2022

Strategies Information Technology Outsourcing Managers Use to Improve Business Performance and Employee Retention

Timothee Ntouba Mboule
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Timothee N. Mboule

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,

and that any and all revisions required by

the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Gregory Uche, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Yvonne Doll, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Brenda Jack, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University

2022

Abstract

Strategies Information Technology Outsourcing Managers Use to Improve Business

Performance and Employee Retention

by

Timothee N. Mboule

MBA, Ashford University, 2011

MDY, Norwich University, 2009

BA, Weber State University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2022

Abstract

Voluntary employee turnover can result in adverse business outcomes. Information technology (IT) managers are concerned with voluntary turnover, which is the number one reason for actual turnover. Grounded in the transaction cost theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention. The participants comprised four IT managers from two firms in Arizona who effectively used strategies to improve business performance and employee retention. Data sources included semi-structured interviews, a review of archival company documents, and field notes. The data were thematically coded and analyzed, and four themes emerged: communication and relationships, labor costs, organizational learning and culture, and vendor management. A key recommendation is for IT managers to implement effective communication and relationships with vendors to achieve efficient labor costs in ITO contracts. The implications for positive social change include the potential for IT managers to create job opportunities, maintain socioeconomic stability for local citizens, provide social amenities and welfare, and promote regional communities' economic development across the globe.

Strategies Information Technology Outsourcing Managers Use to Improve Business

Performance and Employee Retention

by

Timothee N. Mboule

MBA, Ashford University, 2011

MDY, Norwich University, 2009

BA, Weber State University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2022

Dedication

I dedicate this study to the Almighty. Without Him, this should have never come to light.

Acknowledgments

My special thanks to my wife, Judith Mboule, and all my children. I love you deeply and you have been on my side from the beginning of this doctoral journey until the end. I am grateful to my Chair Department, Dr. Gregory Uche, Dr. Lionel De Souza, Dr. Brenda Jack, my faculty members, my brothers Dagobert Mboule and Samuel Mboule, my sisters Jackie, Ladouce, Suzanne, and Alice Mboule. To my deceased parents, Esther and Rodolphe Mboule, I know you are looking down from Heaven on what I have accomplished, and your unconditional love has accompanied me throughout this journey. May your souls continue to rest in peace. To my spiritual parents, George and Yemi Olusa, for their support and guidance all those years.

Table of Contents

i

_Toc101041321

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Outsourcing is a way to explore innovative thinking opportunities (Sen et al., 2020). Information technology (IT) managers usually aim to maximize business profitability, which is often the center of their decision-making during outsourcing projects. Successful outsourcing projects bring a profitable business relationships and knowledge transfer. When knowledge transfer is done right, business partners involved in outsourcing projects could benefit from business performance and employee retention (Masa'deh et al., 2017). IT managers should be aware of the potentially harmful influence of outsourcing on employees and retention rates; thus, they need to design appropriate policies and environments to reduce such threats (Lee & Lee, 2020). Because people tend to leave their jobs when they do not feel empowered, IT managers should understand that getting employees involved in the outsourcing process can enhance their performance and attract them to stay within the company (Lee & Lee, 2020). Information technology outsourcing (ITO) managers struggle to successfully implement business outsourcing contracts to improve business performance and employee retention (Presbitero et al., 2016). According to Lee and Lee (2020), business outsourcing with various incentives can promote employee retention. The focus of this study was to identify the strategies that ITO managers use to improve business performance and employee retention.

Background of the Problem

Management issues arise when outsourcing can be magnified by distance and cultural differences. IT managers should understand that outsourcing products and

services globally can create enormous challenges (Ohaegbu & Agwu, 2015). ITO is a complicated process requiring severe investigation of the strategy before investing. Poor communication and lack of financial support can constitute severe handicaps to overcome the global market realities (Wu & Park, 2019). IT managers encounter challenges in languages, cultural realms, political harshness, corruption, and to some extent, internal conflicts (Pathiranage et al., 2020). Before acquiring the financial assistance to invest on a global scale, ITO businesses should train managers to obtain the necessary skills to minimize the risks of ITO, such as hidden costs and the opportunistic behaviors of the other parties (Lioliou et al., 2019). There are many considerations to make as a manager before investing in ITO.

Although outsourcing seems a logical way to save on labor costs, it also has risks if leaders are not put into place to manage the changes accordingly. There is evidence of activity-making profits worldwide, but it goes hand in hand with well-trained managers who understand the complexity of outsourcing (Fehrenbacher & Wiener, 2019). Business leaders should thoroughly explain the outsourcing contract to all the parties involved before finalizing the signatures. Outsourcing is the dominant strategy for IT businesses to maximize profits (Patel et al., 2020). Unfortunately, if the initial goal of maximizing profits is too prominent, it can become nightmarish when mishandled by IT managers, especially if they are not well trained (Bi et al., 2020). Therefore, company leaders may want to pay attention to cost savings, improving services, access to better technology, and global expertise. I conducted this doctoral research study to provide strategies to help

ITO managers successfully implement ITO contracts to improve both business performance and employee retention.

Problem Statement

Business performance and employee retention can be compromised if business leaders fail to use ITO (Poleto et al., 2020). Industry experts have argued that nearly 10% of ITO efforts fail because IT managers lack outsourcing skills (Karimi-Alaghehband & Rivard, 2020). Nevertheless, the revenue of ITO global markets amounted to $395.5 billion in 2019, with an estimated increase to more than $418.9 billion in 2023 (Wang et al., 2020). The general business problem was that some ITO managers failed to improve business performance through ITO contracts. The specific business problem was that some ITO managers lack leadership strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through implementing ITO contracts.

Purpose Statement

In this qualitative multiple case study, I identified and explored strategies ITO managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The sample consisted of four IT managers from two businesses in Arizona who had improved their business performance and employee retention using strategies to manage international ITO contracts. The implications for positive social change from the findings of this study include improving IT firms' success rates and helping them achieve higher business performance. Improving the success rate of IT businesses could enable ITOs to boost employment and improve local economies by offering more cost-effective services.

Nature of the Study

There are three primary research methods: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed (Venkatesh et al., 2017). Researchers often use a qualitative methodology to explore the what, why, and how of a phenomenon (Roller, 2019). I used the qualitative method to identify and explore ITO managers' strategies to improve business performance and employee retention in this study. Researchers often use the quantitative method to examine variables' characteristics or determine the degree and extent of a possible relationship between two or more variables (Ramlo, 2020). The quantitative method was not suitable for this study because there was not an examination of variables' characteristics or connections or a numerical analysis of data. In a mixed method study, researchers use both quantitative and qualitative methods because the data from both methods may be valuable to a study, such as statistical data and the analysis of qualitative findings (White & Miller, 2019). Because addressing the purpose of this study did not require the statistical testing of hypotheses, the mixed method was not suitable for this study.

The principal qualitative designs researchers choose from include case study, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative (Aten & Denney, 2019). In this study, I employed a multiple case study design to explore the strategies IT managers in Arizona use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. Researchers use a case study design to understand a theoretical perspective (Janakiraman et al., 2019). Researchers can use multiple case studies to analyze and compare business performance at different supply chain levels (Bressanelli et al., 2019). Yin (2018) argued

that researchers use a multiple case study to understand the differences and similarities. Therefore, I used a multiple case study design to explore the ITO strategies of IT business leaders in Arizona. Researchers use the ethnographic design to examine individuals' behaviors within an environment or cultural setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The ethnographic design was not appropriate for this doctoral study because the purpose of the study was not to address individuals' behaviors in a cultural setting. Investigators use the phenomenological design to analyze the meanings of participants' lived experiences and seek to understand the essence of a phenomenon (Yildiz, 2020). A phenomenological design was not suitable because the purpose of this study was not to investigate the meanings of participants' personal lived experiences. Researchers use the narrative design to explore participants' personal stories for reconstructing a historical event (Liestol, 2019). A narrative design was not appropriate because the purpose of the study was not to explore participants' personal stories about a historical event. Overall, the multiple case study approach helped gain a comprehensive and holistic understanding of ITO managers' strategies to improve their IT business performance and employee retention.

Research Question

What strategies do ITO managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts?

Interview Questions

1. What are the IT services that your company is outsourcing?

2. What strategies have you implemented to ensure the success of ITO in your company?

3. What were the key barriers to successfully implementing the associated ITO strategies for employee retention?

4. What were the key barriers to successfully implementing the associated ITO strategies for your business performance?

5. What key challenges did you encounter in implementing ITO strategies in your company?

6. How did you overcome the key challenges you faced in implementing the ITO contracts?

7. How did you assess the effectiveness of the strategies for your ITO?

8. What else can you share with me about your organization's ITO strategies for improving business performance?

Conceptual Framework

The transaction cost theory (TCT) was used as the conceptual lens for this study. Inspired by Coase in 1937 and reintroduced by Williamson in 1993, the TCT was appropriate for evaluating ITO strategies. The TCT originated from the Nobel Prize in Economics that Williamson received in 2009 (Mohn, 2020). IT companies are under a tremendous pressure to cut costs, and TCT could help IT managers to mitigate risks and detect the true potential costs during the ITO process. Darabi and Jalali (2018) went in-depth into Williamson's concept and suggested that each trade or transfer comes with fixed costs from identifying enthusiastic individuals participating in an exchange. IT

managers may use the TCT to make intelligent decisions to improve their business performance and employee retention through effective ITO contracts (Meinlschmidt et al., 2018). The central tenet of TCT is the degree of uncertainty (Hofer et al. (2020). Several internal and external factors can influence the ITO process and the suppliers' opportunistic behaviors, where confidential information can be detrimental to the ITO relationship (Knichel et al., 2020). IT managers might effectively use the TCT to meet their initial goals, maximize profits, and identify the critical governance structures to manage the outsourcing process (Mohn, 2020). Therefore, using the TCT as the conceptual framework for this study provided me with a lens to help interpret the data and better understand the strategies ITO managers implement to improve business performance and employee retention.

Definition of Terms

Competitive advantage: Creating exclusive product/market combinations using resources and taking identifiable and tactical decisions concerning the business (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017).

Global mindset: A skillset consisting of a leader's knowledge, cognitive, and psychological attributes that enable the leader to influence individuals, groups, and organizations of diverse cultural backgrounds (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2017).

IT: The process by which computers store, retrieve, secure, and send all forms of electronic data and information (Yafei & Wang, 2021).

ITO: A business practice where an outsourcing firm (i.e., the client) transfers one or more of its IT-related value chain activities and processes that were previously held or performed in-house to external agents (Mehta et al., 2020).

Knowledge management: The process of identifying, creating, collecting, organizing, storing, and disseminating knowledge within organizations (Masa'deh et al., 2017).

Outsourcing contracts: The transfer of ownership of IT assets (e.g., hardware, software, and human capital) necessary for service delivery from the client to the vendor (Shivendu et al., 2020).

Transaction cost theory (TCT): An economic theory developed by Williamson that addresses the importance of efficiently distributing resources between participants (Mohn, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Yin (2018) stated that qualitative studies entail some researchers' assumptions. Assumptions are elements that may affect the research study and are not within the researcher's control (Saunders et al., 2019). The first assumption in this study was that all participants had successfully implemented ITO and would answer interview questions with honesty and integrity. The second assumption was that the IT managers were aware of the challenges and risks arising from outsourcing. The third assumption was that the participants' answers to the interview questions would realize successful business performance and employee retention.

Limitations

Limitations in research are the parts of a study beyond the researcher's control (Morgado et al., 2018). In this study, I identified two limitations. The first limitation was the personal biases of the participants, who may have limited access to their organization's documents and could not share the full scope of the successful implementation of strategies. Second, the participants may have limited knowledge of ITO.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries within a study that the researcher has established as potential limits to the scope of the study (Saunders et al., 2019). The delimitation in this study was the focus on the ITO businesses located in Arizona. I collected the data in Arizona, where I physically reside and work. In addition, Yin (2018) stated that having the appropriate population is a limitation whereby research findings may not apply to a larger population. The findings of this study might not apply to managers in other areas in the United States or internationally or managers outside of the IT industry.

Significance of the Study

The doctoral study findings might be significant to IT managers to yield strategic, economic, and technological benefits to the global market. Sobinska and Willcocks (2016) noted that ITO benefits include managing core activities, reducing operational costs, gaining access to technology innovations, and maintaining competitive advantage. IT businesses contribute to the economy by providing jobs and wealth; however, the high failure rate of ITO could threaten their contribution to the industry and their brand value

(Hofer et al. (2020). The successful implementation of ITO strategies might improve organizations' performance and employee retention of IT businesses. Implementing successful ITO strategies might provide new knowledge, positively impact IT businesses, and enhance their sustainability for a more extended period.

Contribution to Business Practice

Many IT managers and business leaders may benefit from reading this study because it provides current strategies successful IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention. Studying strategies IT managers use to implement ITO contracts to improve business performance and employee retention may provide substantial insights to help other IT managers overcome the high failure rate of ITOs (Ohaegbu & Agwu, 2015). Outsourcing may benefit businesses by lowering costs, improving market growth, and increasing job satisfaction (Espino-Rodríguez & Ramírez-Fierro, 2017).

Business sustainability can be achieved whenever resources are well managed (Altin et al., 2018). The findings of this study might advance knowledge in the field and enable IT managers to develop, implement, and determine strategies and processes to effectively utilize their resources during the ITO contracts. The findings from the study might also be valuable to business practice by identifying strategies that IT business managers could use to successfully outsource products and services to process overseas. By outsourcing IT services, such as data analysis, data processing, and data management, to countries providing the services at lower costs, IT businesses in the United States could gain a competitive advantage.

Implications for Social Change

The successful implementation of the ITO strategies could help business owners achieve sustainability and job retention. IT managers who sustain their business beyond five years can increase employment opportunities (Strydom, 2017). Sustaining IT businesses can improve families' stability, improve local economies' social structure, and raise incomes (Lee & Lee, 2020). While IT business owners outsource products and services to save costs, this strategy often helps communities by lowering prices, primarily for low-income families (Bi et al., 2020). The findings of this study could help IT business managers implement strategies to maintain socio-economic stability that benefits citizens, families, and communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A literature review must be clear, unbiased, and balanced (Winchester & Salji, 2016). Literature reviews provide readers with a summarized analysis and evaluation of other authors' ideas and relate the study to the results of other studies and the broader body of knowledge (Winchester & Salji, 2016). Leite et al. (2019) explained that researchers conduct literature reviews to summarize and synthesize the sources of information related to a research topic by giving a comprehensive overview of their knowledge to inform the readers. Lacity et al. (2016) opined that ITO presents several challenges leading to organizational failures. Nevertheless, this literature review enhanced my capability to understand the complex international system of trades, the outsourcing process, and the concept of globalization.

In this qualitative multiple case study, I identified and explored IT managers' strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. A comprehensive academic literature review allows researchers to explore experiences and perceptions about the global supply chain and current trends, strategies, risks, and practices (Bi et al., 2020). I began the literature review process by focusing on the TCT and conducting a detailed search for peer-reviewed and sufficient scholarly resources to build the foundation for the study. A literature review is designed to help a researcher identify and use the best practices and evaluate how other scholars have explored the topics (Leite et al., 2019). The databases and search engines used for my search included ProQuest, ABI/INFORM Complete, SAGE Premier, Emerald Management Journals, Business Review Magazines, Google Scholar, the Walden University Library multidatabase search, and government-related sites. The selection criteria were articles relevant to the study that provided substantial insights. I used the following keyword search terms: *business performance and outsourcing, case study, coding and sampling, employment retention and outsourcing, globalization, information technology outsourcing in Arizona, outsourcing, qualitative method, strategic human resources,* and *transaction cost theory*.

After reviewing several articles during the search, I selected 77 scholarly articles to use in the literature review. I employed Ulrich's Periodical Directory to cross-check the articles and ensure they were peer-reviewed material. Approximately 75 items are peer-reviewed articles, with 72 articles (or 96%) published between 2015 to 2021. The literature review publications are compliant with the Walden University doctor of

business administration doctoral rubric for a 2022 completion year (see Table 1). I

reviewed several topics linked to the problem statement on ITO strategies to improve

business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources

Literature review content	Total	Publication date within 5 years	%Total within publication date
Peer-reviewed journals	75	72	96%
Books	1	1	100%
Non-peer-reviewed journals	1	1	100%
Total	77	74	96%

The literature review begins with a discussion of the conceptual framework of the

TCT. I also examine topics related to ITO, including (a) global business outsourcing, (b)

ITO in the United States, (c) internal and external factors affecting ITO, and (d) theories

of outsourcing and their effectiveness.

TCT

Williamson, a Nobel Prize winner in economics, Williamson, created the TCT in

2009, establishing boundaries that business entities should prioritize when entering

international deals (Mohn, 2020). The theory is comprised of the following four

dimensions: (a) degree of asset specificity, (b) level of uncertainty, (c) transaction

frequency, and (d) transaction cost (Yap et al., 2016). The TCT may explain why

business entities adopt particular attitudes toward their domestic expenditures (Fofana et

al., 2020). Because limitations constrain the internal market, business entities may face

transaction costs that are not rational compared with their overseas partners' services. In a

standard set of transaction costs, business leaders could put a long-term agreement in case of contingencies. When IT managers and vendors fail to mention those contingencies, the transaction costs are often irrational. Behavioral uncertainty stems from difficulties in predicting the exchange party's actions in the face of the possibility of opportunistic behavior (Lioliou et al., 2019). The TCT guides decision making for managers through a process of viewing the risks and benefits along the four dimensions and determining a sustainable strategy.

Given that opportunistic behavior can arise during the contract term, IT managers should be on guard and be aware of the relevant details. Resource endowment can become a decisive factor when determining the outcomes of outsourcing (Savino, 2016). For example, valuable resources for the supplier might not be as significant to the vendor. IT managers could discuss those elements during the drafting of outsourcing agreements. Opportunistic behaviors might occur, such as hidden costs. If IT managers do not mention them during the contracts' development, uncertainty is generated by hard to anticipate phenomena (Lioliou et al., 2019). The opportunistic behaviors make business leaders view the international market as complicated, reducing their willingness to take on risks. When firms notice the absence of clarity during the negotiations, they tend to reciprocate and reconsider trusting partners (Chen, 2019). IT managers should do their best to predict risks and mitigate opportunistic behaviors during contract development. Communicating risks ahead of time is important to building trust between entities.

Building alliances across borders requires exceptional levels of trust building. When there is no trust, the outsourcing outcomes can lead to terminal problems (Birt et

al., 2016). The worst ITO issues include loss of jobs, domestic opportunities, the struggle

to maintain a good work performance, and the difficulties of retaining employees

(Presbitero et al., 2016). Before entering the global market, some businesses forget to

determine what products and services are suitable for outsourcing (Deng et al., 2020).

China is an example of a country that outsourced its first goods and textile manufacturing

to consumers; the outsourcing of agricultural production is common, especially in labor-

intensive production (Deng et al., 2020). Resource complementarity is also vital to

achieving superior alliance performance in emerging economies, while firms in

developed countries change their organizational models, focusing on their core

competencies (Rintala et al., 2021). The relationship depends on specific factors related

to the alliances' transactional and institutional conditions (Jiang & Jiang, 2019). IT

managers should communicate their organizational goals to their overseas counterparts.

Even though the organizational goals remain the same, such as to lower the operating

costs, it is always imperative to hire and train highly skilled workers to guarantee a global

demand of customers.

IT managers need to understand the importance of maintaining a trustworthy

relationship with outsourcing partners. Negotiating a successful contract can enhance the

chance to reach the initial profit maximization goals (Patel et al., 2020). Contracting is

less complicated within one legal system, and "out-of-the-contract" deals might seem

more feasible within the same country (Yip et al., 2016). Despite the spread of cost-

driven outsourcing practices, suppliers' cost advantage may weaken manufacturers'

bargaining positions in negotiating outsourcing agreements, thereby hurting their

profitability (Patel et al., 2020). It is crucial to implement and develop a successful contract negotiation strategy because the failure to enforce and develop successful strategies can lead to detrimental ITO outcomes (Agburu et al., 2017). The use of TCT may aid in developing and implementing strategies that benefit IT managers and vendors and draw on traditional make-or-buy decisions with alternative explanations (Patel et al., 2020). The TCT was an ideal approach for exploring IT managers' strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Some companies diversify their approach to ITO by creating contracts with multiple vendors, sometimes in various countries simultaneously (Saran, 2019). The fundamental reason IT managers choose multisourcing options is that it helps mitigate the risk of failure (Mohn, 2020). Multisourcing requires a set of managerial capabilities to cope with many problems, such as task complexity, task interdependence, workflow integration, and knowledge management, in multicultural communities (Pankowska, 2019). IT managers should have a specific skill set to overcome the problems posed by multisourcing (Saran, 2019). Overcoming challenges to keep a higher profit margin should be the top priority for IT managers.

International system integrations depend on relationships with the internal and external organizational units. Multiple partner solicitation creates a spirit of competition between them, and IT managers can reduce the risk of depending on a single vendor (Fofana et al., 2020). Using multiple outsourcing vendors, IT managers can cut costs and foster competition between partners for cost advantages (Meinlschmidt et al., 2018). However, some organizations have progressively increased their dependence on

outsourcing to unprecedented levels, exposing themselves to newer risks and hazards in the turbulent business environment of the 21st century (Sen et al., 2020). IT managers who are well trained to handle the complex international scale are important actors to conduct business with overseas partners. Because TCT is mainly used to negotiate the costs, IT managers who use the theory have been proven to be successful at the global scale (Sen et al., 2020).

Strategies to prevent unethical conduct can be initiated in the earliest phases of ITO negotiation. Whenever successful strategies are implemented within an organization, TCT allows IT managers to detect the partners trying to cut corners and use cheaper materials (Chanson, 2018). Unethical practices could be detrimental to the ITO; hence, IT managers must proactively obtain details to address poor practices during contract development. Differences among IT managers regarding how they operate internally could lead them to have the same approach on the global ITO scale. Chanson (2018) argued that the transaction costs provide a practical analytical framework for managers concerning essential outsourcing strategies, such as service design, pricing, canvassing, negotiations, and announcements. Exposing global IT strategies could set the norms and instill the global market values and philosophy.

Understanding and implementing successful IT strategies might increase competitive advantage and companies' ability to partake in the new ITO world. Bui et al. (2019) argued that significant challenges include the unexpected and constantly changing international market; therefore, IT managers need a commitment to a set of coherent and adaptable behaviors before inviting new risks. When an IT company has defined

outsourcing services, strategies must be aligned among the IT departments to achieve the specific competitive goals (Bui et al., 2019). Whether it involves external contributors or internal employees, companies need to consider taking ideas from such events forward (Saran, 2019). New ideas could contribute to IT managers' personal growth and leadership experiences. This could be a strategy for retention at the IT management level in the organization as well as for investment in human capital and having the potential for continual improvement.

