2022

Strategies Small Business Human Resources Leaders Use to Reduce Voluntary Employee Turnover

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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MS, Walden University, 2016

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2022

Abstract

Small businesses are negatively affected when employees voluntarily leave their jobs. Small business human resources (HR) leaders who implement strategies can enhance employee job satisfaction to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small business HR leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The participants were five small business HR leaders from five different organizations in southern California who successfully implemented strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and company document reviews. Data were analyzed using Yin's five phases. Three themes emerged: implementing work-life balance policies, having an open communication philosophy, and encouraging and managing the relationship between the employees and supervisors. A key recommendation is for small business HR leaders to openly communicate and engage with employees to increase organizational transparency and engagement, which might decrease voluntary employee turnover. The implications for positive social change include the potential to increase the time employees volunteer in local communities, provide more employment opportunities for community members, and improve community engagement with employees through mentoring and tutoring.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my family. Anabelle and Eli, thank you for being my cheerleaders throughout this process and for understanding the nights I could not tuck you in because I was trying to make a deadline. To my husband Carlos, thank you for your encouragement and for holding down the fort when I was working through revision after revision. Thank you to my friends (who are also family) who encouraged me, sent funny memes, and gave me an outlet to breathe.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my chair, Dr. David Blum, for his guidance throughout the doctoral study process, as well as my committee members Dr. Chris Beehner, SCM, and Dr. Deborah Nattress, URR. I would also like to thank Walden University for the resources they have available such as the writing center and academic advisors who provided support through this journey. Finally, thanks to the classmates who graduated before me and gave me motivation and encouragement to reach the finish line.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small businesses comprise 99.7% of the businesses in the United States (U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy, 2019). Small business leaders need to understand the significance of voluntary employee turnover to create financial security for the employee and small businesses. Understanding the internal and external factors that force employees to voluntarily leave an organization highlights the challenges small businesses face with employee retention. In this study, I explored the strategies small business human resources (HR) leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Background of the Problem

In 2019, small business leaders employed 59.9 million employees in the United States (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2019). Small business leaders play a vital role in the U.S. economy, making up 99.7% of U.S. employer firms (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2019). Employee voluntary turnover is a threat to small businesses ' survival (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). An employee who is committed to an organization is widely regarded as having a psychological attachment to an organization (Albrecht & Marty, 2020).

There is a high cost to small businesses when employees leave, as direct and indirect costs are increased related to hiring costs, training dollars, lost production, reduced profits, and low employee morale (Skelton et al., 2019). HR management practices can have a significant impact on employee turnover (Devi & Krishna, 2016). These practices include compensation, recruitment of the best employee for the position, benefit plans, and policies that ensure employee grievances are handled in a timely manner (Basnyat & Lao, 2020). When an employee voluntarily leaves an organization, the coworkers who stay behind typically have reduced morale, which may create challenges for the organization (Tews et al., 2019). Therefore, small business HR leaders should consider strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Problem Statement

In 2019, more than 28% of employees in the western United States quit their jobs (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). The average cost of replacing an employee was upwards of 200% of the employee's annual salary (Rubenstein et al., 2017). The general business problem was that some small businesses are being negatively affected by employee turnover, resulting in cost increases from recruiting and training expenses. The specific business problem was some small business HR leaders lacked strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some small business HR leaders used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The target population consisted of five small business HR leaders from five different organizations in southern California who had successfully implemented strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The implications for positive social change included the potential of helping HR leaders reduce voluntary employee turnover in small businesses and implementing policies and practices to improve financial security for the employee and small businesses. Small businesses that retain employees could participate in local events, including fundraisers for school programs, which enhance the cohesiveness of the local residents.

Nature of the Study

There are three types of research methods: (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed methods (Flick, 2013). McCusker and Gunaydin (2015) stated that in a qualitative study, a researcher was looking for *what*, *how*, and *why* of human behavior. Qualitative researchers explore language and behaviors in a noncontrolled environment, allowing the participants to embrace their individualized and natural characteristics (Kruth, 2015); these researchers focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings that simulate real life to provide insights into a problem (Amaratunga et al., 2002). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study because I focused on identifying and exploring common themes and extracted data from the participants 'natural environment by asking *what* and *how* questions.

In comparison, quantitative researchers measure variables and test hypotheses about variables 'relationships or groups 'differences to address the research question (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The quantitative method was not suitable for this study because I neither collected numerical data nor examined the relationships between variables using statistical tools. Mixed methods researchers use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study (Yin, 2014). I did not choose mixed method because the quantitative component would not have answered my research question.

Qualitative research designs include ethnographic, phenomenological, and case study (Kruth, 2015). Ethnographic design is appropriate for exploring the social world of a group in a cultural setting (Kruth, 2015). In this study, the research scope did not include collecting data in a cultural setting. Therefore, the ethnographic design was not suitable. Phenomenological researchers focus on understanding the personal meanings of the lived experience of participants related to the study purpose (Yates & Leggett, 2016). A phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study, as I did not need to understand participant's lived experiences to answer my research question.

The case study design is used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in a real-world context (Yin, 2014). This design involves generating insights from interviews and document reviews conducted at several distinct real-life settings (Campbell, 2014). A case study design has a clear timeframe and is bounded by place (Fusch et al., 2017). This design was appropriate to address my research question because my focus was exploration of an in-depth situation of a phenomenon bounded by time and place.

Research Question

What strategies do small business HR leaders use to reduce voluntary turnover of employees?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to reduce voluntary turnover of employees?
2. How has your organization used strategies to reduce voluntary turnover of employees?

3. How did you implement your strategies to reduce voluntary turnover of employees?
4. What were the key barriers to implementing your strategies to reduce voluntary turnover of employees?
5. How have you measured the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce voluntary turnover of employees?
6. What additional information can you provide concerning strategies that you have used to reduce voluntary turnover of employees?

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. In two-factor theory, motivation and hygiene factors affect employees 'job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1974). The tenets of this theory are achievement, recognition, positive work environment, increased responsibility, growth, and advancement (Herzberg, 1974). Achievement is the feeling an employee has reached a goal and gained respect from leaders and colleagues (Shariq et al., 2019). Recognition acknowledges a job well done by a colleague or a leader and has been linked to higher job satisfaction (Montani et al., 2020). A positive work environment is one in which there is respect in the workplace and meaningful work is being completed (Pomirleanu & Mariadoss, 2015).

Increased responsibility in the workplace is the fine line between increased accountability and too much responsibility, which causes burnout (Andrews & Kacmar, 2014). An increase in responsibility can promote growth and advancement in the workplace. Herzberg's two factor-theory enabled me to understand my study's findings regarding why some small business HR leaders lack strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Operational Definitions

Employee retention: The ability for leadership to maintain a working environment and culture so that an employee does not want to leave the organization (Steigenberger & Mirc, 2020).

Human resources (HR) leader: An individual holding a HR position more senior than a supervisory role (Abendroth et al., 2017).

Voluntary turnover: Occurs when an employee leaves an organization on their own accord (Dalkrani & Dimitriadis, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts presented by the researcher that are recognized as being true without being verified (Yang et al., 2018). One assumption for this study was that HR leaders would be willing to participate in virtual interviews. I also assumed that HR leaders would be able to answer the questions based upon their relevant knowledge and experience. Finally, I assumed HR leaders would answer the questions honestly and to the best of their knowledge.

Limitations

Limitations have been defined as the potential weaknesses in the study that the researcher cannot control (Rahman, 2017). One limitation was the availability of participants due to a lack of consistent work schedules during the week with meetings, planned vacations, or travel. Another limitation was that successful strategies used by small business HR leaders to reduce voluntary employee turnover may not be transferable to other small business HR leaders. The final limitation was participants may have provided biased responses whether they had negative or positive feelings about the organization, which may have limited the validity of in-depth research information.

Delimitations

Delimitations consist of boundaries that were initially determined arbitrarily in the scope of the study by the researcher (Baporikar et al., 2016). The first delimiting factor was the pool of potential participants, who were HR leaders of a small business; not all employees were included. The second delimiting factor was that study participants were only located in southern California.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The results of the study may contribute to effective business practice by offering successful strategies to alleviate voluntary employee turnover. These results may help HR leaders fill the gaps in understanding effective business practices by creating retention strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Findings from this study may provide value to small businesses and HR leaders as they develop HR policies and procedures to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Implications for Social Change

Positive social change can have significant effects on small businesses. By mitigating voluntary employee turnover in small businesses, employees might be able to improve their financial and economic independence. Employees who have money to spend may use their income on goods and services in the community, which fuels local economies and creates more employment opportunities for local residents. Small businesses that retain employees can support and participate in local events, including fundraisers for school programs, and enhance opportunities for community development.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some small business HR leaders used to reduce employee turnover. The literature review identified relevant literature on Herzberg's two-factory theory and employee turnover. Peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, and books on the topic of employee turnover and Herzberg's theory were retrieved from ProQuest Central, ABI-Inform, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and Business Source Complete. I searched for peer-reviewed sources and other scholarly publications published between 2017 and 2022. The keywords used were *employee turnover, employee job satisfaction, well-being, Herzberg s two-factor theory, working conditions,* and *organizational culture.*

I documented my references in an Excel spreadsheet to organize and review the literature that was published within five years of my expected graduation date in 2022. The percentage of peer-reviewed scholarly sources published within the last 5 years was 85%. The literature reviewed included 315 references, and 85% of the references were published within 5 years of the chief academic officer's approval, which was anticipated in 2022. In addition, the literature review contained 197 out of 219 (90%) references from scholarly peer-reviewed articles. The remaining 10% of sources reviewed consisted of books and dissertations.

Based on the literature review, researchers have studied employee turnover from different perspectives and motives, including job satisfaction, work-life balance, employee engagement, organizational culture, and commitment (Dalkrani & Dimitriadis, 2018). Researchers have also connected Herzberg's theory of internal motivation factors and external hygiene factors to the concepts of employee satisfaction and employee turnover (Rahman et al., 2017). Research has shown that employees had increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment when hygiene factors were met (Saad & Hasanein, 2018). Organizations can also reduce voluntary employee turnover in the workplace if managers created a positive work environment (Mohamed et al., 2017). Thus, Herzberg's two-factor theory helps leaders to identify the factors that motivate employees, make them feel satisfied and content in their roles, and reduce voluntary employee turnover (Alfayad & Arif, 2017). However, individuals cannot be bracketed into one theory based on motivating factors alone (Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003).

Additionally, research has indicated that voluntary employee turnover has been a primary focus for HR leaders who have a responsibility to the employee and employer (Juariyah & Saktian, 2018). Retaining employees improved organization performance and enhanced the business process (Presbitero et al., 2015). HR leaders who implemented strategies and took the lead with job satisfaction, compensation, motivation, and engagement changed the turnover intentions of employees (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018).

The literature review includes a thorough explanation of Herzberg's two-factor theory as well supporting and contrasting theories. I explained motivation (intrinsic) and hygiene (extrinsic) factors as they related to employee turnover and job satisfaction. I conducted the literature review to perform a critical analysis and synthesis of the conceptual framework to understand the phenomenon of reducing voluntary employee turnover. The literature review also included subsections such as reasons for employee turnover, how employee turnover affected the small business, and the management styles that influenced employee turnover.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory is suitable to understand factors influencing job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. Based on the theory, hygiene and motivation factors may lead employers to understand what employees want in their careers. The two-factor theory has helped leaders focus on motivation and hygiene factors, which has contributed to job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction among employees (Fareed & Jan, 2016). Examples of hygiene factors are company policies, quality of supervision, working conditions, status, security, and interpersonal relationships in the workplace (Herzberg, 1974). Examples of motivation factors that create job satisfaction are promotional opportunities, personal growth, and recognition (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Hygiene or extrinsic factors tended to have a high risk of negative impact on both employees and companies (Cavise, 2019; Gbededo & Liyanage, 2018). Examples of extrinsic factors include job security, pay, working conditions, peer relationships, policies, and relationships with management (Haider et al., 2018). Creating a safe and favorable work environment for employees removes negative feelings or disengagement resulting from job dissatisfaction (Azeem et al., 2020). Good working conditions resulted in employee work-life balance (Egcas, 2017). Having hygiene factors in place could reduce employee dissatisfaction and reduce employee turnover (Dobre et al., 2017). Herzberg's two-factor theory supports the notion that motivation depends on fulfilling a two-need system by avoiding an uncomfortable work environment and providing the ability to grow within an organization (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Motivation factors are important because they could alter an employee's attitude in the workplace (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). When an employee experienced job satisfaction, the level of dissatisfaction diminished, resulting in better performance; however, the only improvement in job satisfaction was not a reduction in job dissatisfaction but instead improved productivity (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). Job satisfaction resulted in improved organizational performance (Brdulak et al., 2017). An employee's job satisfaction increases when they are motivated in their position, as expressed by Herzberg's two-factor theory.

