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Interpersonal Conversations in the Restaurant Industry

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Abstract

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Abstract

Managers in the restaurant industry continue to struggle with workplace engagement and turnover at a rate of 31.8% greater than other industries. The general problem is that interpersonal relationships between employees and managers is a leading cause of issues related to job turnover and employee engagement. The specific problem is that some hospitality managers lack strategies to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The purpose of this qualitative critical instance case study was to explore strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. Guided by the conceptual framework, interpersonal conversations were explored as a methods managers use to improve personal connections with employees. A qualitative critical instance case study design was used to explore the phenomenon. Purposeful sampling was used to identify 10 restaurant managers from a Denver, Colorado restaurant brand who have successfully established personal relationships with employees leading to improved workplace engagement and turnover. Data collection included semi structured interviews, and an analysis plan was used to evaluate the data collected. The results of the study showed that strong communication skills, building relationships in the workplace, and the engagement of the team are strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. This study contributes to positive social change by providing restaurant managers tools for improving employee engagement and retention in the workplace.

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Dedication

I dedicate the inspiration of this project to my wife and kids for the love, care, and support they have provided over the years. Without you, I would not have had the courage or strength to continue this journey. Secondly, to my parents for the patience, guidance, and direction they provided me to live an honest and fulfilling life and my brother who has been my rock in life. Finally, to all the leaders, colleagues, and friendships I've developed over the years. Your guidance and direction have continued to point me to *true north*, to make the hard right versus the easy wrong, and challenged me each day to be the best version of myself.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The decision an individual in the workplace makes regarding whether to continue working for a company can be explained through workplace engagement and employee turnover through interpersonal relationships and communication. Building relationships is an emotional, cognitive, and physical investment that people make to develop workplace engagement and improve turnover (Lee & Ok, 2015). These relationships are linked directly to interpersonal communication skills needed by leaders to generate motivation in the workplace (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012). Reward and cost factors in a relationship between managers and employees contains layers that are linked together in a process from artificial connections to a deeper level of intimacy and commitment (Baack et al., 2000). These relationships have been found in previous studies related to how people connect to each in the relationship building process (Altman & Taylor, 1973), how people interpersonally communicate with each other (Graham et al.,1993; Jo & Shim, 2005), and methods used to continue the relationship process with employees (Lolli, 2013). How people communicate with each other affects the outcome of the relationship. In the restaurant industry, this can lead to improvements in the engagement, enhances the work contribution, inspires and empowers, and reduces intent to quit (Chiu et al., 2017). A manager's role in improving interpersonal relationships with employees is critical for organizational growth. Restaurant companies that focus on how managers communicate and build relationships with employees will improve engagement and turnover rates (Chiu et al., 2017).

Background of the Problem

The U.S. job market is experiencing one of the highest increases in employee turnover since 2010 (Maurer, 2018). In 2014, a survey was conducted on 600 U.S. employees in numerous industry categories to determine what employees felt were the most important aspects of their job and the reality of the engagement level. The results of the study showed that employees possessed a need for trust, respect, and communication in the work environment as well as a desire to build relationships with their managers (Employee Job Satisfaction, 2014). Approximately 18 million more people left their place of employment in 2018 than in 2010 (State of Employee Engagement, 2018). Some of the reasons for the higher turnover were related to engagement in the workplace, relationships with management and leadership in the organization, and communication regarding advancement, training, and development, and have a sense of purpose in their work. In 2020, another survey was conducted on employee engagement and experience, which showed that the experience an employee has in their workplace is influenced by the relationship with immediate supervisors and others within an organization, employees having a sense of purpose through engagement in their work, and being able to develop personally and professionally in a positive work culture (Employee Engagement and Experience, 2020). Some of the key elements in the study affecting employee engagement were relationship with immediate supervisor, having a voice that is listened to, and communication that inspires having a sense of purpose.

Through interpersonal communication, employers can improve the performance of engaging people, reducing turnover, and building relationships with employees (Awad

& Alhashemi, 2012; Chiu et al., 2017; Orlowski et al., 2020; Soelton et. al., 2020). In the restaurant industry, building interpersonal relationships through communication leads to increases in productivity, meeting organizational strategies, and decreases in turnover rates. Communication was first introduced as a method for building relationships by Altman and Taylor in 1973. The connection between individuals either adds or subtracts to the value of the relationship based on communication factors (Griffin et al., 2019; Cook, 1987). One-on-one conversations triggers employees to open up more in conversations (Tews et al., 2014), which influence positive connections that help with interpersonal relationship building (Altman & Taylor, 1973), leading to autonomy, motivation, and positive work environment. Adding value to the environmental relationship between the employee and their job leads to improvements in turnover and workplace engagement (Cook, 1987). In more recent studies, these internal events improve the well-being, motivational needs, and trust based on how employers treat their employees, and how they are communicated with (DiPietro et al. 2019; Xi et al., 2017). Employees who feel the relationship they have with their managers is the most important part of the environment that influences the intent to stay (Frye et al, 2020). They want to develop a sense of appreciation, belonging, and to receive support and work in a healthy environment. These turnover factors are influenced by managerial behaviors and the interpersonal relationship a manager has with employees (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020).

Problem Statement

In a 2018 study on employee engagement by the Human Resource Management Group, the relationship an employee has with their supervisors was found to be the

foundation of building employee engagement (The State of Employee Engagement, 2018). Sixty-four percent of the employees surveyed indicated that the relationship they have with managers is very important to job satisfaction, and 95% suggested that communication between employees and managers were important to job satisfaction; however, some respondents were only somewhat satisfied with their trust and relationships with management as well as how management communicated to them (Employee Job Satisfaction, 2017). Employees are less likely to quit a job when managers perform in-depth one-on-one conversations with employees (Xi et al., 2017). The general problem is that interpersonal relationships between employees and managers is a leading cause of issues related to job turnover and employee engagement. The specific problem is that some hospitality managers lack strategies to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement (West & Turner, 2020).