Another hidden value to IT management leadership uncovered by engaging in ITO activities is the opportunity to think through an innovation lens. Global partners' choices become scrutinized whenever the unique potential is developed within IT managers' skillset, which reduces the risk of ITO failure (Knichel et al., 2020). The initial goal for ITO is to reduce costs, so the organization should implement a strategy guide to communicate IT services in harmony to achieve the desired goal (Meinlschmidt et al., 2018). In the current business world, outsourcing is increasingly seen as a way to explore innovative thinking opportunities (Sen et al., 2020). IT managers should develop a strategy and create an identifiable global market to outsource their services. According to Meinlschmidt et al. (2018), IT managers use TCT as the primary approach to their decision-making process, understanding the theory of constraints and defining the whole system where only the constraints are considered. ITO is likely to increase innovation through access to new markets and technology to enhance human capabilities, which results in changes to the onset of the global and local markets. Creativity is the heart of

any business, and IT managers have to adapt to the global market so they can sustain their businesses.

IT managers should focus their attention on asset specificity as the core of their ITO as they learn to focus their attention to the human specificity that sheds light on how to successfully prevent conflict when applying ITO strategies (Shivendu et al., 2020). According to the TCT, parties involved in a transaction need to ensure their interests have been served (Shivendu et al., 2020). Nevertheless, they each come up with terms that are helpful to understand the risks involved. IT managers are protected by the TCT in that it helps them uncover the opportunistic behaviors of the other parties. They also have other unknowns to address on a regular basis, which is demonstrated in the following figure showing the theoretical framework for this study that was adapted from the original TCT model published by Williamson in 1979. Note the different levels of analysis that could guide an IT manager to know what is most important to evaluate beyond costs as each transaction is considered for outsourcing.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework Flowchart Illustrating Transaction Cost Attributes

Asset specificity:
Nonspecific
Mid specific
High idiosyncratic

Uncertainty:
Branding uncertainty
Performance uncertainty
Behavioral uncertainty of the contracting party

Frequency:
Recurrent
Occasional

Transaction costs:
Searching costs
Negotiation costs
Monitoring costs

Producer's decision toward outsourcing
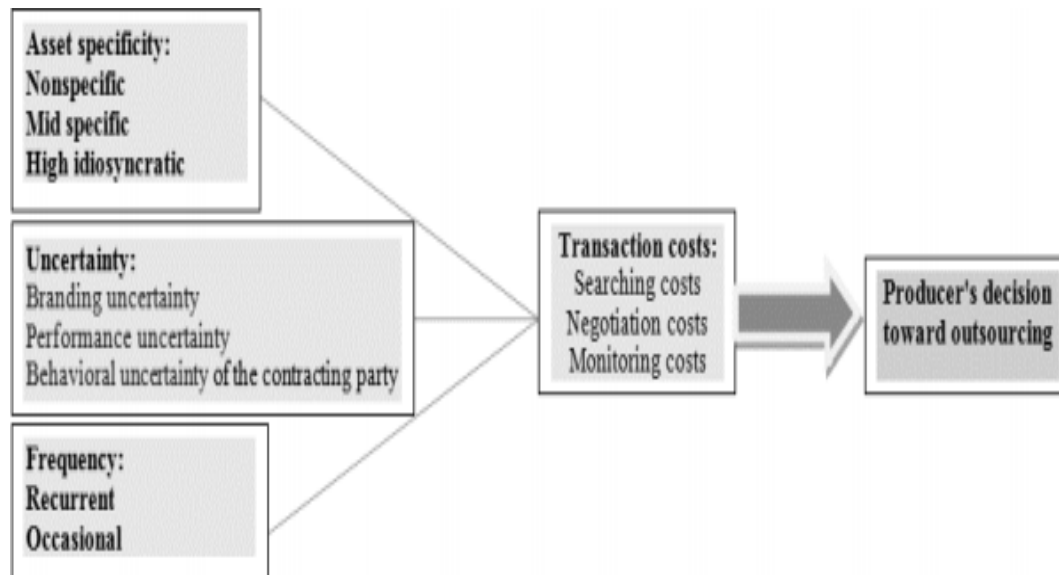
Note. (Adapted from Williamson, 1979).

There are many strategic benefits to ITO to weigh against the risks. The use of outsourcing enables a firm to achieve economies of scale, resulting in lower production costs (Jae-Nam Lee et al., 2019). IT companies that focus on outsourcing core competencies may benefit from having lower average costs. It will be much easier for those IT firms to offer consumers various IT products and services whenever they produce two computer chips using the same resource inputs in China instead of separating in India and China. The outsourcing scheme involves implementing strategies to enhance performance, reflecting the workers' capabilities to enjoy working while IT firms maximize profits. Mohn (2020) stated that the costs of organizing transactions increase as the business scale increases. The motivation to increase profitability comes from the outsourcing contract itself, so business leaders should use the optimal

organization structure for a particular outsourcing contract to determine whether the IT

firm will generate profits or not, depending on how thriving IT managers have focused on

detecting the potential outsourcing risks (Knichel et al., 2020). Scalability of ITO

requires quality data management and evaluation of outcomes on an ongoing basis.

The outsourcing project management undertakes multiple interdependent tasks,

and both vendor and client must come together to make the outcomes fruitful. An

outsourcing project is divided between the client and the vendor, and each party has

different knowledge domains (Wang & Wang, 2019). Underlining the TCT theory, the

client and vendor relationship needs to build a compliant product with the end consumers'

requirements while avoiding potential risks (Knichel et al., 2020). The IT manager has a

key responsibility in maintaining clear communication of the needs of each entity and

accountability to those agreed upon standards in the execution of these ITO contracts.

Related Conceptual Frameworks

The TCT, whose primary concerns are the firm's maximization of profits, enables

the business organizations to enter into agreements with vendors to perform their work.

Nevertheless, the TCT can never be a tool for an organization to work in isolation. Other

related theories that contributed to the results of Williamson when he introduced the TCT

in 1991 include the resource-based view theory, the lean thinking theory, and the

principal-agent theory.

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

The RBV is an older theory that serves as the foundation for much of strategic

management thinking and is key to evaluating competitive advantage across an industry.

Madhani (2010) stated that the RBV is a tool to analyze and interpret the organizations'

resources and understand sustainable competitiveness. Barney first introduced the RBV

theory in 1986. Ghozzi et al. (2016) argued that the RBV is a valuable tool to put

resources that offer a sustained competitive advantage and provide more excellent value

to the firm. Wernerfelt (1984) developed most of the RBV, which underlines how firms

can achieve a competitive advantage using the RBV. IT managers should gain a

competitive advantage whenever they are trained to exploit internal rather than external

factors compared to their company (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). There is no other way to

examine external and internal factors and combine both views. In doing so, IT managers

can quickly determine why their businesses have been successful in outsourcing or the

opposite (Karimi-Alaghehband & Rivard, 2020). Such evaluation processes empower the

organization to create a winning team and implement concrete outsourcing strategies.

Several IT managers who enter the ITO arena might be learning to navigate the

global environment and its challenges for the first time. They can encounter cultural

dilemmas, political failed states, and difficulties introducing a new product (Gallino &

Rooderkerk, 2020). Researchers have frequently shown that international diversification

yields multiple benefits, such as realizing economies of scope, fostering technological

capabilities, increasing market power, and benefiting from larger internal markets (Wu &

Park, 2019). Companies must face a complex and uncertain world filled with potentially

opportunistic partners. Thus, it is in the best interests of IT managers not to go into

outsourcing unprepared. Firms imply the ability to undertake an activity; therefore,

hierarchical governance should focus on those activities with superior knowledge

(Ghozzi et al., 2016). Due to the high demand for skilled workers and the quality of the products, business organizations strive to be competitive and gain an edge (Saran, 2019). IT managers should be prepared to face the challenges posed by cultural differences, which implies deep understanding of one's culture and others' is imperative during ITO.

The IT manager faces complexity every day, and this role requires quality leadership. It is impossible to enter the global market with the mindset of denying learning and continuous improvement (Wu & Park, 2019). The overall reality is that difficulties arise when IT managers enter a foreign country during a physical investment or product expansion is on the line. IT managers must know the existing foreign market channels and suppliers (Jia et al., 2020). Language and cultural barriers could be considerable. Some external factors in the global market that frequently influence IT firms' decisions to outsource include increased competition, growth of globalization, degree of uncertainty of some local economic systems, and the desire to reduce cost and improve quality of service (Ishizaka et al., 2019). The RBV theory helps IT companies clarify their internal resources' availability before entering the complex international market (Wang et al., 2020). IT managers' ability to evaluate the readiness to tackle the global market depends on their internal resources. By understanding internal resources prescribed by the RBV, IT managers could facilitate the optimal positioning of the company (Madhani, 2010). IT managers used the RBV for their sustainability in the global market and their success relies on how well they communicate with vendors, and the strategy put in place to control at a long distance their human specificity, such as

high-profile employees overseas. The RBV is the central strategy that helps to understand

why some IT managers are successful in a global scale while others are still struggling.

Lean Thinking Theory (LTT)

Scholars have traced the principles behind LTT back to the early 1950s in Japan.

The Toyota Motor Company was interested in increasing production at their automotive

facilities (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). Womack and Jones used the term "lean" in 1990

to describe the Toyota production system to reduce waste, which led the organization to a

better quality of their products (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). Wang et al. (2020) argued

that many organizations had worked diligently to improve their processes, products, and

services to meet customers' satisfaction and profit goals. Researchers have identified

many capitals, human talents, high technology, and effective systems as primary factors

for successful enterprises (Bader et al., 2020). To utilize the LTT, IT managers must first

implement strategies that value customers. The theory describes the latent needs of the

customers' willingness to pay for the presented quality of technology products (Gallino &

Rooderkerk, 2020). Therefore, IT managers aim to remove the waste from their lists and

that every proposed product or service meets their end consumers' needs at that particular

time. Lean thinking means enabling a growth strategy and reducing waste within the

organization to maximize profit. According to Womack and Jones, Lean thinking consists

of five fundamental principles: specify a value, identify the value stream, flow, pull, and

perfection (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). LTT also provides a continuous improvement

process as part of the company's organizational culture and growth strategies.

IT managers must implement their most advanced strategic planning tools under the lean theory. Applying lean principles helps the organization create success and business performance improvement (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). Improving business performance can help the organization remain competitive while increasing its values and offering products and services at lower costs. IT managers must anticipate changes and bottlenecks internally and externally (Butts, 2020). Specific questions must be asked before signing the ITO contracts regarding the host country's cultural and political realms (Jia et al., 2020). Examples of questions to ask are (a) what experience do you have? (b) how does the supplier support total outsourcing? and (c) who will govern the IT services? For the lean theory to succeed, the IT managers must use their business canvas model to understand the existing business approach.

The LTT helps IT managers to define the needs of their customers. Recognizing the need for the flow in a value stream allows IT companies to sustain their competitive advantage (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). Lean thinking is the discipline of identifying what does and does not add value and applying that knowledge to producing goods and services within the technology management framework of quality systems (Bader et al., 2020). Companies working under the lean theory principles must underline how to specify the value and add value from the customer perspective. Within the LTT principles framework, IT managers working under the ITO agreements must identify and eliminate activities that create no value for the product or service (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). It would be detrimental for the IT managers to underestimate the host country's cultural impact, including the conflicting political realms that could cause the ITO to fail. When

the ITO is carried out, it will not succeed if the decision process does not follow the

standard methodology (Bi et al., 2020). LTT has been proven to work in many settings

for cost-cutting changes and has been shown to add value to ITO processes as well.

      LTT helps to streamline decision making by clarifying priorities and focusing on

efficiencies. Decision making is a cornerstone of ITO projects, and it can be sabotaged by

IT managers who are not previously skilled in outsourcing (Bader et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, IT managers can use the lean thinking technique as a continuous

improvement strategy that focuses on reducing or eliminating waste to provide customers

with their exact requirements (Bader et al., 2020). LTT principles could be detrimental to

IT managers' ability to handle their ITO contracts. Thus, ensuring waste elimination or

reduction during the applicable ITO before signing the agreements is essential. Removing

waste is crucial because it helps IT managers encompass internal and external customers'

values within their organizations (Patel et al., 2020). For skilled IT managers, detecting

waste within the organization and its elimination is a process; retaining qualified

employees creates value. Thus, it is imperative to emphasize human potential, employees'

mental health for the business performance, creativity, and physical ability to enhance

positive outcomes (Tripathi et al., 2021). IT managers work under an integral lean

perspective to emphasize customer values, needs, and wants. Consequently, locally and

internationally, customers become an essential part of the organizational culture, leading

the IT firms to approach the global scale better and reduce outsourcing risks (Ahmed et

al., 2014). The LTT is a tool that helps IT managers to gain control of their costs, they

can decrease costs so that all savings are well-managed during ITO.

Principal-Agent Theory (PAT)

When Guston introduced the PAT in 1996, it was already part of neo-institutional economics. Initially, scholars used PAT to model the relationship between shareholders and CEOs of a company (Van Thiel & Smullen, 2021). Because the PAT deals with social connection, the IT managers involved in ITO must have at their disposal an arsenal of resources that the potential vendors could accept. In maximizing interests from amplification of the TCT, IT managers are not sure of realizing their goals, given that the vendors might not deliver the work as promised. In circumstances like these, the PAT is a relevant framework for exploring the vulnerability of one entity to the opportunistic behavior of the other (Wong et al., 2021). Inequities can be present for both parties involved in ITO and power dynamics should be considered.

Moral hazards exist in today's business transactions, generating several unwelcome behaviors from ITO partners. However, the PAT is used to control the scheduled risk of ITO projects (Bi et al., 2020). The PAT developed the concept of risk, where the trust between the principal and the agent is the cornerstone of success in contract agreements. Nevertheless, the principal and the agent entering the ITO agreements play a sequential game. The agent has free will to accept or reject the ITO contract but must do the work whenever it is signed. Bi et al. (2020) argued that, despite the numerous advantages and cost benefits of ITO, many organizations face daunting challenges to manage the risks, internal and external, to the company. The risk avoidance is detrimental in that principal and agent must implement strategies to mitigate the unforeseen escalated cost and the vendor lock-in. The PAT has been widely employed to

solve risk control in ITO, and good results have been achieved (Bi et al., 2020). Leaders

use PAT to inform their strategies and to simplify decision making despite complexity.

Therefore, IT managers who have failed to balance the risk and reward are

entering the ITO contract with a more considerable loss margin. In a principal-agent

relationship, the agent acts on behalf of the principal and should not have a conflict of

interest in carrying out the act (Bi et al., 2020). It is not wise to jump into a vendor

selection without investigation because opportunistic behaviors could arise after signing

the contract. Bi et al. argued that the problem between the principal and the agent begins

when the agent enters the agreement with the mindset to maximize its interests. A moral

hazard can thus arise because the agents have decided to act in their selfish interests

rather than for mutual benefit. The principal must gauge that the agent's chance of gains

is significant and offer underlying incentives for work done well. Bi et al. suggested that

underlying agent incentives may reduce the likelihood of opportunistic behaviors.

Opportunistic behaviors are current in ITO when other parties tend to present some

behaviors to preserve their self-interests. IT managers should be trained to identify

potential threats that are aimed to negatively impact the outcomes of the contracts.

Contrasting Conceptual Frameworks

Multiple conceptual frameworks can be used to answer research questions

appropriately and rigorously. When trying to apply opposing theories of the TCT, firms

have difficulties and challenges that prevent them from pursuing access to other markets

(Mohn, 2020). Thus, to maximize their profits by enabling their external needs, business

organizations must first eliminate their internal difficulties explained in constraints and

resource dependence theory. Firms also should review the transaction frequency with potential partners and reshape their buy or make decisions (Rintala et al., 2021). These many forms of strategic analysis will lead to a more wholistic view of the marketplace and the company's place within it.

Theory of Constraints (TOC)

TOC was first introduced by Dr. Goldratt in 1990. He linked management factors, production processes, and ITO decisions (Butts, 2020). In its premises, the TOC identified five focusing steps, which are: (a) identify the system's bottlenecks, (b) decide how to exploit the bottlenecks, (c) subordinate everything else to the above decision, (d) elevate the system's bottlenecks, and (e) return to step (a) but beware of inertia (Pretorius, 2014). IT managers used the TOC during their ITO contracts to realize their initial profit improvement goals. The central point of the TOC is that each IT organization must have at least one constraint (Butts, 2020). Constraint means the IT organizational leaders understand the factor or reason for engaging in ITO contracts, primarily increasing profits. The TOC redefines the necessary tools for the organization to succeed (Butts, 2020). The basics of the TOC are that every organization should have a strategic constraint. Butts argued that discretion helps the organization in the decision-making process and allocates its resources to pursue its goals. Constraints are to be considered in strategic planning as a source of insight.

The IT manager and those planning ITO efforts need to gather as much information as possible in order to predict future trends within the global marketplace. Strategic planning must encompass technology's relevance and the needed changes (Lee,

2017). Implementing a successful long-term technology plan should be the responsibility of IT managers in charge of the ITO contracts. While the primary goal of the TOC is to focus on reaching profit, the lean point of view is primarily customer-focused to improve satisfaction (Womack et al., 2006). Meanwhile, Wang et al. (2020) asserted that the customers' expectations scrutinize IT organizations, and several reduce costs while lowering the prices to attract more end consumers. Therefore, IT firms must alter their services until they no longer pose a barrier to productivity and efficiency (Butts, 2020).

Although business IT organizations outsource their services to lower costs while maximizing benefits, they must include the customer focus in their schedule to be sustainable. Butts (2020) mentioned that business owners should also keep in mind the three core principles of the TOC: convergence, consistency, and respect. As Figure 2 shows, the TCA principles take a scientific approach to improvement; they can assist IT managers in the complex international ITO system. The TOC provides a robust set of tools for IT organizations' success to achieve profit maximization goals.

Figure 2: *The 5 steps to identify and eliminate the constraints.*
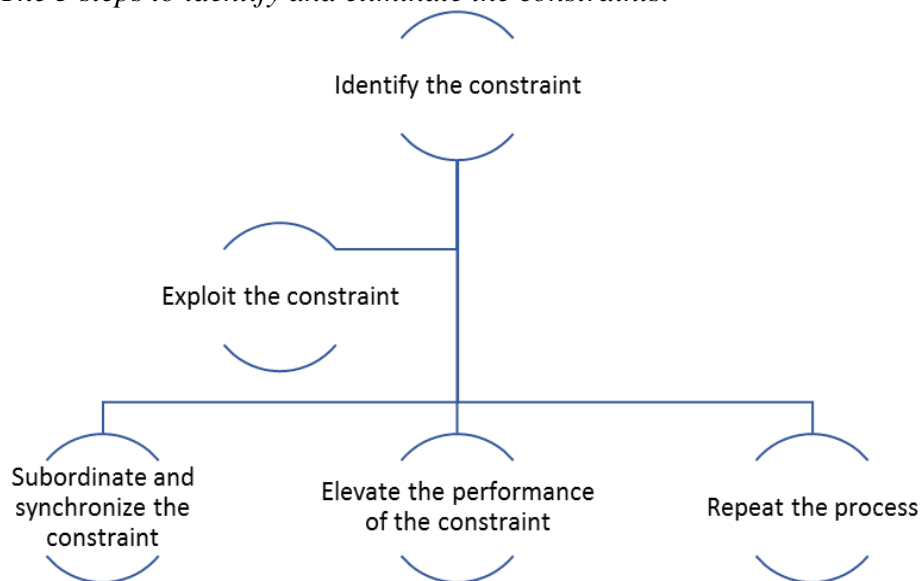
It is imperative strategic analysis be performed internally as well. IT managers who are not familiar with their internal issues can have difficulty identifying the conditions (Butts, 2020). Thus, working toward the IT goal and shipping IT services overseas requires knowing all about their organization's services that prevent them from progressing towards its goals. The truth is that constraints exist, and IT managers must locate them and eliminate them until they meet their organization's goals. According to Wang et al. (2020), the TOC and customer satisfaction are connected; IT managers must comprehensively understand global competitiveness. In contrast, globalization has made customers aware of newly innovated technology worldwide. Customer satisfaction is critical because corporate reputation is at risk; in other words, IT firms must present a favorable image to enhance the trust of their customers (Wang et al., 2020). By looking at the external and internal weaknesses and strengths, decision-making can be balanced.

In the fast-paced world of technology, it can be challenging to keep up with customer's needs. IT managers should know that their local customers rely on product innovation at lower costs (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). Because IT managers do not work in isolation globally, they enter ITO agreements to create a business environment to meet consumers' needs. The truth about the international marketplace is that new markets must emerge because older markets are saturated (Wu & Park, 2019). The TOC is of greater importance in ITO because global companies focusing on customer satisfaction increase their chances of achieving long-term success. It is critical to enhance business performance with proletarianized communication and retain skilled workers (Saran, 2019). Employees qualified for the positions are essential in a lengthy trial strategy where IT companies constantly face the turbulent international business environment.

Because IT managers' most important task is to make money during ITO contracts, TOC helps IT companies generate revenues. IT managers could find the TOC helpful in establishing customer-based needs while maintaining technological advances internally and externally (Butts, 2020). Business leaders should view the IT organization as a chain of departments; each must have a weak link, which constrains the focus. With the growing significance of the service sector, service quality has emerged as a strategic imperative for firms (Patel et al., 2020); customer loyalty is the most challenging aspect to be perceived and established by IT managers, with employee retention not far behind.

IT businesses should enhance their inner circle to be capable to adapt to the global challenges; thus, by creating an innovation framework and hiring skilled managers capable to select, contract, and maintain relationships with vendors. The absence of

collaboration with vendors and IT managers is a warning sign of ITO failure. IT firms should prioritize meeting and exceeding their customer needs, given that technology innovation is crucial (Wang et al., 2020). IT industries strive to understand their global and local customer base to provide them with the best technology services and products. High-quality support services and policies enable employees to deliver results and drive customer satisfaction (Patel et al., 2020). However, if IT managers are running out of ideas, they should rely on the TOC; the five focusing steps of the TOC help alleviate constraints by facilitating the smoother flow of service resources and activities and reducing blockages in service flow (Patel et al., 2020). IT managers must remain focused on their initial profit maximization objectives while maintaining stronger customer satisfaction ties (Wang et al., 2020). The TOC constitutes a powerful tool for sustaining their global competitive advantage.

Resource Dependence Theory

Pfeffer and Salancik's seminal work was on resource dependence theory (RDT), published in their 1978 book, *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective.* Scholars have widely used RDT in explaining inter-organizational cooperation strategies, providing a practical conceptual framework for understanding its effects on organizational performance (Wang et al., 2020). RDT is the tool used for explaining today's global market and why firms decide to engage in mergers and acquisitions. Wang et al. argued that scarcity and the importance of resources determine the dependence level on external organizations. IT managers would benefit from using the RDT during strategic planning related to ITO.

Contrary to the TCT, researchers use the RDT to explain that firms are not seeking to maximize their interests, given that they have none. Thus, firms are seeking resources that they lack to survive and function. Hofer et al. (2020) argued that as resources offered by a member of its task environment become more critical, a firm will pursue strengthening and expanding the linkages to secure access to these resources. In seeking those requisite resources, business organizations will launch the global scale for their survival. The straightforward framework of the RDT is to create that internal and external power to capitalize and enable the firm's competitive advantage.