Herzberg's two-factor theory refers to the notion that attitudes affect job performance (Alfayad & Arif, 2017). Employees 'positive attitude could lead to better job performance, whereas a poor attitude towards the company could result in psychological withdrawal from the job (Haider et al., 2018; Herzberg et al., 1959). Company leaders who created motivational goals for employees increased employees 'satisfaction and job productivity (Gbededo & Liyanage, 2018).

Motivation factors varied with different work environment and positions within a company. Kantek et al. (2015) found motivational factors were different and varied by the employee's age, position, tenure at the organization, and how long they had been in their profession. The authors acknowledged employees perceived appreciation as their most effective motivation factor (Kantek et al., 2015).

Employee motivation results in increased job engagement and job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1974). HR leaders need to enforce Herzberg's motivational and hygiene factors in the organization to improve job satisfaction. Satisfied employees helped meet organizational goals (Hammond et al., 2017). Hygiene factors proposed by Herzberg's two-factor theory could help HR leaders reduce employee voluntary turnover (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016).

Theory Tenets

Herzberg et al. (1959) stated the factors that lead to job satisfaction are not the same as the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction, therefore encouraging managers to eliminate factors that may cause job dissatisfaction. The tenets of Herzberg's two-factory theory are (a) achievement, (b) recognition, (c) employee's perceptions (d) responsibility, (e) advancement, and (f) possibility of growth (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018).

Achievement

Achievement is the need to excel and strive to succeed in relation to a set of standards (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). Achievement positively affected an employee's performance, serving as a motivator for greater productivity and job satisfaction (Alshmemri et al., 2017; Herzberg et al., 1959). However, some researchers have criticized Herzberg's theory, stating that there are different sources for job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction (Malik & Naeem, 2013). Ozsoy (2019) demonstrated Herzberg's two-factor theory supported some hygiene factors to an extent, such as salary, company policy, and work conditions. However, responsibility, recognition and achievement were found to have less strength as motivators. Alfayad and Arif (2017) stated that employers should fulfill hygiene factors to reduce job dissatisfaction rather than focus on motivational elements to improve and escalate job satisfaction.

Small business HR leaders can successfully address hygiene and motivational factors by using goal achievement as a performance metric. Task fulfillment and goal achievement drove top employees to achieve more in their job and in the organization (Jindal et al., 2017). Goal achievement was encouraged by monetary and nonmonetary rewards (Gallus & Frey, 2016). Goal achievement decreased voluntary employee turnover when employees saw achievement in their roles (Gallus & Frey, 2016; Kundu & Lata, 2017).

When managers and employees jointly set goals and determined how to accomplish them, then employees became motivated to achieve more in the workplace (Fiaz et al., 2017). Achievement of goals is seen as successful performance by the employees and reinforced by their managers. However, managers faced challenges from their employees during the goal achievement process if the goals were not clearly understood or if there was not support from the manager (Andrews & Mostafa, 2019). If the goals were not clearly understood or if there was not support from the manager, then the broad context and culture of the organization needed to change (Saratun, 2016). Achievement impacts the value of the employee and the organization. Alshmemri et al. (2017) considered achievement as having a positive effect on an employee's performance, serving as a motivator for job satisfaction, which supported Herzberg et al.'s (1959) position. However, Ogunnaike et al. (2017) stated having goals to achieve could help motivate an employee but would not guarantee satisfaction in the workplace. Small business HR leaders could improve voluntary employee turnover by applying an effective key performance indicator program to track employees 'progress toward meeting performance goals.

Recognition

Recognition is the state of being seen, heard, and/or known by superiors (Matei & Abrudan, 2016). Herzberg et al. (1959) noted that recognizing employees in the workplace motivated employees to produce more output and helped them feel rewarded for their work. Bradler et al. (2016) found recognition substantially increased performance, which supported the Herzberg et al. (1959) position.

Some researchers have criticized Herzberg's theory related to recognition. Kotni and Karumuri (2018) argued recognition was not the only motivator for satisfaction. They reported that the work itself, security, and relationships with subordinates were highly correlated to job satisfaction (Kotni & Karumuri, 2018). Ozsoy (2019) stated that Herzberg's theory might produce different outcomes depending upon various contextual situations such as occupation, income, gender, and personality. Malik and Naeem (2013) concluded that preferences for motivation differed between male and female managers. The female managers were strongly motivated by recognition, whereas male managers preferred responsibility as a motivator (Malik & Naeem, 2013).

When companies implement recognition programs, they should be built on clearly articulated objectives and business knowledge (Saunderson, 2016). As employees were rewarded for their work, they repeated positive actions, and so their work should be consistently recognized and rewarded (Mutisya & Wabala, 2017). Employee recognition builds motivation and has contagious effects on other employees.

Ways to recognize employees included years of service, highest number of units produced, and safety records (Mutisya & Wabala, 2017). Recognition could also include social reinforcement, such as highlighting accomplishments in the company newsletter or website, plaques or letters, extra time off, a special parking space, and public verbal appreciation (Mutisya & Wabala, 2017).

Advancement

Advancement refers to the upward movement of an existing employee's present position to a higher position in the organization (Basak & Khanna, 2017). Herzberg et al. (1959) found that advancement in the workplace influenced overall job satisfaction and improved employee performance. An employee's desire for advancement could provide intrinsic job satisfaction (Mencl & Lester, 2014). Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) determined if employees had the opportunity for advancement in their organization, they would be more likely satisfied in their position, which supported the Herzberg et al. (1959) viewpoint.

Some researchers have criticized Herzberg's theory related to advancement. Hausknecht et al. (2009) argued it is the frequency, importance, and desirability of the advancement that influences an employee's satisfaction level in the organization, not just the move to a higher position. Additionally, Herzberg's theory has been criticized regarding the denial of individual differences. Locke (1976) argued an individual's needs could be similar to those of their coworkers, but their values might be different.

Job advancement is an important factor for employees in the workforce. Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) suggested if employees could advance within their organization, they would be engaged in their positions and less likely to leave. As employees were given the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths in their positions, the leaders of the organization could provide advancement opportunities (Fernández-Aráoz et al., 2017). Unfortunately, many organizations had not figured out how to discuss employees career goals and interests to develop their employees, which led to a lack of advancement, and eventually the employees left the organization (Fernández-Aráoz et al., 2017).

Advancement has also had a positive impact on employee performance, as the employee was meeting performance goals and proving their worthiness to move to the next level (Wang et al., 2016). Locke (1976) argued individuals have distinct values that do not place the same value on money or promotion. Locke's (1976) results suggested the work itself, as described in the job description, produced positive attitudes from the employees.

Achievement was demonstrated to be a motivational factor that reflected the organizational culture, the relationship of the team, and led the employee to take on more responsibility for the company's goals and vision (Anitha, 2014). Advancement impacts an organization as well as the employees. A forward-thinking organization will be aware of their employee's needs. Herzberg et al. (1959) found workers connected job with success and achievement.

Possibility of Growth

Herzberg et al. (1959) indicated that the possibility of growth in the workplace could lead to overall job satisfaction. Increasing an employee's ability to learn new skills, train in new technology, and gain new professional knowledge created the possibility of growth in the workplace (Alshmemri et al., 2017). If an employee was aware of training opportunities within the organization, the employee's engagement and commitment to the organization could improve (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013). Chiat and Panatik (2019) determined if employees felt empowered to take charge of their personal growth in the workplace, then their level of job satisfaction increased.

Herzberg's theory related to the possibility of growth has received some criticism from researchers. Matthews (1999) argued workplace learning is extremely complex and involves more than simple training and development for employee's job satisfaction. Additionally, Herzberg's theory has been criticized regarding the lack of diversified jobs surveyed (Matthews, 1999). According to Malik and Naeem (2013), technical workers were motivated by achievement and recognition while the possibility of growth was not a source of satisfaction.

Training and development in the workplace are important factors for employees. Implementing training programs in the workplace provided employees with growth opportunities (Kulkarni, 2013). Empowering an employee helped support personal growth and retained the employee (Kotni & Karumuri, 2018). Some organizations did not have training and development opportunities in the workplace due to high training costs and lack of training software (Salas et al., 2012).

The possibility of growth through training and development impacted an organization's strategic, tactical, and operational outcomes because it allowed capitalization of employees who showed initiative and met their goals (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017). The possibility of growth was a motivational factor that put employees in a positive mindset by giving them a sense of purpose to attain diverse goals and enhance their competencies in the workplace (Matthews, 1999). Leaders who took time to implement training and development programs motivated and boosted morale in the workforce (Gamage & Imbulana, 2013).

Responsibility

Responsibility is when an employee has the freedom to make decisions in their position with authority (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Herzberg et al. (1959) noted responsibility positively affected an employee's satisfaction in the workplace. However, some researchers have criticized Herzberg's theory as an unstructured format that leads employees to take credit for their successes and blame others for their failures (Behling et al., 1968). Lundberg et al. (2009) questioned Herzberg's use of the critical incident method since it heavily relied on the individual's memory and personal testimony.

When leaders gave an employee more responsibility, the employee was inclined to work harder and had more satisfaction in the workplace (Lysova et al., 2019). When an employee took on more of the decision-making process, they became more accountable for their work (Appelbaum et al., 2013). Bayraktar et al. (2017) found employee involvement, synonymous with employee responsibility, gave employees job satisfaction when they contributed to the decisions that affected their work. Brown and Cregan (2008) found a participative work climate were created when managers involved employees in decision-making.

Adding responsibility helped empower employees (Kotni & Karumuri, 2018). When employees worked in a decision-making climate, they recognized the increased responsibility and had the autonomy to perform their job as they saw fit (Cabrera et al., 2003). Unfortunately, because managers may have seen themselves possessing greater expertise, knowledge, and information, and therefore the ability to make better decisions in the workplace, they stifled their employees and gave them no responsibility (Phipps et al., 2013). McCabe and Lewin (1992) suggested management should not be the sole source of information and decision-making within an organization.

Including employees in the decision-making process helps with employee satisfaction. Employee involvement led to improvements in the workplace: employee motivation, positive changes in employee attitudes, and better employer/employee relationships (Javed, 2017). The inclusion of employees in the decision-making process provided employees with a greater sense of ownership and involvement in their work (Leana et al., 1992).

Work Itself

Work itself refers to the employee liking or disliking the job they are performing (Danish & Usman, 2010). Herzberg et al. (1959) found that work itself was a motivator in the workplace and influenced positive attitudes in the job. Lam et al. (2001) noted a key indicator in employee job satisfaction was the work itself. House and Wigdor (1967) determined if employees had the sense of doing interesting and important work itself, then they would have a lasting positive attitude.

Some researchers have criticized Herzberg's theory related to work itself. Danish and Usman (2010) reasoned work itself is not a high motivator for employees; working conditions and personal dimensions were higher motivators in the workplace. Additionally, Herzberg's theory has been criticized regarding the differences in public and private work settings. Malik and Naeem (2013) found tasks performed in the job itself or job responsibilities were not satisfiers in a public setting.

The work itself of individuals may be a motivating factor for employees in the workforce. When work itself was challenging, varied, and had a defined scope, it was the greatest predictor of overall job satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987). Raza et al. (2015) suggested if a company provided employees a challenging, competitive environment with a variety of tasks, then the employee might enjoy the work itself and have a sense of pride about it. When employees were initially hired, the intrinsic satisfaction was more important, but over time, the extrinsic satisfaction became more important, suggesting companies need to look at the variety of tasks employees perform to have them stay with the company (Ghiselli et al., 2001).

Some employees disliked aspects of the work itself yet still thought the job was acceptable (Smith & Kendall, 1963). Work itself can be fun, and many companies have incorporated fun into their culture. Ronda et al. (2018) reported that instead of seeking self-worth through work itself, employees were choosing employers who provided excitement and stimulation at work. Work itself could be fun if an organization promoted fun organically in the workplace (Owler et al., 2010).

When work itself, as described in the job description, was done by employees, employees demonstrated positive attitudes (Locke, 1976). Work itself is a motivation in the workplace and positively impacts an organization. An organization that can create a fun culture will help employees enjoy the work itself.

Comparing Theory

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Motivating employees to their highest potential could help with retention. Maslow (1943) noted that humans aspire to self-actualization. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a pyramid that includes levels of human needs from lowest to highest order as physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Physiological needs include air, food, water, and shelter (Maslow, 1943). The second layer of the pyramid is safety and security, which concerns individuals who expect to be free from harm or threats (Maslow, 1943). Belongingness is focused on the individual choice to love and to feel belonging in a social situation (Maslow, 1943). The next level is self-esteem, which is about receiving respect and appreciation from others (Maslow, 1943). The final layer on the pyramid is self-actualization, in which an individual realizes that they can develop themselves to their full potential to help others (Maslow, 1943). Maslow said individuals seek to fulfill the most basic need first, and then the next need in hierarchical order becomes a priority (Suyono & Mudjanarko, 2017).

