

2022

## Strategies to Reduce Flight Attendant Voluntary Turnover

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Jorge Mario Tobar

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Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Strategies to Reduce Flight Attendant Voluntary Turnover

by

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MBA, University of Phoenix, 2014

BS, Florida International University, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2022

## Abstract

Flight attendant voluntary turnover can lead to staffing shortages that can cause severe disruptions to flight schedules, damage the airlines' reputations, and negatively affect revenues, which are significant challenges for airline leaders. Grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies airline leaders use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. Data were collected from four leaders from four U.S. airlines in the southwestern United States using semistructured interviews and reviews of organizational documents. Five themes emerged from thematic analysis: improving compensation and benefits packages, implementing rewards and recognition programs, increasing supervisory support, expanding advancement and growth opportunities, and enhancing job embeddedness. A key recommendation is for airline leaders to inspire flight attendants' passion for flying through ongoing training and development programs. The implications for social change include the potential to help airline leaders reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover, which could increase airline revenues and customer satisfaction, leading to more flight attendant job opportunities and increased tax revenues that regional and local governments can use to improve transportation infrastructure.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my mother, Maria Lopez, for giving me unconditional love and support throughout these past 4 years. Enrique Guerra, my husband, for always being by my side and encouraging me to persevere despite challenges, you are my hero! And my sister, Ingrid Tobar, thank you for leading by example and always lending valuable advice when needed.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies airline leaders use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. By the end of 2021, there were approximately 102,500 flight attendants working in the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). As a result, airline leaders are continuously monitoring and implementing strategies to retain qualified talent because turnover can significantly impact the customer service that airlines strive to provide (M. Chung & Jeon, 2020).

According to Ilkhanizadeh and Karatepe (2018), some of the reasons flight attendants decide to depart the airlines include the lack of supervisory support, job dissatisfaction, and opportunities at other airlines. The increase in flight attendant turnover suggests that further exploration of the causes could provide a clear understanding of the phenomenon (M. Chung & Jeon, 2020). Understanding effective management strategies may reduce the likelihood of turnover that results in poor customer service and may increase awareness of how to retain employees in the fast-paced, growing sector of the air transportation industry. Caring can help flight attendants flourish in the industry and provide job security (Ilkhanizadeh & Karatepe, 2018).

### **Background of the Problem**

Voluntary turnover is a concern for all organizations striving to survive a fast-paced competitive economy (Shin et al., 2022). This is costly because turnover takes away knowledge and experience from previous mentorship and training, which must be done again with new employees (Karam, 2019). Voluntary turnover is high in customer-service-related industries because employers expect flexibility of employees' time,

including working weekends and holidays (Stelina, 2019). Although satisfied employees demonstrate loyalty, unsatisfied employees may seek alternative career paths to address their unmet needs. Effective management of employee needs in customer service industries is necessary to reduce turnover.

Senior leadership, human resource managers, and frontline staff can assist in the reduction of employee turnover by identifying worker needs (Shin et al., 2022). Shin et al. (2022) also commented that employee retention is a continuous process influencing organizations to thrive or face uncertainty. Employee engagement builds morale, thereby increasing job satisfaction (Cheng et al., 2018).

### **Problem Statement**

From 2015 to 2020, flight attendant turnover increased substantially in the airline industry (Nogues et al., 2021). Nearly 49% of all flight attendants reported burnout and a lack of job satisfaction as factors in leaving their positions (M. Chung & Jeon, 2020). The general business problem was the steady increase in flight attendant turnover is resulting in poor customer service, increased costs, and decreased organizational performance. The specific business problem was that some U.S. airline leaders lack strategies to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies U.S. airline leaders use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. The targeted population included four leaders from four airlines operating in the southwestern region of the United States who had successfully implemented strategies to reduce turnover

among flight attendants. The implications for social change include a stable workforce that enables airlines to continue or increase economic support for local communities they serve, thereby supporting the quality of life for the communities' citizens.

### **Nature of the Study**

Three research methods considered for this study were quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. I chose the qualitative method for this study. Researchers use a qualitative approach to gain new insights developed through interviews using open-ended questions to explore experiences, perceptions, and strategies of individuals to explain phenomena (J. Park & Park, 2016). Yin (2018) posited that using open-ended questions allow researchers to collect and analyze data to obtain findings. In contrast, the quantitative methodology includes collection of numerical data and hypothesis testing to examine relationships and differences among variables (Yin, 2018). The quantitative approach was not appropriate for the current study because examining variables' relationships or differences through statistical analysis was not necessary to satisfy the purpose of the study.

The mixed-methods approach was also not appropriate for this study because it combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, which were not needed to answer my research question (see Jogulu & Pansiri, 2011). Yin (2018) suggested using a qualitative approach to collect nonnumerical data. Based on Yin's recommendations, I selected the qualitative method for this study because nonnumerical data were required to answer the research question.

The qualitative designs considered for this study included ethnography, phenomenology, and multiple-case study. According to Yin (2018), a multiple-case study design is appropriate for understanding the phenomena by obtaining data about more than one case. Because I explored the strategies airline leaders may implement to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover, a multiple-case study was a suitable method to conduct the study.

In an ethnographic study, the researcher explores and observes the cultural characteristics and behaviors of participants over a relatively long period of time (Graaf, 2016). In phenomenological research, the researcher interviews, observes, and records findings from the value of the meanings of personal human experiences of participants (Vacchelli, 2018). An ethnographic approach was not appropriate for the current study because exploring cultures and customs did not address the business problem. The phenomenological approach was inappropriate because exploring the voluntary turnover phenomenon did not require describing flight attendants' lived experiences.

### **Research Question**

What strategies do U.S. airline leaders use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies have you implemented to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover?
2. How do you assess the effectiveness of these strategies?

3. Which of these strategies were most effective in reducing voluntary turnover for flight attendants?
4. What were the key challenges to implementing these strategies?
5. How did you address the key barriers to the implementation of strategies for reducing voluntary turnover?
6. What other information can you provide to help me understand the strategies used to reduce flight attendants' voluntary turnover?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was the motivation-hygiene theory, also known as the dual-factor theory proposed by Herzberg in 1959. This theory is based on the idea that motivating factors encompass how people perceive satisfaction with an occupation and how effectively they react to supervisory support (Herzberg, 1974). Herzberg (1974) noted that the motivation factors in the workplace include (a) career advancement, (b) recognition, (c) personal achievement, and (d) employee responsibility. Hygiene factors, on the other hand, refer to potential dissatisfiers, which include (a) salary, (b) company policies, (c) working conditions, and (d) supervisory support (Herzberg et al., 1959). Overall, the two-factor theory depicts the need for organizational commitment to their employees to reduce turnover.

The two-factor theory framework can be used in industries providing intangible services, such as airlines (Cheng et al., 2018). The motivation-hygiene theory was appropriate for identifying constructs that can support successful strategies managers use to reduce employee turnover. Due to this suitability, Herzberg et al.'s (1959) motivation-



hygiene theory was expected to be appropriate for my study because it could explain the effectiveness of a variety of strategies that managers can implement to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Hygiene factors:* Hygiene factors are extrinsic motivational components that enable employees to work and cause a lack of satisfaction when absent (Herzberg, 1974).

*Job satisfaction:* Job satisfaction is the workers' engagement and motivation resulting from meeting employees' basic needs (Rau et al., 2020).

*Motivation factors:* Motivation factors are the state of psychological engagement enabling employees to achieve job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959).

*Turnover intention:* Turnover intention refers to factors that influence an employee's decision to depart an organization (Vatankhah, 2021).

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

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are claims that the researcher accepts as legitimate but cannot verify (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). My first assumption while conducting the current study was that participants would provide honest and thorough responses. The second assumption was that my findings could contribute to the limited research on voluntary turnover in the airline industry. Finally, I assumed that four airlines in the southwestern region of the United States would provide enough information to apply the findings to a larger population.

**Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses beyond the control of the researcher (Fan, 2013). One limitation in the current study was concentrating on only four leaders from four airlines operating at one airport in the Southwest United States. Focusing on one geographical location could have affected the findings because data may not be generalizable to the entire flight attendant population. Therefore, future research could examine airlines at more than one airport. The data collection was also limited by the interpretation of supplemental documents provided by the airline. Airlines, at times, are reluctant to share company documents because sensitive information is intended for internal purposes only (J. Lee et al., 2018).

**Delimitations**

Castellan (2010) noted that delimitations are boundaries that limit the scope of research. One delimitation in the current study was the restriction to a single geographical location. I conducted the study in the southwestern region of the United States. As a result, research in one geographic location may not have yielded the comprehensive data on strategies to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. This delimitation could have affected the data collection and interpretation of the findings.

**Significance of the Study**

Flight attendant voluntary turnover is a growing concern for leaders in the airline industry (J. Lee et al., 2018). The findings from the current study may provide airline leaders with insights on what strategies can be used to reduce voluntary employee turnover and, in turn, support increased organizational performance.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Flight attendants' voluntary turnover adversely affects an organization's success (Kanwal & Ajaz, 2019). The retention of skilled employees concerns airline leaders managing the flight attendant population working in the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). The findings from the current study could provide insights into how airline leaders practice job enrichment and increase morale. The findings could help leaders in determining ways to improve flight attendants' satisfaction in the workplace, thereby improving morale and customer service, which could benefit the business.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Social change initiatives can shape airline performances as passenger traffic increases (J. Lee et al., 2018). Shin and Hur (2019) posited that decreasing voluntary turnover could provide employment opportunities for the public. M. Yu and Hyun (2019) commented that airlines connect cities and countries worldwide. Building positive relationships between managers and flight attendants may allow airlines to increase their investments in time and service for supporting employees' families, thereby increasing economic opportunities and improving the quality of life within local communities.

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

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies airline leaders could implement to reduce voluntary turnover among flight attendants. Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory provided the conceptual framework for the study. The academic and professional literature provided the sources for the literature review of employee turnover, retention, and Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory.

I organized the literature review using three categories: (a) Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory, (b) supporting and contrasting theories, and (c) themes and phenomena. I explored the strategies used by leaders of airline customer service organizations to reduce employee turnover. The subheadings for the conceptual framework include critical analysis and synthesis of the literature. The supporting and contrasting theories section includes subheadings for Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory and Vroom's (1964) motivation theory. The themes and phenomena section includes subheadings for organizational effectiveness and employee retention strategies.

I obtained the sources for this study by researching the topic using academic databases, peer-reviewed journals, websites, and related books. Databases from the Walden University library were used to access research literature through ABI/INFORM, Business Source Complete, EBSCO, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Sage Premier, in addition to government websites. The search terms and phrases included *job satisfaction*, *employee turnover*, *hygiene factors*, *motivating factors*, *Herzberg's motivation theory*, *Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory*, and *Vroom's expectancy theory*.

The literature review included 118 peer-reviewed academic sources, journals, and books. There were 116 peer-reviewed articles (98%) of the 118 appearing in the literature review. Sixty-eight percent (81) of the total number of references were peer-reviewed sources published between 2018 and 2022.

**Table 1***Literature Review Reference Content*

Reference type	Total	<5 years	>5 years	% Total < 5 years
Peer-reviewed journals	116	37	79	98%
Books	2	0	2	2%
Non-peer-reviewed journals	0	0	0	0%
Total	118	37	81	100%

**Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Herzberg was a prominent business psychologist during the late 1950s who sought to explore the topic defining motivation. Herzberg et al.'s study on employee motivation included data from 200 accountants and engineers from Pennsylvania. Herzberg et al. (1959, as cited in Farr, 1977) compared employee motivation and lack of motivation. The research included participants' interviews exposing extensive job-related questions (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Herzberg et al.'s (1959) primary purpose was to explore the factors that influence employee performance and contributors to the lack of job satisfaction. Herzberg et al.'s findings revealed that job satisfaction was related to job contentment, whereas lack of job satisfaction resulted from the participants' negative perceptions of meeting basic employee needs. Herzberg et al.'s (date, as cited in Farr, 1977) chief question asked of their participants was to describe the psychological experiences that made them feel satisfied or dissatisfied. Herzberg et al.'s findings were confirmed as predicted by the

two-factor theory. As a result of extensive research on the topic, Herzberg et al.'s findings have prevailed, and today the findings are the foundation of the understanding of the theory of motivation.

### ***Motivation Factors***

Herzberg et al. (1959) noted that the motivation factors in the workplace include (a) recognition, (b) personal achievement, and (c) empowerment. These factors affect the level of satisfaction employees can experience in the workplace. In addition, motivation factors refer to the psychological contributors that keep employees motivated and willing to develop a sense of responsibility in the workplace (Kotni & Karumuri, 2018).