IT managers who are well equipped in seeking external resources do intuitive research on culture and politics in a collaborative effort with external forces. RDT is a powerful tool a business organization could use to promote its task environment, which comprises customers, partners, competitors, and other stakeholders that can affect their discretionary control over resources, competitiveness, and survival (Hofer et al., 2020). The firm can establish a stable and harmonious inbound innovation network to obtain innovation resources from outside (Wang et al., 2020). Firms should strategically address their internal and external difficulties: fewer resources, scarcity of financial resources, and fewer production facilities and distribution channels. Nevertheless, firms get into contracts to overcome innovation constraints, share innovation costs, pool resources, and exchange technologies (Wang, 2021). The benefits of building strategic alliances can go far beyond maximizing profits, but other forms of value can be challenging to monetize.

Transaction Frequency Model

There is a cyclical nature to most management tasks that can be observed, analyzed, or planned for. The transaction frequency model (TFM) is determined by the occurrence rhythm, meaning the same activities may occur continually, intermittently, or on a limited basis (Yap et al., 2016). Whether action should be conducted within the firm or contracted outside of the organization is an ongoing concern for research and practice, including in the information systems field (Lacity et al., 2019). TFM implies that it is detrimental to control those activities whenever IT firms decide to outsource. Whichever transaction occurred, the parties involved must sacrifice their time to promptly monitor their operation's terms (Lacity et al., 2019). Given each party's number of uncontrollable factors, a transaction may encounter several changes due to complicated external forces, such as political changes or damages from natural disasters, resulting in complicated contract designs. In complicated contract designs, IT managers are responsible for reviewing the contracts' terms and taking the appropriate measures (Shivendu et al., 2020). The assumption was that IT managers should use strategies to gain the expected benefits and keep various contingencies in mind.

When problems occur, it often comes with hidden costs to at least one of the companies involved in the ITO agreements. Conversely, a transaction rarely occurs less conducive to outsourcing due to the up-front cost of executing and managing the contract (Siew-Chen & Vinayan, 2016). When mismanaged, outsourcing can lead to hidden costs, which are more expensive than previously expected due to the vendor's lengthy selection. After weighing the internal IT work, Siew-Chen and Vinayan (2016) suggested that IT

managers grapple with their international opportunities; and argued that outsourced

economic activities could damage the economy because of hidden costs. Outsourcing is

not a silver bullet that will solve all problems a company might have, nor is it just another

overrated trend that brings no benefits (Meinlschmidt et al., 2018). The expected

transaction should encompass the full knowledge of the internal resources. In-house

arrangements should benefit the IT company (Meinlschmidt et al., 2018). Nevertheless, it

is essential to be aware of all the factors determining the outsourcing contracts, ensuring

that nothing appears ambiguous but provides valuing transparency with the details.

Moving past ambiguity to contracts is key to ITO success. The contracting phase

is critical in developing an outsourcing relationship (Erdogan & Tokgoz, 2020). The

transaction frequency of ITO is explained by the firm's core competencies, their

acquisitions, improving cost control, and restructuring IT budgets (Yap et al., 2016).

Therefore, the success of the ITO contracts depends on how IT managers communicate

expectations. Some IT managers will implement a performance-based approach to

achieving efficiency and effectiveness, while others will focus on the operational aspects

of the contracts (Ishizaka et al., 2019). However, the strategy depends on the size of the

IT company and how deliberately IT managers spend time to understand the

ramifications of their decisions. This assertion leads to the review of articles on cost-

benefit analyses.

Make-or-Buy Frameworks

The MOB theory is helpful when it comes to choosing to keep a part of the

business internal or to consider external sourcing. Due to the global market moving more

towards production throughout a distributed supply chain, the common practice of specific outsourcing modules entails MOB decisions that must be considered (Liu et al., 2017). Opportunistic behaviors drive the make-or-buy decision-making quest based on various internal or external factors (Lioliou et al., 2019). IT managers should link the various factors to the firm's strategic approaches for synergistic profits.

The TCT requires the IT firm to manage an economic exchange while reducing its transaction costs. The decision-making strategy of make-or-buy consists of six consecutive stages (Bader et al., 2020). Each phase represents a decision-making point of reference in the process of assessing if outsourcing is a best practice or not for the company (see Figure 3). A successful outsourcing relationship often depends on sharing information related to productivity improvements and the incentive from parties to collaborate. There are several points of analysis along the six-phase model to consider when making a collective MOB decision. Having a theoretical framework makes it easier for managers to communicate visually leading their teams through facilitation of this process.

Figure 3

MOB strategy analysis

| Phase I | Phase II | Phase III |
| Establishment of analytical group | Determination of company's goals | Demand for transportation in the company estimation |

| Phase IV | Phase V | Phase VI |
| Identifying opportunities to improve its transport | Comparative analysis of own transport and market offer | Make or Buy (MoB) decision |
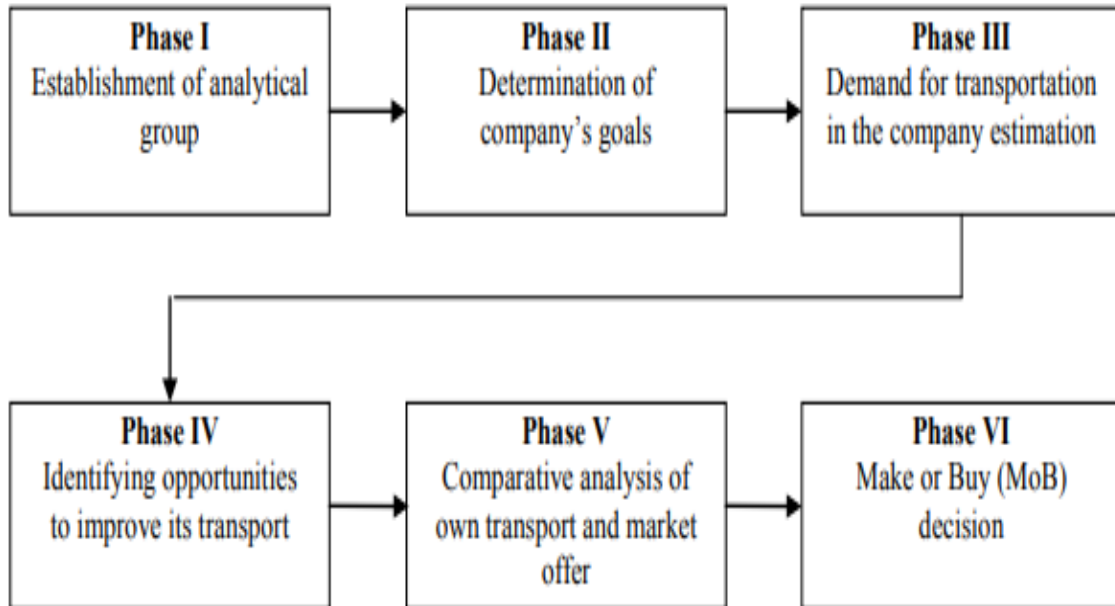
Note: (Patel et al., 2020).

According to the Patel et al. (2020) decision-making process should lead the company to its final choice. As shown in the 6 phases above, IT managers should work deeply to (a) identify and define the problem, which helps the team to focus on what is crucial within their organization; (b) IT managers should specify the criteria in order to minimize the cost and improve profit during ITO; (c) the goal of the IT managers should remain the same no matter the circumstances ahead. Sometime, the ITO process can take a different route, but IT managers should be able to determine possible alternatives. (d) during the ITO process, it is relevant for the IT managers to be able to weigh in between the operational costs and the benefits while managing to decrease the risks. (e) we reach to the phase where IT managers have weighed in all the possible alternatives and the

selection is made and ready to be executed. (f) therefore, IT managers evaluated all the outcomes of the decisions with the expectation to receive feedback from their vendors. This phase requires enough communication to be put in place with their overseas counterparts. The MOB theory's phases help activate the international skills of IT managers who are leaders to make smarter decisions during the ITO process. Managers and decision-makers want to know which factors may influence a firm's decision to buy a part or service rather than manufacture it internally and how to evaluate these factors to make the right decision and avoid future problems and extra costs (Medina-Serrano et al., 2020). Without those skills to understand the parameters of the IT firm's immediate needs, the ITO may suffer a downfall. Firms generally engage in international sourcing internally by setting up a wholly controlled subsidiary in foreign markets (i.e., captive offshoring) or externally by procuring resources from legally independent foreign suppliers (Pongelli et al., 2019). The overall strategic planning was to put an in-house staff capable of determining which function to consider for outsourcing. The MOB decision is not definitive until highly skilled IT managers make their final recommendations. The final recommendations must accompany an overview of the IT firm's strengths and weaknesses. Decision-makers have the platform to strategically assess all the risks in all areas of the organization. Nevertheless, firms need to re-evaluate and adapt their location and outsourcing decisions (Wan et al., 2019). As tempting as vertical integration of parts of the supply chain may be to recapture profit streams, achieving a sustained competitive advantage depends on the context if outsourcing was the best decision for a company in the long run.

IT managers need to understand the needs and wants of their organizations. Products and services that require outsourcing should not escape during the decision-making process. Outsourcing necessitates MOB decisions; for example, the manufacturer should decide how to fulfill a specific module required for delivering a particular product variant by either doing the module in-house or buying it from a supplier, which entails a supplier selection process (Liu et al., 2017). The MOB is a powerful tool internally that helps IT managers better assess their internal services before finalizing their ITO decisions.

Outsourcing Risks

There is a greater potential for unpredictable or problematic circumstances when conducting business across borders. Outsourcing decisions are the most complex organizational decisions, requiring a thorough evaluation of the benefits on one side and the barriers or challenges on the other from the perspective of fostering innovative thinking (Sen et al., 2020). With increasing developments in the ITO industry, many enterprises outsource IT services to reduce costs. However, the schedule risk of ITO projects may result in enormous economic losses for an enterprise (Ahmed et al., 2014). IT managers should be skilled enough to overcome the risks and challenges of developing successful ITO contracts.

Sometimes risks can arise from people holding contrasting worldviews. Cultural differences between east and west countries pose a fundamental challenge in international supply chain management (Jia et al., 2020). Within an organization that aims to cut its IT costs, IT managers in charge of signing the outsourcing agreements must weigh their

sourcing options. Because outsourcing sometimes involves transferring employees and assets from one firm to another (Bi et al., 2020), failure to succeed can damage the organization and the regional economy. The possibility of risk introduced when IT functions are associated with outsourcing activities may negatively affect the business (Bi et al., 2020). The best way to address these risks is to take a proactive approach and including someone on the decision-making team with international relations expertise.

It is crucial that weak management be identified and remediated as needed. If the IT firm is experiencing weak management internally, it will be risky to carry such management on a highly complex international scale (Robles, 2012). ITO may not be the ultimate solution when internal IT managers cannot turn around their internal performance. Before heading in the direction of ITO, the company should hire better IT managers. Business leaders could reduce the risks if their IT company internally manages its IT service because weak management is not an opportunity to generate profits. Hard skills are the technical expertise and knowledge needed for a job (Robles, 2012); some skills are necessary to enter the global outsourcing market. There is a risk of encountering hidden prices; the cultural and political aspects can hinder ITO contracts (Erdogan & Tokgoz, 2020). IT managers should acknowledge the existence of ITO risks and manage to overcome them.

An IT company can end up paying more than initially expected. The decisions to shift part of its IT services overseas include its delivery department, logistics, distribution, human services, sales, marketing, procurement, and customer services (Ishizaka et al., 2019). IT services can encounter several obstacles linked to hidden costs,

a more expensive and lengthier step of vendor selection, the language barrier that makes communication among the parties quasi-impossible, and cultural differences (Pacheco, 2020). Hence, it would be detrimental if a vendor fails to deliver as expected, thereby leading the IT firm into a disaster because the primary objective of the ITO is to manage with efficiency the outsourcing relationships.

There are many proven tactics that help with maintaining customer satisfaction. Wang and Wang (2019) argued that a vendor failing to deliver the IT services on time would not organize or structure a successful outsourcing relationship. Jia et al. (2020) considered the supplier's different risk attitudes, risk aversion, and risk-neutral. Jia et al. demonstrated that product quality enhancement should precede a generous return policy and supply chain management practices in the current business environment. When the firms delay delivering products or services on time, customer satisfaction is lost. IT managers are responsible for managing their customer base to ensure that their information system is up-to-date and under control while dealing with the outsourcing challenges (Patel et al., 2020). Risks can be averted when creating outsourcing success.

Competitive Advantage

If the risks are addressed, then outsourcing can provide a source of advantage. Competitive advantage concerns customers' perceptions of a firm's offering in the specific market vis-a-vis competitors (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). For best practice and interest, IT firms should know that customers are the main focus for companies competing among products' differentiation. Consequently, IT firms must create a distinctive brand image to attract the customers' minds. Some IT firms think that by

shipping their services to a third-party vendor overseas, they can cut costs while

analyzing their competitors' technology strengths and weaknesses globally and enhance

their ability to meet customer needs (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). IT managers who are

well-trained understand the necessity of creating an attractive segment and working with

vendors to develop a market segment that meets their customers' needs (Wang et al.,

2020). IT firms could achieve a competitive advantage with significant benefits through

outsourcing when IT managers understand their vendors' international trade

arrangements. Ishizaka et al. (2019) argued that the operational and strategic aspects of

outsourcing decisions are detrimental to the organization's future. The primary

motivations for outsourcing are cost, strategy, politics, and having fewer employees

requires a minor support system.

The global market is escalating, which forces the IT business to innovate to keep

ahead of competitors. The operation cost may diminish, but the company must maintain

its competitive advantage and free up its assets. Tate and Bals (2017) argued that

intangible assets, such as employee knowledge and skills, may contribute to an

enterprise's competitive advantage. By outsourcing, the IT managers aim to focus on the

firm's core values while enhancing their competitive advantage by reducing operational

costs (Medina-Serrano et al., 2020). Meanwhile, reducing operating costs can be

permanent or temporary, depending on the IT organization's decision. Medina-Serrano et

al. (2020) argued that developing agility and innovativeness as dynamic capabilities are

essential to sustain their competitive advantage in today's global economy. IT firms

believe that using expertise and skilled workers brings a higher marginal return. In an ideal scenario, ITO not only cuts costs but also gives companies access to more expertise.

There are many risks and rewards associated with ITO. Outsourcing is one of the most exciting contemporary business activities because many companies use all science, techniques, and technologies to issue qualified and competitive products to satisfy consumers (Tayauova, 2012). The loss of an IT competitive advantage could result from a poor decision on outsourcing from managers who have limited global learning and innovation (Robles, 2012). Some aspects to consider when outsourcing could include bargaining for better transaction costs, understanding the host country's cultural element, and the contractual amendment. Asseraf and Shoham (2019) said that its core capabilities lie in managing its supply chain to gain maximum advantage in the changing competitive forces. Therefore, IT managers should not rough out new products or strategies; instead, IT managers should clarify the flow of information across the organization.

IT managers are constantly facing unknowns, and they should stay as informed as possible so they can be ready to adapt as needed. In a highly complex global economy, researchers continuously search for strategies that enhance cross-cultural encounters and develop cultural competencies and skill sets to ease the internationalization process (Froese et al., 2016). IT managers should respond quickly to external changes to be reliable in a highly uncertain environment. Dealing with international vendors is like dealing with a host of uncertainties (Lioliou et al., 2019). Uncertainties would arise because of insufficient information about the vendors and the volatile global international environment. After all, firms may generate these supernormal profits by focusing on the

relationship benefits, which will benefit both clients and vendors (Haried & Ramamurthy, 2010). IT businesses cope by having managers skilled in analyzing vendors' uncertainties for better outsourcing outcomes and maintaining their competitive advantage.

Cost Benefits

ITO, like many other management decisions, requires cost-benefit analysis first. IT businesses often opt to outsource because they want to realize a large margin of profits (Research & Markets, 2017). Sometimes it works well for them, and to some other extent, it does not. Thus, the decision to outsource results from previous negated gains (Ishizaka et al., 2019). Therefore, to pursue additional benefits, businesses follow the paths of cheap labor. The critical driver for human resources ITO is cost reduction (Sim et al., 2017). While companies are trying to rectify their past mistakes by reaping significant gains internationally, they could face huge pitfalls. Companies that engage in outsourcing can change their vendors if they are not satisfied with the outcomes (Wang & Wang, 2019). Nguyen and Chang (2017) argued that the information technology businesses realize the cost-benefits when the external enterprise can deliver services at a lower cost by combining activities in one contract, such as payroll and benefits administration. In real-time, outsourcing could generate substantial benefits for the organization. Business organizations can focus on their business goals by freeing up their workloads (Warren & Szostek, 2017). Success in ITO requires strong negotiation skills.

Companies of all sizes can benefit from outsourcing if the strategy is executed well. Small, medium, and large organizations do not differ in the human resources functions they outsource, such as payroll, recruitment, and training and development

(Siew-Chen & Vinayan, 2016). Therefore, IT managers should strive to find a reliable vendor. Additionally, it is best to rethink vendor selection as the capstone of the outsourcing process. For larger organizations, outsourcing strategies are realistic options due to the abundance of resources available for managing an outsourcing engagement (Kocijan & Sopta, 2016). Globalization has made the world become a small village truly. Small businesses compete where large-caliber companies were previously dominant (Warren & Szostek, 2017). This changing knowledge dynamic has led to successful outsourcing strategies as IT managers commit to learn about a place before engaging in outsourcing negotiations.

There are many motives behind choosing to invest in ITO. Some IT companies have suggested that reducing costs by outsourcing their activities is their reaction to a difficult economic situation (Giertl, 2015). Meanwhile, Ishizaka et al. (2019) argued that an outsourcing decision is a company's strategic implementation to reduce costs and increase efficiency. No single company can operate in isolation in this era of globalization. The IT managers must emphasize what the firm would continue to work on internally versus seeking a vendor. Lee (2017) argued that the mistakes that lead to ITO failure are that IT managers fail to understand outsourcing other than a strategic business that shifts jobs to overseas partners. Benefits of ITO like innovation require strong plans and leadership to execute them. Clear communication and accountability to goals is key. Then the findings of the cost benefit analysis will be useful to the IT manager and team.

Recruitment

As IT companies seek to expand or shift their various departments, they should research where the best possible employee bases will be and develop recruitment strategies. Outsourcing has remarkably influenced how IT companies do business internally and externally; one strategy that several IT firms focus their attention on is recruiting experts in IT worldwide to handle increased demands to meet their technological needs (David et al., 2017). Several studies exploring ITO have identified the cases associated with the increasingly integrated labor markets. Businesses initially go overseas to maximize profits while minimizing costs, but they tend to decrease their quotas for highly killed workers (Giertl, 2015). Firms worldwide face considerable talent shortages in a decade, with 40% of firms reporting obstacles in filling jobs due to a lack of qualified applicants (Landay & DeArmond, 2018). Highly skilled workers are scarce, and skilled workers who see their jobs shift overseas feel threatened (Saran, 2019). The political campaign in the United States in 2004 centered on job losses to cheap labor overseas. Globalization and outsourcing are hot topics in election season because so many middle-class Americans are worried about slipping into a lower economic segment (Pacheco, 2020). Outsourcing in the political debate of 2004 raised questions about skilled laborers versus low-paid jobs overseas. Some firm leaders agreed that outsourcing was their reason to recruit more skilled workers due to technological innovations.

Organizations can put effort into being an attractive culture for new hires, even those in other countries. Recruiter characteristics are related to organizational attraction (Landay & DeArmond, 2018). Business organizations should learn how to attract the best

employees to enhance their business performance and competitive advantage globally.

Indeed, organizational reputation, job, attributes, and recruiter behaviors influence

applicant attraction to the firms (Landay & DeArmond, 2018). The quality of the

employees defines the organization and its long-term viability. Signaling theory explains

the relationship between recruiter competence and organization attraction (Landay &

DeArmond, 2018). Hiring managers are held accountable for the negative perceptions

concerning recruitment outsourcing. Sometimes, hiring managers do not know how to

portray their outsourcing ambitions because they lack complete and accurate information

on outsourcing.

Onboarding of the new organization and employees can be helpful or harmful to

the success of the ITO. When the ill-skilled IT managers describe the organization's

outsourcing to the recruits, there is a distortion between the outsourcing services and its

strategy, thus contributing to a distorted view of outsourcing (Saran, 2019). Savino

(2016) demonstrated that recruitment outsourcing is dependent on creating a solid

partnership between the third-party vendor and the host organization. As the global

market is highly complex and changes continuously, IT managers must focus on their

core business strategy to remain competitive (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). IT firms must

remain vigilant when recruiting experts to expand their workforce budgeting (Savino,

2016). Thus, IT firms should realize that recruiting the right people would help them

achieve their goals. Because the global market is constantly changing, it is essential to

acquire more excellent paths by keeping skilled workers (Saran, 2019). Maintaining

quality relationships with employees and other company's leadership is important.

Expectations can be influenced for the better by being upfront and honest from the start.

Outsourcing and Employment

Outsourcing has become such a popular trend that it impacts national economies. ITO issues in America have been politicized, and candidates have been using them for their electoral purposes (Pacheco, 2020). Recent empirical evidence for the United States is not conclusive, making it difficult for policymakers to devise any response to the growing phenomenon (Bailey et al., 2019). For example, most Americans laid off got back their jobs in the recession if the demand for goods and services increased again.

The sad truth is that people who are losing their jobs to outsourcing might not get them back. Nugraha and Garin (2019) argued that one of the most critical parts of the export and import process is port services and infrastructure availability. One of the main points of trading goods and services should be poverty reduction. Outsourcing should thus promote economic growth and poverty reduction (Andriesse & Kang, 2017). Nevertheless, the reversal tends to appear each time companies send part of their human resources overseas, seeking to reduce their internal costs. Infrastructure is a determinant factor in globalization (Khan & Bashar, 2016a). Companies should invest in modern infrastructure to have economic openness and remain competitive globally. The United States has understood the importance of transport infrastructure in the national economy (Bailey et al., 2019). The United States invests in digital infrastructure and cybersecurity as well.

The U.S. Southwest's transport infrastructure development allows information technology businesses not to be concerned with what might otherwise be a limiting growth factor. Bailey et al. (2019) argued that to be a determinant factor for the economy's success, strategic transport, communication, and internet reliability have favored the United States businesses globally. This aspect could make a significant difference when calculating the costs of outsourcing. Saving costs forces the U. S.' companies to outsource main jobs, such as outsourcing U.S. paralegal activity to the Philippines and Panama (Bailey et al., 2019). Offshoring employment implies that some U. S. workers would lose their jobs; however, this painful reality does not weaken the case for a relocation because it remains a strategy for firms to be competitive (Bailey et al., 2019). Although significant jobs are shifted overseas for cheap labor, the competition is still sharpening, and the United States is constrained to adapt to global management and production. Bailey et al. showed that for every dollar of corporate spending outsourced to India, the U. S. economy captures more than three-quarters of the benefit and gains as much as $1.14 in return. Many developing countries are gaining enough digital infrastructure to compete for new jobs.

