel supported and valued by their leaders, resulting in a sense of autonomy and loyalty. Furthermore, leaders can get followers to perform by developing a positive working relationship involving communication and inclusion. According to Jong and Ford (2020), individual consideration helps cultivate a positive relationship between leaders and followers. The relationship results from the perception from followers that leaders recognize the followers as people first and employees second. When leaders establish a structure and allow employees autonomy to complete job duties, followers respond positively to the trust demonstrated by the leaders (Jong & Ford, 2020).

Knowledge Sharing and Training: Idealized Influence

The third common theme: knowledge sharing and training aligns with idealized influence. The participants in the current study intimated that they make sure the employees understand the expectations and develop a training plan individualized to the person. The participants in the present study emphasized the importance of connecting the day-to-day work of the employees to the larger picture. According to Bass (1985), idealized influence is the idea that leaders are respected, admired, and trusted role models who put the needs of the employees before their personal goals. Furthermore, Yin et al. (2020), and Shafi et al. (2019), suggested that idealized influence is when leaders inspire the workforce to push the organization toward a common goal. The choice of the participants to find out how the employees function, learn, and what is essential to them outside of work, aligns with the idealized influence. Furthermore, idealized influence is present through the leaders' desire, in this study, to learn what is significant to the employees, thereby allowing them to design a specific training regimen that considers the strengths of the employees.

The leaders in the current study ensure the employees have what they need and are willing to help them firsthand before completing other responsibilities. The participants in this study dedicate themselves to the employee's comfort, knowledge, and accurate execution of job duties. Instead of the leaders determining that one training approach fits all employees, the participants in this study attempt to tailor the knowledge shared and training to accommodate the employee's needs. The careful approach to the training of employees by the participants in this study aligns with Langat et al. (2019).

In the work by Langat et al. (2019) and the current study, the researchers found a positive connection between knowledge sharing, including training, with employee retention. According to Langat et al., transformational leaders who put the needs of the employees ahead of their own, experience improved job performance from followers. All participants in the current study suggested that sharing knowledge, focused training, and putting the needs of the employees first contributes to retention. According to the participants, many employees have reported feeling supported by leadership and believing the leaders want all employees to succeed.

Employee Recognition and Empowerment: Inspirational Motivation

The fourth common theme: employee recognition and empowerment, aligns with the inspirational motivation component of transformational leadership. The participants in the current study emphasized the importance of allowing the employees a voice when it comes to the training approach or other opportunities to improve processes. The participants also shared their strong commitment to recognizing employees for their work performance and significant life events. The information gleaned from the current study aligns with the observations made by Bass (1985), and further support exists in work by Harika and Bindu (2020).

A connection exists between the current study, the work by Harika and Bindu (2020), Hawkes et al. (2017), and Bass's (1985) inspirational motivation; in all cases, the researchers suggested that employee retention is higher when employees feel valued. The participants in this study indicated that the recognition of employees and willingness to listen contributes to employee retention. The attempts of the leaders in this study to

connect the work of the employees to the larger picture, individualize the training that best fits each employee, and ensure the employee knows their opinion matters relates to inspirational motivation.

According to Bass (1985), inspirational motivation is when leaders help followers recognize their connection to the organization's bigger picture. The current study connects with inspirational motivation as identified by Bass (1985), in that the leaders of Company A empower, support, and have systems in place to recognize the employees. The participants shared that they attempt to connect the employees' work with how it affects other employees, the food quality, and customer service. In work by Hawkes et al. (2017), the researchers suggested that employee retention partly stems from the leader's willingness to empower the workforce to put solutions into action. Furthermore, empowerment and recognition motivate the workforce to perform and connect them to leaders (Hawkes et al., 2017). According to Hawkes et al., followers are more likely to stay with an organization when they feel connected to their leaders. The participants' behavior in this study to recognize and empower the employees provides the foundation for a positive bond to form.

Applications to Professional Practice

The specific business problem for the current study is that some QSRI managers lack effective strategies to retain employees. The conceptual framework for this study was Bass's TL (1985). I applied the principles of TL to explore the following overarching research question: What strategies do QSRI managers use to retain employees? Organizational leaders can use the findings from this study to strengthen employee

retention strategies, therefore improving profitability. The results suggest that business leaders should take the necessary steps to implement the findings of this study. The current study revealed four significant themes that can benefit organizations and improve employee retention. The four themes were:

- A family-friendly work environment
- Communication
- Knowledge sharing and training
- Employee recognition and empowerment