According to Herzberg et al., motivation factors are present when employees are recognized for good performance. Personal achievement is the satisfaction an employee feels from excelling (Farr, 1977). Empowerment is the ability to contribute to an organization, thereby improving employee-to-supervisor relationships (Cheng et al., 2018). Employees' ability to cooperate with supervisors indicates whether the employee is satisfied or is possibly contemplating the option to quit.

Herzberg et al.'s (1959) findings were accurate and have been widely accepted by theorists because the theory has continued to apply to populations employing human talent. For example, Kotni and Karumuri (2018) examined the relationship employees had with customers while shopping at the retail shops in Visakhapatnam, India. Satisfied employees displayed positive attitudes, which was reflected in higher sales. Similar findings in customer service industries such as the airlines could benefit the flying public. Well-compensated managers are also likely to keep employees motivated (Cheng et al.,

2018). In addition, managers who are well paid as employees will likely show sympathy for employees' well-being.

**Recognition.** Employee recognition is vital to the success of an organization. Cheng et al.'s (2018) study on customer service and employee satisfaction included data from the survey distributed to 375 flight attendants from a Taiwanese airline. Self-reported answers from participants contributed to the limited research on employee recognition among the Taiwanese airline population. Cheng et al. suggested that the increasing demand for flight attendants in Taiwan is rising. Airline leaders need to strive to provide the best customer service.

Passenger traffic is on the rise, and as the air transportation industry enters a new era more passengers will fly. Employees want to feel recognized for their contributions because being recognized brings a positive attitude among employees and supervisors (Herzberg et al., 1959). The research in the Taiwanese market indicated that employees with high psychological capabilities adjust better to stressful situations. Cheng et al. (2018) also commented that recognition improved worker relations with other workers. As a result, the findings proved valid as they coincide with the two-factor theory of motivation.

**Personal Achievement.** Personal achievement is critical to flight attendants' well-being. Personal achievement is a positive quality that distinguishes employees in customer service organizations such as airlines (Y. Lee et al., 2022). Employees with high goals and high personal expectations will most likely succeed in the challenging occupation. According to S. Y. Park (2020), job satisfaction indicates that employees are

likely to experience personal achievement, thereby excelling on the job. S. Y. Park examined the characteristics of employee personal achievement and the willingness to maintain healthy work interpersonal relationships with supervisors. S. Y. Park also discussed the determining structural factors, including the desire to display a commitment to the organization. Besides autonomy and promotion opportunities, social support was the leading indicator of satisfied employees and personal achievement. Flight attendants want to feel supported by senior supervisors.

Influential leaders listen to employees' concerns. Ilkhanizadeh and Karatepe (2018) showed how corporate social responsibility models could benefit human resource managers by fostering the understanding of employee needs. The study included 400 surveys distributed to flight attendants at a domestic carrier in Turkey. The findings indicated personal achievement as the factor that made employees feel valued. Employees who feel valued display the best attitudes; thus, the findings concur with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory because higher satisfaction levels are essential for personal accomplishment. Job satisfaction results from being satisfied and feeling achievement on the job.

Personal achievement is accomplished when employees are satisfied with the job. Personal achievement and advancement opportunities exemplify the possibility that employees will be promoted while in the occupation (Asumah et al., 2019). Promotions can motivate employees to thrive and advance in the airlines. New flight attendants desire to serve passengers flying in premium cabins. Additionally, Yang and Yang (2019) concluded that social support motivates employees to continue to have positive



employee-to-manager relationships. Employee-to-leader positive relationships make employees feel empowered.

**Empowerment.** Employee empowerment is vital in organizations working with the general public. Karatepe and Vatankhah's (2015) study on high-performance practices provided valuable insight into flight attendants' job experiences in Iranian private airline companies. Flight attendants, according to Karatepe and Vatankhah, can impact airline operations; for this reason, high-performance empowerment must include management activities enhancing job stability and performance. Providing employees with a positive work environment and enabling them to carry out the job is critical to see an employee succeed because it makes the employees feel empowered.

Employee empowerment influences job satisfaction. Karatepe and Vatankhah (2015) suggested that career opportunities, adequate breaks between flights, pay increases, and training can boost employee empowerment. Addressing employees' concerns creates a positive workplace because employees can voice opinions and provide feedback. Karatepe and Vatankhah's findings support Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory because employee empowerment influences job satisfaction.

### ***Hygiene Factors***

Hygiene factors refer to potential dissatisfiers, which include (a) salary, (b) supervisory support, and (c) working conditions (Herzberg, 1974). Herzberg et al. (1959) classified primary employee needs as hygiene factors determined by extrinsic motivators. Herzberg et al. concluded that the factors that influenced job satisfaction differ from what caused employees to become dissatisfied. The absence of hygiene factors can cause no

satisfaction. However, hygiene factors can only reduce employees' probability of dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg et al. concluded that lack of job satisfaction contributes to voluntary turnover. Herzberg et al. also found that using job incentives could increase morale and productivity.

**Salary.** Factors encouraging job satisfaction include fair wages. Salary is critical because it is the emotional indicator that can make an employee quit (Farr, 1977). M. Chung et al. (2021) noted that employees who meet qualifications are most likely to choose the industry they most likely like to work. Auh et al. (2016) discovered that employees working in customer-oriented industries are ambassadors because they deliver intangible services to the public. Heckler (2018) analyzed the emotions flight attendants experience addressing passengers' concerns during flights. Flight attendants experience fear, joy, and nervousness. Flight attendants' most challenging periods during the flight are takeoff and landing. The hygiene factor of feeling valued creates pride and accomplishment. Supervisory support is critical to flight attendants to enable them to feel valued by the organization.

**Supervisory Support.** Supervisory support and job contentment are the essential aspects of the employee-supervisor relationship. Lepojevic et al. (2018) contested one of the most researched topics in the study of employee behavior. Supervisors can influence the outcome of an employee experiencing satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1974). Annaç Göv and Erbay (2022) suggested that the relationship employees have with coworkers can influence job identification. Supervisory support is vital in helping an employee succeed because it enables managers to communicate effectively. Lepojevic et

al. confirmed Herzberg et al.'s (1959) motivation factor as it applies to human talent management. Effective communication enables leaders to provide adequate working conditions.

**Working Conditions.** Appropriate working conditions are essential in any organization. Čulibrk et al. (2018) uncovered favorable working conditions reinforcing Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory. Favorable working conditions were defined as constructive results from appraising a person's job capability. The employee's emotional state addresses the ability of managers and supervisors to attend to workers' working needs. According to Čulibrk et al., job satisfaction through an appropriate working environment is vital to human resources management applying organizational behavior. Similar to Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory, Čulibrk et al. concluded that working conditions have led to extensive research on the job satisfaction phenomenon.

### **Rival Theories**

Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory raised questions about employee satisfaction during the early 1950s. Herzberg et al. provided some of the most concrete and applicable findings to the study of motivation; however, rival theories also expanded the theory. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theories are two examples. Most theorists concur with Herzberg et al.'s accurate representation of the employee satisfaction phenomena.

### ***Hierarchy of Needs Theory***

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs supports the two-factor theory. Maslow (date, as cited in Fallatah & Syed, 2017) suggested the model of the pyramid of needs

consisting of five levels. The pyramid levels represent human needs that must be met to advance to the model's highest level, defined as self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). The five steps of the pyramid from the bottom up include (a) food and shelter, (b) safety, (c) the need for affection, (d) individual esteem needs, and (e) self-actualization (Groves et al., 1975). Maslow's theory supports Herzberg et al.'s (1959) findings because both approaches address motivation. Flight attendants should be compensated adequately to stay motivated and thrive on self-actualization.

Behling et al.'s (1968) study on employee motivation suggested that replicating Herzberg et al.'s research could reveal comparable findings, reinforcing the two-factor theory's validity. Some of the themes that emerged from the investigation included (a) achievement, (b) advancement, (c) job security, (d) recognition, and (e) salary. The theory of motivation asserts that Herzberg et al.'s findings were precise. The findings apply to most industries employing human talent. Potnuru and Sahoo (2016) examined the effectiveness of 290 executive and nonexecutive employees working in two medium-size Indian cement companies. Potnuru and Sahoo explained that employee competencies enhance effectiveness. Potnuru and Sahoo also expanded Herzberg et al.'s findings to relate to the fundamental principles including commitment and job satisfaction.

Conversely, lower wages lead to dissatisfaction and possibly employee resignation. Similar to Maslow (1943), Matei and Abrudan (2016) assessed Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory by interviewing a group of Romanian students. Matei and Abrudan confirmed that Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory could be difficult to apply to different populations because of cultural differences. Similar to Matei and Abrudan, M. Yu and

Hyun (2019) added that salary and wages are the essential motivators for employee performance. Although Matei and Abrudan concluded that the results could not be generalized to the Romanian population, results indicated that salary is vital to employee satisfaction.

Maslow's (1943) findings coincide with the signaling theory developed by Spence (1973). Spence's observations contribute to employee motivation because satisfaction is the compensation for performing well. The signaling theory provides insight into early theorists' discoveries about fairness and vitality while understanding employees' well-being.

### ***Expectancy Theory and Job Satisfaction***

In 1964 Vroom proposed the expectancy theory by expanding Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory of motivation. The expectancy theory supports Herzberg et al. and Maslow's (1943) findings in the attempt to define employee motivation. Vroom (1964) proposed that expectancy is the employee's anticipation of producing positive results. The approach identified valence as the motivator leading to satisfaction or lack of satisfaction. Guest (1965) also voiced that motivation explains why employees avoid specific jobs because of the fear of losing wages. Vroom's expectancy theory, similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, supports Herzberg et al.'s findings. The theory implementation can apply to flight attendants' experiencing voluntary turnover (Lee et al., 2018).

Similar to Vroom's (1964) analysis, Hellman's (1997) analysis of motivation addressed three factors that determined whether employees desire to express loyalty to

the organization. The three proposed factors included: (a) age, (b) job satisfaction, and (c) intent to leave. Tenure was also a finding from the study. Job satisfaction scored the highest, indicating that employees will continue service when management is available to listen to employee concerns. Hellman revealed that senior federal employees were most likely to commit to the job because motivating incentives like pensions and retirement benefits are becoming obsolete in the private sector. According to Hellman, newer employees were likely to depart government agencies when a lack of interest developed. According to Heckler (2018), flight attendant employment indicators include age and seniority; these factors can determine whether flight attendants will stay motivated or quit.

Farr (1977) expanded Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory analyzing data on employee motivation, praise, and rewards to achieve higher satisfaction levels. Farr concluded that monetary rewards meet basic needs. However, Cummins (1990) noted that a lack of supervisory support leads to job dissatisfaction, thereby decreasing job satisfaction. Similarly, Faerman and Quinn (1985) analyzed Herzberg's theory providing a new perspective based on Herzberg et al.'s (1959) original study. The organizational effectiveness theory and Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory define hygiene and motivator factors as job satisfaction. Faerman and Quinn expanded organizational effectiveness by addressing organizations that included educational institutions. Faerman and Quinn posited that organizations achieving goals are effective.

Goal achievement is essential to any organization. Chung et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study of airport employees. The motivation and the likelihood of loyalty

expression were examined. Chung et al. directed the study on the performance of X-ray airport screeners investigating the correlation between job satisfaction and loyalty to the organization. Chung et al.'s study included 492 X-ray airport screeners from two Korean airports. Airport screeners have stressful jobs securing the flying public's safety. Thus, findings from the study align with Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory because the lack of employee motivation can lead to turnover, which affects employee retention.

### **Hospitality Industry**

At any given time, businesses can experience turnover. Voluntary turnover concerns organization leaders because it affects worker retention and profitability (Y. Lee et al., 2022). Airlines are not exempt because employee needs are continuously changing (Mansour et al., 2021). According to Y. Lee et al., employee loss interrupts business leaders' ability to remain competitive because airlines depend on the contribution from flight attendants. Airline employees look elsewhere for opportunities when employee needs are not met.

Flight attendant alternate career opportunities threaten airlines' growth as air travel traffic increases. Cheng et al. (2018) noted that flight attendants are leaving airlines, which is impacting operations. The airline struggle to replace employees' unique value. Flight attendants' years of service contribute to the training of junior flight attendants (Singh et al., 2022). Observing turnover trends can benefit the industry because data are limited. The lack of research also impedes the career outlook as newer flight attendants join the industry (Yoon et al., 2018). Lack of certainty and limited data about the career prompts flight attendants to opt for alternate jobs.

Alternate job opportunities threaten hospitality-related jobs. The hospitality industry comprises airlines, hotels, and cruise lines (H. Kim et al., 2018). According to H. Kim et al. (2018), during 2015 and 2017 companies became concerned about increasing the public's positive image. Chittaro et al. (2018) agreed that corporate social responsibility is a priority for companies serving the public. According to S. D. Kim and Yong-Kuk (2021), companies are unable to operate without the contributions and assistance of human talent. The hospitality industry benefits from employees' most valuable contributions. Flight attendants are the face and the ambassadors of the airlines (Pradenas et al., 2021). According to Kim et al. (2018), flight attendants are highly valued in Asia and the Middle East. However, when employees feel they are not valued, they lack job satisfaction develops. A similar scenario plays a role in the casino industry in Nevada.