Due to the scale of the trend and how many corporations are choosing to send jobs overseas, outsourcing has become a significant political topic over time. In the United States, politicians have planned to address their capacity to keep jobs and maintain their competitive advantage (Bailey et al., 2019). Many policymakers have understood the importance of underlining the institutional developments that ITO could hurt the economy. Businesses understand that their international trade transactions rely on

better outsourcing decisions because reducing costs when sending their IT services overseas can also shift jobs to overseas locations (Bailey et al., 2019). Offshoring can be detrimental for an organization because domestic employee retention becomes a challenge, and the most frequent scenario is the likelihood of layoffs (Free III, 2020). Because outsourcing is challenging to implement, IT managers must consider internal and external factors to ensure successful outcomes.

Level of Uncertainty

Many factors add to the uncertainty that IT managers should be prepared to face when executing ITO. If the ITO is not well-managed or the IT managers are ill prepared, they can likely encounter ex-ante transaction costs too high to maintain the strategy (Saran, 2019). Notwithstanding the length of time the ITO agreements are signed, the unpredictability and the activities required to manage those issues may lead to more significant transaction costs (Yap et al., 2016). Nevertheless, ITO is not at risk when leveraged and well-organized IT businesses have implemented successful strategies. The ITO focuses on governance decisions related to making or buying decisions; however, IT managers link outsourcing decisions to economic, environmental, political, and competitive conditions. Some firms will launch outsourcing without considering the cultural and political realms of the host countries (Jia et al., 2020). Thus, if not appropriately handled, cultural realms could hinder the accomplishment of ITO projects.

Outsourcing is a politicized issue because it impacts a country's economy at both the micro and macro levels. Executive leadership often discusses cultural and political concepts in parallel because leaders must practice making or buying decisions, but they

must also consider the suitability of the location (Meinlschmidt et al., 2018). In many cases, several outsourcing decisions tend to be made on core competence (Ishizaka et al., 2019). Outsourcing businesses have been subject to questionable business performances and severe loss of employees. During the U. S. presidential elections in 2004, the candidates made outsourcing and job losses to third-world countries their campaign focus (Pacheco, 2020). The panel discussions were on job losses pointing the finger of accusation at the sitting president for his lack of jobs for the U. S. citizens. At that time, the reality was that the economy was shaky, coming from a previous years' tepid job market (Pacheco, 2020). Consequently, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) declined, and many citizens blamed the president for the high unemployment rate.

People often lose jobs because of the reality of the respective economic system. Therefore, maximizing profits while keeping jobs and improving business performance can be substantial for the right outsourcing strategies (Agburu et al., 2017). Uncertainties are unprecedented in the global market, and the necessity for IT managers to face those challenges requires an adequate approach to strategy (Lioliou et al., 2019). The sober reality of ITO is that the international environment where IT firms operate is highly unpredictable. It comes to the point where IT firms must implement such industry-shaping strategies (Lioliou et al., 2019), given that their initial goals were to maximize profits. The IT managers who were well aware of the uncertainties on the global scale might have to lay out a future vision that gives them other options in the market. IT managers implementing strategies and the point forecasts within them should never

underestimate uncertainty at any level of their ITO (Lioliou et al., 2019). There becomes

a high value for real-time management data when reviewing performance at a distance.

Efficiencies Gained

In an ideal scenario, ITO can create additional efficiencies within a business

management system. Scholars have found that executives making outsourcing decisions

balance the transactional costs to achieve higher productivity and greater efficiencies

(Ghozzi et al., 2016). ITO's primary goal is to change its performance by linking

outsourcing to increasing its market share. Nevertheless, there is no clear evidence that

outsourcing has a significant impact on organizational performance (Masa'deh et al.,

2017). However, there is a substantial improvement in organizational relationships with

third parties in quality of work, social responsibility, and profitability. Notable companies

that have outsourced are Kodak Company, which subcontracted its computing operations

to International Business Machines (IBM), resulting in a higher quality computing system

and process at Kodak for less money than they were spending (Agburu et al., 2017).

Some parts of business systems are simpler to separate and manage at a distance than

others. Historical examples of success exemplify expert communication and leadership.

The truth is that outsourcing is significant for organizational profitability only

when it is well-planned. Third-party vendors often manage entire functions with

capabilities to scale and execute tasks with greater efficiency and lower costs (Agburu et

al., 2017). The fundamental motivation of this study was to identify effective strategies

that IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention. The

central tenet of RBV theory is that organizational resources include human capital and

physical assets as the primary sources of competitive advantage (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). RBV provides a theoretical lens for designing resource strategies to generate maximum value for an enterprise (Agburu et al., 2017). By applying the RBV, IT managers can gain an advantageous perspective for strategic planning and execution.

Employee Retention

Organizational culture and leadership can influence employee retention rates. Research and Markets (2017) stated that the promise of cost reduction through outsourcing is driving leaders toward the practice of various business functions. People are reluctant to work for a company that cares only to maximize its profits (Saran, 2019). During turbulent economic times, business leaders must create efficiency via targeted strategies. For example, people in many countries are concerned with the pandemic and cannot afford to pay their bills. Keeping a job is an essential aspect of family life. Witnessing the economic downturn due to the pandemic cannot be added to outsourcing jobs overseas (Deng et al., 2020). Companies are doing what they can to employ people. ITO is not a matter of loyalty to any one area of operations, rather a focus on strategy.

Business leaders' continued interest in outsourcing strategies have led many organizations to explore various in-house functions as candidates for outsourcing. Related studies have predominantly focused on ITO (Chang & de Búrca, 2016). It is essential to understand the critical drivers shaping the outsourcing of products and services and the parties' cultural aspects. Because ITO can generate different outcomes depending on where the third parties are located worldwide (Wang & Wang, 2019), interests driven in the China market might differ from those in the Indian business

environment. Depending on how well the IT managers involved in outsourcing can develop their relationships with partners, profitable companies with higher ethics can attract new technology, thus retaining highly qualified employees (Presbitero et al., 2016). The developing countries are struggling with keeping valuable employees given the lower wage structures that characterize these countries in a global shortage of qualified and skilled IT employees (Presbitero et al., 2016). Very few people would choose to work when the wage is low. In developing countries where cheap labor attracts major international firms, people seem not to have any other option but to accept what they are offered (Presbitero et al., 2016). The power dynamics of supply and demand for different types of jobs is important to understand when negotiating contracts for ITO. Talent pools depend upon variables like population density and access to higher education or job training. In ITO business environments, the marginal product of labor does not equal the competitive wage (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). Because firms were initially outsourcing their services to maximize profits, they base their employee retention on profit margins. For example, due to the severe shortage of qualified IT graduates, developing countries are particularly vulnerable to the so-called "flight of talent" and "employee exodus" to higher-wage countries in the west (Presbitero et al., 2016). Khan and Bashar (2016) argued that globalization directly affects the emergence of the world economy where IT sharing is at the internet speed. Students from India would like to move to the United States to take advantage of the sound economic system. Saran (2019) argued that because skilled IT workers can stimulate the IT industry, retaining them in the U. S. workflow to return to their country upon graduation is challenging. IT managers

are urged to put in place a forward-thinking recruitment strategy to build a talent pool that will enhance the business performance overseas.

Outsourcing Overview

Globalization has increased the speed with which companies adopt outsourcing as a strategy, particularly in the technology industry. The first announcement about outsourcing concerned Eastman Kodak in 1988 when they outsourced information systems to IBM, digital equipment corporation (DEC), and Business land and announced IBM as the IT service outsourcer (Pankowska, 2019). Although IT businesses are outsourcing because they seek low costs, each firm has its requirements and expectations when outsourcing. Lacity et al. (2016) argued that other determinants of outsourcing decisions include quality improvements, access to global markets, and the flexibility to reallocate resources. Successful outsourcing starts with outlining the terms of the contract and how each party involved can be satisfied in the process (Shivendu et al., 2020). Given that the problems arise due to unrealistic expectations, the best approach would be to start the outsourcing process by defining suitable organizational functions. Agburu et al. (2017) argued that leaders must know that not all outsourcing engagements reap the intended benefit before the executives commit to the practice. IT managers should clearly communicate their organizational goals because their success depends on the vendor's internal strengths.

Despite having competent leadership overseeing ITO processes, issues can still occur that complicate successful execution of the contracts at a distance. A business should consider outsourcing the activity where skilled managers are due to the

importance of subcontracting what is well known by the company and not the other way around (Saran, 2019). A business should not confer their problems to a third party because they could not solve them within their business environment. In other words, a company should not hand over its functions that are unknown by its IT managers to a vendor overseas (Ishizaka et al., 2019). The truth about ITO contracts is that a well-planned project could still run into trouble.

Global Product Development (GDP)

Complications arise as companies enter the global marketplace, and the capacity for innovation depends on availability of resources. GDP comprises four models: centralized, local outsourcing, captive, and global outsourcing (Chanson, 2018). In a centralized model, firms place resources in the home location, and ownership is by the company. In contrast, resources are not owned but sourced locally in the home location in the local outsourcing model. The captive model allows the company to own the resources in a foreign subsidiary. In the global outsourcing model, the company does not own resources and sources them from a foreign location. Companies' most challenging realities in the global market are the demands of new markets and new products (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). Competitors always listen to their customers' needs, and companies who think the game was not worth the effort struggle to profit.

IT managers with a global mindset are successful in ITO because they understand the global scale and concentrate on what customers want. Some IT managers are not trying to understand the global market and its complexities (Khan & Bashar, 2016a). Despite cultural differences, products and services are more alike. Politics and culture can

affect the economic context (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). For example, due to

globalization and financial motivations, U. S. institutions are changing with growing

intercultural exchanges (Pepanyan et al., 2019). Global trade's unfairness dictates

advantageous interaction terms despite a more globally connected economy. Therefore,

globalization is desirable but essential (Chanson, 2018) because firms conceive new

products collaboratively. Companies are struggling to bring an action to the global

collaboration of product development, but the difficulty arises because the concept of

culture itself is not rigid (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). IT managers should increase

their levels of communication with the vendors, and act like conductors to guide their

employees to perform their various works in harmony.

Business entities across the world are becoming closer due to the communication

revolution and its rapidity and outreach. Overall, globalization and technological

advancements (e.g., communication technology, smartphones, world-wide-web) seem to

increase the extent to which individuals are prematurely exposed to ways of life different

from their own (Pacheco, 2020). Figure 4 shows that the increasing global knowledge

flows generate the ITO's essential benefits.

Figure 4*: State and Change Aspects of Internationalization*
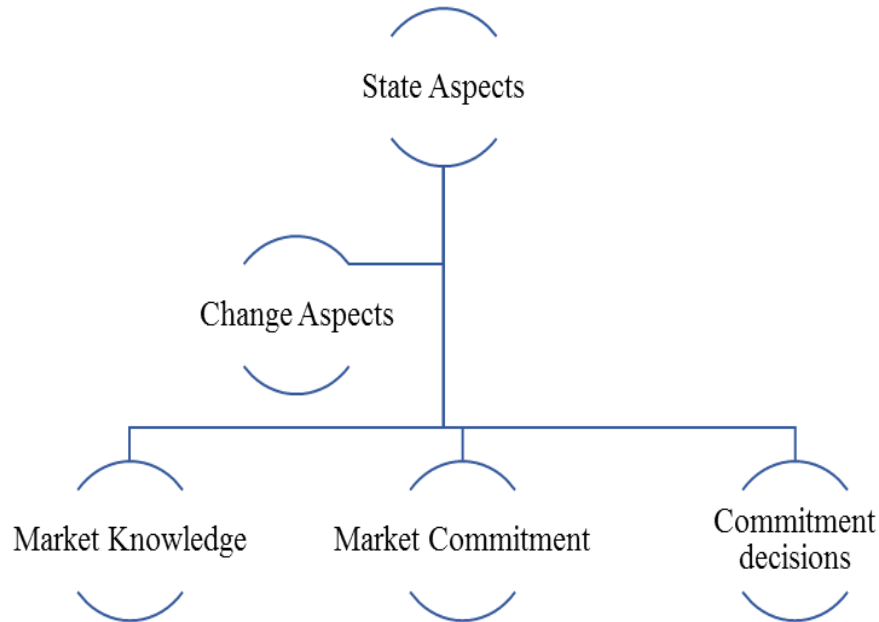
Note: Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020

The fast pace of technology requires companies to keep up with advancements at

the global level. Firms need to enhance their new product development processes to

remain profitable and grow in an omnichannel world (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020). It is

undeniable that globalization has essential effects on product development. The emerging

markets have taken a severe advantage of technology innovation and productivity from

IT firms outsourcing their services in those countries (Gallino & Rooderkerk, 2020).

Technology is progressing worldwide, positively impacting product development

because, from a consumer perspective, new technology is blurring the lines between the

offline and online worlds (Gallino & Rooderkerk). The future of ITO remains bright and

IT managers should emphasize the opportunities on the global scale to explore new operating models.

Effects of Outsourcing.

The past 2 decades have ushered in many changes, especially when it comes to choosing how to find and hire employees. The forces of globalization have impacted global human interactions (Khan & Bashar, 2016b). Consumers could buy products from a store located a thousand miles away. Multinational corporations such as Nike and Coca-Cola are expanding steadily across the globe. The human resources outsourcing market has reached $200 billion globally (Cole, 2017). There was a profound shift in how businesses tend to maximize their profitability. Most firms are managing to explore the global scale of the market to maintain their competitive advantage. By outsourcing some of their corporate functions to service providers, the businesses' primary intentions are to cut costs and maximize profits (Patel et al., 2020). Consequently, companies put strategic approaches to face an increasingly complex, turbulent international marketplace. Manufacturers can benefit from outsourcing practices; therefore, there must be an efficient decision scheme for outsourcing and scheduling (Le, 2019). However, with the aim of outsourcing, every company has its unique capabilities and competencies. IT businesses must have their strengths as core to their strategies.

IT managers should realize the complexity of ITO tasks and that this process requires leaders to develop clear communication and work requirements. Given that markets are continually changing, managers should concentrate their outsourcing decisions on their core competencies (Wang et al., 2008). Nevertheless, it is difficult to

find a win-win situation for outsourcing. The research on employees' perceived image of their organization, including its values, mission, capacities, and performance, indicates that more positive images lead employees to identify more strongly with their organization (Lee & Lee, 2020). Meanwhile, taking away some critical workloads might lead to employees' disengagement. Some leaders opt to communicate strategy before outsourcing, while others choose not (Ishizaka et al., 2019). A positive vision strategy of outsourcing is the one that provides strategic direction for in-house performance.

Despite taking a strengths-based approach to ITO processes, issues can arise that challenge the initial motives for deciding to outsource jobs. Whether it is a small-sized company or a multinational corporation, the reasons for outsourcing include cost-saving, reduced capital investment, improved responsiveness to technology advances, and increased core competencies (Wu & Park, 2019). Nevertheless, when the firm fails to reach any one of those results, the consequences could be devastating to employee performance. During the outsourcing deals negotiation, the lower cost promises did not fulfill their obligations (Research & Markets, 2017). Cost savings did not materialize, which forced companies to cut down jobs. Outsourcing in this scheme could become a nightmare because the companies could no longer monitor the data from a distance. Some changes appear later that were not in the initial contract (Shivendu et al., 2020). The hidden costs could be damaging during the implementation of the outsourcing contract terms, and IT managers should avoid them as much as possible.

Advantages and Challenges of ITO

ITO provides several advantages for organizations, such as reducing the cost of ownership of IT products or services and providing rapid access to modern technologies. However, firms rarely achieve the desired results when the outsourcing relationship is not managed effectively (Erdogan & Tokgoz, 2020). ITO could be a powerful way for IT firms to improve efficiencies when handled with higher scrutiny. Nevertheless, the opposite could be a devastating factor for the IT firms; hence, businesses could benefit by investing time and energy to execute the ITO with care. Two mechanisms exist for the governance of the ITO process, namely, formal (contracts) and relational (Erdogan & Tokgoz, 2020). Whenever IT managers could capture and assimilate the knowledge of their external environment, the ITO process would go smoothly. IT firms understand the relevance of improving their performance by drawing a niche of skilled workers. Erdogan and Tokgoz argued that economic benefits refer to the ability of a firm to utilize expertise and economies of scale in the human and technological resources of the service provider and manage its cost structure through specific contractual arrangements. Organizations could work efficiently with a team of experts to improve business performance because skilled workers deliver tasks efficiently and accurately.

When executed appropriately, outsourcing can be a very advantageous strategy. ITO partnerships have become a burgeoning global phenomenon due to the rapid technological advancements, greater access to global human capital, and close integration of international markets (Mehta et al., 2020). IT managers entering the global markets should increase their assets by accessing an extensive market database where new

customers are flooding, and new technologies are rising. Accordingly, IT managers are

saving costs by downsizing their staff where low-cost labor pools are abundant. Mehta et

al. (2020) argued that the decision to outsource is determined by whether it will enable

the firm to take advantage of the economies of scale of an outside vendor while reducing

internal coordination costs. The IT managers' first thoughts would be to access the

external lower cost structure in China, for example, before accessing new resources and

reducing the need to invest capital. Alternatively, the client might benefit from the value

generation potential of vendor resources. Outsourcing allows the client firms to focus on

and strengthen core competencies by subcontracting non-core functions to a vendor

(Mehta et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, the receiving countries capitalize on increasing their

human potential by giving their IT graduate students better jobs. Therefore, the benefits

of ITO are more significant than just cost savings to both the client and the agent.

Strategic alliances can be built for mutual benefit but require cultural awareness.

The success of an outsourcing alliance and the client-vendor relationship dynamics are

yet to be fully understood (Mehta et al., 2020). The local workers of an IT firm in the

United States might lose their benefits because the Chinese companies brought their local

standards' low wages. Business leaders should not underestimate the cultural aspects of a

receiving country because it could be devastating to the outcomes of the ITO. Cultural

differences profoundly impact the relationship between the client and the vendor (Mehta

et al., 2020). To develop a successful, strategic relationship, partners must understand the

cultural patterns embedded within each culture and devise strategies to deal with

dissimilarities (Mehta et al., 2020). Some IT companies have struggled to adjust to their

host countries' cultural realms. Mehta et al. argued that the host country's regulatory environment challenges outsourcing partnerships. For example, weak legislation and flawed contract and privacy enforcement in India pose a challenge for the United States and European clients. Potential conflicts are not only political, but also social in nature.

ITO can lead the company in reducing labor costs, therefore IT managers should be skilled to manage workers on a global scale. Organizational leaders concentrate the main advantages of outsourcing in four directions: cost reduction, increased productivity, job balance, management flexibility, and risk avoidance (Doval, 2016). Several IT managers might not understand the risk of downsizing their organizations, impacting several departments where poor performance and the absence of technology updates can become noticeable. Doval (2016) argued that the essential disadvantage of outsourcing is downsizing due to the increased unemployment rate. Consequently, IT managers who choose to reduce their employees contribute to the loss of skill and knowledge. Employees who are well trained and skilled are the cornerstone of the industry standards. Letting employees go for the sake of ITO would mislead the project. Nevertheless, IT firms could face lower production rates, unsafe work environments, customer loss, and increases in business expenses.

This literature review includes TCT, TOC, LTT, outsourcing risks, competitive advantage, RBV, transaction frequency, cost-benefit analyses, recruitment, outsourcing and employment, level of uncertainty, efficiencies gained, employee retention, outsourcing overview, GDP, and effects of outsourcing. By implementing outsourcing in the United States, some business entities have increased their competitiveness. Firms in

the United States could increase their competitive advantage by responding to global technological advances. ITO is a worldwide collaboration between business entities. While companies focus on lowering costs and maximizing profits, solving problems via technology and innovation are advantages of executing successful outsourcing contracts.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 contains the background of the problem, problem statement and purpose statement regarding the strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The nature of the study provides a concise explanation for selecting the qualitative case study for the study. The overarching research question was, what strategies do information technology outsourcing managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts? The conceptual framework was TCT which provided a lens to understand better the strategies IT managers develop and implement to mitigate risks for improved IT business outcomes. Other topics discussed in Section 1 include the definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, the significance of the study, and an extensive literature review. The outsourcing impacts on business performance in the United States could benefit a business in its strategic platforms in dealing with the global market, maintaining its competitive advantage, and ensuring higher employment.

In Section 2, I will restate the purpose statement, explain my role as the researcher, and discuss the criteria for selecting participants for this study. Other topics discussed in Section 2 include the research method and design, population and sampling method, ethical research, data collection and analysis techniques, and study method's

reliability and validity. Section 3 covers an overview of the study, presentation of the study findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further study, reflections, and summary and study conclusions.

Section 2: The Project

This Section includes a discussion of the critical quality indicators for the study. In this qualitative multiple case study, I explored strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. Section 2 begins with a restatement of the purpose statement and explanation of the role of the researcher and the qualification of the participants. Other topics discussed in Section 2 include the research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis. The section ends with a discussion of the approaches for establishing reliability and validity to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the study findings.

Purpose Statement

In this qualitative multiple case study, I identified and explored strategies ITO managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The sample consisted of four IT managers from two businesses in Arizona who had improved business performance and employee retention using strategies to manage international ITO contracts. The implications for positive social change from the findings of this study include improving IT firms' success rates and helping them achieve higher

business performance. Improving the success rate of IT businesses could enable ITOs to boost employment and improve local economies by offering more cost-effective services.

Role of the Researcher

I served as the primary data collection instrument for this study. Researchers are the key instrument in ensuring successful development of a research study (Farooq & de Villiers, 2017). Using the semistructured interview questions (see Appendix A) to collect the data allowed me to obtain more detailed information from the participants. A researcher's role is to gather, evaluate, organize, and interpret data (Vaara et al., 2016). This study involved the collection of open-ended data to provide the participants' detailed thoughts and beliefs while adhering to the interview protocols (see Appendix B). As a primary data collection instrument, the researcher has a responsibility to objectively analyze and interpret the information obtained from participants for the accuracy of the findings (Yin, 2018). The research question for this study was: What strategies do IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts? As a primary research tool for this study, I constructed the interview questions to elicit the participants' knowledge of ITO and answer the research question. The participants' responses were audio recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed .

The relationship between researcher and participant is essential in a research study. Shaw and Satalkar (2018) argued that the researcher must develop and negotiate a relationship with participants to achieve both the participants' and the research study goals. For this research study, I chose to recruit participants who had a more profound knowledge of ITO. Establishing solid grounds for a relationship before the interview is

best (Shaw & Satalkar, 2018). When embarking on the semi structured interview to collect the data, I opted to interact with the participant several times before the interview setting. Shaw and Satalkar (2018) strongly believed that researchers who can develop a friendship as a method are more successful in collecting rich data. A trustful relationship with the participants is essential so they disclose their business documents and the process flow of ITO. Shaw and Satalkar argued that it is crucial to sustain the relationship based on trust that documents and knowledge will be shared. To build trust with the researcher, I emailed the interview protocol prior to the interview, along with the consent form. Before meeting for the interview, they had a clearer understanding of what was at stake and that the information was being offered voluntarily. Crucial aspects of collecting data for this research study were to emphasize the quality of the participants and to secure their agreement to be part of the study.