The information gleaned from this study applies to professional practice because leaders in the QSRI can adopt the strategies revealed to reduce employee turnover in their organizations. For example, the leaders in Company A are intentional about creating a family-friendly work environment that helps the employees feel supported and comfortable. Business leaders need to create an environment that is supportive of their employees and allows for a relationship to develop between the leaders and followers. According to Yusliza et al. (2020), a supportive work environment is conducive to employee retention because the employees feel valued by the leaders. When employees feel valued, a stronger relationship with the leaders may exist, supporting employee retention and performance. Moreover, Yusliza et al. (2020) found a positive connection between leaders who support their employees, and employee retention. The participants in this study support the idea of developing a relationship with the employees which contributes to their comfort. In the current study, the participants suggested that when employees feel supported by leadership and can share their thoughts and ideas, they feel a

stronger organizational connection; therefore, business leaders need to have such strategies.

According to Hawkes et al. (2017), when business leaders take the time to develop a relationship with their workforce, the employees are more engaged, feel supported, and connected to the organization. An environment that supports the employees through empowerment and active listening is conducive to job satisfaction and employee retention (Hawkes et al., 2017). The leaders in Company A create a supportive work environment by developing a relationship with the employees and getting to know them as individuals. The leaders of Company A are committed to the employee as a person first and an employee second. The development of a relationship with the leaders creates a family-friendly work environment that involves open communication.

Business leaders also need to create a system conducive to communication. The communication needs to be two-way, as revealed in the current study because it ensures that the workforce feels trusted and has the information they need to complete their tasks. The communication strategy used by the participants in the current study includes opportunities for employees to share their ideas for improvements or other changes. Business leaders need to understand that employees need to have a voice and feel that their opinion matters. According to Kalogiannidis (2020), business communication has a positive effect on employee performance. The work by Kalogiannidis suggested that ongoing communication with the organization allows the workforce to share ideas and other forms of knowledge which advances the skill set of everyone. The constant communication from leaders demonstrates a commitment to transparency which

improves the organizational commitment from employees. The participants in the current study provide all necessary information to the workforce regarding corporate structure and direction, and they suggested that this is another reason why employees stay. Lastly, by creating a communication platform that considers the individual, the leaders in this study form a social component of the work culture.

Business leaders in the QSRI should also develop a work environment that involves information sharing and individualized training. According to the participants in the current study, the employees feel a stronger organizational connection when the leaders use a system to ensure the employees understand the expectations and specific job tasks. Furthermore, the leaders in this study clarify to the employees how their work contributes to the big picture. The behavior of the leaders in the current research suggests that business leaders need to develop a vehicle that focuses on sharing organizational knowledge on both the macro and micro levels. According to the participants in this study, when business leaders share organizational details, it helps build trust and engage employees to work toward a common goal. According to the participants in the current study, the employees responded positively to being trusted with information that only the leaders may know.

Business leaders need to adopt an individualized training regimen that considers the way the employee learns. According to the participants in this study, the employees appreciate and retain information better when the training regimen aligns with their learning style. A one size fits all training routine may not be the most effective way for employees to retain pertinent information about their job. Instead, organizational leaders

need to allow flexibility in the training process and adjust as necessary. According to Akdere and Egan (2020), transformational leaders create a work culture that supports employee performance, development, and learning. Furthermore, Akdere and Egan (2020) suggested that employee job satisfaction is higher through transformational leadership and the leaders' connection to the workforce. Similarly, when business leaders individualize the training approach, it demonstrates care and communicates the support of the employees. Moreover, customer satisfaction was higher in organizations that consider the development and support of the employee (Akdere & Egan, 2020).

Business leaders need to create employee recognition strategies to demonstrate their support of the workforce. According to the participants in the current study, the recognition strategies need to go beyond work performance. The participants identified the importance of recognizing life events for the employees, birthdays, graduations, and accomplishments. The participants also suggested that the verbal recognition of a job well done is sometimes more powerful than a gift card or other forms of recognition. According to Malik et al. (2020), employees who feel supported and connected to their leaders are more likely to stay with an organization. Furthermore, Malik et al. (2020) suggested that through employee recognition efforts, the employees may feel supported by their supervisors and therefore become more willing to perform. The work by Malik et al. (2020) and the current study's findings suggest that business leaders develop a mechanism of recognition in a significant manner to the employees.

According to the participants, the strategies used to recognize the employees should go beyond work performance and include life events. The participants emphasized

that they are always looking for ways to improve their recognition strategies because they know they need employees with skills and knowledge to make the restaurant successful. The participants are allowed flexibility in recognizing employees, including gift cards, bonuses, sometimes raises, gifts, verbal recognition, and other overt methods. The participants suggested that the employees appreciate the acknowledgment and the fact that the leaders are willing to take the time to recognize them not only for their work performance but also life events unrelated to work.