Casino employees are inclined to leave the industry because of the lack of supervisory support. Thomas et al. (2017) studied the characteristics involving the high turnover rates among casino operators in Nevada. Casinos entertain the public operating 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. The casino industry, like the airline industry, forces employees to work long hours, weekends, and holidays (Stelina, 2019). The job is complex; however, regulations are in place to protect flight attendants. Leaders overseeing employees are responsible for employees' wellbeing.

Leaders are responsible for the employee's wellbeing by offering fair compensation packages. Yoon et al. (2018) posited that flight attendants experience a sense of threat and anxiety because they fear job loss. According to Yoon et al., flight



attendants view their positions differently because the career is perceived as the foundation to advance in the industry. Similarly, Bufquin et al. (2018) addressed the restaurant employee population, including cooks and servers. The frontline staff serve the customer by delivering food and beverages. Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory also applies to the restaurant industry, where managers manage cooks and servers. Grobelna (2021) stated that in the airlines flight attendants aim to provide the best inflight customer service experience to passengers traveling to cities and countries across the world.

### **Turnover in the Airline Industry**

Y.-T. Huang et al. (2018) measured airline job satisfaction by collecting data from a survey distributed to 306 flight attendants. Because of the lack of responses and completeness of the questionnaires, 54 surveys were discarded, reducing the total number of surveys reviewed to 252. The study included questions about perceptions and supervisory support. Huang et al. concluded that a strong correlation between job satisfaction and supervisory assistance was vital to continue operations.

According to Costakis and Pickern (2018), customer service is challenging to measure. Costakis and Pickern proposed that employees' abilities are classified as soft and hard skills. Costakis and Pickern observations describe soft skills as personal qualities, attributes, and the level of commitment that set employees apart. Costakis and Pickern concluded that emotions could impact customer service. Hard skills are objective and can be measured because they are task oriented.

### ***Supervisory Support***

Managers are responsible for employees' wellbeing. Wygal et al. (2021) surveyed leaders of U.S. motor companies. The investigation provided responses about implementing the higher levels of organizational effectiveness. The study also revealed that high performance was attributed to higher pay. Pay influences employees' performance (Herzberg, 1974). Wygal concluded that managers influence employee performance and thus can increase productivity.

### ***Compensation Packages***

Compensation packages are critical to ensure employees feel treated well. Schlechter et al. (2016) studied factors contributing to employee turnover at an insurance company in South Africa. Schlechter et al. concluded that factors influencing turnover intentions included age, years of service, and coworkers' interactions. Service longevity motivates employees to provide the best customer service.

Effective managers influence adequate supervision (Nogues et al., 2021). Tandung (2016) examined the responses from 454 participants from various organizations in the Netherlands. Tandung concluded that the leading concern HR managers endure is reducing rising employee turnover. Managers should safeguard flight attendants' wellbeing and must comply with regulations (Mansour et al., 2021). Supervisory support is vital to motivate flight attendants because it promotes satisfaction. Tandung concurs with Huang et al.'s (2021) study by observing appealing to flight attendant needs. Airlines strive to provide the best customer service.

### ***Company Policies and Managerial Activities***

The medical industry also shares similar employee reactions because of pay. Parveen et al. (2017) studied the similarities and differences among hospital workers in Saudi Arabia. A survey, including 12 questions, was self-administered to 400 participants. Saudi nationals were highly satisfied with the healthcare occupation because of high pay. However, factors including conflicting job schedules and lack of supervisory support led to turnover. According to Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory, salary influences employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Parveen et al.'s (2017) study indicated the importance of adequate pay and the level of satisfaction.

Job satisfaction and opportunities for self-growth play a role in the educational leaders' profession. Mullen et al. (2018) discovered that student affairs professionals in the education industry manage and direct students' activities. Mullen et al. expanded on one possible threat in managing employees. The education industry faces similar challenges to airlines. Burnout is the emotional exhaustion decreasing the personal desire to produce results (Herzberg et al., 1959). An increase in compensation can reduce employee turnover because satisfaction and motivation increase job gratification. Lack of job satisfaction and stress can result in employee burnout. Mullen et al. concluded that burnout is the result of exceeding an employee's coping ability. Hotel employees are not exempt from burnout.

Hotel employees work under pressure and experience burnout. In a study that surveyed 260 hotel employees in a Turkish hotel, Koc and Bozkurt (2017) concluded that hotel workers are paid lower wages. The lack of motivation influences stress and fatigue

(Mullen et al., 2018). Darvishmotevali et al. (2017) analyzed a hospitality installation in Cyprus by surveying workers about difficulties about the job. According to Darvishmotevali et al., in the hospitality industry employees must work under pressure to ensure accommodations are ready. Darvishmotevali et al.'s findings indicated that the hospitality environment is stressful, which can result in voluntary turnover. Turnover also affects the customer service offered to travelers.

An increase in travelers causes high demand for accommodations. The findings identified that the lack of skills and education forced hotel employees to continue working for lower wages. Hotel employees endure dissatisfaction, long hours, and low pay. Dorta-Afonso et al. (2021) supported Herzberg et al.'s (1959) findings by concluding that unmotivated employees will likely depart jobs not meeting basic needs.

### ***Working Conditions***

Truck drivers also experience turnover. Huang et al. (2021) surveyed the truck driver population where employees experience the highest stress levels in the transportation industry. Salary and psychological well-being were vital to reducing job dissatisfaction. However, the lack of supervisory support influenced turnover. The literature on the trucking industry is limited, showing the need to further research. Huang et al. commented that the job entails long hours in traffic, lack of adequate sleep, and poor nutrition.

Ganguly (2015) defined managing an active organization as 3Ps of motivation: (a) performance, (b) productivity, and (c) profitability. Ganguly's observations align with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) findings because positive job attitudes define employee likeliness

to commit to the job. Productivity results from strategically compensating job performance. Finally, profitability sets businesses' motive to continue to operate.

Ganguly concluded that managers must protect and motivate employees.

### ***Career Advancement***

Ismail et al. (2019) investigated various businesses influencing positive employee behavior. Some of the industries included information technology, sales, and marketing. Additional findings from Ismail et al. included the relationship among job satisfaction, employee values, and job performance. Similarly, Ismail et al.'s findings can be applied to flight attendants rendering customer service to passengers using psychological qualities. Bozionelos (2016) noted that flight attendants working for Saudia Arabian Airlines demonstrated positive emotions towards customers and coworkers when job satisfaction was present. The findings from this study align with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory because employee satisfaction promotes job commitment. Flight attendants engaged with work ensure exceptional services are offered to passengers.

Satisfied flight attendants are engaged on the job. Mohamed and Zaki (2017) studied flight attendants from an Egyptian airline practicing work engagement. Egyptian flight attendants were most likely to engage in the job due to attractive perks and supervisory support. In addition, according to Sürücü and Sağbaş, (2021) positive attitudes enable flight attendants to work in harmony and respect, thus, benefiting the flying public. Flight attendants are essential in the transportation of millions of passengers across the globe. By meeting the needs of this valuable population, the public will benefit from improved services and customer satisfaction.

### ***Recognition***

When an employee is new to the job, satisfaction develops as the employee becomes familiar with the job. According to Belias et al. (2022), job satisfaction is the positive or negative evaluative judgment of one's job autonomy. Positive engagement motivates employees to take further steps to receive positive feedback from supervisors. According to Belias et al., emotional attachment characterizes job satisfaction as the employees identify with the duties; thus, employees contribute to the company objectives.

Flight attendants are critical to airlines' operations and achieving company objectives. Flight attendants must meet qualifications before being hired for the job. Kim and Park (2014) listed the qualifications necessary to become a flight attendant in South Korea. In recent years, an increase in preparation through educational programs offered in more than 30 Universities throughout Korea's territory was noted. Two significant carriers dominate Korea by providing inflight services from Seoul to worldwide destinations. According to Kim and Park, the rigorous selection process involving recruiting flight attendant personnel can be challenging. Kim and Park commented that the qualification process flight attendants must undergo to qualify for the job is highly competitive. Differently in the United States, the minimum educational requirement is earning a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). Korean flight attendants are highly qualified because hospitality-related industry training is the norm.

### **Flight Attendant Voluntary Turnover**

Flight attendants that do not have needs met leave the airlines. Castro et al. (2015) identified contributors influencing flight attendants leaving the airlines. Castro et al. distributed a survey to 73 flight attendants from a Portuguese airline. The study examined questions ranging from what type of medical issues were experienced during flights to the motivation factors preventing turnover. An in-depth analysis of the responses revealed that most complaints came from lack of sleep, time zone circadian rhythm problems, and fatigue. Castro et al. assert that the flight attendant occupation is under-investigated; thus, it would be beneficial for managers to listen attentively to flight attendant concerns. Castro et al. concluded that not all airlines compensate employees for the health-related issues arising from strenuous working conditions. Low compensation can lead employees to quit.

### ***Turnover and Intention to Quit***

Airline pilots are not exempt from experiencing turnover. Littman-Ovadia and Raas-Rothschild (2018) investigated airline pilots' experiences and challenges. The findings uncovered that turnover is less likely to occur among pilots; job satisfaction is a requisite to enhance working conditions. Littman-Ovadia and Raas-Rothschild surveyed an Israeli airline employing pilots from North America, South America, Europe, and the Middle East. The study concluded that pilots also become stressed because of heightened responsibility for the safety of passengers and crew members. Littman-Ovadia and Raas-Rothschild indicated that the qualities that constitute a pilot's career include (a) job satisfaction, (b) prudence, and (c) teamwork, which are critical indicators of flight safety.

Lin et al. (2017) qualitative study examined the effectiveness of employee job satisfaction and organizational support among 183 participants in China. Human capital enhancement consists of employee retention and productivity, thus reducing turnover. Lin et al. (2017) concluded that applying organizational competitiveness increases job satisfaction.

Job dissatisfaction affects job commitment. Kim and Back (2012) conducted a study on job satisfaction at the busiest airport in Seoul, Korea. Kim and Back identified that employee turnover was associated with a lack of job commitment. The findings from the investigation included (a) burnout, (b) job satisfaction, (c) organizational commitment, (d) organizational support, (e) self-efficacy, and (f) work climate. Stressful at times is the work environment flight attendants experience during flights. Also, flights between Korea and the United States have a longer flight duration; thus, this increases the possibility of health-related complications. Flights are scheduled to land, and flight attendants have a limited time to rest during layovers. The survey findings revealed that although most flight attendants were dedicated, the lack of adequate rest impacted job satisfaction (Castro et al., 2015). Flight attendants are one of the most valuable assets like pilots at the airlines, and it is dedication and perseverance benefit employees and the traveler. However, flight attendants also can experience burnout.

### ***Burnout***

Burnout promotes intention to quit. Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory addressed job satisfaction and career growth as two factors that promoted positive job attitudes. Burnout is the emotional exhaustion resulting from a lack of job satisfaction



(Görlich & Stadelmann, 2020). Mullen et al. (2018) posited that burnout included limited career advancement opportunities. Mullen et al. concluded that compensation was vital among student professionals. The study findings also provide similar conclusions about the flight attendant turnover; thus, suggesting that employee burnout is inescapable among flying attendants. Burnout can also be the consequence of not meeting employee family needs to be met.

### ***Work Family Conflict***

Work-family conflict was addressed by Huyghebaert et al. (2018). Huyghebaert et al. proposed that managers can support employee efforts affected by burnout and family conflict. Flight attendants work with the public providing intangible customer service (Yoon et al., 2018). Flight attendants are affected by the absence of family members from their lives. It is estimated that most flight attendants spend more time away from loved ones than at home.

Work distance affects employee family relationships. Widyanti and Firdaus (2019) ascertained that employees working long hours away from family and loved ones experience high stress and exhaustion. Family relations are vital to workers' wellbeing. Turnover intention results from employee discontentment with employers' performance and can sometimes result in voluntary quitting (Belias et al., 2022). In addition, the employees implementing the organization's mission can, at times, become unmotivated. Liu et al. (2020) noted that insecurity could lead to employee turnover.

### **Strategies to Prevent Flight Attendant Voluntary Turnover**

Flight attendants help ensure passengers' wellbeing. Flight attendants' daily activities include assisting passengers during flights (Huang et al., 2018). Flight attendants ensure the passenger's wellbeing by assuring safety during take-off and landing and at times of turbulence. The customer service industry experiences ups and downs, as Bolade (2018) revealed in a study conducted in Nigeria. A self-developed structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 120 respondents from financial institutions. Paethrangsi and Jamjumrus (2021) suggested that employee motivation and job satisfaction work by reducing job loss. According to Nogues and Tremblay (2019), promoting high employee morale enables workers to thrive. According to Mullen et al. (2018), implementing morale practices instilled by senior managers encourages employees to follow in leaders' footsteps. Employees that do not follow in leaders' footsteps are dissatisfied with the job.