Similarities and differences exist between Maslow's (1943) and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theories. Both theories focus on motivation and personal satisfaction (Spillane et al., 2017). Deci and Ryan (2000) suggested that satisfaction of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, including motivation, would positively affect a person's well-being. Smith and Shields (2013) noted Herzberg's two-factor theory showed that true satisfaction in one's job was a product of internalized motivation. Maslow's theory is about fulfilling needs in hierarchical order based upon survival and deficiency needs. On the other hand, in Herzberg's two-factor theory, there is no sequence of need attainment and individuals rely on a rewards and recognition system for motivation (Suyono & Mudjanarko, 2017).

Researchers can use Maslow's (1943) and Herzberg et al. (1959) two-factor theory to predict job satisfaction and employee turnover. For example, Jyothi (2016) found Maslow's (1943) theory was helpful in motivating employees only after the fulfillment of lower needs. Udechukwu (2009) used Maslow's hierarchy and Herzberg's two-factor theory to understand job satisfaction (motivation) and job dissatisfaction (hygiene). Udechukwu (2009) found employee turnover was high when employees were unable to fulfill the hierarchy of needs as stated in Maslow's theory. Similarly, turnover was high in the absence of the motivational and hygiene factors identified in Herzberg's two-factor theory. Spillane et al. (2017) also discovered Maslow's (1943) theory was suitable in satisfying a higher level of needs and developing close associations with others. Applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs helps leaders recognize the needs of their employees in the workplace to develop to their full potential. Business leaders could improve employees ’potential by providing a safe environment, a sense of belonging, and respect (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Monetary rewards, non-monetary rewards, and the development of self-realization within employees could improve their potential at work (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Maslow and Herzberg's theories supported the notion that motivational and hygienic factors were essential for employees to thrive at work.

Contrasting Theory

Vrooms' Expectancy Theory

According to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, the actions of an employee are a direct result of their personal choices, which will lead to the best personal outcome. Vroom's expectancy theory is a contrasting theory to Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory in that employee behavior results from the employee's choice to increase pleasure and minimize pain. Vroom asserted that employees' values manifest in their actions of motivation. The premise that explains Vroom's (1964) motivation theory includes three variables which drive behavior: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (as cited in Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Expectancy is about employees believing their efforts will achieve a particular outcome; instrumentality is employees ’perceptions about attaining an award after the performance; and valence is about a desirable or undesirable reward of the outcome (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Herzberg et al. (1959) and Vroom (1964) used two different methods to rationalize an individual's motivation and job satisfaction. Unlike Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory, Vrooms 'expectancy theory is suitable to study the drivers behind the individual's decision making, given the assumption that effort leads to performance (as cited in Beiu & Davidescu, 2018).

Researchers have used Vroom's theory of motivation to explore employee turnover. Akgunduz et al. (2020) investigated the effects of rewards and proactive personality on employee turnover using Vroom's theory. Akgunduz et al. (2020) found first-level rewards, which represented valence, had an impact on second-level awards, which demonstrated instrumentality. Akgunduz et al. (2020) found that non-financial and financial rewards negatively affected turnover intention, while the financial rewards and proactive personality had a positive effect on the work that was being completed.

Furthermore, Beiu and Davidescu (2018) studied Vroom's (1964) theory to examine the overall motivation of employees. They found the main motivational factor was professional status, which then resulted in good pay, bonuses, and opportunities for promotion (Beiu & Davidescu, 2018). A significant difference between Herzberg et al. (1959) theory and Vroom's expectancy theory is Vroom's theory only included factors related to the employee and their desires (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017). Vroom's theory has sparked much debate, suggesting the model is too simplistic (Lawler & Porter, 1967) and the theory fails to address cognitive bias, which influences an individual's choices (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018).

Small Business

An organization can be categorized as a small business based upon its number of employees, type of industry, and profit margins. I will use the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy (2019) definition of small business as "an enterprise of less than 500 employees." The four primary types of small businesses in the United States are cooperative, corporation, partnership, and sole proprietorship (Nartisa, 2012). A cooperative small business is owned by members who participate in the decision-making process, whereas corporations are a legal organization formed by individuals, stockholders, or shareholders (Nartisa, 2012). Some companies are issuers, which means they are publicly traded, while others are non-issuers and are privately held companies (Teoh & Wong, 2002). In a partnership, two or more people own the business, while a sole proprietorship has only one business owner (Turner & Endres, 2017).

Small business owners conceive, launch, and assume the risks for a business venture. Small business owners represent 99.9% of all U.S. companies, employ 48% of private-sector employees and constitute 41.2% of the total private payroll in the United States (Small Business and Entrepreneurial Council, 2016). Further, small business owners were responsible for 1.8 million of the net U.S. jobs created in 2018 (U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy, 2019).

California has 4.0 million small businesses, which employ seven million employees (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2019). In 2016, small business owners created 249,508 new jobs in California (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2019). In 2016, the small business sector in California contributed 43% of California's $151.1

billion in total exports (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2019). In southern California, small business owners provide job opportunities. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (2019), about 36% of San Diego's small companies are owned by women, 20% by minorities, and 10% by veterans. However, small business owners might compete with larger organizations for resources, such as employees (Li et al., 2019). More than 50% of small business owners close their businesses within five years, and only one-third of small businesses survive 10 years of operation (Small Business and Entrepreneurial Council, 2016).

Voluntary Employee Turnover

There are two types of employee turnover, voluntary and involuntary. Turnover is described as a situation when an employee leaves an organization, which then impacts the company negatively in terms of cost and lost knowledge (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017). Voluntary turnover occurs when an employee leaves an organization by choice (Parker & Gerbasi, 2016). Voluntary turnover may include retiring or being unable to return to work after a leave of absence because of an injury, illness, or personal reasons (Klotz et al., 2020). Employee turnover impacts organizational effectiveness and performance (Klotz et al., 2020). Employee turnover generates recruiting and training costs for new employees as well as decreased employee morale causing lower performance in the organization (S. Lee, 2018). Therefore, HR leaders use metric analysis to determine the cause of employee turnover and to prevent unnecessary turnover in the future. According to Fragouli and Chalkias (2018), the value of HR metrics as accurate knowledge factors for making the right decision is increasing, especially while looking at turnover. Leaders and managers are exploring the metrics to see how they can be used to enhance the business while reducing voluntary employee turnover (Fragouli & Chalkias, 2018).

Employees quit organizations and companies for many reasons. According to Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006), employees leave their jobs voluntarily when they do not like their bosses or work environments. Additional factors of voluntary turnover are lack of job autonomy, opportunities for growth, and compensation (Klotz et al., 2020).

Involuntary turnover happens when an employer decides to terminate an employee's employment. Grounds to terminate an employee can be related to performance, misconduct, or lack of fit with the organization (Parker & Gerbasi, 2016). Other factors may include the company's decision to downsize, move their operations elsewhere, or outsource the employee's role or department (Lee et al., 2017). Involuntary turnover is a decision made by leaders or managers in the organization (Parker & Gerbasi, 2016). Other examples of involuntary turnover include inappropriate behavior from the employee, policy violations, and a reduction in force (Barrick et al., 1994).

A small business's daily operations are affected by voluntary employee turnover (Reina et al., 2018). For every organization, turnover is a critical issue that affects all sectors of the business, including productivity, product and service quality, and profitability (Belete, 2018). An employee's exit impacts customer experience and interrupts business relationships, which reduces company profits (Holtom & Burch, 2016). Satisfied customers are more likely to return to a business with an attentive and responsive staff (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). If a skilled staff member leaves, it would be expected that the business 'profitability would be affected since the company would not receive referrals generated by that employee (Simons et al., 2018).

Factors Contributing to Employee Retention

Relationship with Supervisors

The relationship between supervisor and subordinate is essential. If the supervisor-subordinate relationship is healthy, then employee productivity, efficiency, and organizational goals increase (Hellweg, 1978). A strained relationship between a supervisor and a subordinate may create a reason for an employee to quit the job (Xu et al., 2020). Ramalho Luz et al. (2017) noted inadequate supervision could create unwanted turnover. Employees frequently cited their managers' behavior as the primary reason for leaving their jobs (Reina et al., 2018). Managers may exhibit poor behavior, which includes workaholism, and supervisor level attitudes with subordinate level attitudes, including communication and encouragement.

The term *workaholic*, defined by Oates (1971), refers to people whose need to work has become so amplified that it may cause distress on the person's health, happiness, relationships, and social functioning. Scottl et al. (1997) identified three types of workaholism patterns: (a) compulsive-dependent, (b) perfectionist, and (c) achievement-oriented. Compulsive-dependent workaholism and the traits associated with it include levels of nervousness, stress, and physical and mental issues adversely related to job performance and job fulfillment (Scottl et al., 1997). The second type of workaholic is the perfectionist who is positively linked to levels of stress, physical and mental issues, and hostile interpersonal relationships. Perfectionist workaholism is also tied to voluntary employee turnover and absenteeism while being negatively related to job satisfaction and performance (Scottl et al., 1997). The final type of workaholism is achievement-oriented, which is positively related to job satisfaction, physical and mental issues, and job performance, while negatively related to stress and voluntary employee turnover (Scottl et al., 1997). Workaholics tend to experience low job and life satisfaction, exhaustion, counterproductive work behavior, and low job performance (Kim et al., 2020). Supervisors who are workaholics and place high demands on their subordinates in the workplace increase psychological job strain, causing voluntary employee turnover (Çelik, 2018). Subordinates tend to mimic their supervisor's behaviors and attitudes, as they are considered a legitimate source of appropriate behavior in the workplace (Ambrose et al., 2013). An example is the differences in communication types.

There are different communication types employed in the supervisor and subordinate relationship. Supervisors practice upward and positive relationship communication. Supervisory communication occurs when a supervisor communicates on job-related matters, performance, work schedules, assignments, and objectives to their subordinates (Choi & Moon, 2017). McCune Stein et al. (2020) suggested that effective communication between supervisors and subordinates could increase professional knowledge and skills. However, when there is poor communication between supervisors and subordinates, it may lead to low employee morale and high turnover (Iqbal, 2010). Iqbal (2010) concluded the lack of effective communication by managers in the organization led employees to look elsewhere for the information they needed and to leave the organization.

Upward communication occurs when information is exchanged from subordinates to supervisors in an organizational hierarchy (Sadia et al., 2017). Communication between a subordinate and supervisor should be less hierarchical and more one of mutual respect and influence (Kumar & Mishra, 2017). Upward communication helped supervisors recognize needs and change from the employees 'perspective (Kumar & Mishra, 2017). Upward communication may create a work environment of trust and respect between subordinates and supervisors (Sadia et al., 2017). When upward communication is not evident in the workplace, organizations should improve communication processes and networks to avoid high turnover rates (Iqbal, 2010).

Positive relationship communication occurs when information between a supervisor and a subordinate is shared in an informal and supportive manner (Guan & Frenkel, 2019). Supportive communication from a supervisor may lead employees to believe they are valued and supported, which results in less stress (Guan & Frenkel, 2019). Supervisors' communication and commitment towards employee may lead to job satisfaction (Bohle & Alonso, 2017). Supportive workplace communication from a supervisor decreased the likelihood of employee burnout and reduced voluntary employee turnover (Guan & Frenkel, 2019). Bohle and Alonso (2017) concluded that supervisors' support had positive effects on employee engagement and that supervisors should communicate often with employees to build trust.

A positive relationship between employees and supervisors strengthens the employees 'commitment to the organization (Walden et al., 2017). Supervisors should exhibit traits that motivate, instill trust, and share knowledge to help build up employees

(Afsar & Umrani, 2019). Supervisors should share the organization's vision, mission, and goals with the employees to receive the expected outcomes of the employees, all the while being encouraging and motivating (Mitrovska & Eftimov, 2016).

Job Autonomy

Job autonomy occurs when employees freely use their knowledge and skills to complete their work without being monitored by a supervisor (Vui-Yee & Yen-Hwa, 2020). Employers could increase employees 'intrinsic motivation by providing job autonomy (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Thompson and Prottas (2006) found job autonomy resulted in less dissatisfied employees who were likely to stay with the organization and perform well. Tummers et al. (2018) determined job autonomy improved employees' well-being and frequent open communication with managers made employees feel comfortable and competent at work. Cho and Song (2017) indicated autonomy created less stress in employees while building their trust in the organization. Employees who experienced job autonomy throughout their workday showed greater vitality and higher job satisfaction (Tummers et al., 2018).

However, Park and Park (2016) warned job autonomy may not be beneficial in all industries because organizational environments and the company strategies in the market may produce different outcomes for the employees. High workload coupled with low autonomy was likely to produce employee turnover (Liu & Lo, 2018). Business leaders should balance the amount of continuous feedback given to an employee with the amount of autonomy provided (Xu & Thomas, 2011).