Business leaders who implement strategies that involve employee recognition, empowerment, and motivation of employees also support employee retention. The implementation of employee recognition and empowerment strategies demonstrates to the workforce that they are valued. According to Kurdi et al. (2020), employees want to feel economic and psychological security at work. Both financial and psychological security contribute to employee retention (Kurdi et al., 2020).

Implications for Social Change

The information uncovered in the current study is valuable to successful employee retention strategies in the QSRI and can lead to positive social change. The information revealed might enable organizations to retain a strong workforce and thereby reducing costly voluntary turnover. The retention of employees improves the profitability of an organization and may also reduce unemployment rates in the community, which strengthens the local economy. Further support of the positive social implications of employee retention is found in work by Kim et al. (2020). Business leaders who overtly support the local community and ethically conduct business have strong employee

support, which contributes to retention (Kim et al., 2020). The stronger the organizational support from the employees, the more significant the impact on retention and, therefore, the community.

The implications for social change involve the positive effect of a steady income for employees and their families, strengthening the community's support by increasing traffic to local businesses. Furthermore, employee retention reduces money spent on training, hiring, and recruiting employees. The reduction in added expenses may enable business leaders to support community events, fundraising efforts of local businesses and create lasting relationships with other entities in the community. The information gleaned from this study may contribute to social change because satisfied employees may choose to purchase property and otherwise support local businesses in Northern Illinois.

Recommendations for Action

Business leaders need strategies to retain their employees because they are the most valuable assets to any organization. According to Chiat and Panik (201), employee turnover adversely affects organizational profitability due to the increased cost of replacing employees. The results of this study may provide value to leaders of quick-service restaurants who lack effective strategies to retain employees. The QSRI employed more than 5.1 million workers, including supervisors, cooks, and line workers, in 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

If business leaders in the QSRI implement the retention strategies found in the current study, they could improve employee retention in their organizations. Based on the themes revealed in this study, I would make four recommendations for business leaders

to maximize employee retention efforts in their organizations. The recommendations align with the findings and provide an opportunity for leaders in the QSRI to strengthen profitability through employee retention strategies.

Recommendation 1

It is imperative that business leaders create a family-friendly atmosphere conducive to growth and considers the individual. The consideration of the individual should not only involve recognition strategies for work performance but also include a genuine attempt to recognize personal milestones. According to Kwon et al. (2019), leaders who actively listen, mentor, and guide followers experience improved employee retention and job satisfaction. Furthermore, Kwon et al. (2019) suggested that supportive actions by leaders, such as mentoring employees regarding their goals, communication that goes beyond work performance and duties, and a genuine interest in employees as people, serves to help employees manage work-related stress and focus on solutions. An atmosphere that is supportive of the employees cultivates organizational commitment and strength.

Recommendation 2

Business leaders need to develop a knowledge-sharing platform. According to Ratan (2020), knowledge sharing positively affects employee retention and maximizes job satisfaction. The knowledge-sharing platform should include information about the company and how the employee's work connects to the bigger picture. Providing the company background is a strategy to help employees connect with the organization and

offer them the bigger picture. Furthermore, employees will have a better understanding of how they fit into the organizational mission and vision.

Recommendation 3

Business leaders need to develop and implement a comprehensive and individualized training regimen. The training needs to consider the way the employee learns best and involve a rotation of activities specific to their job duties. Researchers such as Ahn and Huang (2020) found a positive correlation between general and specific training of employees and employee retention. The general training approach included internet training and communication and general practices in an organization; the specific training had on-the-job training, job rotation, career planning, and mentoring (Ahn & Huang, 2020). By providing both the general and specific training approaches, leaders can individualize the training and ensure the employee obtains the necessary information. The specific training of employees can also lay the groundwork for future leaders in the organization. Individualizing the training allows the leaders to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the employee and develop plans to help the employee improve both.

Recommendation 4

Business leaders need to establish an opportunity for open two-way communication with employees. The leaders in this study emphasized the importance of talking to the employees and remaining open to their feedback. According to Tian et al. (2020), the researchers improved employee retention when leaders communicated responsibilities. Furthermore, leaders who listen to the workforce and use the feedback to shape their own decisions and behavior experience improved employee retention. By

establishing a two-way communication system, the organizational leaders will have better access to input from the employees and can implement ideas. Furthermore, corporate leaders can utilize the workforce as a resource to develop and implement strategies together to enhance employee engagement. Lastly, leaders need to use the communication strategy to support the employees in their personal and professional goals (Tian et al., 2020).