Lack of job satisfaction can lead to lack of job performance. Similar to Bolade (2018) findings, flight attendants can bear various tasks leading to lack of performance. Some flight attendants are satisfied and motivated; thus, they pursue an attractive career (Waramontri et al., 2022). However, the strenuous nature of the job can be demanding at times, and not all employees have the endurance to fulfill the job. Bolade concluded that managers should care for the wellbeing of flight attendants. A positive team attitude leads the organization to higher levels of satisfaction.

### **Flight Attendant Future Outlook**

Flight attendants are airline ambassadors. Some of the duties flight attendants perform during flights are to serve travelers food and beverages during flights; however, their primary purpose is to ensure the safety and well-being of passengers (Huang et al., 2018). Serving well-experienced travelers across the globe are also one of the many duties of flight attendants. Flight attendants have one of the most demanding jobs in the air transportation industry because the job requires long hours and a lack of sleep (Shin et al., 2022). The career attracts many because of worldwide flying benefits for family and friends. The position is attractive, however as Ghaderi et al. (2021) commented there is a high price to pay for traveling the world. Some flight attendants make flying a career while others experience voluntary turnover (Asumah et al., 2019). The complexities of the job and the ability to cope with a fast, complex environment forces those experiencing turnover to opt for better elsewhere opportunities.

The U.S. Department of Labor (2022) projects that as the airline industry enters a new chapter in the air transportation era, improved employee management practices and customer service enhancements will shape the global industry. The demand for flight attendants is rising (Cheng et al., 2018). As passenger traffic increases, flight attendant talent will be required to serve the flying public (Ji et al., 2019). However, the research presents a high price to pay for traveling the world. Lack of sleep and limited rest periods are only two of the drawbacks (Rau et al., 2020). Flight attendants, at times, as Rau et al. summarized, must be allowed to rest and enjoy time off after a long transatlantic flight or a one-hour trip from any point in the country.

The literature provided an insight about the lucrative career with rewards and challenges to endure to wear the distinguished wings flight attendants display on their uniforms. According to Cheng et al. (2018), the flight attendant career continues to be one of the most sought-after careers in the air transportation industry.

### **Transition**

In Section 1, I provided an overview of the foundation for this study. Section 1 includes an introduction to the background of the problem, a problem statement, a purpose statement, and the nature of the problem. Within the problem statement, I identified the general business problem, and the specific business problem that is the focus of this study. The purpose statement outlines the justification for conducting the research study, and what the intentions and achievements are with this study. The nature of the study includes the research method and design selected for this study. I presented the central research question as well as the interview questions. In Section 1 of this study, I introduced the conceptual framework, the operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, including the significance of the study. Section 1 concludes with a review of the professional and academic literature.

In Section 2, I restate the purpose statement and explain my role as the researcher. I describe and outline the strategies for obtaining participants and present the research method and research design. Section 3 included the presentation of the findings and the applicability of the findings to the professional practice in the airline industry. Section 3 also included the implications for social change and recommendations for action and further research; final reflections and study conclusions were also addressed.

## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies U.S. airline leaders could use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. The target population included four leaders from four airlines operating in the southwestern region of the United States who had supervised flight attendants for a minimum of 5 years. The implications for social change included benefiting the flying public through improved in-flight services. The findings of the study could also help to create jobs and strengthen local communities' economies.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is to collect and analyze data and to report the findings (Reay, 2014). The scholar selects the topic relevant to business practice and addresses the phenomenon with a rigorous academic analysis by synthesizing literature; this is accomplished by using theory to expand research. In the qualitative case study, the researcher (a) analyzes audiovisual materials, (b) conducts face-to-face interviewing, (c) records data, and (d) reports the findings (Langley & Klag, 2019; Yin, 2018). The role of the researcher is to interpret the participants' experiences, record interviews, conduct member checking techniques, and triangulate the data. My role in the current study was to collect data from four airline leaders about their experiences implementing strategies to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. Interviewing is one of the most effective methods of collecting data because the sought participants have the expertise from exposure to the phenomenon (Yin, 2018).

I chose to study flight attendant voluntary turnover because of my experience working for the airlines. As a previous flight attendant, I lived the dream of flying, traveling to many exciting destinations, and getting to know different cultures. Researchers often devote their attention to one topic of familiarity and interest; this advantage can facilitate research (Yin, 2018). Eliminating bias and viewing data through a personal lens is the researcher's priority (Frempong et al., 2018). According to Yin (2018), the researcher must define the rationale for selecting the topic and have a defined position to present findings. To mitigate personal bias, I chose airline leaders with whom I had no working relationship. I recorded the interview responses to triangulate the data to identify themes. I also reported the participants' responses accurately to reduce the possibility of my personal opinion influencing the findings.

I conducted the study ethically. While collecting the data, I complied with National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979). *The Belmont Report* specifies the research guidelines by protecting participants, respecting opinions, and safeguarding personal information (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). *The Belmont Report* outlines three fundamental principles to conduct research: (a) beneficence, (b) justice, and (c) respect for all participants. The questions that guided the current interviews focused on communicating participants' experiences to maintain study alignment. According to Ahern (2012), participants' consent is the first step before commencing the data collection process.

According to Roberts et al. (2019), mitigating bias is part of conducting ethical research. The researcher detaches from personal biases to conduct the interviews to establish reliability and transparency (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Participant trust is vital to gather data (Beugelsdijk et al., 2018). I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix) by recording interviews, following member checking techniques, and triangulating company documents. The interview protocol minimizes potential misinterpretation (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Stake, 1995).

I also used the reflective journaling technique. The technique added necessary details that were useful in the data transcription process. I reviewed journal entries to ensure that only participants' experiences were recorded. The journal-keeping technique is an effective and practical method researchers can use (Yin, 2018). An interview protocol is used to help ensure that the study maintains alignment (Hackett & Strickland, 2018). I used a consistent interview protocol (see Appendix) to present the questions to participants and maintain study alignment.

### **Participants**

According to Yin (2018), participants can provide sought data. In the current study, the leaders' number of years working for the airline was advantageous. The participants were selected based on their roles working with the flight attendant population to solicit opinions from different perspectives maximizing the possibility of collecting current data from the industry. Participants provide data that can help enhance study credibility (Yin, 2018). The participants invited to participate in the current study included four leaders from four airlines operating in the southwestern region of the

United States. According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018) and Hardin et al. (2017), achieving reliable data requires the researcher to seek and select the most qualified participants.

I contacted airline leaders to explain the purpose of my study and my desire to interview potential candidates. I sought four participants; however, these numbers could have increased depending on whether the responses provided similar findings, thereby indicating data saturation. The failure to reach data saturation compromises the validity and reliability of the study (Stake, 1995). Each participant received an official invitation to participate in the study; the invitation explained the purpose and outcome of the study. After email confirmation from the participants was received, I scheduled the telephone interviews.

Yin (2018) stated that researchers must establish trust and a positive working relationship with participants. I confirmed the participants' written consent and communicated my availability via telephone to answer questions or address concerns. After identifying participants, I explained the nature and purpose of the study. I conducted the telephone interviews in line with the California public health guidance in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Research Method and Design**

The research method and research design selected are important to achieving valid and reliable findings (Stake, 1995). The research method and design facilitate the understanding of the data collected from participant interviews (Goerres et al., 2019). The



method selection and design should also be consistent with the study's intent (Yin, 2018). Selecting the appropriate method facilitates the data collection process.

### **Research Method**

I used the qualitative method to explore the strategies airline leaders can implement to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. According to Goerres et al. (2019), using the qualitative method permits collecting participant interviews by establishing two-way communication. Research requires the use of one of three methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2018). The qualitative method is the preferred method to explore participants' lived experiences (Weller et al., 2018). The qualitative method was appropriate for the current study because it allowed me to compare company documents to conduct triangulation and use member checking techniques.

The quantitative method was unsuitable for the current study because it required analyzing numerical data and variables while testing a hypothesis. The quantitative method lacks applying real-life issues, unlike the qualitative approach based on the participants' lived experiences (Gherardi, 2019). The current study's research question did not indicate the need to compare or analyze numerical data.

Roberts et al. (2019) and Lowe et al. (2018) stated that the mixed-method approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods. For the current study, I abstained from using the mixed-methods approach because quantitative data were not required to address the research question. Use of the mixed-methods approach also prompts statistical and numerical data (Lowe et al., 2018). In addition, the mixed-

methods approach includes hypothesis testing (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). I did not test hypotheses or analyze numerical data; therefore, the mixed-methods approach did not apply to this study.

### **Research Design**

I reviewed four qualitative designs: (a) case study, (b) ethnography, (c) narrative, and (d) phenomenology. I used the multiple-case study design for this study. Weller et al. (2018) suggested that a multiple-case study design is most appropriate when studying businesses in customer service industries. My purpose of interviewing four managers from four different airlines in the southwestern region of the United States was consistent with the multiple-case study design. The phenomenological design benefits qualitative research because it narrates participants' meanings and lived experiences (Yin, 2018). Vacchelli (2018) posited that using a phenomenological design dictates the study's assessment of the participants' lived experiences. In the current study, the phenomenological design would not have been helpful because the data collection process would have required additional time and would have deviated from the study's purpose.

Researchers can also apply the ethnographic design. However, synthesizing participants' experiences over an extended period can be tedious and time-consuming (Yin, 2018). In addition, the ethnographic approach assumes the need to conduct detailed interviews (Gherardi, 2019). I abstained from using the ethnographic approach because I did not need to collect detailed data from the interviews. Lastly, I rejected the narrative design because it is used to collect data over an extended period of time (Yin, 2018). Data

collection from participants' previous experiences over an extended period of time was not appropriate for the current study.

I used the multiple-case study design to conduct semistructured interviews, collect data, and triangulate company documents to reach data saturation. The in-depth understanding of the participants' responses enhances the findings (Stake, 2013). Roberts et al. (2019) concluded that data saturation is achieved when data findings repeat. In addition, Kline (2017) confirmed that data saturation is achieved when the study replication yields repeated results. According to Mwita (2022), when no new data from the interviews are obtained, the study has reached data saturation.

### **Population and Sampling**

The participants selected to participate in the study were required to have the experience supervising flight attendants for a minimum of 5 years and have successfully implemented strategies to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. Windsong (2018) proposed that the number of participants is not an indication of whether a study reaches saturation; instead, it is the richness and differences in the participant responses that determine whether the purpose of the study is attained. Sometimes a smaller participant sample can address the phenomenon because fewer participants with concrete answers provide reliable findings (McGrath et al., 2019). I used purposive sampling for the current study. According to Windsong, purposive sampling is beneficial to recruit and select participants. According to McGrath et al. (2019), researchers use purposeful sampling to identify specific populations. The researcher benefits from seeking qualified participants (Brown & Danaher, 2019).

Selective purposive sampling was the ideal technique for the current study because it reduced the number of participants. A smaller sample could provide the necessary data. Conversely, using a large sample could overwhelm the researcher (Mahat-Shamir et al., 2019). Asking irrelevant questions decreased the likelihood of repeating responses.

In qualitative case study research, data saturation is attained when the researcher can no longer uncover new information (Mohajan, 2018; Yin, 2018). In the current study, the interviews were followed by conducting member checking, reviewing company documents, and coding the data. Moustakas (1994) stated that the validity of the interviews and the researcher's ability to communicate the findings substantiate saturation. Brown and Danaher (2019) suggested that the main focus of qualitative research is to amplify the understanding of the phenomenon.

### **Ethical Research**

Ethical considerations to protect participants from vulnerability and confidentiality are essential (Moustakas, 1994). The participant's consent is the first step to consider when conducting research (Yin, 2018). The protocol for obtaining participants' consent was as follows: (a) I purposefully invited the participants by recruiting airline leaders with experience managing flight attendants, (b) the interviews proceeded following the participants' verbal and written consent, and (c) the participants' identity confidentiality was of utmost importance while conducting research involving real-life humans to avoid ethical complications (see Neufeld et al., 2019). In addition, Ross et al. (2018) suggested that the researcher conducting interviews should have the

knowledge and expertise on the topic to avoid unethical practices. Applying the principles established by *The Belmont Report* reduces the likelihood of disrespecting participants (Mathur et al., 2019).

Participant consent is ethical practice while conducting research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The purpose of obtaining written consent is to inform participants of the study's purpose and the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Yin, 2018). Participation in the current study was voluntary, and my responsibility was to ensure each participant's confidentiality. I informed study participants that their participation in my research study was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time by email or verbal communication to me.