Compensation

In an organization, employee compensation is the single largest operating expense (Gerhart et al., 2009). Various types of compensation have been used to recruit, retain, and motivate employees, including money, benefits, and awards (Chiu et al., 2002). Compensation is typically an HR function in which an individual receives an award in exchange for performing organizational tasks (Rasmi et al., 2017). Compensation strategies and procedures can be one of the most difficult and time-consuming aspects of an organization's HR structure (Pohler & Schmidt, 2016). The ways compensation strategies are enforced, as well as their alignment with corporate culture and strategy, can have a significant impact on compensation system effectiveness (Kepes et al., 2009). A compensation package, such as salary and bonuses, can determine an employees' willingness to stay or leave an organization (Michael et al., 2016). A competitive compensation package motivated employees if they felt they were being compensated fairly for their role within the organization (Pohler & Schmidt, 2016).

The type of compensation an employee receives could influence their behavior (Dixon, 2016). Employees need monetary (salary and bonuses) and non-monetary (fringe benefits and discount incentives) compensation to strengthen their sense of belonging and commitment to the organization (Michael et al., 2016). Mabaso and Dlamini (2017) found compensation had a positive, significant effect on an employee's job satisfaction. Rasmi et al. (2017) discovered financial and non-financial compensation directly and indirectly affected employee satisfaction. The authors concluded compensation had a positive and dominant effect on employees' job satisfaction (Rasmi et al., 2017).

Herzberg (1974) classified money and benefits as hygiene factors, rather than motivating factors and deemed these factors necessary to retain workers in an organization. Employees who were valued for their work and compensated fairly were most likely to stay with an organization, which then saved the company time and money (Mitchell et al., 2001). Human capital is the most valuable asset in an organization, and retaining qualified employees fuels a company's productivity and competitiveness (Mabaso & Dlamini, 2017).

Organizational Culture

According to Lopez-Martin and Topa (2019), organizational culture is a set of values, rules, and beliefs that is shared by leaders and employees of the organization. Organizational culture is how businesses distinguish themselves from other competing organizations (Eversole et al., 2012), and what may be acceptable behavior in one organization may not be acceptable within another. According to Remijus et al. (2019), organizational culture played a major and influential role in employee engagement and supported workers' commitment to the organization's vision, purpose, and strategic goals. When new employees were immersed in a work environment with consistent values and rules, they quickly became committed to the organization (Lopez-Martin & Topa, 2019). On the other hand, when values within an organization were constantly changing, employees felt exhausted and their dedication to the organization decreased (Aarons & Sawitzky, 2006). Therefore, establishing and maintaining consistent organizational culture promoted employees' work performance and loyalty to the organization (Matziari et al., 2017).

According to Herzberg (1974), organizational commitment is not a hygiene factor but rather a motivational factor based upon the employees' attitudes and insights toward the organization. Jahromi et al. (2018) found when employees felt like they belonged at an organization and their desires and values were aligned with the organizational goals, they felt committed to the organization. The discipline in which an organization's core values are applied determines the organization's performance and the employees' turnover intention (Fitria, 2018). An organization's core values may be defined by a constructive or defensive culture (Aarons & Sawitzky, 2006). Constructive cultures are characterized by organization that encourage interactions with people and support employees, while defensive cultures make employees feel threatened (Aarons & Sawitzky, 2006). An organization that reinforces its core values may create an environment where employees want to stay for a long period of time (Warrick, 2017).

Work-Life Balance

As early as 1974, Herzberg's two-factor theory connected work-life balance to job satisfaction. Pressure from work and family can result in role conflict, affecting work-life balance (Chen et al., 2018). Work-life imbalance leads to poor job performance, causing tension between the employee and manager, thus damaging their working relationship (Haider et al., 2018). On the other hand, when work-life balance is achieved, employees are more creative and productive (Haider et al., 2018). Work-life balance supports employees' psychological well-being (Haider et al., 2018).

A common reason for job dissatisfaction is the absence of work-life balance (Blackburn et al., 2017). Work-life balance was found to be a more significant factor for female workers than for male workers, leading to high turnover among female employees (Chen et al., 2018). Since females make up 47% of the workforce (U. S. Department of Labor, 2020), problems with work-life balance can have a severe impact on businesses. Yu's (2019) survey of female employees indicated work-life balance was the main reason for employee turnover. The female employees surveyed suggested family-friendly policies in the workplace, such as alternative work schedules and teleworking options, would keep them at their current organization (Yu, 2019).

When management knows and understands the benefits associated with work-life balance, flexible options, such as a condensed work-schedule, virtual work, and flexibility in scheduling can be implemented (Ng, 2017). The condensed work-schedule is when a full-time work schedule has more working hours each day, but fewer workdays in the week (Hyatt & Coslor, 2018). An example of a condensed work schedule is a four-day, ten-hour work week (Hyatt & Coslor, 2018). With advancements in information technology, virtual work, also known as teleworking or remote work, has become increasingly popular (Asatiani & Penttinen, 2019). In 2019, nearly a third of the estimated 160 million Americans who were employed in November worked remotely (National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 2020). A flexible work environment may include flexible working hours, part-time work, job sharing, teleworking, variable year employment, choice of shifts, compressed working weeks, and working from home (Austin-Egole et al., 2020).

Herzberg (1974) classified work-life balance as a hygiene factor that contributes to a good working environment. As employees try to juggle work, family, friends, and health, the search for companies that have work-life balance has become increasingly common (Nwagbara & Akanji, 2012). Employees who have flexibility in their work schedule will likely have high job satisfaction (J. Zhang, 2016).

Human Resources

HR is one of the most valuable assets for helping the organization to achieve its goals and objectives (Hewage et al., 2020). HR is a management term introduced in the 1960s (Fitz-enz, 1991). In an organization, the HR department performs a variety of functions, including managing internal employee policies, ensuring compliance with current regulations, and determining best practices in the industry (Lojić et al., 2012). Madera et al. (2017) and Tzafrir (2005) found HR best practices that involved incentive programs, performance appraisals, and training that resulted in the expansion of social networks and improved an organization's performance related to employer-employee relationships, interactions, communications, and company philosophy.

Performance management is part of the HR structure that creates a framework for collaborating, building relationships, enhancing communication, and reiterating the company's philosophy and core values (Pavlov et al., 2017). Madera et al. (2017) noted that HR practices developed cooperation and trust with HR and managers which in turn positively influenced an organization's performance. Tzafrir (2005) found that HR managers with high levels of trust with their employees had a strong predictive power for organizational performance. An employee's cooperation with and trust in their manager motivated them to act in the best interest of the organization rather than in their own self-interest (Pavlov et al., 2017). Tzafrir (2005) also indicated HR managers with high levels of trust were more likely to shape high performance work practices, such as advancement, training, motivation, and demonstration of a positive relationship between internal career advancement and organizational performance.

HR serves as an important department in large organizations, with key roles in recruiting, training, rewarding, and motivating employees (Wang, et al., 2016). Recruiting and hiring human capital with knowledge, skills, and necessary abilities can influence an organization's performance, competitiveness, and efficiency (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2005). When HR invests in an employee from the initial stage of hire with compensation, training, appraisal, and rewards, the employee can have a positive effect on the organization's performance (Madera et al., 2017). As noted by Jiang et al. (2012), employee motivation positively affects the relationship between HR practices and the operational outcomes, which then creates positive effects seen in the organization's financial statements. An organization's HR practices, and organizational commitment were significantly related to operating expenses and operational performance (Wright et al., 2003). In contrast, some smaller businesses often lack formalized HR practices and rarely employ HR professionals (Wapshott & Mallett, 2015). HR issues, such as voluntary turnover, compensation, organizational culture, and work-life balance, may be delegated to small business leaders or other staff not trained in HR (Marlow et al., 2010).

HR and Employee Turnover

HR leaders recognize that employee turnover is costly and disruptive to an organization. Turnover rates are significant because they are linked to the expense of replacing employees and the ability to deliver an acceptable standard of service on an ongoing basis (Zhao et al., 2019). Turnover costs can be separated into five major categories: (a) separation costs, (b) recruiting and attracting costs, (c) selection costs, (d) hiring costs, and (e) lost-productivity costs (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). Separation costs may include the hourly rate of the exit interviewer, the hourly rate of the employee exiting and completing the exit interview, the time it takes to process the paperwork and severance pay if applicable, and increased unemployment insurance (Steed & Shinnar, 2004). Costs associated with recruiting and attracting applicants may include advertising of the position, search and agency fees, internal referral fees, managerial pre-employment administrative functions, applicant travel, recruiter travel, recruiter time, phone and email correspondence, and HR pre-employment administrative functions (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). Selection costs may add up, and include the HR interview, managerial interview, background and reference checks, medical exam, HR administrative functions and managerial administrative functions (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). Hiring costs may include HR administrative functions, management administrative functions, relocation costs, signing bonuses, orientation, formal training, on the job training, uniforms, security, and informational literature (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000).

Finally, lost-productivity costs may include vacancy cost, pre-departure productivity, learning curve, errors and waste, supervisory disruption, and peer disruption (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). The learning curve costs are computed by multiplying the daily wage by the number of workdays required to achieve competency (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). When calculating the learning curve, a manager may assume the performance of the employee is at a constant level; however, due to the employee's lack of knowledge, their performance is much lower (Plaza & Rohlf, 2008). In Hinkin and Tracey (2000), peer and supervisor disruption was calculated as the percentage of decrease in productivity of an experienced worker or supervisor caused by a new employee's need to be shown something or needed assistance with work or correcting mistakes.

There are data sets that may be analyzed during the exiting process to help with turnover metrics and future workforce planning (Zhu et al., 2017). The data sets included in turnover metrics are payroll category, hire date, termination date, age, years of service, gender, job classification and department code (Zhu et al., 2017). Understanding data sets may help organizations determine if HR strategies can influence turnover intention and if they matter equally at all stages of an employee's career (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Organizations of every size and type are affected by costly employee turnover (Y. Zhang, 2016).

Transition

In Section 1, I presented the background of the problem, discussing the business problem followed by a description and justification of why it is important to study the strategies small business HR leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. I also included the (a) problem statement; (b) purpose statement; (c) nature of the study; (d) research question; (e) conceptual framework; (f) operational definitions; (g) assumptions, limitations, and delimitations; (h) significance of the study; and (i) a review of the professional and academic literature.

In Section 2, I included a restatement of the purpose statement and a discussion of the (a) role of the researcher, (b) participants, (c) research method, (d) research design,

(e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instrument, (h) data organization techniques, (i) data analysis, and (j) reliability and validity of the study. In Section 3, I will include the (a) introduction, (b) presentation of findings, (c) application to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendation for further research, (g) reflections, and (h) the conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some small business HR leaders used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The target population consisted of five small business HR leaders from five different organizations in the southern California who had successfully implemented strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The implications for positive social change included helping HR leaders reduce voluntary employee turnover in small businesses and implementing policies and practices to improve financial security for the employee and small businesses. Small businesses that retained employees participated in local events, including fundraisers for school programs, which enhanced the cohesiveness of the local residents.

Role of the Researcher

A researcher (a) selects participants, (b) interviews participants, (c) obtains participants' consent, (d) confirms data collection method, and (e) collects, analyzes the data, and presents findings (Ibrahim & Edgley, 2015). As the researcher, I served as the primary data collection instrument for this study. I formulated a research question, selected the research method, research design, and identified participants. I then conducted interviews, analyzed data, and presented findings. After completing data analysis, I conducted member checking to ensure my interpretation of the participants' responses was accurate.

Over the past 15 years, I have held positions as an HR professional in health care, manufacturing, and education. I have launched engagement surveys and conducted interviews with former employees in manufacturing and education to reduce employee turnover. However, I had no prior contact with the participants or vested interest in participants' companies.

As a researcher, I also had moral and ethical obligations to protect participants. The *Belmont Report* contains guidelines to safeguard human subjects in research (Cascio & Racine, 2018). The three principles outlined in the *Belmont Report* were respect, justice, and beneficence (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 1979). The *Belmont Report* laid out basic ethical principles for the protection of human subjects, including: (a) respect for people as autonomous agents and protection for those with limited autonomy; (b) beneficence, minimizing harm and maximizing benefits; and (c) justice, fairly distributing benefits and research (HHS, 1979). After receiving IRB approval, I followed the ethical principles by treating participants with respect and equality, safeguarding their privacy, getting their informed consent, and educating them of the benefits and hazards of participating in data collecting. According to *the Belmont Report*, a researcher should obtain informed consent. An informed consent document can help the participant understand the risks and benefits of the research (Cascio & Racine, 2018). The informed consent form was completed before participants engaged in interviews, and I followed the ethical principles outlined in the *Belmont Report.*

Once I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I contacted the participants and collected data. I sent the consent form with an invitation email (see Appendix B). I treated all participants fairly and ethically. Kaiser (2009) recommended the researcher assure participants that their information will remain confidential to gain trust. I did so when discussing the informed consent form and ensured the participants' information stayed confidential by assigning codes, such as P1 for Participant One.