The Belmont Report (U.S. 1979) developed the principles of ethical research, including the core principles of being transparent with participants, protecting the participants' identities from any harm, and allowing the participants to partake in the benefits of the study. I ensured strict adherence to the principles of the Belmont Report during this study. Ensuring the participants that the information shared would be kept confidential and used only for this study was the highest priority. According to the protocols of the Belmont Report, participants are encouraged to participate in a study. The participants can voluntarily accept through the informed consent process (Brothers et al., 2015). The formulation of guidelines by various organizations and authority research promotes integrity, compliance, and ethical standards when conducting research (Yip et

al., 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016),
ethical research standards are constructed around justice, respect for persons, and
benevolence. I completed Human Research Protection Training to enhance my
knowledge of ethical research for this study.

I developed an interview protocol for use with the participants. A qualitative
study researcher becomes an instrument for collecting data (Talebi et al., 2017). I
conducted face-to-face interviews with local participants and Skype video interviews
with distance participants. I adhered to the Walden University Institutional Review Board
(IRB) requirements for the participant selection process and briefed participants on the
purpose of the study and any expectations before beginning the interviews. The
researcher's competence is the individual's actual capacity to perform and complete a
particular task when interacting with the study (Ting et al., 2019). Upon receiving IRB
approval, I sent emails to IT managers who had successfully outsourced their products
and services that explained the study to them, assured the participants that their
confidentiality would be maintained, and included the attached consent form. After
completing the study, I secured all research-related materials, and 5 years later, will
destroy the data and research findings.

I used the semi structured interview protocol and asked the participants open-
ended questions while underlining my role as a researcher and theirs as participants to
explain the study process. Braaten et al. (2020) argued that the essence of building quality
and consistency resides in use of an interview protocol. I used a flexible interview
protocol supplemented by open-ended, follow-up questions for this study. The main goal

was to explore participants' thoughts to develop an understanding of their feelings and beliefs about managing ITO. The interview protocol was my guide to building stronger relationships with the participants. Researchers should enhance the interview protocol's reliability because it helps to increase the quality of the data (Granikov et al., 2020). I developed a solid initial interview protocol enabling me to capture the participants' experiences and perspectives related to ITO. Braaten et al. argued that participants would likely share their deepest thoughts when the researcher followed the interview protocol. I adhered to the interview protocol to enhance the consistency of the research study.

A researcher has the ethical responsibility to commit to following through on a study and ensure integrity in the research method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It was essential to remain neutral during the interview to minimize bias, and my obligation as a researcher was to protect the participants' confidentiality. A researcher must ensure confidentiality of the participants' information and that their names remain anonymous (Celestina, 2018). I reassured the participants that the data would be stored in a secure area and destroyed 5 years after the study's completion. Although it was challenging to complete the research study without introducing bias into it, researchers avoid bias by assuring the accuracy and repeatability of research data to prevent unnecessary personal influence (Birt et al., 2016). Avoiding biases was a primary concern of mine throughout the interview process. A qualitative researcher must have integrity and avoid biases to achieve reliable research results (Shaw & Satalkar, 2018). I avoided bias by ensuring that my personal experience and judgement on the subject did not influence the study interpretations and that the findings were based on participants' knowledge. Ending the

participant selection process is unnecessary before the data analysis process is complete because keeping the selection process open helps to avoid bias because new information can emerge until saturation is reached.

Participants

Effective participant selection is critical to getting robust results in any qualitative study (Yin, 2018). The main eligibility criterion for participants for this study was individuals who were IT managers with experience in outsourcing and who have successfully implemented ITO to improve business performance and employee retention. Purposive sampling helps researchers determine participants' expertise, knowledge, and understanding of the research question (Imani-Nasab et al., 2017). I used purposive sampling to select participants for this study who were willing to speak of their experiences interacting with global partners. Researchers must choose specific participants from which to obtain facts and information (Vasileiou et al., 2018). I recruited four IT managers who successfully implemented strategies to improve business performance and employee retention to participate in this qualitative case study.

All the participants in this qualitative multiple case study were knowledgeable about ITO and shared their experiences and strategies while operating in the global market. The scale and scope of this research were the impacts of outsourcing in the United States. Investigators must define the appropriate inclusion and exclusion criteria when designing a study and evaluate how those decisions will impact the external validity of the results of the study (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). The inclusion criteria for this study were participants needed over 5 years of IT experience in outsourcing, had to

live and work in Arizona, and had to be leaders in their respective organizations who had successfully outsourced products and services to vendors in other countries.

I gathered information about the participants in local magazines and contacted the IT managers in IT industries located in Arizona. My network of friends and coworkers also helped identify participants who met the criteria of IT managers who have experience in outsourcing. LinkedIn and Facebook were also used to locate IT managers in Arizona who had successfully implemented ITO. By limiting the geographical location of the study to the state of Arizona and using local IT managers for the interviews, I minimized travel distance costs. For this study, the priority was on IT managers who have made informed strategic outsourcing decisions that led their organizations to substantial profitability.

There are many strategies researchers may choose from to access data for qualitative studies, most of which require social interactions or official communication (Mohn, 2020). Researchers should rely on business gatekeepers to access the participants (Xu et al., 2020). However, participants may not be willing to share their organization's information, which poses a significant research challenge. Thus, a researcher should attempt to build strong relationships with the participants to gain their trust and confidence (Ting et al., 2019). Researchers need to develop strong relationships with participants to obtain their agreement and consent (Xu et al., 2020). After receiving Walden University IRB approval to conduct the study, I established a relationship with the participants. First, a letter of invitation (see Appendix D) was sent via email to IT managers to identify participants interested in taking part in this study. Upon their

acceptance of the invitation, I followed up with an informed consent form, explaining the purpose of the study and the rationale for getting their agreement. It was not always easy to gain access to participants without facing unforeseen challenges. After gaining access to the participants, qualitative researchers should build and maintain relationships through personal but professional communication (Yin, 2018).

Qualitative researchers should exercise professionalism and social skills throughout the length of the study (Yin, 2018). One way researchers can gain participants' confidence is by being truthful with them (Shaw & Satalkar, 2018). Qualitative researchers should minimize bias to create an atmosphere of transparency and objectivity in a nonthreatening environment (Xu et al., 2020). Building a trustful relationship with the participants is critical in obtaining reliable data and conducting a credible study (Shaw & Satalkar, 2018). Establishing a good relationship with participants prevents them from withholding information (Erdogan & Tokgoz, 2020). For example, offering participants interviews away from their work environment is a strategy for increasing their trust. I sent an informed consent form to participants, clearly illustrating the purpose of the study and explaining that their participation was voluntary, how confidentiality would be maintained, and the expected length of interviews.

Research Method and Design

Researchers use qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, or action research to collect data (Zoellner & Harris, 2017). The paradigm of each style varies widely from the rest, and researchers must decide on a methodology before entering any agreements with the IRB committee from their college or with study participants. For example, researchers

use the quantitative method for any statistical analysis or attempt to prove or disprove a hypothesis (Yin, 2018). The qualitative method is suitable to delve into a phenomenon's deeper meaning by giving subjects a voice (Ribeiro et al., 2021). Qualitative research helps understand people's underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations (Heidari et al., 2021).. In the following section, I discuss the theoretical reasoning for choosing the research methodology.

Method

In this doctoral study, I employed the qualitative method. Researchers use the qualitative method to understand a social and cultural phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The qualitative method is the primary mode of inquiry in social sciences and applied fields (Thomann & Maggetti, 2020). Contrastingly, researchers use the quantitative method for statistical sampling (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The focus of this study was to gather insights into IT managers' perspectives who had implemented successful outsourcing strategies. The quantitative method was unsuitable for this study because I did not need to collect data about variables. A mixed method consists of both the qualitative and quantitative methods is a research approach used to describe multiple methodological strategies, representing generic classes of research strategies for gaining knowledge about a research question (Turner et al., 2017). Because the mixed method approach consists of a quantitative aspect in addition to the qualitative aspect, it was inappropriate for this study where no numerical data were used to establish the relationship among variables (see Turner et al., 2017).

The qualitative method was ideal for this study. Researchers use the qualitative method to understand the complex environment where the research occurs and the interactions between persons and their settings (Lock & Seele, 2018). A qualitative method was the most appropriate method to gain insights into IT management strategies for successful business performance and employee retention. Qualitative research might enhance the perception of the research topic through data collection to establish the strategies for the successful implementation of ITO contracts. For this study, I used the qualitative method to gain an evaluative approach to successfully improving business performance and employee retention during ITO contracts. The qualitative method was the most appropriate for this research because I explored the phenomenon to obtain a personal understanding of strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Research Design

I used a multiple case study design for this study. Within qualitative research designs, the choices I considered for my study included the case study, phenomenological, ethnographic, and narrative designs (Yin, 2018). The case study approach is recommended for investigating a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and in a real-life setting, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear (Granikov et al., 2020). Researchers use the phenomenological design to reveal insights into cases they know about but lack in-depth knowledge (Yildiz, 2020). Ethnographic design is suitable for discovering truths about cultural groups within natural settings, while a narrative design is appropriate for exploring the life and history of an

individual (Pathiranage et al., 2020). Although these qualitative methods all have their benefits, they are not all purposeful for the kind of data needed to answer my inquiry.

In this study, I selected the case study design rather than a phenomenological, ethnographic, or narrative study due to the nature of the research question. The phenomenological design is suitable for studies involving participants' lived experiences. However, the focus of this study was not on participants' experiences but on exploring the strategies they use to implement ITO contracts successfully. Ethnographic design is practical in analyzing behaviors, beliefs, customs, and social behaviors. The focus of this study was not to understand a group of people and their behaviors. Therefore, the ethnographic design was not suitable for this study. A narrative was not ideal for this study because the study's purpose was not to explore the life and history of individuals. Researchers use the narrative design to explore the life and history of individuals, which was not suitable for this study because the focus of this study was not to collect and analyze participants' life data.

Data saturation is the point at which the researcher identifies all relevant concepts. No new concepts would be specified in the analysis if qualitative research interviews continued (Gugiu et al., 2020). During this study, only four participants were needed to reach a saturation point with themes in the data. I asked the same open-ended questions several times during the interview process to collect robust data. Then, I analyzed the verbal data until no new ideas emerged. Researchers should gather enough information to replicate the study until no further coding is feasible. Saturation is attaining the researchers' ultimate point of data collection (Alam, 2020). Therefore, I interviewed the

selected participants from the different organizations until no new themes emerged during coding to reach a data saturation point.

Population and Sampling

The target sample size consisted of four IT businesses in Arizona that have successfully implemented ITO strategies. Sampling consists of the number of participants, contacts with each participant, and each contact's length (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The sampling selection technique for this study was a purposive approach. The importance of sampling in qualitative research is undeniable and purposeful sampling helps identify and select cases related to the phenomenon. Purposeful sampling is conducive to examining situations with in-depth and rich experiences regarding the subject studied (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I used purposeful sampling to identify potential interviewees, and I purposefully selected four IT managers who have successfully implemented ITO contracts as the study participants. I selected four participants who met the study requirements and could answer the interview questions accurately. Yin (2018) argued that the sample size in qualitative research is important to reduce the probability of error, and researchers should use judgments to go deeper into the findings. It is best to consider that because it is a multiple case study the number four could be enough to collect the fundamental data and to reach saturation. The sample size allowed me to focus on each participant and develop a stronger relationship with them during the interview process.

The case study provided strategic insights into successful ITO. Purposive sampling is best to extract meaning from the data (Yin, 2018). The purposive method is

the fundamental reason for interviewing four managers to collect and further examine a sufficient dataset. The sampling technique is crucial because it is a tool that helps collect as much data as possible during participants' interviews (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The quality of the research questions elicited responses from the participants. The information the participants provide is beneficial to the findings of this study. To understand the research problem better, I asked appropriate questions to uncover and explore the core business problem.

The IT managers in Arizona constitute the sample size of relevant people because they have successfully implemented IT strategies in ITO contracts. Sampling strategies are selected to yield rich information and are consistent with the methodological approach used (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The participants showed their interest in participating in the research study by replying to emails. I sent the informed consent forms to the participants to explain the purpose and benefits of the study before conducting the semi-structured interviews.

Qualitative research interviews use data saturation to know when they have completed the coding process. The researcher cross-references different data sources and types (Puyvelde, 2018). Researchers use different sample sizes to reach data saturation. I asked open-ended questions multiple times to achieve data saturation. Therefore, it is relevant to determine the number of participants to obtain data saturation in qualitative research (Fofana et al., 2020). I determined four participants were enough for a multiple case study to diminish the likelihood of errors, and ensure I receive sufficient information from them to find common themes and answer the overarching research question.

The participants in this study have successfully implemented business strategies within their organizations, which is vital to collect information for the findings to benefit future management scholars or the public. Because most business entities would like to preserve their organizational privacy, sharing their successful strategies could jeopardize their reputation. A researcher must respect and ensure research participants' confidentiality (Xu et al., 2020). I conducted semi structured interviews at a convenient place and time for the participants. Participant comfort is essential to maintaining a trusting relationship between the researcher and participants.

Ethical Research

Ethical issues exist in any research study, but the researchers must know how to cope with them before embarking on the study journey. Qualitative researchers pay close attention to ethical matters while conducting research (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). Participants have the right to maintain their privacy, and the researcher must endeavor to do good and avoid harm (Ting et al., 2019). The goal of this study was to explore the strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention. This study adhered to Walden University's ethical principles and the protocols established by the Belmont Report (U.S., 1979). I informed the participants of their adherence to the Belmont principles, assured their protection, and dissipated any concerns. The researcher needs to consider any adverse effects the study could have on the participants (Dooly et al., 2017). Because a signed informed consent form was crucial for this study, I sent the informed consent form to all the participants. For a research project carried out with

participants outside of an institution, each participant must obtain a signed consent before beginning the research.

The consent form clearly expressed that the participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time (Clayton, 2020). I encouraged the participant to contact me via telephone or email if they wanted to withdraw from the study. Participants are aware that they can withdraw from the study for any reason without any adverse consequences or implications. The consent form underlined the purpose of the study and stated there was no incentive for participating, including monetary.

Researchers should understand the ethical principles in protecting human research participants. I completed web-based Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) (Appendix E) training to comply with ethical standards for protecting human research participants and meet Walden University requirements. Furthermore, I obtained IRB approval from Walden University faculty and staff. (WU IRB 03-04-22-0154424) Since the 1970s, U.S. federal regulations have relied on IRBs to review and approve human research protocols and provide continued oversight to ensure the rights and welfare of human subjects participating in research (Tsan, 2019). I reassured the participants about their security in participating in this study based on the IRB overseeing ethical practices in adherence to federal and state regulations.

Participants knew about storing personal information and ensuring confidentiality by using password protection on a removable hard drive. I locked participants' data in a secured area for 5 years and will destroy the files by shredding or deleting them. I protected the participants' names and organizations' identities using acronyms that were

not easily detected. For this study, I used a unique identifier for each participant (P),

followed by a number based on their interview order. For example, Participant 1 was

"P1." The appendices applicable for ethical research transparency include Appendix A

(interview questions), Appendix B (interview protocol), (informed consent form),

Appendix D (letter of invitation), and Appendix E (CITI certification).

Data Collection

Instruments

Qualitative research data include interviews, documentation, physical artifacts,

direct observation, archival records, and participant observation (Yin, 2018). Every

research study is different from another and must use a familiar source (Aten & Denney,

2019). I used semistructured interviews to collect the data and findings for this study. As

the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument because I conducted a

semistructured interview to administer interview questions (Appendix A) using the

interview protocol (Appendix B). In the open-ended questions for the interviews, the

participants felt free to express their views on ITO. In addition to the responses to the

interview questions, I collected some IT business documents, such as successful IT

strategies as a secondary source and cross-referenced the data.

I recorded the interviews using video recording software and saved the data

collected onto a thumb drive. Before selecting the participants in the study, I reviewed the

interview guides and protocols (Appendix B). All participants received information about

the study and the researcher. By reassuring the participants of the confidentiality of their

information, they grew confident in participating in the study. Before the interview, I

asked and obtained the participants' permission to record conversations. I took field notes because it was crucial for the researcher to write down important details while the interview occurred. I securely stored all study documents in a thumb drive and used password to protect the thumb drive for 5 years.

Conducting semistructured interviews can be challenging (Braaten et al., 2020). I used an audio recording device for the discussions to allow flexibility and follow-up with the participants. The length of time set for each interview did not exceed 45 minutes. Following up with participants is substantial because it is relevant for reaching data saturation (Fofana et al., 2020). After the interviews, I transcribed and analyzed the interview data to identify critical success factors and IT strategies that support ITO. Guest et al. (2020) argued that data saturation is not a tool that defines an adequate sample size for a research study. Nevertheless, researchers could only achieve data saturation when they had sampled and analyzed all the data until no new findings emerged. The concept of data saturation is crucial to all research studies where no new information emerges from conducting semi structured interviews. In this doctoral study, I conducted semi structured interviews until data saturation occurred.

For this multiple case study, data triangulation is pertinent to achieving reliability and validity of the data. The validity and reliability of the study are complete when the findings are analyzed, interpreted, and summarized (Farooq & de Villiers, 2017). The maximization of the study's validity helps to reduce bias (FitzPatrick, 2019). Member checking allows research participants to check the accuracy of raw data or research results (Brear, 2019). In the process of the interview, I recorded the interview, and at the

conclusion, I summarized the data collected and asked the participants the same question

to determine accuracy. Once the participants affirmed that the data collected reflected

their views, I confirmed the study's credibility. If the participants wanted to provide

additional information to strengthen their opinions, it would be my decision to

incorporate such ideas within the data or not. Consistency with all the participants during

the interview and member checking is crucial. By repeatedly asking the participants the

same question, I enhanced data objectivity and limited bias. Nevertheless, it is best to

follow the same interview protocol with all the participants and to thank them for their

time and contribution to the feasibility of the study.

Data Collection Technique

The data sources included outsourcing strategies from semi structured interviews

with open-ended questions and the IT business's written management-related data.

Interviews are a particular form of verbal interaction as they attempt to elicit answers in

one way or another (Aarsand & Aarsand, 2019). In this study, I conducted a semi

structured interview process using social media, telephone, and email. The process that

researchers consider in a study is the planning, conducting, and analyzing of interviews

for the validity of their findings (Costa et al., 2017). I prepared a research protocol and

selected appropriate IT-related questions to capture the expected findings. The interview

data was accurate, reliable, and unbiased, with easily understood documentation of the

sources to avoid any errors that might affect the quality of the data. I transcribed all

participants' information from the recording files. After member checking, I analyzed

them. I used the interview protocol (Appendix B) and interview questions (Appendix A) to assist in my collection of the primary data for this study.

I chose semi structured interviews because it is an effective method to collect data, and to explore the participants' thoughts on ITO. Researchers undertake semi structured interviews at a site where the interviewer and the interviewee play crucial roles in the joint production of meaning, knowledge, and stories (Aarsand & Aarsand, 2019). The data collection technique plays a pivotal role in reducing the misinterpretation of the responses from the participants (Alam, 2020). During the semi structured interviews, I gathered more insights about the participants and their roles in successfully implementing ITO strategies. After all, face-to-face interviews are efficient, and a stronger relationship between the participant and the researcher may be established (Xu et al., 2020). However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I used social media, telephone, and email for this study because it enhanced my chances to know the participant better when the observation, which is not an option, is time consuming. Semi structured interviews can be time consuming, but they are a suitable data collection method given that few open-ended questions are good for follow up.

Open ended questions were ideal to uncover successful ITO strategies and experienced leadership perspectives. Initially, some researchers will undergo a semi structured interview to gain more insights to determine whether or not a trial as a next step in the study is necessary (Teychenne et al., 2021). Ensuring that all participants are willing to be interviewed during a suitable time is crucial to an effective data collection process. Furthermore, the participants must have competency and experience in ITO.

Using the semi structured interview for this study is relevant; hence, I did not conduct a pilot study after IRB approval.

The member checking process allows the participants to fulfil crucial role-players within their organizational success. The conventional validity procedure of member checking may be used as an accountability practice if applied as an iterative-generative process during data collection and analysis (Naidu & Prose, 2018). Member checking is commonly used to verify data accuracy once the researcher has completed collection and possibly analyzed the data (Naidu & Prose, 2018). Member checking was part of the interview protocol (Appendix C). Additionally, the follow-up with the participants was to reassure them of accurate interpretation of their insights.

Data Organization Techniques

Qualitative researchers make sense of the verbal data by following organizational protocols. Organizing the data is an important step that could impact the research findings; thus, the data organization technique allows for flexibility and accuracy (Yin, 2018). For this study's data organization technique, I separated the data into groupings: recording, notes, and participants' responses. I checked the data for validity by performing the verbatim transcription for each interview and used an interview protocol. I also consistently reviewed the research notes. By checking the data for validity and reviewing notes, I reduced errors and increased the likelihood of accurate data.

The process of conducting interviews was simple, but it required my familiarity with technology for smooth execution. The qualitative methodology depends primarily upon eliciting self-reports from subjects or observations made in the field transcribed into

field notes (Yin, 2018). The qualitative data collection must be adequate to ensure the correct organization and analysis of the data. The research questions were well defined and aligned with ITO. The research question helped maintain the flow of qualitative data. I set up a recording device to capture all the information from the participants. I reviewed all the interview questions, the participant's responses, the interview notes, memos, and coded data and repeated the process until no new information emerged. Once transcribed, the audio files and transcripts were labeled to avoid confusion and allow flexibility and accuracy. I stored all transcripts and the consent forms on a secured drive. After 5 years, I will permanently destroy electronic data and shred any associated paper documents.

Data Analysis Technique

I used thematic analysis to analyze the data. Data analysis consists of collecting, recording, analyzing, displaying, and disseminating the findings (Yin, 2018). The data analysis could involve five steps: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2018). I used Yin's five step approach to qualitative data analysis.

Yin (2018) described the compiling phase as the primary step to analyze the data. I collected several data pieces during the interview process and put them in a specific order. Yin suggested that it is essential to transcribe each participant's interview data as soon as it is recorded to avoid mixing up the details. Overall, I compiled the data to develop groupings in an electronic spreadsheet. The second phase of the data analysis is encoded as the study is conducted (Yin, 2018). I implemented the patterns using the conceptual lens of how ITO strategy impacts Arizona's business performance and employee retention.

In this case, I used the components of the research question for the data coding and disassembled the data to reduce and eliminate non variant themes of the ITO. Disassembling is critical to code and sort the data in several ways to create new insights (Yin, 2018). Therefore, the interviews and company documents are essential for breaking down different IT managers' global strategies. All the patterns and trends became apparent during the coding and its completion.