As the primary researcher, I followed ethical behavior practices to protect the participants' confidentiality. I sought Walden Institutional Review Board approval to conduct the research (approval number 05-20-22-0568287). I contacted the prospective participants via email. I did not provide any tangible incentives for participation. The only incentive from participating in the study was the gratification from knowing that the findings contributed to airline research, thereby benefiting the flight attendant population.

Safekeeping participants' information, including the identities of each leader, significantly impacts data exchange (Beugelsdijk et al., 2018). To safeguard participants' identities, I assigned alphanumeric codes for each participant. The codes were labeled as P1 to P4. In addition, protecting the organization's identity was vital. My study committee and I were the only individuals with access to this information.

The interview notes and recordings were stored in a password-encrypted flash drive and will be kept in a locked safe for 5 years. After the stipulated time completion of the data's retention, all hardcopy documents will be shred, all electronic files will be permanently erased, and the flash drive will be destroyed. This disposal practice will safeguard the retention of personally identifiable information.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

I was the primary data collection instrument for this qualitative study. According to Yin (2018), the data collection instruments used in qualitative research include company documents, focus groups, and semistructured interviews. van den Berg et al. (2019) suggested the use of the semistructured interview technique. The semistructured interviews consisted of asking open-ended questions (see Appendix).

I acquired organization-related documents, company public website documents, and company training manuals provided by the airline leadership as a secondary data source. Upon receiving approval, I emailed the participants who met the criteria. After receiving participant approval and acknowledging participation via email on the informed consent form, I scheduled telephone interviews. I used an interview protocol, which included the interview questions (see Appendix). I shared my interpretation of participant interview responses and asked each leader to verify my understanding for member checking.

In the interview process, I received organizational documents, including company memos and training manuals used by the airlines for training purposes. Using semistructured interviews, member checking, and triangulation, I enhanced the data's

reliability and validity. Methodological triangulation was used to validate the data collected from the interviews, organizational documents, and literature review. Mahat-Shamir et al. (2019) stated that researchers benefit from triangulating data. Triangulation is one technique used to ensure that the results are valid (Malmqvist et al., 2019). Therefore, I triangulated the interview data with public company organizational website documents, employee manuals, and notes from the interviews.

### **Data Collection Technique**

I collected data using semistructured interviews and a review of company documents. According to Yin (2018), qualitative researchers ask participants specific questions. Participants' feedback is of utmost importance. My review of companies' documents provided data to triangulate against the interviews. I adhered to the following steps: (a) research airlines operating at one airport in the southwestern region of the United States, (b) communicate my desire to request the leaders' potential participation, and (c) contact the prospective airline leaders for each airline.

I contacted each participant 24 hours before the interview to communicate the interview questions. On the day of the interviews, I conducted interviews via telephone. Upon the conclusion of the interviews, I began recording, journaling, and triangulating company documents as Adhabi and Anozie (2017) suggested to follow when conducting qualitative interviews. The study's main ideas were noted in my journal to enrich the research process. Member checking is the process of asking participants to confirm my interpretations of their responses gathered from the interviews (Yin, 2018). I emailed the participants a copy of my interpretations to verify my understanding of their responses.

Participant review of the data collected enhances the credibility of the study (Malmqvist et al., 2019).

According to Hawkins (2018) and Rainford (2019), brevity and clarity while asking probing questions benefit the study. I tracked the data collected by utilizing the note-taking technique. According to Hawkins (2018), reliability, validation, and authenticity support findings. A study is reliable when the results yield similar responses (Yin, 2018). Hawkins noted that a lack of validity and reliability could potentially jeopardize findings.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Mohajan (2018) commented that following data organization techniques and coordination facilitates data retrieval. I used the journaling technique to keep a paper trail of the interview key points. The journaling technique helps the researcher attain validity and reliable practices by recording annotations and observations (Rainford, 2019). I organized the data using the qualitative software NVivo12. Castleberry (2014) noted that NVivo software is helpful to collect and organize qualitative data as it is not as complex to understand compared to similar software used by some researchers. I assigned alphanumeric codes P1 through P4 to protect the participants' identities.

Malmqvist et al. (2019) indicated that researchers are required to protect participants' confidentiality. To comply with this requirement, I stored all electronic data in a password-encrypted flash drive, and the recordings and the documents are stored in a safe at my residence for 5 years after completion of the study. After the 5 years have passed, all data will be destroyed. The flash drive will be physically destroyed, and hard



copy documents will be shredded. According to McGrath et al. (2019), safeguarding all data is the ethical protocol to protect participants' confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

I used methodological triangulation using data from interviews and reviewing company documents. According to Yin (2018), researchers must collect data from two or more data units to validate findings. Malmqvist et al. (2019) posited that triangulation often includes interviews, observations, and review of company documents. Nyirenda et al. (2020) noted that methodological triangulation can reinforce dependability, credibility, and confirmability. Yin noted four phases of triangulation analysis: (a) compile data, (b) organize data, (c) reuse data, (d) and interpret data.

Thematic analysis was used in this study to enhance the data collected. Thematic analysis provides rich, insightful information that is exploratory and aims to understand the data to explain a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Yin stated that researchers must familiarize themselves with the data to generate initial codes, categories, and themes. When the themes were identified, I used figure mapping techniques to derive additional ideas. I used tree-like brainstorming drawings to organize ideas. Tree-like branches enrich and explain the findings. I reviewed and compared the themes to the literature and the findings from Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory to relate to the conceptual framework.

I collected data from multiple sources in order to achieve methodological triangulation. According to Stake (2013), methodological triangulation entails using more than one data source to study a phenomenon. Interviews were the primary source of data, and the secondary data source was the review of organizational documents.

The findings from the study aligned with Herzberg's et al. (1959) two-factor theory stating that job satisfaction results from meeting employee needs. I demonstrated alignment of the findings to the conceptual framework, company documents, and literature review.

The prevailing themes identified were: (a) improving compensation and benefits packages, (b) implementing rewards and recognition programs, (c) increasing supervisory support, (d) expanding advancement and growth opportunities, and (e) enhancing embeddedness. Upon analyzing, reducing, interpreting, and confirming the data, the final step is to form conclusions (Stake, 1995). In each theme, I summarized and demonstrated alignment to the literature review and conceptual framework.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The reliability and validity of qualitative research depend on conducting interviews and uncovering repeated results (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Rose and Johnson (2020) concluded that study findings are valid and reliable when data saturation is achieved. Yin (2018) noted that data saturation must be achieved to enhance credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability.

#### **Reliability**

Reliability is paramount in a qualitative study (Frempong et al., 2018). Reliability is the consistency measurement and the ability to obtain repeated results (Rose & Johnson, 2020). When conducting qualitative research analysis, it is critical to prepare and organize the data into themes (Yin, 2018). According to Stake (2013), some techniques can improve reliability for a qualitative research study (a) triangulation, (b)

member checking, and (c) external auditing. Triangulation enhances the accuracy of the interpretation of the collected data (Yin, 2018). Methodological triangulation was employed using interviews, taking notes to capture any change in tone or body language, and reviewing company documents. Airline leaders were asked the same interview questions in the same order and applied member checking to enhance the dependability of the results. To conduct member checking, I emailed each participant their interview summary to ensure accuracy and confirmability.

### **Dependability**

Coleman (2022) noted that dependability is a criterion that supports a study's reliability. I used a two-step process by comparing the interview transcript with the recorded interview. Secondly, I used the member checking technique to provide participants the opportunity to verify my interpretations of their responses to the interview questions. According to Frempong et al. (2018), respecting each participant's reflections enhances responses. Each participant's response validates the data's authenticity (Hawkins, 2018). Malmqvist et al. (2019) added that the data are essential to obtain consistent results. Consistency while conducting qualitative research was imperative to enhance the study's reliability (Hawkins, 2018).

### **Validity**

Validity refers to the accuracy of the interpretation of the data (McLaughlan, 2018). The validity criterion includes confirmability, credibility, and transferability. According to Yin (2018), member checking confirms the credibility of the participants' responses. Member checking techniques also ensured that the participants' responses

were validated. Rose and Johnson (2020) noted that member checking enhances trust among the participants and the researcher; therefore, member checking complies with ethical rules in qualitative research.

### **Credibility**

Credibility enhances the findings believed to be true (Yin, 2018). To ensure study credibility, an appropriate participant sample was selected, as well as establishing a proper data collection methodology. The study's credibility was based on the participant responses obtained from the interviews (see Appendix). Yin (2018) postulated that credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of data interpretation. Methodological triangulation involves using multiple qualitative methods to gather the data (Stake, 2013). I ensured that the interview questions directly aligned with the research question (see Appendix) and continued to interview participants until no new themes or data emerged. Participants were asked to review their interview summary to confirm their interpretations before data analysis. Transferability was ensured by analyzing and interpreting the data.

### **Transferability**

The analysis and interpretation of the data from the interviews enhance transferability (Frempong et al., 2018). Transferability applies to similar populations to obtain repeated findings. Transferability is achieved when the study findings can apply to similar groups; thus, obtaining repeated results (Yin, 2018). Transferability of my study will be determined by future researchers. Adherence to the interview protocol is vital to

support research (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Frempong et al. (2018) concluded that transferability applies the method and findings to similar populations.

### **Confirmability**

The study's accuracy supports quality results; thus, it complies with confirmability. Confirmability reflects the accuracy and relevance of the research findings (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Confirmability also refers to the quality of the results and applying the results to similar populations (Yin, 2018). Confirmability is a concept that demonstrates the accuracy of the findings applied to similar populations. To increase confirmability, the researcher can use member checking and review of company sources to ensure the study reaches data saturation (Rose & Johnson, 2020). I used member checking technique to verify participants' responses.

### **Data Saturation**

According to Yin (2018), data saturation occurs when the researcher notices no new data can be obtained from repeating participant interviews. Interpreting participants lived experiences can contribute to data saturation (Brown & Danaher, 2019). There is no specific number of interviews a researcher should conduct; however, reaching data saturation indicates that the study findings are valid and reliable. According to Mabuza et al. (2014) and Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is attained when no additional coding could be performed. In this study I interviewed four leaders. I used interview questions, conducted member checking, and performed methodological triangulation until no new data or themes emerged from data sources.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 is an overview of this qualitative multiple-case study to explore strategies that airline leaders can use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. This section described the reasons for exploring this phenomenon. Section 2 reinstated the purpose statement and described several facets of the research study, which includes (a) the role of the researcher, (b) participants, (c) research method and design, (d) population and sampling, (e) ethical research, (f) data collection instruments, (g) data organization, (h) data analysis, and (i) reliability and validity.

Section 3 includes the presentation of findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and conclusion.

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

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies that airline leaders use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. I conducted telephone interviews with four airline leaders from airlines operating in the southwestern region of the United States to answer the research question. The use of interview data coupled with the airline leaders' organizational documents helped enable methodological triangulation and achieve data saturation. The data collection process was used to answer the research question: What strategies do airline leaders can use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover? After the interviews were conducted, I uploaded each interview file from my audio recorder to my home computer. I transcribed each interview using the audio recording and notes taken during the interview and uploaded each transcript into the NVivo software. The NVivo software allowed me to create codes, analyze the data, and find themes. The participants' identities were masked by replacing their names with P1, P2, P3 and P4. For the member checking process, I emailed each participant an interview summary to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation. Five themes emerged: improving compensation and benefits packages, implementing rewards and recognition programs, increasing supervisory support, expanding advancement and growth opportunities, and enhancing job embeddedness. This section contains the findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research. I conclude this section with my reflections and study conclusions.

## **Presentation of the Findings**

The research question for this qualitative study was the following: What strategies can airline leaders use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover? The data collection process included semistructured interviews with four airline leaders who had applied the strategies to reduce voluntary turnover and had proven experience working with the flight attendant population. In one-on-one telephone interviews, each participant provided information on the strategies they use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. Each interview was conducted via telephone at the participants' chosen day and time, which lasted no more than 30 minutes. I completed the interviews in line with the California public health guidance in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. I used the interview protocol (see Appendix) as a guide for conducting each interview. After the fourth interview, no new themes emerged, and data saturation was reached. To ensure interpretation accuracy, I provided each participant with an interview summary for member checking. For the methodological triangulation process, I reviewed organizational documents such as organizational policies, public documents obtained from company websites, and data recovered in the interview process. I used the NVivo software to organize, code, and analyze the data collected. NVivo enabled me to identify and group emerging themes. I uploaded the transcribed interview data, notes, and company documents into NVivo. I assigned an alphanumeric code to each participant (P1 to P4) in place of the participants' names to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory considers different factors influencing job satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the job. Using Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory as a lens, I identified the following



themes: (a) improving compensation and benefits packages, (b) implementing rewards and recognition programs, (c) increasing supervisory support, (d) expanding advancement and growth opportunities, and (e) enhancing embeddedness.