Additionally, understanding and mitigating bias in a research study is essential to the study's findings. These goals can be accomplished by being mindful of personal assumptions that may affect the collection of data (Althubaiti, 2016). The first strategy to minimize research bias was to limit the negative impact of my views or assumptions in the research through self-awareness. I used a bracketing technique to maintain self-awareness. The bracketing techniques helps the researcher remain vigilant and alert throughout a study by identifying their personal perceptions and beliefs about the research phenomenon (Sorsa et al., 2015). I remained self-aware of my preconceived notions while collecting and analyzing data.

Creating an interview protocol (see Appendix A) was also an essential step in establishing a reliable qualitative case study (Yin, 2014). The interview protocol contained open-ended questions, which were the same for each participant. The qualitative interview should include open-ended interview questions to explore participants' experiences and knowledge of the study phenomenon (Britten, 1995). The follow-up questions helped to clarify participants' responses to understand their views and opinions of the phenomenon (Morris, 2015). To minimize bias, I asked follow-up questions related to research inquiry and did not interject my personal interests or assumptions.

Participants

A researcher sets eligibility criteria to locate participants who can best answer the research question (Aydin & Bayir, 2016). The participants 'experiences need to align with the study phenomenon (Ferrazzi & Krupa, 2015). The eligibility criteria for this study were: (a) having been an HR manager or higher level, (b) having 5 years of experience, (c) working in a small business of 500 or less employees, (d) working at a company located in southern California, and (e) having developed strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

I used LinkedIn to identify and gain access to participants. Using an online social media platform, such as LinkedIn, could help the researcher obtain eligible participants to interview (Wise et al., 2016). LinkedIn is a professional social media group where scholars have found research participants belonging to a specific industry (Agnihotri et al., 2016).

I identified potential participants in the western United States by setting the LinkedIn search filter to southern California. I narrowed the search results by experience level at 5 years, job function as an HR manager or above, and working in a small business of 500 or less employees. Initially, I sent emails to 50 potential participants who met the study criteria. I selected the first five participants who responded to my invitation letter (see Appendix B) via LinkedIn messenger and who met the study eligibility requirements.

A good working relationship with participants was essential for successful completion of the study, as it supported collection of high-quality data (Yin, 2017). Building trust led to reliable and credible study findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Lewis (2015) noted that reviewing the consent form can help participants to understand the research guidelines, confidentiality, and privacy, which built trust in the researcher. I reviewed the consent form with participants and answered any questions participants had. Maintaining access to the participant required relationship building with each participant and can help with collecting rich data (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016). I maintained consistent communication via email with the participants. Breitkopf et al. (2015) noted consistent communication with participants may build trust. To further build trust with the participants, I started the interview with an ice breaker, gave my undivided attention to the participant while they were speaking, and made myself available at a time convenient for participants for the interview and follow-up.

After I transcribed each interview, I contacted the participant through email, and I explained to the participant the objectives of member checking. I emailed a summary of my interpretations to the participant to review and validate. I allowed the participant a week after receiving a summary of my interpretations to review the content and make any changes. The participants agreed to member checking and no changes were made to the summary of my interpretations.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

In the qualitative method, the researcher collects rich data from participants' experiences to gain in-depth knowledge of phenomenon (Sykes et al., 2017). The qualitative researcher uses semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to find the answers to the research question (Sykes et al., 2017). In a quantitative study, a researcher examines numerical data to explore a relationship between independent and dependent variables and test hypotheses (Polona et al., 2018). Mixed method is suitable for a study in which the qualitative or quantitative methods alone are not sufficient to understand the complexity rooted in the phenomenon (Alavi et al., 2018).

The quantitative method did not apply to this study because understanding the phenomenon did not require me to collect numerical data, compare variables, or test hypotheses. The mixed method was not suitable because I did not integrate the quantitative component into the study inquiry. The qualitative method was optimal for this study because the objectives were to explore a phenomenon by capturing participants' experiences through semistructured interviews using open-ended questions and then analyze the data to develop patterns and themes to answer the research question.

Research Design

The qualitative research designs I considered for this study were ethnographic, phenomenological, and case study. In an ethnographic design, the researcher conducts a study for an interpretive understanding of cultural and social processes (Lanclos & Asher, 2016). Researchers use the phenomenological design to explore an individual's lived experience for meaning and essences relating to the phenomenon through direct and conscious attention (McCoy, 2017). The ethnographic design was not applicable as I was not studying an intact culture. The phenomenological design did not meet my research objectives because I did not explore participants' lived experiences about the research phenomenon. In a case study design, the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, and a process, bounded by time and place from one or more individuals (Yin, 2017). The multiple case study design involves gathering information from participants from different organizations (Campbell, 2014). The multiple case study design was suitable because I planned to learn more about a little known, unexplored, underexplored, or poorly understood phenomenon from participants' perspectives working at different companies.

Data saturation occurs when no new themes or ideas emerge from data (Hancock et al., 2016). To achieve data saturation, I conducted interviews and gathered turnover metrics, exit interviews, and policies documents related to turnover policies from participants. Member checking was also used to help ensure data saturation. Member checking provided the interview participants an opportunity to review my interview summary notes and to verify or correct my interpretation of what the participants intended to say. I continued to interview HR leaders at small businesses who had successful strategies to reduce employee turnover until data saturation occurred.

Population and Sampling

The population for the study included five small business HR leaders who had successfully implemented strategies to reduce employee turnover. I used the purposeful sampling technique to identify participants from southern California. Benoot et al. (2016) suggested selecting participants from a population based on geographic location, availability, and accessibility. A purposeful sampling method is appropriate in a qualitative study to identify participants who possessed specific knowledge about the research topic (Yin, 2017). Purposeful sampling allowed me to select experienced and knowledgeable participants to obtain rich and meaningful data (Agyemang et al., 2014).

In a qualitative case study, a researcher could achieve data saturation with three to five participants (Roy et al., 2015). The qualitative researcher also focuses on the richness of the data collected from the interview participant (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). When rich data begins to replicate itself and no new information emerges from the interviews, then data saturation can occur (Hancock et al., 2016; van Rijinsoever, 2017). I reached data saturation with five participants by asking open-ended interview questions and gathering company documents.

I used Zoom which is a video conferencing, cloud phone, online webinar, and chat platform, to perform the interviews. I emailed the participants information on how to create a free Zoom account at https://zoom.us/signup. The participant used an email address to create an account (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., 2022). If an account already existed, then the participant clicked on “Forgot password?” to retrieve their information.

Zoom is applicable on a computer, smartphone, or tablet (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., 2022). The participant could use a headset or ear buds to keep the conversation confidential. If the participant did not want to use the computer or tablet for audio or was not able to receive audio via the computer or tablet, then the participant could use a dial in number provided in the meeting request (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., 2022). The participant was asked not to go on camera to protect their privacy.

Once the participants accepted the invitation, I sent them a calendar invite. I sent a Zoom link to the participants before the interview, so they had time to test their system and the account. I let the participants know I would be in the meeting 10 minutes before it was scheduled to start. The participant clicked on the link and then "Join a Meeting," where they typed in the 10-digit meeting ID number (Zoom Video Communications, Inc., 2022). I let the participant know I would be recording the meeting via Zoom and through my iPhone. I requested the participant be in an office or quiet setting that was distraction free. I let the participant know I had turned off my phone for notifications, and I asked them to do the same. Interviews ranged from 25 to 40 minutes in length.

Ethical Research

After receiving IRB approval from Walden University, I emailed the consent form to each participant by attaching the form along with the letter of invitation (see Appendix B). According to Halcomb et al. (2013), email is a suitable medium of communication to send the consent form to participants. The informed consent form provided information on the nature of the study, the rights and responsibilities of the participant, as well as the researcher. Moreover, the consent form contained information on research risk, contact information for the researcher and the institution, and participants’ right to withdraw from the study.

I advised the participants that if they wanted to withdraw from the study, then they could do so by contacting me via phone or email to let me know their intention. There would not have been any negative consequences for a participant if they had withdrawn from the study. I did not have any participants withdraw from the study. I did not offer any monetary incentives to participate in this study. I emailed participants a thank you note for their time. I provided a summary of the findings after my study was published.

The participants’ information, along with all documents and data collected, will remain securely stored for 5 years after CAO designee approval date on a password-protected USB flash drive in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. After 5 years, paper documents will be destroyed using a paper shredder. Yin (2017) recommended retaining documents for 5 years. When 5 years have passed, the flash drive will be reformatted to erase all data. I am the only person who with access to the filing cabinet.

I ensured the confidentiality of the participants by not publishing any personal or company information about the participant. Assuring and maintaining confidentiality and privacy reflects study integrity (V. Lee, 2018). I protected the names of individuals and organizations by assigning codes, such as P1. In P1, the letter P stands for participant number. The IRB approval number for this study was 10-13-21-0581362.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument in this qualitative multiple case study. I used semistructured interviews. A researcher uses semistructured interviews with an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to collect rich and detailed qualitative data to understand participants ’experience of a phenomenon (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview protocol included introductions, interview question, answering any questions the participant may have had regarding the consent form, advising the participant of the interview being recorded, and turnover metrics, exit interviews, and turnover policies documents from the participant. The elements of the interview protocol impact the quality of data collected in the interview and was generated before the research study and before data collection began (Kallio et al., 2016). Using open-ended questions during the interview encouraged participants to share more information and give more detailed answers to questions (Park & Park, 2016).

I recorded the interview using the Zoom platform and an iPhone 12 as a back-up and obtained the participants' consent at the beginning of the interview. Jentoft and Olsen (2019) suggested each interview be recorded with two devices to ensure back-up and to avoid any data loss. Interviews ranged from 25-40 minutes. Member checking was used after each interview by sharing my interpretation of participant responses in summary form. I conducted a member checking interview with each participant after the initial interview within one week so that participants could make any necessary changes to the summary form. Conducting member checking added to the credibility of the research data since they were reviewed and accepted by the participant (Thomas, 2017).

I established validity and reliability by analyzing the transcripts and turnover metrics, exit interviews, and turnover policies to help establish methodological triangulation. I included in the consent form that I would be asking for company documents, such as turnover metrics, exit interviews, and turnover policies from the participant. If the participant agreed to participate in the study, then they also agreed to provide the requested documents.

Data Collection Technique

Semistructured interviews were the primary data collection technique. I used semistructured interviews to answer my research question. All interviews followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A. Having an interview protocol ensured each participant received the same interview questions in the same order to reduce bias (Yin, 2017). Before the start of each interview, the participant emailed "I consent" reiterating the voluntary nature of the interview process, the risks and the benefits, and the option to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time. Reiterating the voluntary nature of involvement in the study was important so participants understood they could always change their mind and not participate (Seymour et al., 2017). Once the emailed consent had been received via LinkedIn messenger, I started the interview. The semistructured interviews were used to allow the participant flexibility in responding to follow-up questions or probes that emerged during the interview (Ergul Sonmez & Koc, 2018).

There are advantages and disadvantages with using semistructured interviews. One advantage of semistructured interviews is participants can speak freely and can describe their experiences in their own words (Ergul Sonmez & Koc, 2018). Another advantage of semistructured interviews is the interview focuses directly on answering the research question (Yin, 2017). A disadvantage of semistructured interviews is the potential for the interviewer to influence the participant’s responses with their own bias (Yin, 2017). I remained cognizant of my personal assumptions that may have influenced the data collection. Another disadvantage was not being able to observe social cues and the participant’s body language.

I used member checking to validate the participants’ responses. According to Yin (2017), member checking can help the researcher validate the interview summary with the participant to confirm the accuracy of the information collected. The first step in member checking was returning the summary form of my interpretations based on my understanding of the participants interview to the participant for a review to confirm the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. Member checking involved asking the participant to assess the trustworthiness of the research by validating the data collected (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Once the participant confirmed the accuracy of my interpretation of the interview in summary form, I judged the qualitative data to be valid and dependable.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers use various techniques to analyze, review, and collect data (Yin, 2017). I organized my data by using a reflective journal and labeling system. These methods ensured the information given by participants was secure and accurate. I maintained one main folder on my computer with sub-folders for each participant so data could be found quickly. I used my reflective journal to contemplate the audio recordings from the interview, written interview notes, and documents collected from the participant. I transcribed the audio recordings into a Microsoft Word document. During transcription, as part of my labeling system, I transferred the transcribed interviews into Microsoft Word and stored all these data under the assigned codes. I assigned codes for each participant to protect the participant and the company, such as P1. In P1, the letter P stands for participant number. Gibson et al. (2013) suggested maintaining various folders with alphanumeric codes rather than participants 'names for confidentiality: for example, using P1 for the first participant. The main folder was titled “Participants” and the sub-folders had the same naming convention as the participant codes, such as P1, P2, to indicate the participant number.