Reassembling is the third phase of the data analysis process. Reassembling includes categorizing, tabulating, and recombining the data to discover patterns (Yin, 2018). In this study, I reassembled the strategies IT managers use to succeed in ITO. Qualitative research uses various methods, such as intensive interviews or in-depth analysis of historical materials, and it is concerned with a comprehensive account of some event or unit (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Taking advantage of the technology, IT managers aim to use various systems to make and implement decisions. Visionaries have explicitly created some newly innovated technology systems for ITO purposes. The systems are great at listing receivables and displaying cultural and political information of the potential IT vendors. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Aspers & Corte, 2019). IT managers should be aware of the cultural differences and communicate their organizational goals clearly with vendors. Vendor selection is a crucial moment in any ITO because failure to detect their opportunistic behaviors can constitute a pitfall for the IT companies.

In the data analysis plan, Yin (2018) suggested that interpreting is the fourth phase in which the researcher extracts the data for their deeper meaning. Therefore, I checked the patterns against the interview transcripts and the IT businesses' documents to interpret the data's insights during this phase. Interpreting could include methodological triangulation of the source of evidence (Yin, 2018). By interpreting the data, I provided answers to the questions regarding the strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. After completing the interview, I checked the backgrounds of the participants to ensure the accuracy of their responses.

The last phase of the data analysis process is called concluding. Concluding is a critical phase in the data collection process because researchers share their unique insights (Yin, 2018). In this study, I generated the findings to serve other IT businesses willing to outsource their services to vendors overseas. Knowing that IT managers could use the findings for their gains, I examined the results carefully to make more profound and vigorous interpretations. Also, I coded the data using NVivo 10 software to assist in my interpretation in analyzing, organizing, and identifying the ITO themes. According to Yin (2018), concluding can include answering the research question based on the study results. Finally, I concluded the data analysis by relating the interpretation of the study findings with the TCE theory and the research question.

To check the validity of my research study, I used the triangulation technique. Triangulation is a technique that helps to mitigate bias (Farquhar et al., 2020). I used a semi-structured interview to gain insight into ITO's successful strategies and looked at

company documents related to ITO management. Therefore, triangulation was used to investigate all the participants' strategies and evaluate their common grounds for successful ITO strategies. Triangulation led me to identify the findings and understand the fundamental reason behind the ITO's successes. Farquhar et al. (2020) argued that researchers could use data triangulation to ensure reliability in the study. Data collection from four participants' interviews and the various business documents provided for analysis were compared as I used triangulation to ensure the validity of the research study. By using data triangulation, I increased the validity of the findings while providing confidence in the findings.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative studies require researchers to build in reliability and validity checks throughout the methodology. Korstjens and Moser (2018) argued that the quality criteria for all qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Reliability refers to the soundness of the study, particularly concerning the appropriate methods chosen and how those methods were applied and implemented in a qualitative research study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Validity refers to the process of determining the fidelity (sometimes understood as accuracy) of the findings from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants, and the consumers of the research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). To ensure reliability and validity, researchers must provide sufficient information on the dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability of their research design to enable readers to determine its quality (Moon et al., 2016). Several researchers have considered establishing credibility as one of the essential indicators for

strong qualitative inquiry (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). In this study, I used methodological triangulation and member checking to ensure the validity of the study. Nowell et al. (2017) argued that a qualitative research study could only be trustworthy when researchers use data triangulation to assure data saturation. In this study, I used member checking, triangulation, and data saturation to ensure reliability and validity.

Reliability

Overall, reliability is based on the consistency of the findings. Reliability is used to confirm the accuracy of the findings or reach a consensus between coders (Poucher et al., 2020). To assess the measurement procedure's quality, the researcher would carefully examine the construct in the study by checking the participants' answers and all methodological decisions using an audit trail. Dependability is related to reliability. I repeated the ITO measures using objective methods to establish the findings' truth. Member checking is crucial because it engages the researcher in member reflections to elaborate on interpretations of the data (Poucher et al., 2020). Reliability is critical in this study because it could enhance the comparison of the data collected.

The research question must link to the repeatability of the data and the consistency of the notes taken. Triangulation allows the consistency of the findings to be compared and contrasted and therefore verified or not (Ellis, 2019). Flick (2017) noted that methodological triangulation is used to enhance the validity of the research study and to mitigate any risk of researcher bias. I used triangulation to mitigate biases and personal lenses. Triangulation is a technique researchers tend to use to reduce bias and validate the data through multiple sources (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). In this study, I transcribed all the

data collected with accuracy to minimize bias that could threaten the research's internal validity. By using member checking to confirm data interpretation and interview protocol, I ensured the dependability of the research findings.

Increased reliability can be achieved by using semi-structured interviews. Marshall and Rossman (2016) argued that the definition of reliability often depends on the dependability of a study. Dependability is used to enhance the consistency of methods and processes during the data collection and analysis process (Singh et al., 2021). Researchers use dependability to capture the changes that appear in the research study setting and are associated with the consistency of findings (Langtree et al., 2019). Dependability is evaluated by considering the decisions and steps taken during the research process (Langtree et al., 2019). Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process (Moon et al., 2016). Korstjens and Moser (2018) argued that dependability involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation, and recommendations of the study. Dependability appears to be a necessary tool of trustworthiness in a research study.

Dependability is crucial for trustworthiness because it brings to the research its consistency and repeatability of the findings. Dependability in qualitative research refers to the stability of data over time and conditions; it is an evaluation of the quality of the data collection, data, and theory generation undertaken in a study (Ellis, 2019). Member checking is one way of achieving transactional validity, which has been heralded as a

more robust version of validity reached through triangulation (Caretta & Pérez, 2019).

Researchers triangulate the significant findings with data from different sources

(Rooshenas et al., 2019). Azulai (2021) described triangulation as a combination of at

least two or more data sources, methodological approaches, data analysis procedures, or

investigators to collect and analyze the data. I used methodological triangulation, such as

member checking, to achieve the dependability of this study. Yin (2018) noted that the

researcher could generate audit trails by clarifying (a) the reasons for choosing the

participants in a study, (b) the reason for the study to the participants, (c) the data

collection process, (d) the transformation of the data during exploration, (e) the precise

techniques used to define the credibility of the information, and (f) the research findings.

Validity

Member checking is a vital tool to strengthen the validity of the data. Validity is

dependent on the purpose and context of the research (FitzPatrick, 2019). Validity refers

to conclusions based on certain methods to address validity threats pertinent to the

specific investigation (Fitzpatrick, 2019). Credibility, transferability, confirmability, and

data saturation are used to evaluate the trustworthiness of the qualitative data obtained

(Jalali et al., 2020). I used member checking to certify accurate interpretation of the

answers from the IT managers selected for this study. Simpson and Quigley (2016)

argued that member checking increases the credibility of the study by validating the

precision of the data gathered from participants. Validity brings quality to the study.

Credibility

The credibility of this research study rested on the participants with proven experience in ITO. Credibility refers to the amount of confidence the reader has that the findings presented are truthful and accurate (Ellis, 2019). To ensure credibility in a project, a researcher uses an ongoing interaction with the participants, facilitating, and gaining the trust of the participants and understanding their experiences (Jalali et al., 2020). In this study, I collected data from different sources, which are: (a) semi structured interviews, (b) organizational documents, and (c) reliable observations. The quality of a study depends on how the researcher implements the data and their analysis (Yin, 2018). I used member checking to confirm the credibility of the participants' inputs. Ensuring the credibility of the research involves returning the findings to some participants for further comments (Jalali et al., 2020). Therefore, I used member checking and the interview protocol (Appendix B) to maintain the credibility of the data collected from multiple participants. To ensure credibility, qualitative researchers use sample selection, reflexibility, audit ability, applying peer scrutiny, applying member checking, and triangulation (Yin, 2018). For this study, I used reflexibility, member checking, and triangulation to ensure the credibility of the study findings.

Transferability

The emphasis is put on transferability in this study by the description of participants' experience in ITO. To promote the transferability of the findings, the researcher must select diverse participants in the research study (Ting et al., 2019). The findings from this study would enhance the ability of readers and future researchers to

adapt ITO in the face of increasing globalization for improved business performance and employee retention. Enough information provided could serve the readers about the population, the sample, the method, the design, and the organization of the data collected. I used purposive sampling to collect data and triangulation of multiple data sources to determine the transferability of this study.

Confirmability.

Semi structured interviews and member checking ensured the conformability of this study. Confirmability is derived from establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination but derived from the data collected (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Member checking can effectively complement triangulation by checking data at different stages and enhancing the overall study validity (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). To ensure confirmability in this study, I used member checking and multiple sources of data for triangulation. Triangulation is recommended as a good practice in conducting case study research and is traditionally envisaged as offering validity through the convergence of findings, sources, or methods (Farquhar et al., 2020). I provided a summary of the study based on the data from the findings, which included the analysis of the interview transcripts and the company documents. Some of the company documents reviewed include meeting presentations, financial statistics, standard operating procedures, project management plans, business plans, ITO documents, shareholder agreements, and mission statements. The analysis of the study findings increased the validity and reliability of interpretation. I conducted member checking and document analysis to confirm the study findings**.**

Data Saturation

In qualitative research, the concept of data saturation has been proposed as the solution to an determine adequate sample size (Fofana et al., 2020). I conducted semi-structured interviews until no new information emerged to replicate the study to ensure data saturation. Researchers determine the point of data saturation in studies with open-ended questions (Fofana et al., 2020). After the interviews, I applied member checking and sent the participants' responses to them via email. During the interviews, gathering enough information helped to collect rich data. During coding, data saturation is achieved when no new concepts or relevant information emerges with additional interviews (Fofana et al., 2020). I conducted interviews with participants until no emergence of new information. Member checking techniques and triangulation enabled the study to attain data saturation quickly.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I restated the purpose of this case study, which involves exploring the strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. Next, I explained the role of the researcher as the prime collection instrument of the data. Other areas discussed in Section 2 include the participants, the research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instrument, technique, and data organization. Finally, I discussed the analysis process and the methods for improving the validity and reliability of the research. In Section 3, I will provide an overview of the study and present the findings, and discuss the application to

professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and future research, reflections, and summary and study conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In this section, I provided an overview of the study and present the study findings on the strategies some IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. Then, I link the study findings to the conceptual framework of TCT. Other topics discussed in this section include the applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and future research, reflections, and a summary and study conclusions.

Overview of Study

The aim of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies some IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The conceptual framework was TCT. The overarching research question was: What strategies do ITO managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts? Four IT managers from four different organizations in Arizona who had improved business performance and employee retention using strategies to manage international ITO contracts participated in this study. The participants provided the primary data to answer the overarching research question, and the sources of secondary data included company observations, field notes, and archival documents.

To reach data saturation, I continued with the data collection process until no additional information emerged from the interview process and document review. From analysis of the participants' responses to the interview questions, four themes emerged:

(a) communication and relationships, (b) labor costs, (c) organizational learning and culture, and (d) vendor management. By relating TCT to the study findings, I gained a better understanding of the topic under study. The study findings illustrate that some IT managers use a blend of strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Presentation of the Findings

Outsourcing is the dominant strategy for IT businesses to maximize profits (Patel et al., 2020). When knowledge transfer is done right, business partners involved in outsourcing projects can benefit from better business performance and employee retention (Masa'deh et al., 2017). According to Lee and Lee (2020), business outsourcing with various incentives can promote employee retention. I used the triangulation method to combine the data collected from interviews and the review of company archival documents, such as IT strategies and field notes. Upon completion of the interview with the fourth participant, no new information or themes emerged, indicating that I had reached data saturation. After I conducted thematic analysis, I used the NVivo 11 application as a tool to assist in organizing the collected data.

To reduce operating costs, IT managers shift their focus towards ITO; yet, outsourcing decisions are one of the most complex organizational decisions, requiring a thorough evaluation of the benefits on one side and the barriers or challenges on the other from the perspective of fostering innovative thinking (Sen et al., 2020). Lacity et al. (2016) opined that ITO presents several challenges leading to organizational failures. Nevertheless, there is no clear evidence that outsourcing has a more significant impact on

organizational performance, employee retention than the skillset of IT managers and vendor management (Masa'deh et al., 2017). The failure to enforce and develop successful strategies can lead to detrimental ITO outcomes (Agburu et al., 2017). The four themes I identified in this study are: (a) communication and relationship, (b) labor cost, (c) organizational learning and culture, and (d) vendor management. In the following subsections, I discuss these four themes in detail.

Theme 1: Communication and Relationships

The theme of communication and relationships emerged from the participants' responses to all the interview questions. Poor communication and lack of financial support can constitute severe handicaps when attempting to overcome the global market realities (Wu & Park, 2019). When there is no trust, the outsourcing outcomes can lead to terminal problems (Birt et al., 2016). Relationships depend on specific factors related to the alliances' transactional and institutional conditions (Jiang & Jiang, 2019).

The theme of communication and relationships included the ideas of consultation, empowerment, trust, and influence of ITO contract vendors. All participants affirmed using communication and relationships as a strategy to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

To develop a successful, strategic relationship, partners must understand the cultural patterns embedded within each culture and devise strategies to deal with dissimilarities (Mehta et al., 2020). Participants agreed that communication and relationships, including consultation, empowerment, trust, and influence, are critical to improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Responding to Interview Question 1, P1 said, "When a truthful partner handles our marketing and advertisement department, we also have peace of mind." In response to Interview Question 1, P2 explained the importance of "ensuring that the relationship runs smoothly, efficiently, and within our budget." Responding to Interview Question 2, P1 affirmed, "Therefore, our development team must fully communicate with us daily." P3 stated, "Our team has a powerful influence on our external supplier, who helps them understand our business specificity." Answering a follow-up question, P3 explained, "They maintain a channel of communication during the lifetime of the outsourcing contract." In response to Interview Question 2, P4 noted the significance of "establishing a communication channel with shareholders and leaders."

More insights about communication and its relationship to performance and employee retention emerged. Responding to Interview Question 3, P1 remarked, "Diversity is always a positive thing within an organization, and to some extent, it can also become a barrier to clearly and concisely communicating the organizational goals with the employees." Providing further narrative, P1 attested, "We establish a clear and concise communication channel with employees who know their expectations and the organizational goals to reach. The stronger relationship the employee is with the managers, the less likely the employee is motivated to leave." In response to Interview Question 4, P1 noted, "The company implementing a change must be fully explained to the employees to avoid the loss of control. Therefore, the lack of communication can lead to the loss of employees and negatively affect business performance." P4 commented, "Whether we want to implement the strategy to innovate our business performance, our

staff must be empowered to the specific setting." The participants acknowledged the importance of communication and relationships in improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Interviewees also described their common communication challenges. Responding to Interview Question 5, P3 explained that the inability "to communicate clearly and concisely with overseas partners … creates our biggest challenge, damaging our vendor relationship." In response to Interview Question 5, the participants stated the following:

- "But the main challenge that we are facing at that moment is the lack of communication with our internal and external departments. Managers in charge have to adjust to improving communication in a virtual setting." (P1)

- "We have to create that environment where employees feel empowered, and we provide a follow-up to ensure their longevity at work." (P2)

- "My organization strives to create a clear and concise communication channel internally and externally. Therefore, it is always tricky and sometimes impossible to communicate clearly and concisely with overseas partners." (P3)

- "We have months of brainstorming with our employees to consult with the stakeholders." (P4)

There are many tactics for creating and maintaining trust at a distance during ITO. The organization should implement a strategy guide to communicate IT services in harmony to achieve the desired goal (Meinlschmidt et al., 2018). Responding to

Interview Question 6, P2 affirmed, "The other challenge is trust; many vendors bring their opportunistic behaviors that always compromise the outcomes of the business. Creating that international environment of trust and more vital relationships are challenging to put in place." In response to Interview Question 7, P1 attested, "We emphasize two skills: The first one is communication and the second one is problem-solving skills. We look into complex ideas in communication skills and ensure that our internal and external components go smoothly." P3 noted, "Amidst the changes within the organization by the ITO, we must maintain a stronger relationship with the vendors and employees. They have to feel empowered." On further inquiry, P3 added, "Despite the relationship with the vendors, we must also trust ourselves and the customers, the suppliers, and other stakeholders." P3 advised, "We must assess our progress through our relationship with external forces and maintain a concerted effort to remain loyal to the end consumers." Responding to Interview Question 8, P2 remarked, "The IT managers and the vendors must communicate regularly to eliminate the fire drill if the relationship is not well grounded." Trust is built by consistent communication, especially when problem solving is involved.

The participants' responses to the interview question aligned with the findings of Mehta et al. (2020) and Wu and Park (2019) who illustrated that IT managers use communication and relationships to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The current study findings demonstrated that all IT manager participants used communication and relationships as a strategy to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Theme 2: Labor Cost

The theme of labor cost emerged from Interview Questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8. The risk of encountering hidden labor prices can hinder ITO contracts (Erdogan & Tokgoz, 2020). The critical driver for human resources ITO is cost reduction (Sim et al., 2017). Reducing the labor cost in ITO contracts is critical to improving business performance and employee retention. Business owners understand that their international trade transactions rely on better outsourcing decisions because reducing costs when sending their IT services overseas can also shift jobs to overseas locations (Bailey et al., 2019). All participants attested to using labor cost as a strategy for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Participants shared their perspectives on cost-saving strategies related to ITO. Some IT companies have suggested that reducing costs by outsourcing their activities is their reaction to a difficult economic situation (Giertl, 2015). Responding to Interview Question 1, P2 opined, "Some other organizations will keep those functions in-house, but our strategies are different in that it costs more in the United States to pay an IT engineer than it does in India." In response to Interview Question 1, P3 commented, "Once we have that aspect covered, we now know what can be performed by a business partner overseas at a cheap cost. We look for small organizations that are low-cost to offer those services" Responding to Interview Question 1, P4 remarked, "Our initial focus is to find low-cost locations to centralize our activities. Mainly those activities are not generating incomes and must be held at a lower possible cost overseas." P4 further explained, "We have an internal department specializing in knowledge transfer, and their responsibilities

are to locate a low-cost location where our low generating incomes tasks can be outsourced." It appears that creating economic efficiencies remains a motive of most ITO managers.

Strategic management related to ITO decisions requires a RBV. Ishizaka et al. (2019) argued that an outsourcing decision is a company's strategic implementation to reduce costs and increase efficiency. In response to Interview Question 2, P2 attested, "We have higher quality, cheap labor pools with excellent IT software developers in those countries." P2 further stated, "When we pay less to an engineer in India to perform the same work that will cost us triple their salaries, it makes more corporate sense to increase a large scale of quality and production overseas." P3 noted, "Our experts are always on the hunt for relevant information that can lower costs while decreasing the likelihood of risk in global business." P4 added, "We are not focusing on short-term savings, and we do not want to fall short because the housing cost has increased to a point where we can no longer afford to pay our employees." Outsourcing is linked to larger economic forces.

IT managers try to balance concerns about cutting costs with other interests. In response to Interview Question 4, P2 noted, "The international scheme is a fast-paced environment where IT managers can quickly lose sight of the main objective of maximizing revenues." In agreement, P3 affirmed,

> We understand that keeping the costs very low is the primary objective, but at the same time, we also want to compensate highly qualified workers for their unpaid work. Some of us focus too much on savings than managing our labor force.

Responding to Interview Question 5, P1 attested, "Working from home had created an alarming increase in operating costs." In response to Interview Question 6, P4 opined, "Engaging in the journey of ITO is to save costs and increase our chance to improve our competitive advantage." Responding to Interview Question 8, P1 remarked, "Analyzing the operation costs should take us to the visualization of the activities overseas, ensuring that the company's goals are reached." P3 noted, "The vendors must know that the organizational goals are set to reduce risk and contain costs and that their assistance is needed to reach those objectives." Responding to Interview Question 8, P4 affirmed, "We go overseas because we want to lower our labor costs or taxes but want to sell our products in the U.S. to gain a larger audience, which increases revenue and our international competitive advantage." By engaging in ITO successfully, companies can gain several benefits which go beyond simple cost-savings.

The study findings demonstrated that all participants used labor cost as a strategy for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The participants' responses to the interview question aligned with the results of Bailey et al. (2019), Erdogan and Tokgoz (2020), Ishizaka et al. (2019), and Sim et al. (2017) who found that IT managers use labor cost as a strategy for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Theme 3: Organizational Learning and Culture

A commitment to organizational learning and cultural awareness are key to success in ITO. IT managers encounter challenges in languages, cultural realms, political harshness, corruption, and to some extent, internal conflicts (Pathiranage et al., 2020).

Cultural differences between Eastern and Western countries pose a fundamental challenge in international supply chain management (Jia et al., 2020). The theme of organizational learning and culture emerged from participant responses to Interview Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8. All participants recognized the importance of organizational learning and culture in improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Collaboration across countries requires significant leadership skills. If the initial goal of maximizing profits is too prominent, it can become nightmarish, especially if IT managers are not well trained (Bi et al., 2020). In response to Interview Question 2, P2 attested, "For more than 20 years, my organization has strived to maintain a decentralized culture as a significant standpoint of our outsourcing strategy." Responding to Interview Question 2, P3 said, "Our company has been doing outsourcing for more than three decades, and organizational learning has always been our central tool to manage to outsource." P3 further explained, "Whenever the team brings new insights, we use our collaborative knowledge to draw the final line of outsourcing decisions. As soon as the selection of a partner is confirmed, our team of experts shares knowledge with the suppliers." In response to Interview Question 3, the participants stated:

- "Once we recruit and train them." (P1)
- "The cycle consists of hiring the right employee, investing in the training, and ensuring that we offer a healthy work environment, rewards, flexibility, and competitive compensation." (P2)

- "We invest a lot in training, and it will become a significant concern and expense if the employee leaves. The primary barrier is the employee's motivation to stay and become part of the organizational culture for a long time. But employees have motivations that go beyond the understanding of the training and development team, and that is our serious challenge." (P3)

- "Information technology outsourcing may also encounter the problems of cross-cultural integration because we are not expecting to find the same societal realms overseas as those we have here." (P4)

Out of the many unknowns related to ITO, cultural barriers can be the most unpredictable. The risk of encountering cultural and political aspects can hinder ITO contracts (Erdogan & Tokgoz, 2020). Responding to Interview Question 4, P2 opined, "It is thus essential to thrive not to get caught up in the internal cultural scheme to the international realities." In response to Interview Question 5, P1 commented, "Another critical issue could be the cultural barriers because we are transferring away from our internal functions overseas, and most likely, it can be somewhat geographically dispersed." Responding to Interview Question 5, P2 remarked, "For example, we implement a new approach by hiring and training highly qualified employees to execute the tasks." In response to Interview Question 5, P3 attested, "The second challenge is to ensure that the vendor will hire and train highly qualified individuals that will do the job." There many be differences in how professionalism and highly qualified workers is defined across different cultures as well.