### **Theme 1: Improving Compensation and Benefits Packages**

The first theme that emerged was improving compensation and benefits packages. P1, P2, and P3 noted that competitive benefits such as fair pay and worldwide travel are some strategies airlines can use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. Tumi et al. (2022) noted that fair wages could reduce turnover. All current participants aligned with Tumi et al.'s findings that offering higher pay and competitive benefits can decrease the possibility of employees experiencing turnover. Rewarding employees with fair compensation will likely result in employee retention (Bradley, 2021). Employee retention is also affected by employers offering competitive wages.

Competitive wages and per diem are motivators that ensure flight attendants' needs are met. P1 explained "per diem is an additional form of payment in the flight attendant's paycheck used to pay for meals and other necessities while staying away from home during layovers." P3 expanded "most flight attendants spend many hours away from home and caring for their needs is essential to keep them motivated." Flight attendants spend most of their time flying; therefore, it can affect their well-being. Three of the participants noted that their airline pays the highest salaries compared to other carriers operating in the southwestern United States at the time of this study. Competitive wages and per diem add up and ensure flight attendants are taken care of financially. P4 expanded

pay is one of the many aspects why some flight attendants decide to work for the airline. Our company offers a competitive salary as other carriers in the industry. Our flight attendants have the opportunity to negotiate their salaries; however, there is a base start in salary. Specialized skills such as speaking a foreign language and previous experience with other airlines can make flight attendants' resumes attractive, and most likely, these qualifications can result in the employee being hired for the position.

Pay is a motivator that can motivate an employee to stay with one organization or seek opportunities elsewhere. This observation concurs with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory of motivation. All current participants responded that the flight attendant population is aging faster and more rapidly. P2 noted

today, most flight attendants that stay with the airlines are looking for retirement benefits such as a 401(k) or pension benefits. Our airline offers these benefits, and thus, they can motivate flight attendants to continue employment for decades and some even retire from the airlines after working over 30 years.

Herzberg et al. noted that satisfied employees are motivated; therefore, they excel on the job. Consistent with this observation, P1 stated

there are family and friend benefits offered to flight attendants; not only can flight attendants fly for free as space permits, but also family members can plan vacations at discounted prices. Our airline provides buddy passes annually that can be used anywhere the airline flies. The ability for employees and family

members to fly for free or at a discounted price is an attractive benefit that prompts flight attendants to seek a career in the airlines.

Compensation in rewards and recognition can motivate flight attendants to perform their best on the job.

According to all current participants, job satisfaction is increased when flight attendants receive compensation in the form of pay or have the ability to fly friends and family members. Salary is critical for flight attendants to support their families.

According to Marta et al. (2021), compensation is vital because basic needs must be met. Employees are motivated when adequately compensated; therefore, compensation can contribute to employee retention. This observation concurs with Herzberg's (1974) findings that meeting employees' basic needs results in the ability of employees to experience job satisfaction. Job satisfaction results from having an employee's needs met (Herzberg et al., 1959). The subthemes for Theme 1 were pay, benefits packages, and travel benefits (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Theme 1 Improving Compensation and Benefits Packages*

Subtheme	Number of sources	Frequency
Pay	6	22
Benefits packages	4	14
Travel benefits	4	21

### ***Alignment of Theme 1 to the Conceptual Framework***

Fair compensation and benefits are strategies identified by Herzberg's et al. (1959) two-factor theory. According to Guedes et al. (2021), compensation and benefits are two key factors determining whether employees will stay with one company or look for more attractive opportunities elsewhere. Rewarding employees with adequate compensation and benefits is a strategy participants identified as contributing to job satisfaction. Herzberg et al.'s findings showed that fair compensation and benefits are critical factors in an employee's well-being. The flight attendant population identifies with the two-factor theory because when employees are looking for gratification for a job well performed, monetary incentives work well to motivate.

Herzberg et al. (1959) identified compensation and benefits packages as critical factors in the constructs of the two-factor theory. A crucial component for leaders is providing employees with adequate compensation and attractive rewards to increase job satisfaction and motivation. Providing recognition and rewards is essential to Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory. Bonuses in the form of payment are examples of what motivates flight attendants, as identified by Herzberg's (1974) theory of motivation. According to Herzberg et al., employees who are most content with the job are those who have needs met. According to P1, P2, P3, and P4, pay greatly influences job satisfaction and the ability to pay for necessities that make the economy and society thrive during challenging economic times.

### *Alignment of Theme 1 to the Literature*

In the literature, improving compensation and benefits packages can reduce flight attendants' voluntary turnover. Motivation increases by acknowledging adequate compensation and competitive benefits packages (Shin et al., 2022). Encouraging employees with a competitive salary and benefits such as retirement and 401(k) can benefit flight attendants' organizational goals and objectives, thereby increasing motivation. Fair wages reduce turnover intention. The literature (Bradley, 2021; Marta et al., 2021) revealed that flight attendants are more likely to stay longer with airlines that meet flight attendants' needs and help them thrive.

Well-paid employees who stay longer with an organization promote job loyalty. M. Chung and Jeon (2020) noted that compensation makes employees stay with one airline or opt to look elsewhere for opportunities. Flight attendants have one of the most stressful jobs in the aviation industry because they must constantly be on their feet delivering intangible services to the flying public. All current participants agreed that per diem is the primary form of payment airlines award employees to live comfortably during domestic and international layovers.

Airlines must reward flight attendants during layovers with basic necessities such as per diem to pay for food. According to M. Chung and Jeon (2020), well-compensated flight attendants enjoy flying. Traveling benefits for family members mean that families can travel to exciting destinations. Flight attendants benefit from traveling anywhere the airline flies systemwide. This perk motivates flight attendants to render the best customer service. According to Herzberg (1974), well-compensated employees enjoy working

because job satisfaction leads to happy employees. More than the flying perks, serving the passenger provides a sense of fulfillment and job gratification.

## **Theme 2: Implementing Rewards and Recognition Programs**

The second theme that emerged from the data was implementing rewards and recognition programs. P1, P2, P3, and P4 reported that rewards and recognition are some of the most effective strategies airline leaders implement to reduce voluntary turnover. The participants' responses concur with Siruri and Cheche's (2021) findings that employees who are recognized for a job well done are satisfied intrinsically. P1's company website documents revealed that employee recognition is one of the airline's priorities. Recognizing employees' accomplishments motivates them to provide the best customer service in the industry. P3 highlighted,

our airline recognizes our employees by sending thank you emails about new achievements by various flight attendants flying across the U.S. and worldwide. Every day, flight attendants communicate via email. That's the way our airline communicates with flight attendants. Because our flight attendants are on the go most of the time, checking company emails can provide relief after a long flight because the airline shows caring.

According to Tortia et al. (2022), rewards motivate employees; therefore, flight attendants can improve motivation and enhance job satisfaction. Employees recognized for doing a job well are happier, which is felt in the organization (Riyanto et al., 2021). P3 elaborated,

our airline also recognizes flight attendants with yearly award ceremonies where the airline flies flight attendants to an annual awards ceremony in which the top 500 flight attendants are presented a crystal award. Awards and recognition boost flight attendants' motivation. Motivation can come from a thank you note, recognition by other employees, or a simple gift like a glass globe with an airplane or a flashlight with the airline logo.

Rewards and recognition are motivating factors that can increase job satisfaction, thereby decreasing employee turnover (Roni et al., 2018). According to P1, P2, P3, and P4, seniority is everything in the airlines.

Seniority determines the type of flights flight attendants can bid for the rest of the month or weeks in advance. Employee recognition causes the employee to stay with the organization (Kumari et al., 2021). P2 stated "to help resolve the seniority concerns; our airline operates from new hubs both on the east and west coast to assist flight attendants in advancing their opportunities to bump up seniority and reduce commuting time." P3 shared,

in our flight attendant's airline lounge, plenty of comfortable chairs are available to help flight attendants relax before a flight. Also, we have a sleeping room available where flight attendants can take a nap to refresh before the flights. Some of our flight attendants commute from other cities. To reduce commuting time, some flight attendants opt to live closer to their airline home base by staying closer to the airport.

Flying can be taxing to the body and the mind. For this reason, airlines are becoming aware of the need to care for flight attendants' well-being.

All participants concluded that having a lounge to relax before a flight can ease the strenuous workload before commencing a flight. Airlines are becoming more mindful of how seniority affects the lives of junior flight attendants. Kang and Lee (2021) stated that satisfied employees are those whose basic needs are met. Like Herzberg et al.'s (1959) discovery, recognized employees are less likely to experience job dissatisfaction. Managers implementing rewards and recognition programs motivate flight attendants to perform well. P1 ascertained that "employee rewards and recognition are essential to ensure that workers will stay loyal to the organization." According to Guedes et al. (2021), when employees are motivated, they will most likely engage in the occupation; as a result, job satisfaction is enhanced. Rewards and recognition are motivating factors defined by Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory. According to Herzberg et al., recognition is a motivating factor that causes job satisfaction, which can increase employee retention. The subthemes for Theme 2 were rewards, motivation, and job satisfaction (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Theme 2 Implementing Rewards and Recognition Programs*

Subtheme	Number of sources	Frequency
Rewards	6	19
Motivation	4	11
Job satisfaction	4	15



### *Alignment of Theme 2 to the Conceptual Framework*

Herzberg et al. (1959) identified rewards and recognition as critical factors to the constructs of the two-factor theory. Herzberg (1974) noted that rewards are motivators that can improve an employee's ability and desire to achieve more, thereby decreasing the possibility of employees experiencing job dissatisfaction. The implementation of rewards and recognition programs enhances employee morale and motivation (Abdullahi et al., 2021). Job satisfaction is closely related to implementing recognition programs. Rewards and recognition programs motivate employees; also, according to Abdullahi et al., rewards can reduce employee turnover.

A critical component for airline leaders is providing employees with rewards and recognition programs to increase their job satisfaction and motivation. Providing recognition and rewards is an essential factor of Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. Flight attendants are satisfied with their work when recognition for accomplishments from leaders is visible (Marta et al., 2021). Herzberg et al. attested that a sense of pride and achievement increases job satisfaction (Bradley, 2021). A critical aspect for airline leaders is to consider Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory by ensuring that recognition is a factor in lowering job dissatisfaction (Riyanto et al., 2021). Rewards and recognition are two motivating hygiene factors because both are critical aspects for airline leaders to balance when considering strategies to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover.

### *Alignment of Theme 2 to the Literature*

In the literature, rewards recognition is a significant element in improving voluntary turnover among the flight attendant population. Motivation increases with the acknowledgment of rewards and recognition. According to Herzberg (1974), encouraging employees with rewards and recognition fulfill organizational goals and objectives, which also increases motivation. P1 replied, “flight attendant expectations established during training demonstrate the skills, attributes, and capabilities of their role within the airline.” Training is the steppingstone that allows flight attendants to thrive throughout the airline service.

The implementation of rewards and recognition programs is a factor that improves commitment to the airlines. P2 recognized, “the organization allows managers to reward employees with flying incentives that provide positive feedback.” Rewards and recognition programs motivate flight attendants and increase job satisfaction; thus, it achieves organizational success. P1, P2, and P4 acknowledged that the airline awards employees by providing airline vouchers to family and friends. Ilkhanizadeh and Karatepe (2018) were keen on how airlines rewarded employees and discovered that caring for flight attendants benefits the employee and makes the economy flourish as passenger traffic increases.

Intrinsic motivation begins with meeting flight attendants’ well-being by making every flight a pleasant experience to look forward to with excitement. An inner desire to do what flight attendants enjoy creates a sense of pride and accomplishment. Recognition can be expressed as an increase in pay or a thank you note. Rewards motivate flight

attendants because meeting employee needs motivate and inspire to excel. According to Kumari et al. (2021), meeting employees' physical and psychological needs improves overall well-being. Promotions are essential; for example, moving up from servicing the passenger from economy class to business class and then first class motivates flight attendants to give their best every flight.

### **Theme 3: Increasing Supervisory Support**

The third theme that emerged from the data was increasing supervisory support. According to Lee et al. (2019), companies strive to retain qualified employees; supervisory support is closely related to job satisfaction. P4 expanded, "flight attendant candidates attend open houses across the U.S., and those selected subsequently are invited for additional interviews." According to van Dorssen & Boog et al. (2021), effective leadership impacts turnover intention. Norawati et al. (2022) posited that effective supervisors do more for employees and go the extra mile to ensure employees' well-being. Supervision is a hygiene factor that can cause job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). P3 noted,

most of our supervisors are previous flight attendants that have the experience of flying for the airlines, and some have many years of experience; this provides an advantage for the crews because these supervisors firsthand have experienced what it takes to become a flight attendant as well as understand how exhaustive flying can be. Some flight attendants become supervisors, and as they become more seasoned with the airline, they move up within the company.