After the completion of each interview, I downloaded the voice memo to my laptop, which is password protected. I transcribed the handwritten notes from the interviews into digitized text documents in Microsoft Word to store electronically on my password-protected laptop. Any additional documents from the participants, such as confirmed consent forms and emails were printed as a PDF and saved to my laptop to file in the participant’s appropriate folder and then transferred to the USB flash drive.

Collected data are held on a password protected laptop in one folder on my computer and saved to a USB flash drive, which will remain in a locked filing cabinet, in my home office, for 5 years from CAO designee approval date. I am the only person who has access to the filing cabinet. After the 5 years have passed, the USB will be reformatted to erase stored data and all paper documents will be shredded.

Data Analysis

Data analysis helps a researcher prepare and organize data, categorize data into themes, and interpret the results to learn about a phenomenon under investigation (Roller & Lavrakas, 2018). For this study, I used methodological triangulation. Farquhar et al. (2020) noted when a researcher confirms the consistency of findings acquired by various collection methods, this is known as methodological triangulation. Farquhar et al. (2020) recommended methodological triangulation as a good practice in conducting case study research because combining research findings, sources, and methods achieves a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and supports qualitative data validity. Using methodological triangulation may limit bias since the researcher is collecting data from multiple data sources (Yin, 2017). I used semistructured interviews and turnover metrics, exit interviews, and turnover policies.

Five Phases Cycle

For my data analysis, I used Yin's (2017) five phases' data analysis, which consists of (a) compiling data coherently, (b) disassembling data into smaller pieces, (c) reassembling data, (d) interpreting data, and (e) drawing conclusions. I asked the same interview questions in the same order for all participants. I used an interview protocol to maintain consistency. An interview protocol can help to maintain consistency, thereby making data collection more reliable (Spillane et al., 2017). I used the five phases to analyze data placed into categories during the coding process to look for emergent themes.

Compiling

The first step of Yin's data analysis is to compile data into a useable format to find meaningful answers to the research question (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). In qualitative research, Castleberry and Nolen (2018) defined compiling as the process of organizing raw data for analysis. Watkins (2017) indicated Microsoft Word is a tool used in qualitative research to organize, reduce, and analyze data. I gathered data from interview notes, from turnover metrics, exit interviews, and turnover policies, interview transcripts, and a reflective journal and began to compile data. To familiarize myself with these data and to allow a greater understanding of meaning, I transcribed the participant's interview on the same day of the meeting using Microsoft Word. Once member checking was complete, I made notes about areas of commonalities and differences and color coded the themes by highlighting them through the data analysis process. I highlighted relevant words associated with employee turnover with a yellow highlighter; other phrases which answered the research question I marked with a green highlighter. Once these data were organized, I transferred them from Microsoft Word to Microsoft Excel within labeled rows and columns, and then I was ready to start disassembling the data.

Disassembling

For the next phase, I disassembled the data. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) defined disassembling the data as taking it apart and creating meaningful groupings by identifying the outlying themes and then consolidating them with common identities. In qualitative research this is often done through coding. Coding is using raw data that is converted into usable data through identifiable themes that have some connection with each other (Austin & Sutton, 2014). I used Microsoft Excel to compile, import, and organize my data. Disassembling data into smaller categories helps the researcher focus on one category at a time (Tuapawa, 2017). I began the process by reading the transcripts, completing member checking, reviewing company documents, journal notes, and any additional notes I had written down during the interview process. I highlighted and color-coded reoccurring or pertinent words in different color highlighters, such as a yellow highlighter for words associated with employee turnover and a green highlighter for other phrases which answered the research question. I repeated this coding process until data saturation had occurred.

Reassembling

After disassembling the data, I reassembled the data into main themes. Hierarchies and matrices are two common ways qualitative researchers can put data back together into themes (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Matrices are constructed into vertical and horizontal columns by participant roles, themes, variables, and emerging concepts (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I prioritized each category by order of significance to develop an understanding of the phenomenon to answer my research question. I completed several iterations of coding, highlighting and color-coding reoccurring or pertinent words and then transferred the themes into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I organized the data into a Microsoft Excel file labeled with participants (rows) and themes (columns). I assigned each theme a name and then grouped the themes that supported the research question. Once the coding and synthesizing were complete, I compared the data to the literature review and conceptual framework to ensure alignment.

Interpreting

For the fourth phase, I interpreted data by checking the main themes against the interview transcripts. This step allows the researcher to start focusing on interpreting the data and identifying thematic patterns within the data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Vaismoradi et al. (2013) defined interpreting as the process of obtaining meaning from data and describing the implications of the data. I continued to analyze the data after reassembling it into patterns and themes. Researchers decipher codes and create themes in an analytical narrative that explains the relevance of the findings in relation to the research question (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I used member checking to check for accuracy, and I did not have to revise the summary of my interpretations. Once I reassembled the data through coding, I was able to extract excerpts from the data and view them together and independently. I was able to confirm alignment by comparing the evidence from data, literature review, and conceptual framework to ensure the interpretation aligned with the research question.

Concluding

Finally, based on emergent themes and patterns in the data, I concluded and assessed the results. The final step in the data analysis structure is concluding data, which is when researchers offer their results and conclusions (Tuapawa, 2017). Yielding results from the researchers' decision-making process can be accomplished with a detailed description of coding procedures, description of codes, and patterns of the codes leading to themes and results. For example, I used a yellow highlighter for words associated with employee turnover and a green highlighter for other phrases that answered the research question. Yin (2011) stated that conclusions are the answer to the research questions or the purpose of the study. I finalized the data analysis by outlining how the findings were interpreted in relation to the conceptual framework, literature, and my research question. I also incorporated newly published studies from the literature relating to strategies to reduce employee turnover. After my findings were complete, I provided the participants with a summary of the findings via email once the study was published.

Coding of Qualitative Software

Organizing and sorting qualitative data can help researchers with coding data to help identify themes (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Transcribing and verifying interview notes and recordings might help organize these data (Storer et al., 2017). I used color coding to classify reoccurring themes in the data in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, using yellow for words associated with employee turnover and green for other phrases that answered the research question. I transcribed the audio recordings from participants into a Microsoft Word document. To ensure confidentiality, I assigned codes for each participant, such as P1. In P1, the letter P stands for participant number, to protect the participant. I then removed any identifying information of the participants, such as name, company, and consent form, and transferred the information to a USB flash drive. I analyzed the interview transcripts, company documents, and used member checking to check for accuracy until no new themes emerged.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability in a qualitative study is often referred to as dependability (Cypress, 2017). Dependability in qualitative research is the stability of the data over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, I used methodological triangulation to obtain information from multiple data sources from turnover metrics, exit interviews, and turnover policies related, and semistructured interviews. Using methodological triangulation can help to create additional checks for data interpretation to enhance the credibility of the research study (Yin, 2017). An interview protocol as well as member checking can help to support the reliability of the study (Yin, 2017). Validity is the process of establishing legitimacy which includes determining evidence of credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Morse, 2015).

Credibility

Credibility can be defined by how confident the qualitative researcher is in the truth of the research study findings (Patton, 1999). Credibility is enhanced when multiple sources of data and triangulation are used to increase validity and reduce bias (Yin, 2017). Member checking was accomplished by continuously checking data and my interpretations with the participants that were selected for the study (Cypress, 2017). I used member checking and company documents shared by the participants in the interviews to enhance credibility by methodological triangulation.

Transferability

Transferability occurs when the rich knowledge of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Anney (2014) noted the researcher's role is to provide a detailed description of the study and the results can be transmitted to other contexts with different respondents. I enhanced transferability by providing thick descriptions of the research process from data collection to the final report of the study. I recorded the participants during the interview process to ensure the conversations were transcribed verbatim.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others based on participants 'responses instead of any potential bias or personal motivations of the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used methodological triangulation to increase confirmability in the study. Another strategy I used to establish confirmability was maintaining a reflective journal. A reflective journal was used to highlight each step of data analysis and the rationale behind the decisions I made (van Rensburg & Ukpere, 2014). I used the reflective journal to document procedures for checking data gathered during the study.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is achieved when no new themes emerge, there are no new findings, and the existing findings account for all patterns in the data (Charmaz, 2014; Nelson, 2017). To ensure data saturation, I conducted semistructured interviews until no new information emerged. Fusch and Ness (2015) stated data saturation occurred when no new evidence or themes emerged. Methodological triangulation can be achieved by cross-checking the data from participants as well as the interpretations within and across each category (Cypress, 2017). I asked each participant six questions and compared their responses until no new information was presented.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2 of the study, I discussed (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) research method, (e) research design, (f) population and sampling, (g) ethical research, (h) data collection instruments, (i) data organization techniques, (j) data analysis, (k) reliability and validity, and (l) transition and summary.

Section 3 of the study presents the following information: (a) introduction, (b) presentation of findings, (c) application to professional practice, (d) implication for social change, (e) recommendation for action, (f) recommendation for further research, (g) reflections, and (h) conclusions. I discuss the implications of social change and provide suggestions for future research addressing a gap in business practices.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small business HR leaders use to reduce voluntary turnover of employees. Five small business HR leaders participated in the study from the southern California area. The data collection process included semistructured interviews and review of company documents. My findings revealed that participants used strategies to reduce voluntary turnover of employees by (a) implementing work-life balance policies, (b) having an open compensation philosophy, and (c) encouraging and managing the relationship between the employee and their supervisor. The participants 'strategies to reduce to voluntary turnover of employees could benefit other small business HR leaders help to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question was: What strategies do small business HR leaders use to reduce voluntary turnover of employees? The qualitative multiple case study involved five semistructured interviews with those who met the selection criteria: (a) worked as an HR manager or above level, (b) had at least 5 years of experience, (c) worked in a small business of 500 or less employees at a company located in southern California, and (d) implemented successful strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. All participants consented to the interview via LinkedIn with the words "I consent" before the interview.

Participants were identified with a code, such as P1, P2, P3, and so on, to maintain confidentiality. I reached data saturation after interviewing the fifth participant and found no new data or themes emerging. The findings in this study align with the analysis from the literature review and the conceptual framework of Herzberg's two factor-theory.

Theme 1: Implementing Work-Life Balance Policies

The first theme that emerged from the data analysis was implementing work-life balance policies. During the interviews, all participants mentioned work-life balance policies as a strategy to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Work-life balance policies reduce employee burnout and benefit the employer by improving employee and organizational outcomes (Dousin et al., 2021).

Work-life balance is an essential aspect of an organizational strategy that impacts employees' willingness to stay with the company (Maurya et al., 2021). Employees who have flexible work hours, the opportunity to work from home, and a company that recognizes and supports their employees' attempts to balance work and family life have lower turnover rates (Wong et al., 2017).

Information gathered from all the participants revealed that implementing work-life balance policies has mitigated voluntary employee turnover in small businesses. P1 and P5 mentioned that during COVID, employees could avoid burnout because they had flexibility in their day to help their kids with virtual school and could work non-traditional hours but still get their work done. P1 stated, "The company has given employees the ability to flex their hours during the pandemic. Since this strategy has been so well received from employees and productivity is up, we will keep this flexibility moving forward." P5 said, "Giving employees autonomy and flexibility to do their work on their own time, and not the traditional 8 to 5 schedules, our engagement scores have been higher, and work is getting done quicker."

However, P3 revealed that their inability to provide all employees a work-life balance option with remote work was a barrier that caused some employees to leave the organization. As companies went remote during the COVID pandemic, not all positions could be remote. The participants deemed essential employees to the organization found themselves at work each day, with little interaction with other employees on site. P3 stated,

> There are some positions in the organization that cannot be remote; it is not possible. HR had to quickly put COVID safety protocols into place so employees could come back and work. We made sure that other non-essential employees rotated throughout the week with the essential employees, so they would not feel alone while they were here. We did our best to retain the essential employees with extra hazard pay and would give them gift cards for the grocery store since we could not bring in lunch for them. We also gave a monthly stipend to the essential workers for childcare they had to pay for. We lost two essential employees but were able to retain everyone else, which is a huge win for us. There are a lot of organizations like us that lost half of their essential employees. I feel like we were successful.

P4 said they had implemented a company policy on remote work and flexible hours before COVID:

> When the COVID pandemic hit, we were already ahead of the game. We did not struggle to get everyone set up remote with laptops and screens because we were already there. No one missed a beat, and there were no major changes in work production or downtime.

P2 stated that work-life balance, especially the past year and a half, has contributed to less turnover and high performance. P2 indicated, “We have had less turnover since implementing the work-life balance policy. We are making our employees a priority by giving them a flexible work arrangement and providing them with resources to mental health and childcare.”