IT managers should exercise culturally competent leadership. Cultural differences profoundly impact the relationship between the client and the vendor (Mehta et al., 2020). In response to Interview Question 7, P2 noted, "The cultural aspect in outsourcing is critical to assess, and the essential way to overcome the issue is to observe and make sure that all the strategy is grounded." Responding to Interview Question 7, P3 identified the need "to overcome the challenges posed by the cultural, social environment, and foreign countries' political aspects." In response to Interview Question 8, P4 explained, "Before we went to India and the Philippines, we thrived on learning to overcome language barriers and cultural differences, manage a global team, and learn the currencies and their politics." The participants all agreed that there are cultural nuances that influence the success of executing ITO contracts.

The study findings demonstrated that IT managers used organizational learning and culture as a strategy to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The participants' responses to the interview question aligned with Bi et al. (2020), Erdogan and Tokgoz (2020), Mehta et al. (2020), and Pathiranage et al. (2020) statements that IT managers use organizational learning and culture to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. As applied in this study, 100% of the participants attested to using organizational learning and culture as a strategy to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Theme 4: Vendor Management

IT managers have a significant responsibility for managing the vendor contracts. Before acquiring the financial assistance to invest on a global scale, ITO businesses

should train managers to obtain the necessary skills to minimize ITO's risks, such as hidden costs and opportunistic behaviors of the other parties (Lioliou et al., 2019). The theme of contract management emerged from Interview Questions 2 and 3-8. All participants acknowledged using contract management as a strategy for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Each participant spoke of different ways of preparing for success with ITO. Responding to Interview Question 2, P1 opined, "We use the project-based model where a designated team of experts assists the partner organization in hiring skilled employees to form a development team for our products' quality and performance." In response to Interview Question 2, P4 commented, "Once we have selected a business partner willing to purchase a location on our behalf, we have thus reached our first and significant outsourcing cycle, … preparing the project team for outsourcing." Responding to Interview Question 4, P3 remarked, "So, we always ask ourselves whether or not we have the right people on the floor to carry on the strategy we have on paper." In response to Interview Question 5, P4 noted, "We need the right vendors to execute our strategies abroad and internally. All the leaders involved in the outsourcing process must accept the methods of selecting the right vendors, which is sometimes not easy to achieve." Placement of competent leadership within teams is one of the notable common themes among the participants.

Risks associated with ITO can be averted by keeping track of manageable data. In response to Interview Question 6, P3 said, "Whenever you hire the wrong vendor, you quickly realize that your performance and employee retention are at risk of pitfalls. The

right vendors and employee qualifications are essential for a brighter ITO future."

Responding to Interview Question 6, P4 explained, "My organization puts a lot of

emphasis on hiring skilled employees to increase our chance of business performance and

employee retention. We need the right people to set clear goals and define our key

variables." Responding to Interview Question 7, P2 opined, "We ask more questions to

the vendors to become adept at spotting opportunities." In response to Interview Question

8, P1 commented, "My organization is fully aware of those potential risks, and we have

been successful during all the years in dealing with international partners. Our success is

attributable to our measurements, monitoring, and analysis." P1 attested, "We have never

offshored our vendors' functions without measuring their optimal performance."

Responding to Interview Question 8, P2 remarked, "Our IT managers and those in charge

of making IT decisions on outsourcing believe that brainstorming the vendors and the

skilled employees is the best way to keep organizational goals alive." In response to

Interview Question 8, P3 added, "Before any organization is willing to outsource its

functions, it is crucial to take the necessary time to find a vendor that has the industry or

function-specific expertise in IT." Vendor analysis is a critical phase in planning for ITO.

The participants' responses to the interview question aligned with Lioliou et al.'s

(2019) statements that IT managers use vendor management to improve business

performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The study findings

demonstrated that IT managers used vendor management as a strategy to improve

business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. As applied in this

study, 100% of the participants attested using vendor management as a strategy to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Findings Related to TCT

TCT was the conceptual framework for this study. The four dimensions of the TCT are the degree of asset specificity, level of uncertainty, transaction frequency, and transaction cost (Yap et al., 2016). IT managers should have a specific skill set to overcome the problems posed by multi-sourcing (Saran, 2019). Global partners ' choices become scrutinized whenever the unique potential is developed within IT managers' skillset, reducing ITO failure risk (Knichel et al., 2020). The study findings indicate that IT managers could improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts by implementing strategies based on TCT. As applied in this study, all participants affirmed using a combination of strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

As applied in this study, IT managers should establish strategies for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. All participants confirmed the TCT regarding the use of strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The use of TCT may aid in developing and implementing strategies that benefit IT managers and vendors and draw on traditional make-or-buy decisions with alternative explanations (Patel et al., 2020). Underlining the TCT, the client and vendor relationship needs to build a compliant product with the end consumers' requirements while avoiding potential risks (Knichel et al., 2020). As applied in this study, all participants' responses echoed Knichel et al. (2020)'s and Patel et al.

(2020)'s statements on using strategies based on the TCT to business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

As applied in this study, IT managers performed specific roles to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. When an IT company has defined outsourcing services, strategies must be aligned among the IT departments to achieve the specific competitive goals (Bui et al., 2019). Whenever successful strategies are implemented within an organization, TCT allows IT managers to detect the partners trying to cut corners and use cheaper materials (Chanson, 2018). All participants' responses echoed Chanson's assertions on the crucial roles IT managers play in improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. All participants used a combination of strategies involving communication and relationships, labor costs, organizational learning and culture, and vendor management to improve their business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. As found in this study, all participants applied the TCT principles to improve their business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Applications to Professional Practice

Identifying the strategies that IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts is crucial in the maintenance and growth of organizational revenues and profits. Outsourcing is the dominant strategy for IT businesses to maximize profits (Patel et al., 2020). IT managers must be aware of the potentially harmful influence of outsourcing on employees and retention rates; and, thus, design appropriate policies and environments to reduce such threats (Lee & Lee, 2020).

IT managers encounter challenges in languages, cultural realms, political harshness, corruption, and to some extent, internal conflicts (Pathiranage et al., 2020). This study's findings could provide IT managers with knowledge on how to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The findings from this study could significantly enhance IT business revenues and profits by implementing strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The findings from this study could contribute to the literature on business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. New and upcoming IT managers may use the study findings to understand the importance of implementing strategies and best practices to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

All participants acknowledged that communication and relationships, labor cost, organizational learning and culture, and vendor management were fundamental to improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. When knowledge transfer is done right, business partners involved in outsourcing projects could benefit from business performance and employee retention (Masa'deh et al., 2017). Based on the study findings, the most significant contribution to professional practice may be identifying potential strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. IT managers could use this study's results to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The study findings could provide ITO managers with a practical model for developing strategies for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO

contracts. The practical model could serve as a basis for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

All participants affirmed using a combination of strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The results of the study could help IT managers to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The study findings could significantly contribute to collaboration, information sharing, and teamwork among IT managers seeking strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. According to Lee and Lee (2020), business outsourcing with various incentives can promote employee retention. Poor communication and lack of financial support can constitute severe handicaps to overcome the global market realities (Wu & Park, 2019). Some IT managers with weak strategies may apply this study's findings to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

There is an advantage to involving employees from various levels of management in the planning process. Because people tend to leave their jobs when they do not feel empowered, IT managers should understand that getting employees involved in the outsourcing process can enhance their performance and attract them to stay with the company (Lee & Lee, 2020). The findings from this study could contribute to the literature on ITO, business performance, and employee retention. The study findings might add value to the IT business community by disseminating information regarding strategies for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The study findings may benefit business leaders, including governmental and

non governmental agencies, entrepreneurs, and SME owners, to gain helpful information on strategies for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO.

Implications for Social Change

A significant implication for positive social change of this study includes providing IT managers with strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. IT managers who sustain their business beyond five years can increase employment opportunities (Strydom, 2017). By studying the research outcomes and implementing excellent strategies, IT managers might improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts and sustain their firms. The existing area IT managers could use the information from this study to enhance communication and relationship with employees to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

The study findings might significantly contribute to the economy of the local community. While IT businesses outsource products and services to save costs, it often helps communities by lowering the prices, primarily for low-income families (Bi et al., 2020). Adopting strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts might assist IT managers in increasing their firm performance, thereby boosting economic growth for local communities. With improved business performance, the IT firms would pay more corporate taxes, which the municipal government could use to provide social amenities to the local community. New aspiring IT entrepreneurs could use the information gained from this study's findings to establish new businesses which could create job opportunities for local citizens, thereby promoting

socioeconomic growth in the local community. As illustrated in this study, improving

business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts might assist IT

managers in implementing successful contracts and continue to provide job opportunities

to the local community.

By improving business performance and employee retention through ITO

contracts, IT managers could increase the profitability, competitiveness, sustainability

and the IT business. Sustaining IT businesses can improve families' stability, improve

local economies' social structure, and raise incomes (Lee & Lee, 2020). IT business

growth and profitability could contribute to social change by strengthening local

economies, sustaining small businesses, and creating job opportunities, thereby

improving the welfare and amenities of the local communities. The implication for

positive social change for this study was improving business performance and employee

retention through ITO contracts, thereby maintaining socioeconomic stability for

benefiting citizens, families, and communities. By improving business performance and

employee retention through ITO contracts, IT firms could accomplish their corporate

social responsibilities to the local citizens through sponsorship of local events, awards of

scholarships, and the building of social amenities such as healthcare, libraries, and

schools. The general public might learn from the strategies IT managers use to improve

business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

Recommendations for Action

Business leaders should adopt effective strategies to improve business

performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. ITO can generate different

outcomes depending on where the third parties are located worldwide (Wang & Wang, 2019). Researchers have demonstrated that ITO contracts present several challenges leading to organizational failures (Lacity et al., 2016). According to Lee (2017), IT managers fail to understand outsourcing is a strategic business that shifts jobs to overseas partners, which could lead to ITO failure. To sustain IT firms, IT managers should implement strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. I recommend that IT managers should implement a blend of strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

An effective strategy is essential to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The worst ITO issues include loss of jobs, domestic opportunities, the struggle to maintain a good work performance, and the difficulties of retaining employees (Presbitero et al., 2016). In ITO business environments, the marginal product of labor does not equal the competitive wage (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). IT managers must focus on their core business strategy to remain competitive (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). Maximizing profits while keeping jobs and improving business performance can be substantial for the right outsourcing strategies (Agburu et al., 2017). I recommend that IT managers should implement strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

To ensure business sustainability, IT managers should establish strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The failure to enforce and develop successful strategies can lead to detrimental ITO outcomes (Agburu et al., 2017). The uncertainties are unprecedented in the global market, and the

necessity for IT managers to face those challenges requires an adequate approach to strategy (Lioliou et al., 2019). I recommend that IT managers should implement a blend of strategies involving communication and relationship, labor cost, organizational learning and culture, and vendor management to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

The study findings indicate that IT managers use a combination of strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. I recommend that IT managers should have adequate skills and experience to identify the appropriate strategies for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. I will disseminate the findings of this study to interested stakeholders through the presentation in seminars, training, and conferences; knowledge sharing in my workplace and social media; and publications in business and academic journals.

Recommendations for Further Study

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The study findings, recommendations, and conclusions might contribute to existing and future research and close gaps in business practice regarding strategies that IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. Lee and Lee (2020) advised IT managers to be aware of the potentially harmful influence of outsourcing on employees and retention rates; and, thus, design appropriate policies and environments to reduce such threats. A significant limitation of this study

was the cross-sectional, qualitative multiple case study involving IT managers from two firms in Arizona, United States. I recommend future researchers should explore longitudinal, quantitative, or mixed methods involving participants selected from varying levels of employees in diverse industrial sectors at different geographical locations.

The study provided rich information that future researchers could further explore regarding the strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. Yin (2018) opined that having the appropriate population is a limitation whereby research findings may not apply to a larger population. This study was limited to a small sample size of four IT managers who have successfully implemented strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. Researchers should determine the number of participants to obtain data saturation in qualitative research (Fofana et al., 2020). Using a larger or smaller sample size, researchers could obtain different themes which might significantly differ from this study's findings. I recommend that future researchers should use a more significant sample size of participants with diverse roles and responsibilities in ITO from many organizations.

I have limited knowledge and competency in doctoral research. The researcher has a responsibility to objectively analyze and interpret the information obtained from participants for the accuracy of the findings (Yin, 2018). The study was limited to my accurate interpretation and subjective evaluation of the participants' responses to the interview questions. In qualitative research, a researcher must have integrity and avoid biases to achieve truthful and robust research results (Shaw & Satalkar, 2018). Another

limitation of this study was my professional background in ITO and personal beliefs

regarding strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee

retention through ITO contracts. Researchers must choose specific participants to obtain

factual information (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The final limitation of this study was the

accuracy of information from the participants and the availability of company archival

data. I recommend future studies should involve research experts from multi-disciplinary

fields in ITO contracts, business performance, and employee retention to capture some

details that I might have missed in this doctoral study.

Reflections

In conducting this multiple case study, I explored the strategies IT managers use

to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. From

the study findings, I gained an in-depth knowledge of the research problem from four IT

managers in Arizona regarding their use of different strategies to improve business

performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. I learned that IT managers

use a similar blend of strategies, including communication and relationships, labor cost,

organizational learning and culture, and vendor management, to improve business

performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. My new knowledge and

understanding of the research problem positively changed my preconceived ideas and

values, beliefs, and personal bias and perceptions about the strategies IT managers use to

improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

In compliance with research ethics, I attended online National Institutes of Health

(NIH) training and obtained Walden University IRR approval before engaging the

participants, which improved my understanding of the requirements for using human beings in a research study. By using emails and telephone calls to contact participants, I had the opportunity to improve my collaborative, creative, negotiation, and inspirational skills. This study involved the use of the purposive sampling technique to select four IT managers in Arizona who have experience in ITO and had successfully used strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. By using the purposive sampling technique, I selected participants who had the competence, education, experience, pertinent knowledge, and skills to answer the research question. During the purposive sampling process, I interacted with the participants, which enabled me to improve my networking, negotiation, interpersonal, inspirational, collaborative, and emotional intelligence skills.

Because I preferred the qualitative research method, I conducted semistructured interviews and interacted with the participants, which improved my analytical, consultation, communication, critical thinking, ethical, listening, observant, problem solving, and self-confidence skills. By interviewing the participants at their convenient date, time, and location, the respondents expressed themselves freely, which gave me the opportunity to gain an in-depth knowledge of the research problem. During the data organization and analysis process, I identified the themes and patterns, which enabled me to understand the research problem and establish the study findings. Consequently, I gained a better understanding and knowledge of the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) doctoral study process, thereby improving my skills, experience, and awareness in conducting academic research work.

Summary and Study Conclusions

IT managers face challenges on how to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. This qualitative multiple case study aimed to use TCT to explore the strategies IT managers in Arizona, United States, use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. I administered eight open-ended questions through semistructured interviews of four IT managers from two firms to collect data to answer the overarching research question. Four themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the data indicating the strategies IT managers in Arizona, United States, use for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The themes were (a) communication and relationships, (b) labor cost, (c) organizational learning and culture, and (d) vendor management. The study findings indicated that IT managers used a blend of similar strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts.

New and upcoming IT managers might gain useful insights and information on effective strategies for improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. By improving business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts, IT managers could sustain their businesses and continue to provide job opportunities, boost the economy, and accomplish their corporate social responsibilities to citizens in the local communities. The use of TCT as the lens for this study might fill a gap in the literature on ITO contracts, business performance, and employee retention. The general public might learn from the strategies IT managers use to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO contracts. The study findings aligned

with previous researchers' conclusions regarding the benefits and significance of using

effective strategies to improve business performance and employee retention through ITO

contracts.

References

Aarsand, L., & Aarsand, P. (2019). Framing and switches at the outset of qualitative research interviews. *Qualitative Research*, *19*(6), 635-652. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794118816623

Agburu, J. I., Anza, N. C., & Iyortsuun, A. S. (2017). Effect of outsourcing strategies on the performance of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, *7*(1), 1-34. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40497-017-0084-0

Ahmed, M. N. (2019). The use of performance-based contracting in managing the outsourcing of a reliability-centered maintenance program: A case study. *Journal of Quality in Maintenance Engineering*, *26*(4), 526-554. https://doi.org/10.1108/JQME-02-2018-0007

Alam, M. K. (2020). A systematic qualitative case study: Questions, data collection, NVivo analysis, and saturation. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, *16*(1), 1-31. https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-09-2019-1825

Altin, M., Uysal, M., & Schwartz, Z. (2018). Revenue management outsourcing: A hybrid model of transaction cost economics and organizational capability. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, *59*(2), 112-124. https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965517730318

Andresen, M., & Bergdolt, F. (2017). A systematic literature review on the definitions of global mindset and cultural intelligence. Merging two different research streams.

International Journal of Human Resource Management, *28*(1), 170-195.

https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1243568

Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019). What is qualitative in qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology*, *42*(2), 139-160. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-019-9413-7

Aten, J. D., & Denney, R. M. (2019). Qualitative research in psychology. In *Salem press encyclopedia of health*. 291-295. Salem Press.

Azulai, A. (2021). Are grounded theory and action research compatible? Considerations for methodological triangulation. *Canadian Journal of Action Research*, *21*(2), 4-24. https://doi.org/10.33524/cjar.v21i2.485

Bader, B. H., Badar, M. A., Rodchua, S., & McLeod, A. (2020). A study of the balancing of lean thinking and stakeholder salience in decision-making. *The TQM Journal*, *32*(3), 441-460. https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-04-2019-0108

Bailey, D., Driffield, N., & Kispeter, E. (2019). Brexit, foreign investment and employment: Some implications for industrial policy? *Contemporary Social Science*, *14*(2), 174-188. https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2019.1566563

Bi, H., Lu, F., Duan, S., Huang, M., Zhu, J., & Liu, M. (2020). Two-level principal-agent model for schedule risk control of IT outsourcing project based on genetic algorithm. *Engineering Applications of Artificial Intelligence*, *91*, 10, 35-84. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.engappai.2020.103584

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, *26*(13), 1802-1811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Boddy, C. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research*, *19*(4), 426-432. https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2016-0053

Braaten, B., Kramer, A., Henderson, E., Kajfez, R., & Dringenberg, E. (2020). Accessing complex constructs: Refining an interview protocol. *2020 IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference*, 1-3. https://doi.org/10.1109/FIE44824.2020.9274260

Brear, M. (2019). Process and outcomes of a recursive, dialogic member checking approach: A project ethnography. *Qualitative Health Research*, *29*(7), 944-957. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318812448

Bressanelli, G., Perona, M., & Saccani, N. (2019). Challenges in supply chain redesign for the circular economy: A literature review and a multiple case study. *International Journal of Production Research*, *57*(23), 7395-7422. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2018.1542176

Brothers, K., Holm, I., Childerhose, J., Antommaria, A., Bernhardt, B., Clayton, E., Gelb, B., Joffe, S., Lynch, J., Mccormick, J., Mccullough, L., Parsons, D., Sundaresan, A., Wolf, W., Yu, J.-H., & Wilfond, B. (2015). When participants in genomic research grow up: Contact and consent at the age of majority. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, *168*, 226-231. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2015.09.020

Bui, Q. N., Leo, E., & Adelakun, O. (2019). Exploring complexity and contradiction in information technology outsourcing: A set-theoretical approach. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, *28*(3), 330-355. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2019.07.001

Butts, R. (2020). Theory of constraints (TOC). In *Salem press encyclopedia*. 930-936.

Salem Press.

Caretta, M. A., & Pérez, M. A. (2019). When participants do not agree: Member

checking and challenges to epistemic authority in participatory research. *Field

Methods*, *31*(4), 359-374. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X19866578

Celestina, M. (2018). Between trust and distrust in research with participants in a conflict

context. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *21*(3), 373-383.

https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2018.1427603

Chanson, G. (2018). Macro-environment's effects on onshore outsourcing: The transition

costs approach. *Journal of Global Operations and Strategic Sourcing*, *11*(1), 27-

38. https://doi.org/10.1108/JGOSS-03-2017-0008

Chen, C. (2019). Developing a model for supply chain agility and innovativeness to

enhance firms' competitive advantage. *Management Decision*, *57*(7), 1511-1534.

https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-12-2017-1236

Chowdhury, F. M. (2015). Coding, sorting and sifting of qualitative data analysis:

Debates and discussion. *Quality & Quantity*, *49*, 1135-1143.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-014-0039-2

Clayton, E. W. (2020). What should we be asking of informed consent? *The Journal of

Law, Medicine & Ethics: A Journal of the American Society of Law, Medicine &

Ethics*, *48*(1), 185-187. https://doi.org/10.1177/1073110520917009

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research*. Sage.

Costa, W. F., Tito, A. L., de, A., Brumatti, P. N. M., & Alexandre, M. L., de O. (2017). The use of data collection instruments in qualitative research: A study of tourism research papers. *Turismo: Visão e Ação*, *20*(1), 02-28. https://doi.org/10.14210/rtva.v20n1.p02-28

Darabi, H., & Jalali, D. (2018). Illuminating the formal-informal dichotomy in land development on the basis of transaction cost theory. *Planning Theory*, *18*(1) 100-121. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095218779111

Deng, X., Xu, D., Zeng, M., & Qi, Y. (2020). Does outsourcing affect the agricultural productivity of farmer households? Evidence from China. *China Agricultural Economic Review*, *12*(4), 673-688. https://doi.org/10.1108/CAER-12-2018-0236

Dooly, M., Moore, E., & Vallejo, C. (2017). Research ethics. *Research-Publishing*. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2017.emmd2016.615

Doval, E. (2016). Is outsourcing a strategic tool to enhance the competitive advantage? *Review of General Management*, *23*(1), 78-87. https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/

Ekleş, E., & Türkmen, M. A. (2022). Integrating the theory of constraints and Six Sigma: Process improvement implementation. *Istanbul University Journal of the School of Business Administration, 51*(1), 123-147. https://doi.org/10.26650/ibr.2022.51.938481

Ellis, P. (2019). The language of research (part 20): Understanding the quality of a qualitative paper (2). *Wounds UK*, *15*(1), 110-111. https://www.wounds-uk.com/journals

Erdogan, D., & Tokgoz, N. (2020). The role of contract and relationship norms in the success of information technology outsourcing. *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, *11*(2), 229-250. https://ejes.uaic.ro/

Espino-Rodríguez, T. F., & Ramírez-Fierro, J. C. (2017). Factors determining hotel activity outsourcing. An approach based on competitive advantage. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *29*(8), 2006-2026. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2016-0291

Farooq, M. B., & de, V. C. (2017). The market for sustainability assurance services: A comprehensive literature review and future avenues for research. *Pacific Accounting Review*, *29*(1), 79-106. https://doi.org/10.1108/PAR-10-2016-0093

Farquhar, J., Michels, N., & Robson, J. (2020). Triangulation in industrial qualitative case study research: Widening the scope. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *87*, 160-170. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.02.001

Fehrenbacher, D. D., & Wiener, M. (2019). The dual role of penalty: The effects of IT outsourcing contract framing on knowledge-sharing willingness and commitment. *Decision Support Systems*, *121*, 62-71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2019.04.005

FitzPatrick, B. (2019). Validity in qualitative health education research. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, *11*(2), 211-217. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.11.014

Flick, U. (2017). Mantras and myths: The disenchantment of mixed-methods research and revisiting triangulation as a perspective. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *23*, 46-57. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800416655827

Fofana, F., Bazeley, P., & Regnault, A. (2020). Applying a mixed-methods design to test

saturation for qualitative data in health outcomes research. *PLoS ONE*, *15*(6), 1-

12. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0234898

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative

research. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*(9), 1408-1416.

https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss9/3

Gallino, S., & Rooderkerk, R. (2020). New product development in an omnichannel

world. *California Management Review*, *63*(1), 81-98.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125620951969

Ghozzi, H., Soregaroli, C., Boccaletti, S., & Sauvée, L. (2016). Impacts of non-GMO

standards on poultry supply chain governance: Transaction cost approach vs.

resource-based view. *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*,

21(6), 743-758. https://doi.org/10.1108/SCM-03-2016-0089

Granikov, V., Bouthillier, F., Pluye, P., & Pluye, P. (2020). Understanding collaboration

in monitoring research publications: Protocol for a qualitative multiple case study.