According to Özel and Hacıoğlu (2021), the flight attendant population require unique needs compared to other professions that provide customer service. P3 explained, “flight attendants require rest after long flights; sleep can become a problem when flight attendants are sleep deprived.” P1 expanded, “to be a flight attendant, one must be whole and completely healthy, and this is why some leave the airlines because it takes a lot to endure the physical and psychological requirements of the job.” Zhang and Liu (2022) posited that employee retention is closely related to employees’ working environment.

Most flight attendants experience burnout. P3 commented,

one of the most common contributors to turnover is burnout, just burnout, and to mitigate this consequence from the job itself, our airline is doing all possibilities to accommodate flight attendants’ work schedules; days are long, and at times, flight attendants have to work ten-hour shifts domestically and 14-hour shifts internationally, depending on the time it takes to get to the destination. For example, an international flight to Tel-Aviv has a duration of 10 to 12 hours, depending on where the flight originates, and it is essential for flight attendants to perform their best during such long flights and layovers away from their home base.

Abdullahi et al. (2021) postulated that supervisors that listen to employees’ concerns are most likely to have a positive relationship with employees. Flight attendants have one of the most demanding jobs in the aviation industry. P4 responded, “flight attendants represent the airline and are the first person the customer comes in contact with during a flight.” According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2022), the typical duties of flight

attendants include safety and preparing the aircraft for an evacuation whenever necessary, caring for children and the elderly, and providing customer service. For these reasons, communication is vital to ensure flight attendants perform their duties to the best of their abilities. P3 expanded,

effective communication begins early during training, usually lasting about 4 to 6 weeks for most airlines. Flight attendants learn to communicate with immediate supervisors. Whether it is traffic on the way to the airport or a headache that can escalate. Our flight attendants always have a direct supervisor on the aircraft, the purser. Pursers are responsible for flight attendants, and the captain briefs are usually aware of the operations during the flight whether a situation arises. The captain also briefs the crew before the flight with weather information, routes, and service-related information.

Supervisors and flight attendants must work as a team. P2 commented, “communication is everything at the airlines because flight attendants are always on the go; also, flight attendants must work on the aircraft for hours providing customer service to passengers.” Afsar et al. (2018) posited that working as a team creates a spirit of unity which improves employee well-being because communication reduces turnover. P1 elaborated, “adequate supervision is essential because supervisors care for flight attendants.” Work–life balance includes resolving family conflict; sufficient time to care for loved ones reduces turnover (Silva et al., 2021). Supervisors that recognize flight attendants for a job well done and work as a team to achieve the company’s mission promotes job satisfaction. According to Herzberg (1974), job satisfaction results from

having employees' psychological needs met. Thus, satisfied employees are those that find satisfaction on the job. The subthemes for Theme 3 were supervision, communication, and team spirit (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Theme 3 Increasing Supervisory Support*

Subtheme	Number of sources	Frequency
Supervision	6	14
Communication	4	12
Team spirit	4	16

*Alignment of Theme 3 to the Conceptual Framework*

A significant hygiene factor in Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory is the achievement of practical supervisory support to motivate employees. Employee motivation is gained through personal interaction and communication. According to Afsar et al. (2018), satisfied employees are those workers that work frontline in the organization and are therefore in need of better care. According to Herzberg et al. (1959), increasing supervisory support is an essential strategy to reduce turnover. Flight attendants exemplify frontline workers who work both day and night, ensuring the safety and well-being of passengers and crew (J. Yu et al., 2020). Supervisors oversee the airlines' operations and therefore are responsible for the care of flight attendants. Afsar et al. attested that effective communication between leaders and employees increases job satisfaction.

Practical supervisory support creates an environment of encouragement, respect, and trust, which will foster a reduction in flight attendant turnover intentions. Using Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory as a lens reveals that adequate and effective leadership support can lead to job satisfaction. According to Sari et al. (2021), effective communication is a strategy that can foster employee motivation and elevate employee performance. P4 replied, "internal communications can improve flight attendant engagement and organizational commitment." According to Herzberg et al., increasing supervisory support is a motivating factor influencing employee perceptions of leaders. Consistent flight attendants' adequate supervision will lead to increased motivation and better performance, which benefits flight attendants and the flying public.

### *Alignment of Theme 3 to the Literature*

According to the literature, increasing supervisory support is an essential component of employee retention. According to Haroon and Shakil (2021), leadership transparency reduces job dissatisfaction because leaders that communicate organizational accomplishments with employees increase employee motivation and employee retention. P2 commented, "leaders with an effective communication approach enhance the flying experience, and flight attendants can approach supervisors by reassuring that their concerns will be heard." According to Sari et al. (2021), leaders who increase supervisory support stress effective communication that increases employee engagement and reduces employee turnover.

P1 noted, "at our airline, we prioritize employees first because communication between flight attendants is critical to maintaining employee engagement and

motivation.” P4 added, “communication is critical when making decisions that affect the passenger’s well-being.” Herzberg et al. (1959) ascertained that reducing turnover indicates adequate supervisory support. Manager-to-flight attendant instant feedback is a strategy that creates a solid workforce that is involved and motivated. Supervisors include those immediate crewmembers that lead the cabin crew operations during a flight. All participants concur that the lead flight attendant or purser in charge of the flight is the most important go-to leader during a flight.

Adequate supervision causes job satisfaction that can lead to reassured employees, happy customers, and thus increase profits for the airline. According to Norawati et al. (2022), supervisors showing charisma and support for employees’ well-being motivate flight attendants to give their best every flight. Passengers that experience an unforgettable getaway will most likely become second- and third-time repeat customers.

#### **Theme 4: Expanding Advancement and Growth Opportunities**

The fourth theme was expanding advancement and growth opportunities. Three of the participants reported that opportunities for growth and advancement are strategies they implement to reduce flight attendant turnover. Herzberg (1974) uncovered that advancement is a motivating factor that can lead to job satisfaction because when an employee is well-compensated, work retention is improved. P3 explained, “when we hire supervisors, we promote from within the company.” Opportunities for advancement indicate employee growth in the organization (Siruri & Cheche, 2021). Employees who are promoted are less likely to depart from the organization. P4 said, “growth begins after



flight attendants leave training because, during training, flight attendants are shown the career ladder to promotions and the steps to follow if they decide to make flying a career.” P2 expanded,

most flight attendant supervisors at one point were flight attendants that moved up in the company, and some even have reached executive positions. At our airline, flight attendants’ career begins right after training, and after completing the required flight qualifications and adequate progress, flight attendants can apply to become domestic pursers and aspire to become international pursers.

Khuong et al. (2020) found that job satisfaction is the result of growth in an organization. These findings confirm Herzberg et al.’s (1959) findings that the opportunity to advance at the job produces job satisfaction, and employee retention is improved. P4 confirmed, “promotions also mean pay increases, which can motivate flight attendants to want to move up to positions as pursers or immediate flight attendant supervisory positions.” Herzberg et al. noted that incentives increased job satisfaction. P1 concluded, “at the end of the day, flight attendants have to pay bills and sustain a family; a bump in pay can motivate flight attendants to continue working for the airline.” P1 observation concurs with Sari et al.’s (2021) findings that when an organization offers advancement opportunities, employees experience job satisfaction.

Room for advancement and training mentoring programs motivate employees, while the absence of such motivating factors can lead to employee turnover (Mohammed et al., 2021). All participants confirmed that the airline provides some opportunities for training and advancement. Company organizational documents, including job

descriptions, revealed that airlines offer career opportunities for improvement to those flight attendants interested in advancing through the airline ranks. M. Chung and Jeon (2020) posited that training, benefits, and compensation could increase flight attendant retention because employees well compensated are more likely to stay with the organization. P1 elaborated, “at our airline, there is always room for improvement for any flight attendant interested in developing their skills; we offer scholarships and tuition reimbursement.”

Advancement is a strategy used to retain employees. Employees advance and achieve more when growth opportunities are offered (Kumari et al., 2021). P2 replied, “those flight attendants that grow in the company and move up the leadership ladder make flying a career.” Employees stay competitive through training, coaching, and development (Alsafadi & Altahat, 2021). Growth and advancement are a strategy used to reduce turnover intention. Advancement ties with Herzberg’s et al. (1959) findings because job satisfaction is closely related to an employee’s emotional value by the organization. Training, growth, and advancement opportunities improve productivity, decreasing employee turnover. The subthemes for Theme 4 were training, promotions, and employee retention (see Table 5).

**Table 5***Theme 4 Expanding Advancement and Growth Opportunities*

Subtheme	Number of sources	Frequency
Training	4	12
Promotions	6	8
Employee retention	4	19

*Alignment of Theme 4 to the Conceptual Framework*

Herzberg et al. (1959) discovered that growth and advancement are intrinsic factors that motivate employees to perform better on the job. According to Herzberg (1974), advancements in the form of promotions and opportunities are hygiene factors that can cause an increase in job satisfaction. Airline leaders must identify training and growth opportunities to keep flight attendants motivated. Options such as the ability to move up within the airline can influence and improve employee job satisfaction. According to Herzberg et al., one motivating factors employee seek is growth opportunities. Airlines that offer advancement and development opportunities to their flight attendants increase motivation and job satisfaction and reduce employee turnover (Mohammed et al., 2021). According to P2, “providing flight attendants with advancement and growth opportunities are additional strategies airline leaders can implement to reduce turnover.” Employees who are given growth opportunities can advance in the airlines and thus become highly engaged with the job.

Herzberg (1974) attested that the availability of advancement and growth opportunities could highly influence an employee’s intent on staying with an organization

or opting to quit. Growth and advancement opportunities motivate flight attendants, increase job satisfaction, and improve organizational leadership (Khuong et al., 2020). Participants P1, P2, P3, and P4 are convinced that the presence of advancement and growth opportunities assists leaders in keeping flight attendants engaged and motivated. Leaders must provide flight attendants with growth and advancement opportunities to increase motivation and job satisfaction. Leaders who give improvement and development opportunities align with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) motivator construct.

#### ***Alignment of Theme 4 to the Literature***

The literature focuses on the organizational investment of training and growth opportunities to increase organizational success. Flight attendants increase their organizational commitment when presented with attractive development opportunities. An essential factor for flight attendants to consider when working for airlines is the availability of training and development opportunities. P1 expanded, "at our airline, there is a vast number of opportunities for growth and development. The only requirement is the desire to succeed and move up the ranks within the airline." Siruri and Cheche (2021) postulated that leaders focusing on training and development could reduce employee turnover.

P1 commended the organization's commitment to developing its flight attendants and used it as a tool to empower employees to maintain their commitment to accomplishing the airline's vision and mission to reduce voluntary turnover. According to Kang and Lee (2021), investment in human talent positively affects the customer and the employee. P3 said, "customer service with a smile goes a long way," P1 stated, "happy

employees increase engagement and retention.” Roni et al. (2018) indicated that adequate advancement and growth opportunities motivate employees to perform their best.

Opportunities for growth and advancement cause employees to stay with one company and not experience turnover.

Promotions from cabin services class to purser position and flight supervisors inspire flight attendants to stay employed with the airline. Flight attendants that advance to inflight supervisor positions have found joy and a sense of pride working for the airline. Promotions ensure flight attendants stay motivated because promotions also mean increases in pay and seniority. According to Siruri and Cheche (2021), employees offered opportunities for advancement remain with the airline longer. Loyalty to the organization results from meeting employees’ needs, thus creating job satisfaction; this observation concurs with Herzberg’s (1974) findings because satisfied employees promote job satisfaction.

### **Theme 5: Enhancing Embeddedness**

The last theme was enhancing job embeddedness. According to Haroon and Shakil (2021), employee commitment can have a positive impact; thus, it can improve retention. P1, P2, P3, and P4 reported that flying is every flight attendant’s dream. J. Yu et al. (2020) defined job embeddedness as the idea of being voluntarily attached to the job. This observation exemplifies best what flight attendants that make flying a career a choice over other professions experience throughout service. According to Herzberg et al. (1959), job satisfaction results from doing what one likes and being rewarded for a well-done job. P4 explained,

my dream of flying is what prompted me to join the airlines. If you ask most of our flight attendants why is becoming a flight attendant so essential, the answer would most likely be a passion for aviation, airplanes, and flying. Most flight attendants have already decided that they want to fly as early as they can remember. Some become pilots, and others become flight attendants. The answer is flying and the satisfaction it brings to our flight attendants.

The prerequisite to becoming a flight attendant includes having a minimum high school diploma or some sort of college education (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). P2 noted, “the more experienced candidates are in customer service would most likely advantage of the odds that they would be chosen for the job.” Flight attendants displaying a sense of embeddedness are usually the best employees (J. Yu et al., 2020). Three of the participants confirmed Herzberg’s (1974) findings. P1 commented,

at the end of the day, flying is more than just a paycheck; it is having a sense of adventure, flying to different places and new cities, meeting new people, and exploring different cultures, and a deep understanding of fulfillment. Every day our flight attendants work with other flight attendants flying for hours; they get to know each other, and they work as a team, which creates a positive team attitude that results in providing the best customer service.