Company documents obtained from P4 showed that the flexible work policy implemented in 2018 indicated employees could choose a flexible schedule and what days they wanted to work from home, with the manager’s approval. The remote work agreement emphasized if the employee's performance needed improvement, they would come back to work in the office full time, and remote work could be re-evaluated. Manager’s expectations that employees remain online to increase an employee’s workload, while an increasing number of emails and phone calls can disrupt an employee and reduce their productivity (Bouwmeester et al., 2021). Providing employees a balance of work and home life could help small business HR leaders reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Alignment to the Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Theme 1 aligns with the two-factor theory relating work-life balance as a hygiene factor to job satisfaction. Herzberg (1974) connected work-life balance as a hygiene factor to job satisfaction and a good working environment. According to Kotni and Karumuri (2018), highly satisfying motivation factors for employees are work-life balance and autonomy. According to Kotni and Karumuri, companies should design motivation programs that concentrate on their employees' work-life balance and autonomy. The Herzberg two-factor theory can be used as a framework to explore job satisfaction in the context of work-life balance (Thant & Chang, 2021).

Companies are being forced to adopt work–life balance policies to balance employees' job-related responsibilities as well as their personal responsibilities (Rodriguez-Sanchez et al., 2020). However, other researchers have found that employees working from home frequently cause workers to blur the lines between work and personal life, resulting in work overload, increased stress and anxiety, and decreased job satisfaction (Liu & Lo, 2018). Regardless, work–life balance is critical to job satisfaction, resulting in positive attitudes and behaviors related to work by employees (Sudibjo & Suwarli, 2020). The higher the job satisfaction, the lower voluntary employee turnover will be (Azmi et al., 2012).

Theme 2: Open Compensation Philosophy

The second theme that emerged from the data analysis was implementing an open compensation philosophy in the organization. During the interviews, three participants mentioned the company's open compensation philosophy was a strategy used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Having a comprehensive pay policy to promote employee work satisfaction is one way for companies to decrease voluntary employee turnover (Prasetio et al., 2019).

A compensation philosophy is a set of beliefs and practices that govern how a company pays its workers (Bradley, 2021). The philosophy could specify where the company wants its overall compensation to be in comparison to other companies, for example, at or above market rates (Heisler, 2021). The philosophy could be about how salary should stimulate and inspire employees to strive for excellence, or about how the organization will reward and incentivize top performers, without specifying what these incentives will be (Heisler, 2021).

Information gathered from the participants revealed that implementing an open compensation philosophy has mitigated voluntary employee turnover. P1 mentioned they looked at compensation trends and found that compensation transparency was important to employees to feel equitable with their peers. P1 stated, “We are very transparent with employees and upfront about what our compensation philosophy is and what percentage they fall in, within the pay grade.” P1 went on to state:

> Before we implemented and rolled out the compensation philosophy, the HR department reviewed salary surveys and did a market analysis of all employee salaries. HR ensured employees were being paid fairly based on the job description, which included job responsibilities, education, seniority with the company and the employees job performance.

P1 also mentioned employees did receive a market adjustment or a cost-of-living adjustment if they were not being paid fairly. After P1 rolled out the adjustments and then the compensation philosophy, employees felt they were being paid fairly. P1 said, “There has been a significant decrease in employees leaving for more money, because they know they are getting paid fairly here.” Compensation philosophies that align with the company’s overall strategy serve as a motivator for employees to believe in the company's vision and culture (Sembiring, 2019). P4 similarly said, “Looking at compensation surveys and benchmarking, what we are paying employees versus our competitors and implementing a formalized compensation policy has made our employees feel valued and content to be here and it’s just part of our culture now.”

Employees who are satisfied with their jobs can focus on their work instead of worrying about their pay (Jiru & Tadesse, 2019). P5 described how the open compensation philosophy has created a productive environment:

> After we implemented our compensation philosophy, we saw an increase in productivity. To me that’s because employees did not have to wonder if they were going to get an increase, or if the person next to them made more money, or if there were going to be strings attached when they received an increase. Employees knew they could have open and honest conversations with their supervisors about pay, read our policy on pay, and know exactly where they stood. When employees don’t have to use their extra energy thinking about pay, they are able to take that energy and put it into their performance. When the

performance increases, the pay increases, and employees stay, because they are excited to be here.

Company documents obtained from P1, P4, and P5 indicated their compensation philosophy objectives were in line with each other. The compensation objective is (a) to attract and retain key talent, (b) create appropriate salary structures for each position based on job responsibilities and education requirements, (c) pay salaries that are competitive in the job market, and (d) recognize and reward employees. The compensation philosophy focused on how jobs are evaluated and the method to developing pay ranges within the organization.

Compensation is an important component that should be addressed and evaluated wisely by leaders of an organization, based on employee motivation and the organizations financial conditions (Asriani & Riyanto, 2020). Providing employees with an open compensation philosophy could help small business HR leaders reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Alignment to the Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Theme 2 aligns with Herzberg’s two-factor theory relating compensation as a hygiene factor to job satisfaction. Herzberg (1974) connected money as a hygiene factor, rather than a motivating factor. Employees frequently consider their pay to reflect their value to the organization, and when an employee is discontent it is typically exacerbated by low pay, resulting in high employee turnover (Frye et al., 2020). Job satisfaction in the context of fair compensation can be studied using the Herzberg two-factor theory as a framework, since salary is described as a hygiene factor in the theory (Yousaf, 2020).

Compensation is a basic need of employees and when the compensation is lower, this can increase dissatisfaction therefore a higher compensation is a driver for employee satisfaction (Stamolampros et al., 2019).

Compensation can improve many factors such as loyalty, performance, and employee satisfaction (Rinny et al., 2020). Additionally, employees are driven to fulfill organizational goals if compensation is offered in accordance with performing the role and fairness (Rinny et al., 2020). Having a structured approach to compensation helps an organization manage their employees in a way that maximizes its value (Magnan & Martin, 2019). Companies should ensure that their compensation packages stay competitive in the market to retain high-performing staff (Ramli, 2019). Herzberg (1974) assumed that money increases job satisfaction, which Mwau et al. (2019) has challenged. Mwau et al. (2019) found employees are less driven to perform work when the link between effort, performance, and pay raises is not apparent. Furthermore, when compensation practices are created and implemented in isolation by HR management, which might lead to adverse outcomes, such as employee turnover (Jannat et al., 2020).

Rinny et al. (2020) stated compensation can improve many factors such as loyalty, performance, and employee satisfaction. Additionally, Rinny et al. (2020) stated employees are driven to fulfill organizational goals if compensation is offered in accordance with performing the role and fairness. Having a structured approach to compensation helps an organization manage their employees in a way that maximizes its value (Magnan & Martin, 2019).

Theme 3: Encouraging and Managing the Relationship Between the Employee and Their Supervisor

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis was encouraging and managing the relationship between the employee and their supervisor. The data provided evidence that the four participants (P1, P2, P3, P4) have encouraged and helped managers cultivate the relationship between the employee and their supervisors to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Employees strive for professional achievement through positive relationships with their supervisors', which can aid in organizational commitment and job happiness, lowering employee turnover (Hirschi & Spurk, 2021).

Pattnaik and Panda's (2020) findings suggested that a supervisor who regularly supports and engages with their employees is an effective strategy for reducing employee stress and increasing employee happiness. An important factor in an employee's work environment is social relationships, especially the relationship between an employee and their supervisor (Huang et al., 2021). P1 mentioned how important it is for managers to engage with their employees. P1 stated, "We explain to managers weekly how important engagement is and how important it is to do things like employee check-ins and get really involved in why employees are happy or unhappy." P2 mentioned that while employees are remote, it is more important to build the relationship with their employees. HR provides the organization managers with three different questions the manager can choose from to ask their employees each week. P2 stated:

> We have weekly leadership meetings with all the managers at the same time. We provide the managers with three questions each week to choose which question to

> ask their employees that week. We let the managers know they can ask their questions one-on-one with their employees or do it as a team meeting and have a group conversation. The manager then sends a summary of the answers anonymously from their employees to the HR leader for their group, and then we in HR compile all the responses from the different groups. This technique helps the manager engage with their employees, holds the manager accountable for having the meetings and not canceling them, builds a rapport with their employees, and sees what we can be doing better as managers and as an organization.

P2 shared the following questions the manager can ask their employees are:

1. As your manager, what can I do more or less of?
2. What are we currently not doing as a company that you feel we should be doing?
3. If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?

Employees who have a positive and supportive relationship with their supervisors communicate more openly when asked to solicit ideas and engage in conversations (Lee & Chon, 2021). Effective managers pay attention to their employees' concerns, solicit their input, and involve them in decision-making (Abdien, 2019). P4 stated, "We encourage our managers to be open and honest with their employees and not to silo their communication. Employees are not afraid to approach their manager, and managers are not afraid to approach their employees for feedback either." Employees are more inclined to speak positively or negatively outside of the organization based on their opinion of their supervisor (Lee & Chon, 2021). P4 also mentioned, "When employees are happy with their relationship with their supervisor, they are more positive about the company as well, and positive word of mouth always helps with recruiting and retention."

Training is a solution for improving employee and organizational performance and orienting new employees to the organization (Syahruddin et al., 2020). P3 revealed that their company had to put in time and effort to train managers to communicate more effectively with employees over the past couple of years. P3 stated:

> We noticed our exit surveys had a lot of the same themes. The managers did not respect the employees' opinions, the employee did not have open communication with their manager, and sometimes the manager would speak down to the employee. When we read these, we knew something needed to change. We implemented communications training for anyone who was a people manager. The training was over 5 days and was pretty dynamic. Managers were able to see where they had gone wrong in the past, and then the managers had homework each day and had to write a paper on how they would have approached the conversations differently now, after what they had learned that day. The new communication model was not an overnight success but took several months of constant reinforcement. The open communication between managers and their employees is ingrained in our culture. When a new manager is hired or promoted internally, they all go through communications training.

A review of company documents provided by P3 indicated the training schedule for new managers on effective communication and some of the training materials used.

Employees who believe their managers are not communicating effectively often seek ~~to~~ leave an organization (Pattnaik & Panda, 2020). When employees develop the confidence to speak with their manager and build a relationship, they are more engaged in their work (Schroth, 2019). Employees' engagement reduces turnover intentions when they have a solid and open relationship with their manager (Sandhya & Sulphey, 2020). Creating an engaging work environment for employees and their supervisors can help small business HR leaders reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Alignment to the Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Theme 3 aligns with the two-factor theory relating interpersonal relationships as a hygiene factor to job satisfaction. Herzberg (1974) connected interpersonal relationships as a hygiene factor to job satisfaction and a positive working environment. Some organizations consider collaboration and group cohesiveness to be critical for a healthy working environment and the development of strong workgroup connections (Chimote & Malhotra, 2020). According to Tian et al. (2020), employee retention was high when effective communication exists between the employee and the manager. The Herzberg two-factor theory can be used as a framework to explore job satisfaction in the context of interpersonal relationships with coworkers and supervisors (Alrawahi et al., 2020).

Employee morale is enhanced when employees believe their supervisors appreciate what they do and their suggestions for improving a work process are heard (Ewing et al., 2019). According to Herzberg (1974), hygiene factors such as interpersonal relationships, will not only motivate employees to communicate more openly but will also assist them in minimizing job unhappiness (Hee et al., 2019). Participants in this study demonstrated how encouraging and managing the relationship between the employee and their supervisor can improve voluntary employee turnover.

Applications to Professional Practice

The application of this study to professional practice includes providing small business HR leaders with strategies used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. I interviewed and collected documents for five small business HR leaders in southern California to gather strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Findings from this study indicated that HR leaders may improve voluntary employee turnover by implementing work-life balance policies, having an open compensation philosophy, and encouraging and managing the relationship between the employee and their supervisor.

The small business HR leaders in this study provided examples of open communication and engagement techniques to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The multiple viewpoints of HR leaders on communication and engagement techniques may also aid other small business HR leaders in determining the most effective communication style for reducing voluntary employee turnover. According to the participants, good work-life balance policies is a strategy that reduces voluntary employee turnover.

HiralBorikar and Bhatt (2020) noted that leaders should incorporate policies to help employees balance work and family since a work-life imbalance creates absenteeism, reduced productivity, and high turnover. Employees tend to have less intention to leave an organization when there is a balance between work and life demands as the employee feels they have more control over their lives (Jaharuddin & Zainol, 2019).

As a result of the findings, HR leaders could communicate an open compensation philosophy to employees to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Maryani et al. (2021) emphasized that organizations with a compensation policy have a favorable impact on employee enthusiasm to continue working for the company. Salary transparency has been demonstrated to generate more trust in management, increase employee engagement, reduce employee turnover, and contribute to a competitive advantage in the labor market (Trotter et al., 2017). Clear communication of the compensation philosophy and transparency about pay practices improve voluntary employee turnover.