Education for Information, *36*(1), 69-79. https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-190340

Gugiu, C., Randall, J., Gibbons, E., Hunter, T., Naegeli, A., & Symonds, T. (2020).

PNS217 bootstrap saturation: A quantitative approach for supporting data

saturation in sample sizes in qualitative research. *Value in Health*, *23*(2), S677.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jval.2020.08.1661

Heidari, N., Abdullahzadeh, M., & Naji, S. A. (2021). Lived religious and spiritual experiences of transgender people: A qualitative research in Iran. *Sexuality & Culture*, *25*(2), 417-429. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09776-8

Hofer, A. R., Jin, Y. H., & Knemeyer, A. M. (2020). Environmental uncertainty and cross-buying in logistics outsourcing arrangements: A resource dependence perspective. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, *51*(3), 236-258. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPDLM-04-2019-0121

Imani-Nasab, M. H., Seyedin, H., Yazdizadeh, B., & Majdzadeh, R. (2017). A qualitative assessment of the evidence utilization for health policy-making based on support tools in a developing country. *International Journal of Health Policy & Management*, *6*(8), 457-465. https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2016.158

Iphofen, R., & Tolich, M. (2018). *The sage handbook of qualitative research ethics*. SAGE Publications Ltd

Ishizaka, A., Bhattacharya, A., Gunasekaran, A., Dekkers, R., & Pereira, V. (2019). Outsourcing and offshoring decision-making. *International Journal of Production Research*, *57*(13), 4187-4193. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2019.1603698

Jae-Nam Lee, YoungKi Park, Straub, D. W., & Yunmo Koo. (2019). Holistic archetypes of IT outsourcing strategy: A contingency fit and configurational approach. *MIS Quarterly*, *43*(4), 1201-1225. https://misq.org/

Jalali, S., Keshvari, M., & Soleymani, M. R. (2020). Fitness information-seeking behavior among female university students: A qualitative study. *PLoS ONE*, *15*(8), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0237735

Janakiraman, S., Watson, W., Watson, S., & Bawa, P. (2019). Instructional design and

strategies for multicultural education: A qualitative case study. *Journal of*

Educational Research and Practice, *9*(1), 300-315.

https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2019.09.1.21

Jia, Y., Wang, T., Xiao, K., & Guo, C. (2020). How to reduce opportunism through

contractual governance in the cross-cultural supply chain context: Evidence from

Chinese exporters. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *91*, 323-337.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.09.014

Kaleka, A., & Morgan, N. A. (2017). Which competitive advantage(s)? Competitive

advantage-market performance relationships in international markets. *Journal of*

International Marketing, *25*(4), 25-49. https://doi.org/10.1509/jim.16.0058

Karimi-Alaghehband, F., & Rivard, S. (2020). IT outsourcing success: A dynamic

capability-based model. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, *29*(1), 101-

599. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2020.101599

Knichel, D., Moos, T., & Moradi, A. (2020). The risk of outsourcing: Hidden SCA

trojans in third-party IP-cores threaten cryptographic ICs. *2020 IEEE European*

Test Symposium (ETS), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1109/ETS48528.2020.9131594

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part

4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *The European Journal of General Practice*,

24(1), 120-124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Lacity, M. C., Khan, S. A., & Yan, A. (2016). Review of the empirical business services

    sourcing literature: An update and future directions. *Journal of Information*

    Technology, *31*(3), 269-328. https://doi.org/10.1057/jit.2016.2

Landay, K., & DeArmond, S. (2018). Recruitment process outsourcing and recruiter and

    hiring firm characteristics: A two-study investigation. *Journal of Personnel*

    Psychology, *17*(4), 183-192. https://doi.org/10.1027/1866-5888/a000206

Langtree, T., Birks, M., & Biedermann, N. (2019). Separating "fact" from fiction:

    Strategies to improve rigour in historical research. *Forum: Qualitative Social*

    Research, *20*(2), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-20.2.3196

Lee, G. R., & Lee, S. (2020). How outsourcing may enhance job satisfaction in the U.S.

    Federal Bureaucracy: Exploring the role of knowledge sharing. *The American*

    Review of Public Administration, *50*(4-5), 387-400.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074020913980

Lee, J. (2017). Strategic risk analysis for information technology outsourcing in hospitals.

    Information & Management, *54*(8), 1049-1058.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2017.02.010

Leite, D. F. B., Padilha, M. A. S., & Cecatti, J. G. (2019). Approaching literature review

    for academic purposes: The literature review checklist. *Clinics*, *74*, 1-16.

    https://doi.org/10.6061/clinics/2019/e1403

Levitt, H. M., Bamberg, M., Creswell, J. W., Frost, D. M., Josselson, R., & Suárez-

    Orozco, C. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for qualitative primary,

    qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research in psychology: The APA

publications and communications board task force report. *American Psychologist*, *73*(1), 26-46. http://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000151

Liao, H., & Hitchcock, J. (2018). Reported credibility techniques in higher education evaluation studies that use qualitative methods: A research synthesis. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, *68*, 157-165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.03.005

Liestol, G. (2019). Augmented reality storytelling: Narrative design and reconstruction of a historical event in situ**.** *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, *13*(12), 196-209. http://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v13i12.11560

Lioliou, E., Willcocks, L., & Liu, X. (2019). Researching IT multi-sourcing and opportunistic behavior in conditions of uncertainty: A case approach. *Journal of Business Research*, *103*, 387-396. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.04.002

Liu, X., Du, G., & Jiao, R. J. (2017). Bilevel joint optimization for product family architecting considering make-or-buy decisions. *International Journal of Production Research*, *55*(20), 5916-5941. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2017.1304666

Lock, I., & Seele, P. (2018). Gauging the rigor of qualitative case studies in comparative lobbying research. *A Framework and Guideline for Research and Analysis*. https://doi.org/10.1002/PA.1832

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research*. SAGE Publications.

Masa'deh, R., Shannak, R., Maqableh, M., & Tarhini, A. (2017). The impact of
knowledge management on job performance in higher education: The case of the
University of Jordan. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, *30*(2), 244-
262. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEIM-09-2015-0087

Medina-Serrano, R., González-Ramírez, R., Gasco-Gasco, J., & Llopis-Taverner, J.
(2020). Strategic sourcing: Developing a progressive framework for make-or-buy
decisions. *Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management*, *13*(1), 133-154.
https://doi.org/10.3926/jiem.2858

Mehta, A. M., Saleem, H., Hafeez, I., Ali, A., & Rahi, S. (2020). Examining the
influence; Bpo risks, vendor team's performance & knowledge management
capability. *Journal of Management Information & Decision Sciences*, *23*, 397-
408. https://www.abacademies.org/journals/journal-of-management-information-
and-decision-sciences-home.html

Meinlschmidt, J., Schleper, M. C., & Foerstl, K. (2018). Tackling the sustainability
iceberg: A transaction cost economics approach to lower-tier sustainability
management. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*,
38(10), 1888-1914 https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOPM-03-2017-0141

Mohajan, H. K. (2017). Two criteria for good measurements in research: Validity and
reliability. *Annals of Spiru Haret University Economic Series; Editura Fundatiei
Romania de Maine*, *17*(4), 59-82. https://doi.org/10.26458/1746

Mohn, E. (2020). Transaction cost theory. In *Salem press encyclopedia*. 1-2. Salem Press.

Moon, K., Brewer, T., Januchowski-Hartley, S., Adams, V., & Blackman, D. (2016). A

    guideline to improve qualitative social science publishing in ecology and

    conservation journals. *Ecology and Society*, *21*(3), 1-20.

    https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-08663-210317

Morgado, F. F. R., Meireles, J. F. F., Neves, C. M., Amaral, A. C. S., & Ferreira, M. E.

    C. (2018). Scale development: Ten main limitations and recommendations to

    improve future research practices. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, *30*(1), 1-20.

    https://doi.org/10.1186/s41155-016-0057-1

Naidu, T., & Prose, N. (2018). Re-envisioning member checking and communicating

    results as accountability practice in qualitative research: A South African

    community-based organization example. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*,

    19(3), 783-797. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-19.3.3153

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis:

    Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative*

    Methods, *16*(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Nugraha, E., & Garin, H. M. (2019). The influence of career growth and job insecurity on

    outsourcing workers' turnover intention in port services field companies. *Russian*

    Journal of Agricultural and Socio-Economic Sciences, *90*(6), 270-275.

    https://doi.org/10.18551/rjoas.2019-06.33

Ohaegbu, A. V., & Agwu, P. E. (2015). Strategic management of the benefits and

    challenges of HR outsourcing in effective organizational management (SSRN

Scholarly Paper ID 3122439). *Social Science Research Network*.

https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3122439

Özkal, N. (2020). Teachers' and school administrators' views regarding the role of recess for students. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, *16*(5), 121-137. https://doi.org/10.29329/ijpe.2020.277.8

Pacheco, E.-M. (2020). Culture learning theory and globalization: Reconceptualizing culture shock for modern cross-cultural sojourners. *New Ideas in Psychology*, *58*, 1-29. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2020.100801

Pankowska, M. (2019). Information technology outsourcing chain: Literature review and implications for the development of distributed coordination. *Sustainability*, *11*(5), 14-60. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11051460

Patel, P. C., Sahi, G. K., Gupta, M., & Jayaram, J. (2020). Service profit chain and throughput orientation: A manager-employee-customer triad perspective in services. *International Journal of Production Research*, *58*(17), 5196-5217. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2019.1708991

Pathiranage, Y. L., Jayatilake, L. V. K., & Abeysekera, R. (2020). Case study research design for exploration of organizational culture towards corporate performance. *Review of International Comparative Management / Revista de Management Comparat International*, *21*(3), 361-372. https://doi.org/10.24818/RMCI.2020.3.361

Patino, C. M., & Ferreira, J. C. (2018). Inclusion and exclusion criteria in research

    studies: Definitions and why they matter. *Jornal Brasileiro de Pneumologia*,

    44(2), 84. https://doi.org/10.1590/S1806-37562018000000088

Poleto, T., Clemente, T. R. N., de Gusmão, A. P. H., Silva, M. M., & Costa, A. P. C. S.

    (2020). Integrating value-focused thinking and FITradeoff to support information

    technology outsourcing decisions. *Management Decision*, *58*(11), 2279-2304.

    https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-09-2019-1293

Pongelli, C., Calabrò, A., & Basco, R. (2019). Family firms' international make-or-buy

    decisions: Captive offshoring, offshore outsourcing, and the role of home region

    focus. *Journal of Business Research*, *103*, 596-606.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.02.033

Poucher, Z. A., Tamminen, K. A., Caron, J. G., & Sweet, S. N. (2020). Thinking through

    and designing qualitative research studies: A focused mapping review of 30 years

    of qualitative research in sport psychology. *International Review of Sport and

    Exercise Psychology*, *13*(1), 163-186.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2019.1656276

Presbitero, A., Roxas, B., & Chadee, D. (2016). Looking beyond HRM practices in

    enhancing employee retention in BPOs: Focus on employee-organization value

    fit. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *27*(6), 635-652.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1035306

Puyvelde, D. V. (2018). Qualitative research interviews and the study of national security intelligence. *International Studies Perspectives*, *19*(4), 375-391. https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/eky001

Ramlo, S. E. (2020). Divergent viewpoints about the statistical stage of a mixed-method: Qualitative versus quantitative orientations. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *43*(1), 93-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2019.1626365

Ribeiro, J. M., de Oliveira, E. S. F., & Gonçalves, R. F. L. (2021). Contexts of qualitative research in health. *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*, *74*(1), 1-2. http://doi.org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1590/0034-7167.2021740101

Rintala, O., Solakivi, T., Laari, S., Töyli, J., & Ojala, L. (2021). Drivers of logistics outsourcing: Examining transaction costs, core competencies, and planned behavior. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, *51*(3), 259-280. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPDLM-08-2019-0244

Roller, M. R. (2019). A quality approach to qualitative content analysis: Similarities and differences compared to other qualitative methods. Forum qualitative sozialforschung/ forum. *Qualitative Social Research*, *20*(3), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-20.3.338

Rooshenas, L., Paramasivan, S., Jepson, M., & Donovan, J. L. (2019). Intensive triangulation of qualitative research and quantitative data to improve recruitment to randomized trials: The Quinte-T approach. *Qualitative Health Research*, *29*(5), 672-679. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732319828693

Rose, J., & Johnson, C. W. (2020). Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative

    research: Toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in

    leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *51*(4), 432-451.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2020.1722042

Saran, C. (2019). How IT departments can find different ways to upskill in the new

    economy. *Computer Weekly*, 4-6.

    https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252469050/How-IT-departments-can-

    skill-upskill-in-the-new-economy

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., & Bristow, A. (2019). Research methods for

    business students chapter 4: *Understanding Research Philosophy and Approaches*

    to Theory Development .128-171. Pearson Education.

Savino, D. M. (2016). Assessing the effectiveness of outsourcing human resources

    recruiting. *American Journal of Management*, *16*(2), 17-22. http://www.na-

    businesspress.com/ajmopen.html

Sen, S., Kotlarsky, J., & Budhwar, P. (2020). Extending organizational boundaries

    through outsourcing: Toward a dynamic risk-management capability framework.

    Academy of Management Perspectives, *34*(1), 97.

    https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2015.0191

Shaw, D., & Satalkar, P. (2018). Researchers' interpretations of research integrity: A

    qualitative study. *Accountability in Research: Policies & Quality Assurance*,

    25(2), 79-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2017.1413940

Shivendu, S., Zeng, D., & Gurbaxani, V. (2020). Optimal asset transfer in IT outsourcing contracts. *MIS Quarterly*, *44*(2), 857-905. https://doi.org/10.25300/MISQ/2020/12336

Siew-Chen, S., & Vinayan, G. (2016). Recruitment process outsourcing: A case study in Malaysia. *Personnel Review, 45*(5), 1029-1046. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-10-2012-0172

Simpson, A., & Quigley, C. F. (2016). Member checking process with adolescent students: Not just reading a transcript. *The Qualitative Report, 21*, 376-392. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/

Singh, N., Benmamoun, M., Meyr, E., & Arikan, R. H. (2021). Verifying rigor: Analyzing qualitative research in international marketing. *International Marketing Review*, *38*(6), 1289-1307. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-03-2020-0040

Sobinska, M., & Willcocks, L. (2016). IT outsourcing management in Poland - Trends and performance. *Strategic Outsourcing: An International Journal*, 9, 60-96. https://doi.org/10.1108/SO-10-2015-0024

Strydom, J. W. (2017). Longevity of SMMEs in Soweto: Does marketing play a role? *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, *9*(6), 685-695. https://doi.org/10.1080/20421338.2017.1355603

Teychenne, M., Abbott, G., Stephens, L. D., Opie, R. S., Olander, E. K., Brennan, L., van der Pligt, P., Apostolopoulos, M., & Ball, K. (2021). Mums on the move: A pilot randomized controlled trial of a home-based physical activity intervention for

mothers at risk of postnatal depression. *Midwifery*, *93*, 1-12.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2020.102898

Thomann, E., & Maggetti, M. (2020). Designing research with qualitative comparative

analysis (QCA): Approaches, challenges, and tools. *Sociological Methods &*

Research, *49*(2), 356-386. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124117729700

Tincani, M., & Travers, J. (2018). Publishing single-case research design studies that do

not demonstrate experimental control. *Remedial and Special Education*, *39*(2),

118-128. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932517697447

Ting, S. H., Yahya, S., & Tan, C. L. (2019). The influence of researcher competence on

university-industry collaboration: The mediating role of domain knowledge

transfers and spillovers. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*,

11(2), 277-303. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-06-2018-0054

Tran, V.-T., Porcher, R., Tran, V.-C., & Ravaud, P. (2017). Predicting data saturation in

qualitative surveys with mathematical models from ecological research. *Journal*

of Clinical Epidemiology, *82*, 71-78.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2016.10.001

Tripathi, A., Bagga, T., Sharma, S., & Kumar Vishnoi, S. (2021). Big data-driven

marketing enabled business performance: A conceptual framework of

information, strategy, and customer lifetime value. *2021 11th International*

Conference on Cloud Computing, Data Science Engineering (Confluence), 315-

320. https://doi.org/10.1109/Confluence51648.2021.9377156

Tsan, M.-F. (2019). Measuring the quality and performance of institutional review boards. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, *14*(3), 187-189. https://doi.org/10.1177/1556264618804686

Turner, S. F., Cardinal, L. B., & Burton, R. M. (2017). Research design for mixed methods: A triangulation-based framework and roadmap. *Organizational Research Methods*, *20*(2), 243-267. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428115610808

Vaara, E., Sonenshein, S., & Boje, D. (2016). Narratives as sources of stability and change in organizations: Approaches and directions for future research. *Academy of Management Annals*, *10*(1), 495-560. https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520.2016.1120963

Van Thiel, S., & Smullen, A. (2021). Principals and agents, or principals and stewards? Australian arm's length agencies' perceptions of arm's length government instruments. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2021.1881803

Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S., & Young, T. (2018). Characterizing and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: Systematic analysis of qualitative health research over 15 years. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *18*(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7

Venkatesh, V., Brown, S. A., Bala, H., (2017). Bridging the qualitative-quantitative divide: Guidelines for conducting mixed methods research in information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, *37*(1), 21-54. https://doi.org/10.25300/MISQ/2013/37.1.02

Waa, J., van der, Schoonderwoerd, T., Diggelen, J. van, & Neerincx, M. (2020).

    Interpretable confidence measures for decision support systems. *International*

    Journal of Human-Computer Studies, *144*, 1-11.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2020.102493

Wan, L., Orzes, G., Sartor, M., Di Mauro, C., & Nassimbeni, G. (2019). Entry modes in

    reshoring strategies: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Purchasing and Supply*

    Management, *25*(3), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pursup.2018.11.002

Wang, J.-J., Sasanipoor, N., & Wang, M.-M. (2020). The influence of PRINCE2 standard

    on customer satisfaction in information technology outsourcing: An investigation

    of a mediated moderation model. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*,

    33(6), 1419-1442. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEIM-08-2019-0223

Wang, M.-M., & Wang, J.-J. (2019). How vendor capabilities impact IT outsourcing

    performance: An investigation of a moderated mediation model. *Journal of*

    Enterprise Information Management, *32*(2), 325-344.

    https://doi.org/10.1108/JEIM-07-2018-0167

Wang, X. (2021). Why do firms form R&D cooperation? A resource dependence

    perspective. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, *33*(5), 586-598.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/09537325.2020.1832210

Warren, G. E., & Szostek, L. (2017). Small business strategies for sustainability beyond

    10 years. *International Journal of Applied Management and Technology*, *16*(1),

    111-122. https://doi.org/10.5590/IJAMT.2017.16.1.07

Wernerfelt, Birger (1984). A resource-based view of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal, 5*(2), 171-180. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250050207

White, E., & Miller, K. (2019). Mixed methods research to improve course design for preservice teachers. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 13*(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2019.130113

Winchester, C. L., & Salji, M. (2016). Writing a literature review. *Journal of Clinical Urology, 9*(5), 308-312. https://doi.org/10.1177/2051415816650133

Wong, W. P., Sinnandavar, C. M., & Soh, K.-L. (2021). The relationship between supply environment, supply chain integration and operational performance: The role of business process in curbing opportunistic behavior. *International Journal of Production Economics, 232*, 1-34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2020.107966

Wu, J., & Park, S. H. (2019). The role of international institutional complexity on emerging market multinational companies' innovation. *Global Strategy Journal, 9*(2), 333-353. https://doi.org/10.1002/gsj.1166

Xu, A., Baysari, M. T., Stocker, S. L., Leow, L. J., Day, R. O., & Carland, J. E. (2020). Researchers' views on, and experiences with, the requirement to obtain informed consent in research involving human participants: A qualitative study. *BMC Medical Ethics, 21*(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-020-00538-7

Yafei, W. (2021). Application of information technology in optimizing the governance of basic education groups. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning, 15*(5), 281-292. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v16i05.22407

Yap, C. S., Lim, Y. M., Jalaludin, F. W., & Lee, T. H. (2016). Determinants of ICT outsourcing among the locally-owned manufacturers in Malaysia. *Strategic Outsourcing: An International Journal*, *9*(3), 324-342. https://doi.org/10.1108/SO-03-2016-0011

Yildiz, E. P. (2020). Opinions of academicians on digital literacy: A phenomenology study. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, *15*(3), 469-478. https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v15i3.4913

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, Inc.

Yip, C., Han, N.-L. R., & Sing, B. L. (2016). Legal and ethical issues in research. *Indian Journal of Anaesthesia*. 684-688. *60* (9). https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5049.190627

Zoellner, J., & Harris, J. E. (2017). Mixed-methods research in nutrition and dietetics. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, *117*(5), 683-697. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2017.01.018

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What are the IT services that your company is outsourcing?

2. What strategies have you implemented to ensure the success of information technology outsourcing in your company?

3. What were the key barriers to implementing the associated ITO strategies for employee retention?

4. What were the key obstacles to implementing the associated ITO strategies for your business performance?

5. What key challenges did you encounter in implementing ITO strategies in your company?

6. How do you overcome the key challenges you face in implementing the ITO contracts?

7. How did you assess the effectiveness of the strategy for your ITO?

8. What else can you share with me about your organization's ITO strategies for improving business performance?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

1. Start by introducing myself to the participant of the study

2. Introduce the topic of the study, the purpose of the study.

3. Present to the participant the consent form

4. Advise the participant of their rights to withdraw from the study and ask if they have questions or concern

5. We Go over the recording device and the importance of recording the interview sessions

6. We Go over the notes taking, and we underline the date and time of the interview at the start

7. Ask participant all the nine questions while respecting the duration of the interview

8. I show my gratitude to the participants, and I thank them for their time and contribution to the accomplishment of this study

9. Reassure the participant that the information will be stored for five years and destroyed after that.

Appendix C: CITI Certification

citiprogram.org/verify/?w58bc551b-122b-46e7-a619-329528b548f4-43816923