In addition to Herzberg et al.’s (1959) findings, Maslow (1943) discovered that most employees with all basic needs met want to move up the top of the pyramid of needs. Maslow defines the top of the pyramid is defined as which is self-actualization. Like Maslow’s findings, Herzberg et al. also discovered that self-actualized employees work

best under stressful situations, are happier, and remain loyal to the organization.

According to P1, “flight attendants do more than just complete a day’s job; they take pride and seek the highest sense of satisfaction from doing what they enjoy best.”

Employees who are well compensated, supported by their supervisors, and given growth opportunities are most likely to experience job embeddedness. Job embeddedness translates to excelling in customer service. P4 elaborated,

customer service is everything in the airlines. First is safety, and after safety is service to the passenger. Excellent customer service leads to happy customers and fewer complaints. Also, excellent customer service can encourage flyers to repeat the flying experience with our airline. Most of the profit from our airline comes from repeat customers that fly one time after another and bring their friends. As a result, the airline’s reputation is positive, and more passengers will choose to fly in our airline.

Flight attendants are the image of the airlines. P4 noted, “our flight attendants are the ambassadors and are usually what causes passengers’ first impressions about the airline.” Airlines strive to provide the best flying experience by assuring aircraft is safe and clean before commencing a flight. Flight attendants experiencing job embeddedness stay with the airlines longer. P3 elaborated, “I have worked for the industry for 34 years.” P1 shared, “I have flown for the airlines for over 20 years and am still supervising flight attendants.” Meeting flight attendants motivating factors encourages flight attendants to experience job satisfaction (M. Chung & Jeon, 2020). Job embeddedness confirms Herzberg’s findings because meeting employees’ self-esteem needs leads to job

satisfaction. The subthemes for Theme 5 were job identification, job satisfaction, and passion for flying (see Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Theme 5 Enhancing Embeddedness*

Subtheme	Number of sources	Frequency
Job identification	4	21
Job satisfaction	4	20
Passion for flying	4	23

*Alignment of Theme 5 to the Conceptual Framework*

Enhancing job embeddedness is an essential component of Herzberg et al.'s (1959) motivator construct. All leaders indicated that flight attendants work for the airlines by personal choice. It is the sense of job satisfaction, as identified by Herzberg et al., that motivates employees to work well. Flight attendants have the quality that distinguishes them from other types of workers; it is the sense of joy and adventure that attracts more aviation enthusiasts to pursue a career in the airline industry.

Happy employees are those individuals that find a sense of pride and accomplishment in the job. P4 shared, "at our airline, most employees are working because they love what they do, the job is not for everyone; however, those that stay travel the world with joy and a sense of fulfillment." Herzberg et al. (1959) defined job satisfaction as having all basic needs met.



### *Alignment of Theme 5 to the Literature*

The literature focuses on job satisfaction, defined as job embeddedness and the development of new opportunities to increase airline success. Flight attendants increase their organizational commitment when presented with options that fulfill what Maslow (1943) defined as self-actualization. The literature outlines the requisites of becoming a flight attendant in the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). Flight attendants bear one of the most demanding jobs in the air transportation industry. Day after day, new recruits take up the challenge that, to some, is just a fantasy with no end. All airline leaders confirmed that job embeddedness is just the beginning of a steppingstone ladder to success. P4 summarized, “there is no limit on how high a flight attendant can promote itself; the sky is the limit and those that pursue the dream of flying will soar high into the clouds.”

J. Yu et al. (2020) voiced that at times, performing a job well is more than just a paycheck, it means doing the best work thus fulfilling the organization’s mission. Maslow (1943) defined the phenomenon of achieving more when all needs are met as self-actualization. M. Chung and Jeon (2020) postulated that when flight attendants’ needs are met they are happier on the job. Flight attendants demonstrate that flying is a choice because no matter how long a flight can be or how challenging the passengers can become because of unexpected turbulence, happy flight attendants provide the best customer service experience with a smile.

### **Application to Professional Practice**

The objective of this study was to identify the strategies that airline leaders can implement to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. Airline turnover is costly and affects flight attendants' well-being by providing intangible customer service in the air (Özel & Hacıoğlu, 2021). Airline leaders can apply the findings of this study to gain insight into turnover reduction strategies such as improving compensation and benefits packages, implementing rewards and recognition programs, increasing supervisory support, expanding advancement and growth opportunities, and enhancing embeddedness. Flight attendant turnover affects customer service and profits (M. Chung & Jeon, 2020). Airline leaders can benefit from the study because the findings uncovered strategies to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover, improve supervisory support, and increase job satisfaction.

Leaders implementing efficient compensation and benefits packages enhance employee psychological well-being. According to Bradley (2021), compensation in the form of pay is a critical determinant that can make an employee leave the airline or seek other gratifying opportunities elsewhere. Also, attractive benefits, including retirement and health, can motivate flight attendants to stay with one airline. Flight attendants are also encouraged when airlines provide adequate rewards and recognition programs. Airlines with an effective reward and recognition program enhance flight attendants' psychological well-being.

The flight attendant occupation is among the most mentally demanding careers in the air transportation industry, second to pilots (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022).

Recognizing employees for doing a job well motivates flight attendants to do their best despite how stressful a duty day can be. Also, the support employees receive from supervisors determines the quality of the relationships between managers and flight attendants.

Leaders adopting the strategy of caring for flight attendants can result in flight attendants becoming less stressed. Flight attendants can voice concerns that can otherwise become problematic to emotional feelings. Leaders that listen to employees tend to have better relationships with subordinates because they are less intimidated by implementing an open-door policy (Guedes et al., 2021). Growth and advancement opportunities are among the most effective strategies to reduce turnover. Advancement opportunities also enhance the quality of how attached a flight attendant is to the job.

Flight attendants flying for airlines possess qualities that distinguish them from other occupations in the aviation industry. Job embeddedness is the quality of becoming emotionally attached to the job without considering other benefits that otherwise become critical in other occupations (J. Yu et al., 2020). Flight attendants love their jobs, and this is mainly reflected in the satisfaction they receive from rendering exceptional customer service. Business leaders can apply the results from this study to help understand strategies to decrease voluntary turnover to remain competitive in the industry, which can lead to social change.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Voluntary turnover among flight attendants is a concern for airlines (Özel & Hacıoğlu, 2021). Airlines can strive to retain flight attendant talent by implementing the

strategies mentioned in this study. The results of this study could create positive social change by educating airline leaders about how to decrease turnover to remain competitive. Flight attendant turnover reduction would more likely be motivate new flight attendant candidates to seek employment opportunities, thus creating new jobs for the community.

To reduce turnover in the industry, airline leaders should implement strategies to decrease flight attendant voluntary turnover, such as improving compensation and benefits packages, implementing rewards and recognition programs, increasing supervisory support, expanding advancement and growth opportunities, and enhancing embeddedness to create a more sustainable airline industry. Employee turnover affects employee well-being as profits are lost, and companies struggle to replace flight attendant talent. Leaders implementing the strategies mentioned in the study could better understand flight attendants. Appealing to employee psychological needs is imperative to develop job satisfaction and loyalty to the organization.

Implementing the strategies outlined in the study could help social change initiatives because managers will increase employee morale and appeal to flight attendants' emotions and psychological well-being. Satisfied employees are those that are content with the job and find satisfaction as a result of having motivational needs met (Mitsakis & Galanakis, 2022). This study could potentially benefit local communities and the industry because it addresses a real problem that can be mitigated by employing the suggested strategies provided by the study findings.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The strategies identified in this study can help airline leaders understand what it takes to ensure flight attendant job satisfaction. Potential, current, and future flight attendant leaders should pay attention to the results from this study because the findings could reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. Airline leaders can apply the findings of this study to gain insight into turnover reduction strategies such as improving compensation and benefits packages, implementing rewards and recognition programs, increasing supervisory support, expanding advancement and growth opportunities, and enhancing embeddedness.

Leaders implementing compensation and benefits packages can enhance employee health. According to Magnan and Martin (2019), pay and benefits can make an employee stay with the company or seek elsewhere opportunities. Attractive benefits, including retirement and health, can motivate flight attendants to stay with one airline, thus, reducing the likelihood of leaving one airline for another. Airlines implementing effective reward and recognition programs enhance flight attendants' quality of life. Recognizing flight attendants for a job well done can motivate employees to perform their best despite how stressful a flight can be.

Leaders that listen to employees communicate better with subordinates because managers can be approached without fear or repercussions (Men et al., 2018). Advancements in the airlines can also enhance the quality of the job flight attendants perform. A positive attitude about the job defines job embeddedness (Y. Lee et al., 2022). Flight attendants' dedication to the job is shown while working during flights providing

the best customer service with a smile. Business leaders can apply the results from this study to help understand strategies to decrease flight attendant voluntary turnover to remain competitive.

I plan to disseminate the results from this study by providing each participant with a one- to two-page summary of the results, provide training to airlines in the local community on the strategies on how to reduce turnover, and publish the study to add to the limited literature research on the flight attendant voluntary turnover phenomenon. This study will be published in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database for future scholars and academic professionals. My final recommendation is for potential, current, and future leaders in other regions of the United States to review the findings of this study to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The objective of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies airline leaders can implement to reduce flight attendant turnover. The participant sample comprised four airline leaders managing flight attendants in the southwestern region of the United States. Limitations of this study included the small sample size and the inability to carry out the research in other regions because of time constraints. Researchers might explore a broader location, like the entire United States. Also, future scholars may consider researching the effectiveness of the following strategies identified in this study: improving compensation and benefits packages, implementing rewards and recognition programs, increasing supervisory support, expanding advancement and growth opportunities, and enhancing embeddedness.

### **Reflections**

The doctor of business administration study has been a life-changing experience. Throughout the journey, I learned that hard work and dedication are the key to overcoming any obstacle that might come along the way. My experience of working for the airlines helped me understand the phenomena and know some turnover reduction strategies. However, I set aside preconceived ideas and ensured that my study's conclusion reflected the findings. I was mesmerized to have uncovered new strategies that emerged from the data. I am excited to share the results with airline leaders, managers, and those aspiring to fly for the airlines. I hope that anyone seeking to reduce flight attendant turnover will find the information in this study helpful and informative and apply the strategies to their business practice to create positive social change.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that airline leaders use to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover. Flight attendant voluntary turnover can negatively affect the daily operation of the airlines. Turnover is costly because employees leave the airlines, and new flight attendant candidates must be trained, thus resulting in profit losses (M. Chung & Jeon, 2020). The loss of talent is detrimental to the business culture and organizational performance. Airline leaders should implement strategies to decrease flight attendant voluntary turnover, such as improving compensation and benefits packages, implementing rewards and recognition programs, increasing supervisory support, expanding advancement and growth opportunities, and enhancing embeddedness to create a more sustainable airline industry.

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## Appendix: Interview Protocol

### **Interview Format**

- Contact participants at the agreed-upon time via telephone.
- Before the interview begins, ask participants to refer to the invitation email and consent form stating “*I consent*” to the interview.
- Greet participants and provide a short introduction about myself.
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the study and the role of participants.
- Ask participants for their consent to record the interview.
- Thank all participants for participating in the study and inform them I will e-mail them a copy of the interview transcript for their review and approval.

### **Opening Statement**

My name is Jorge Tobar. The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies airline leaders use to reduce flight attendant turnover in the airline industry. Before the interview begins, I will discuss with you the purpose of the research and obtain your consent to record the interview. Please don't hesitate to ask if needed to repeat any of the questions. I will ask the seven predetermined interview questions and invite for comments.

Additional questions can follow up if needed. All information discussed will be stored in a locked safe for 5 years. All documents will be destroyed after the completion of the 5 years. Your participation in this interview is strictly voluntary, and if you decide you decide to withdraw from the study, please indicate so at this time verbally. With your permission, please say yes or no if this is okay with you to record the interview. The interview will be recorded now.

**Interview Questions**

- What strategies have you implemented to reduce flight attendant voluntary turnover?
- How do you assess the effectiveness of these strategies?
- Which of these strategies were most effective in reducing voluntary turnover for flight attendants?
- What were the key challenges to implementing these strategies?
- How did you address the key barriers to implementing strategies for reducing voluntary turnover?
- What other information can you provide to help me understand the strategies used to reduce flight attendants' voluntary turnover?

**Closing Statement**

Thank you (Participant name). With your participation, this study can help the airline industry implement some strategies airline managers can use to reduce flight attendants voluntary turnover. I will provide you with a copy of the interview transcript for your review and approval to ensure I accurately captured your responses. Again, thank you for your participation in the study.