Recommendations for Further Research

Leaders in the QSRI need to find better ways to retain their employees. Recommendations for further research specific to the QSRI include expanding similar studies to a different geographical location. I recommend that researchers expand the analysis to include restaurants in the QSRI outside of Northern Illinois.

It would be equally valuable to consider the market size when exploring employee retention strategies. Employee retention strategies may vary in a region populated differently, so choosing a more minor or more extensive market may produce valuable results. I recommend that researchers explore employee retention strategies in a more prominent and smaller market in the QSRI.

This study involved only the perspective of the leaders regarding employee retention strategies; therefore, I recommend researchers obtain the view of the employees to strengthen support and uncover more retention strategies. Expanding the study to include the employee's perspective would strengthen the existing research and add new techniques to explore.

Lastly, I would recommend that researchers explore the strategies used to retain employees in different industries. If researchers were to conduct this study in other industries, effective employee retention strategies might be uncovered, helping organizations improve their workplace culture and reduce employee turnover, thereby improving profitability.

Reflections

In my first class to become a doctor, I was asked to share why I wanted to become a doctor. My colleagues, at the time, shared their reasons and that becoming a doctor would allow them to accelerate their career path and put them in a better position to advance professionally. My response was quite different. I decided to go on this journey simply because it is what I wanted to do. I have no professional or career-related agenda; it is a personal goal.

When I reflect on my Doctoral journey, I must admit it has been enlightening. The journey was full of challenges, setbacks, tears, and triumphs. I considered putting an end to this journey on more than one occasion as it became seemingly too arduous and lengthy. The support from my wife, children, colleagues, and chair inspired me to push forward. I overcame several obstacles, a change in careers, severe medical issues, and deaths in the family. I strengthened my resolve and decided to remove all barriers, minimize distractions, utilize my resources, and move forward. I learned so much about myself, the process of research, and the world of leadership.

I learned that becoming a doctor is not about the title. It is about the professional journey and the opportunity to give back to the world of research. The expedition also

involves challenging oneself to go beyond your limits, intellectual stimulation, developing as a professional, and the desire to finish what one has started.

My experience in leadership spans four decades. I have come to find the leadership theories and ongoing research are evolutionary processes. This study proves to be no different. While standing on the shoulders of giants, I believe this study adds to the foundation of transformational leadership. The employee retention strategies used by the participants have proven to be effective and support the existing research.

Conclusion

I conducted this single case qualitative study to explore the employee retention strategies used by managers in the QSRI. Leaders in the QSRI need to improve their employee retention efforts to strengthen customer service and maximize profit. To obtain data triangulation, I conducted semistructured interviews with the leaders of a quick-service restaurant and reviewed applicable company documents. Because of the data collected, there were four common themes: family-friendly work environment, communication, knowledge sharing and training, and employee recognition and empowerment. The common themes found in the current study align with much of the existing research. For example, in work by Naz et al. (2020) the researchers found a positive relationship between having a supportive work culture and the employee's desire to stay. The common theme, in the current study, of the importance of communication from leaders and the positive effect on employee retention aligns with the work by Jong and Ford (2020). Jong and Ford (2020) found that employees are more willing to stay

with an organization if they perceive the organizational leaders to be transparent and open.

According to Langat et al. (2019) employee retention is positively affected when business leaders share organizational knowledge and consider the needs of employees. The findings of the current study are like the work by Langat et al. (2019). In both studies, the participants reported a positive connection between how they share organizational information with employees and the importance of considering the needs of the employees during training. The individualized training approach the participants in this study employ and the positive effect on employee retention further distinguishes this study in the QSRI.

Last, Harika and Bindu (2020), indicated that when employees are recognized and supported by organizational leaders, they are more likely to stay with the organization. The current study results are confirmatory to the research work by Harika and Bindu (2020), but the recommendations from this unique design are specific and practicable, thereby fulfilling a notable research gap. The employee recognition strategies employed by the participants in the current study are intentional and appear to be effective.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. What are the most effective strategies to retain employees in the QSRI, in your experience?
2. What are the key barriers to retaining employees in the QSRI?
3. How do the leaders in your organization address the key barriers to implementing the strategies for retaining employees in the QSRI?
4. What retention strategies have you found most useful in retaining employees in the QSRI?
5. What ways besides retention, did the employees respond to the effective strategies you have implemented?
6. What other information would you share with me regarding the best strategies for retaining employees in the QSRI?