HR leaders could potentially benefit from reduced voluntary employee turnover by encouraging and managing the relationship between the employee and their supervisor. When managers empower their employees, show commitment, trust, and make sure employees feel supported and appreciated, employees feel more committed to the organization (Waeraas & Dahle, 2020). Employees need managers to communicate in a direct, clear, and empathetic manner to effectively complete tasks on the job and work successfully (Mikkelson et al., 2019).

Implications for Social Change

Based on my findings, implications for positive social change might include creating, developing, and implementing strategies for small business HR leaders to enhance economic opportunities within local communities. Stahl et al. (2020) stated that implementing and encouraging corporate sustainability and social responsibility practices in the workplace fosters employee engagement, improves employee performance, and the well-being of the community.

The first theme that emerged from the research was providing a positive work environment with work-life balance policies. Employees who have control over their work schedules are more likely to participate in family and social activities (Arlinghaus et al., 2019). Employees might spend more time with their families and foster volunteer roles in the community, which could lead to creating a sustainable investment in the community and developing social influences to expose youth to social norms such as volunteering for good causes. Volunteering could mean working with local food banks and/or homeless shelters, tutoring disadvantaged students, and neighborhood cleanup initiatives. Employers who increase efforts to engage their employees in activities such as mentoring disadvantaged students, holding recreational activities for groups of vulnerable or disabled individuals, or cleaning up litter in nature reserves (Shachar & Hustinx, 2019).

The second theme that emerged was open compensation philosophy policies, which could potentially stimulate and inspire employees to strive for excellence. Employees who are satisfied with their pay could potentially build a positive reputation for the organization; thereby, people would want to work for the organization, which would increase the hiring selection within the community. Hiring residents could potentially boost the local economy. According to John et al. (2019), organizations that pay their employees well are viewed positively in the community. Making an organization a highly sought-after place to work could likely increase residents ’interest in employment, which could boost the local economy.

The third theme that emerged was encouraging and managing the relationship between the employee and their supervisor. The positive social implication is that employees could build a rapport with organizational leaders to engage with the local communities to help reduce unemployment. This could potentially lead to the needs of the community being addressed through a workforce alliance, which helps to bridge the skills gap and address key employment shortages. Community engagement is key to employee commitment because when employees feel as if the company, they work for is concerned about their community it can build trust, which could lead to support for initiatives that would benefit the community (Mahmood et al., 2019). Community engagement could potentially be available through developing scholarship programs for residents to attend college who then can contribute to community initiatives, such as mentorship and tutoring.

The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by providing strategies to small business HR leaders to reduce voluntary employee turnover. When employees have money to spend in their communities, the money spent remains in the community fueling the economy, creating employment opportunities for local residents, and enhancing opportunities for community development.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some small business HR leaders used to reduce employee turnover. The findings of this study indicated strategies small business HR leaders used successfully to reduce voluntary turnover of employees were: (a) implementing work-life balance policies, (b) having an open compensation philosophy, and (c) encouraging and managing the relationships between the employees and their supervisors. After exploring the strategies employed by the participants, I propose three recommendations for action.

First, HR and business leaders should implement work-life balance policies. Doing so aligns the HR function with business strategy to increase organizational productivity and effectiveness. These policies also increase employee morale, which promotes retention. HR and business leaders could use the findings of this research to develop an effective remote work policy or a flexible work agreement policy. HR and business leaders could find methods to incorporate flexible working hours and shift flexibility. They could also help with teleconferencing by providing webcams and laptops. Giving employees alternative work arrangements outside of the standard eight to five work schedule helps them achieve work-life balance and improves organizational performance.

Second, HR and business leaders should consider adopting and implementing an open compensation philosophy. An organization's lack of transparency and commitment to compensation policies could negatively affect voluntary employee turnover. HR and business leaders should consider (a) mentioning their wages or salary in a recruitment advertisement to attract skilled applicants, (b) conducting an annual salary survey to ensure current employees are being paid fairly, and (c) revisiting the written compensation philosophy yearly to ensure the policy is still up to date and accurate.

Lastly, I recommend that HR and business leaders encourage and manage the relationships between their employees and the supervisors. HR and business leaders should consider (a) setting up team building activities on a quarterly basis, such as participating in a simple game of truth and lies where participants gather in a conference room and each member says three truths and one lie about themselves. The game is designed to ensure participants to get to know one another better as a team by conducting engagement surveys to get a pulse on the commitment level of the employees to stay with the organization and by completing management training on various topics regarding how to build a trusting relationship with employees.

After my study is published, I will pursue opportunities to present my findings through the local SHRM chapter conferences. I will share a summary of the findings with study participants. I plan to be a guest speaker in HR courses at local universities and to post excerpts of my study on my LinkedIn account to start discussions with HR and business leaders. Creating an open-ended question for HR and business leaders to answer through a LinkedIn discussion could create activity on the discussion post. I will encourage others who respond to the post to share it with their network to reach a wider audience.

Recommendations for Further Research

This qualitative multiple case study explored the strategies some small business HR leaders used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The findings of this case study were based upon the knowledge and insight of five small business HR leaders located in southern California. In this study, there were three limitations. The first limitation was that participants may not be available due to a lack of consistent work schedules during the week with meetings, planned vacations, or travel due to COVID-19 pandemic social distancing precautions. Therefore, interviews were conducted in a virtual environment via Zoom meetings. To protect the privacy of each participant, cameras were turned off during interviews. Future researchers may have the opportunity to have in person interviews and to offer participants more options, such as one-on-one interviews or focus groups. Some participants may not have access to or knowledge of a virtual environment.

One recommendation for further research is to conduct a quantitative correlational study connecting employees ’level of job engagement with retention outcomes. Future researchers could also study specific job retention strategies to determine the level of organizational benefits necessary to retain employees in small businesses. The results of these studies could help HR leaders focus their efforts and financial resources to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

The second limitation was that successful strategies used by some small business HR leaders to reduce voluntary employee turnover may not be transferable to other small business HR leaders. Future researchers should include participants from a broader geographical area to identify if HR leaders in different areas have similar or different strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Another recommendation for further research is to use a quantitative or mixed method research method to examine trends in data to study as to why employees voluntarily leave small businesses. For example, a researcher could use a quantitative or mixed method research method for data collection and analysis that examined exit interviews of employees voluntarily leaving small businesses and the rates in which they left; these data could be compared across small business organizations.

The third limitation was that participants might have provided biased responses about whether they had negative or positive feelings about the organization; this bias could have limited the validity of the results. Future researchers may want to interview participants from different levels of the organization, including employees, supervisors, and managers, to get an in-depth understanding of the organization. Future researchers can review motivational strategies used by small business HR leaders, taken from organizational documents, exit interview, and employee surveys, to create policies to curtail employee dissatisfaction and negative work cultures and to create incentive programs to encourage employees to stay with the small business.

Reflections

Over this 5-year DBA Doctoral Study journey, there have been some challenges, including a global pandemic. However, with the guidance of my chairperson, I was able to work toward my goals indicated in the term plan in a timely manner. My experience was that I had to adjust my daily schedule to be sure I completed each subsection on time. One of the benefits of this experience was improving my time management skills.

Overall, the research process has been time consuming but fulfilling. I initially assumed HR leaders would answer the interview questions based upon their relevant knowledge and experience. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the HR leaders had to immediately learn about remote work policies and new federal and local laws that needed to be followed. I was conscious I needed to mitigate my bias because of my background in HR, and so I determined my study conclusions solely upon the interview data and documents obtained from participants.

While there are many ways to reduce voluntary employee turnover, the focus on small businesses presented different approaches and perspectives on how to retain employees. These findings were not typical of my own ideas or professional experience. My experience in retaining employees included giving employees incentives (gift cards, company stock) and organizing appreciation events (a dinner cruise). Although I had basic knowledge of qualitative analysis, I improved my skills of organizing and connecting the data, coding, and reporting themes derived from the analysis.

During this study experience, I have changed my thinking on how small business HR leaders focus on retaining employees. I thought small businesses would not have the resources to put funds into employee retention programs. However, HR leaders in the small businesses I interviewed were able to implement low-cost strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small business HR leaders used to reduce voluntary turnover of employees. The five participants who participated in the semistructured interviews were HR leaders in small businesses in southern California. During data analysis, three themes were identified in response to the research question and supported by the conceptual framework of Herzberg’s two-factor theory and existing literature on employee turnover. The three themes were: (a) implementing work-life balance policies, (b) having an open compensation philosophy, and (c) encouraging and managing the relationship between the employee and their supervisor.

An increase in voluntary employee turnover is costly to small businesses and may cause their business to fail. Based upon the literature review and study findings, to reduce employee turnover, small business HR leaders should (a) have open communication with all levels of employees, (b) become familiar with and implement engagement techniques, and (c) create salary transparency in the workplace. Small businesses benefit when employees stay-with the company. For example, when employee retention rates increase, the cost of hiring and training new employees decreases. When supervisors seek to have better working relations with employees, the employees contribute more to developing a positive company culture and building the business. In addition, employees and supervisors will have a stronger sense of belonging to the business and the community.

HR and business leaders who seek to create an engaged and transparent workplace should be mindful of the employees ’perception of organizational culture, employee needs, such as work-life balance, and the employee and supervisor relationship. Paying attention to this study’s findings could help small business HR leaders reduce voluntary employee turnover, which could help their small businesses stay open.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol	
WHAT TO DO	**WHAT TO SAY – SCRIPT**
1. Introduction of the interview	Thank you for taking time out of your schedule today for this interview. The purpose of this interview and the data being collected is for my doctoral study, which is a requirement for graduation. The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies some small business human resources leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. I will interview you and at least four other human resources leaders to find strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover. First, I would like to let you know your participation is voluntary. If I ask a question that you are not comfortable answering, please let me know and we will move on to the next question. If you want to stop the interview at any time, please feel free to let me know. I will be audio recording the interview and I am going to take note as well; are you okay with this? When the interview is complete, within one week I am going to email you a one- or two-page summary of my interpretations. If I misrepresented anything you said, or if there is any information you would like to add or take away, just let me know. To ensure confidentiality, I plan to protect your identity, the organization and all data collected by having a numbering and alphabetic system in place. I have set aside an hour for the interview. If more time is needed, then we can extend it another 30 minutes.

2. Paraphrase as needed 3. Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth information	The research question for this qualitative case study is: What strategies do small business human resources leaders use to reduce voluntary turnover of employees?
	Interview Questions 1. What strategies have you used to reduce voluntary turnover of employees? 2. How has your organization used strategies to reduce voluntary turnover of employees? 3. How did you implement your strategies to reduce voluntary turnover of employees? 4. What were the key barriers to implementing your strategies to reduce voluntary turnover of employees? 5. How have you measured the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce voluntary turnover of employees? 6. What additional information can you provide concerning strategies that you use to reduce voluntary turnover of employees?
4. Bring the interview to a close and thank the participant for their time	Thank you very much for taking time today to complete this interview for my doctoral study. This now concludes the interview.
5. Schedule member checking meeting	I want to let you know I will be emailing you a summary of my interpretations so you can review them to ensure I did not misrepresent you in any way. Please let me know if there is anything you would like to add or take away. I will email you the summary. Thank you, I look forward to speaking with you again at that time.

Follow-Up Member Checking	
6. Introduction of the follow-up e-mail	Thank you again for your time. Did you have time to review the email summary I sent?
7. Share a copy of the brief synthesis for each individual question.	I have recorded the following evidence from your interview session and have summarized my understanding as per my transcription and would like to verify with you any gaps, missing sections, or responses that were hard to understand. The review of the summary to ensure accuracy will take approximately 10-20 minutes of your time to read through.
8. At the close of each interview, I will thank the participant for their time, and I will let them know I will send them a copy of the doctoral study once it is completed.	

Appendix B: Email Invitation to Participate

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of my doctoral study research at Walden University, I would like to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting to explore the strategies small business human resources leaders use to reduce voluntary turnover of employees. Your participation in the research study is voluntary and will remain confidential. If you have any questions before accepting the invitation to participate, please let me know. To achieve the objectives of the research study, your participation depends on satisfying certain criteria. Participants in this study need to meet the following eligibility criteria (a) having been an HR manager or above level, (b) having 5 years of experience, (c) working in a small business of 500 or less employees at a company located in southern California, and (d) having implemented successful strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

If you satisfy these eligibility criteria and agree to participate in the study, please notify me via the contact information below. I will contact you to set up the interview. Attached is the consent form for you to indicate your consent by responding to this message with the words “I consent” before the interview. The initial interview will be completed within 45-60 minutes. I will email you the summary of my interpretation. The review of the summary to ensure accuracy should take about 10-20 minutes of your time to read through to ensure my understanding, as per my transcription, I would like to verify any gaps, missing sections, or responses that were hard to understand. This process is known as member checking. The interviews will be audio recorded. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristina Afonso