Gaps in Research

A gap for future research exists between emotional labor strategies and intent to quit (Xu et al., 2017). Future exploration is needed to understand how the deeper elements of trust with managers leads to organizational commitment (Orlowski et al., 2017). In a 2009 study on interpersonal communication, Graham et al. explored how communication leads to relationships in the work environment. Their study provided that frequency of conversations and how people speak with each other improved interpersonal relationships; however, a gap existed on whether self-disclosure in conversations was directly related to strengthening personal relationships. Research on turnover has also

focused on the human resource aspect of why people quit such as how managers lead

their teams, external and intrinsic motivators, mismanagement practices, leadership

behaviors, and how support from management leads to organizational commitment

(Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). Previous research was focused on how employees feel at

work, what their reasons for quitting are, and the methods organizations use to improve

turnover. The current study was needed to explore what methods managers use to

develop interpersonal relationships through their communication with employees leading

to improvements in engagement and the intent to quit.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to

establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and

improves employee engagement. This critical instance case study provided strategies

restaurant managers used to improve relationships with their employees while also

providing context that will help restaurant companies improve engagement and turnover

in the workplace (see West & Turner, 2020). An explanation of these strategies will show

how they can be used to improve engagement and turnover in the restaurant industry and

determine which factors contribute to the general problem. Little research has been

explored on interpersonal relationships between managers and employees used to

improve workplace relationships (West & Turner, 2020). The implication for social

change from this critical instance case study includes elevating the communication

between employees and managers that bridge the gap in engagement and intent to quit

(Ghofar et al., 2018; West & Turner, 2020). When interpersonal communication exists

between managers and employees, organizations can be more effective in retaining and improving productivity of their people.

The target population for this critical instance case study consisted of 10 restaurant general managers in Denver, Colorado who have had success in building relationships with employees through conducting meaningful one-on-one conversations leading the employee engagement and improvements in turnover. One-on-one interviews were conducted with general managers who have had success in building interpersonal relationships with employees through interpersonal communication methods. I conducted semistructured interviews to collect information from general managers to explore key words and phrases with consistent factors used to improve employee interpersonal relationships, engagement, and turnover intent.

Research Question

The overarching research question was "What strategies do hospitality managers use to establish positive interpersonal relationships with employees that will reduce turnover and improve employee engagement?"

Conceptual Framework

For this critical instance case study, the theory making up the conceptual framework is the social penetration theory. The concept of the social penetration theory is that personal relations are built on the foundation of rewards and cost benefits associated with building personal relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973). This was found in Cook's (1987) social exchange theory and symbolizes relationship building as an analogy of peeling back layers within communication to increase the levels of relationships (Altman

& Taylor, 1973). The concept of building relationships found in the social penetration theory is based on the needs of people, what people look for in relationships, and how they interpersonally connect with each other. As the relationship improves, trust is built leading to a stronger bond (Altman & Taylor, 1973). The same interpersonal concepts are found in McClelland's motivational needs theory (McClelland, 1965) which suggests that motivation is derived from a person's surroundings and experiences.

The social penetration theory has been used to study the effects of ethical decisions in the workplace. Baak et al. (2000) described social penetration as a process that people go through to make relationship decisions, known as rewards and costs. When a person feels that they are valued, supported, understood, and cared for, a feel of rewards allows the relationship to strengthen; cost is observed a person does not have these feelings (Baack et al., 2000). As the relationship changes, so does one's trust and feelings for another person. When a person feels and received positive reinforcements from another, the bond of their relationship will begin to strengthen. The result becomes a stronger bonded relationship. The researchers developed inquiries of how people have made unethical decisions, why they made those choices, how they came of the course of action for their choices, and the factors associated with their decisions. The researchers developed the framework of what ethical decisions looks like and how it can be broken down based on personality, characteristics, and leadership behaviors. The results of the study showed that cycles of behaviors influence deeper patterns of rewards and costs to relationships. Ethical behaviors build stronger relationships and unethical behaviors that continue to develop will create weaknesses in relationships.

Interpersonal relationships, interpersonal communication, engagement, and turnover are concepts found in literature that support the use of the social penetration theory to ground this study. The perception employees have about their manager affects the output of their engagement levels in the work they perform (Orlowski et al., 2020). Management characteristics, such as warmth, competency, and moral attributes, are key factors that enhance the engagement level with employees, elevating energy, motivation, and inspiration in the workplace. These factors are a connecting factor in building interpersonal relationships with managers (Orlowski et al., 2020). When employees feel good about what they are doing, are less stressed at work, and do not feel burned out in their job, they are less likely to quit (Soelton et. al., 2020). Turnover factors are thus influenced by managerial behaviors and the interpersonal relationship a manager has with employees (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020). Turnover intent is a measurement of how effective a manager is at building interpersonal relationships with employees. A relationship with managers is the most important part of the environment that influences the intent to stay (Frye et al, 2020). Employees want to develop a sense of appreciation, belonging, and to receive support and work in a healthy environment.

Within the conceptual framework, interpersonal communication improves the interpersonal relationships between people which, influences engagement in the workplace and improves ones' intent to quit. Figure 1 shows the progression of how interpersonal communication leads to relationships which engages people and improves intent to quit.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Model
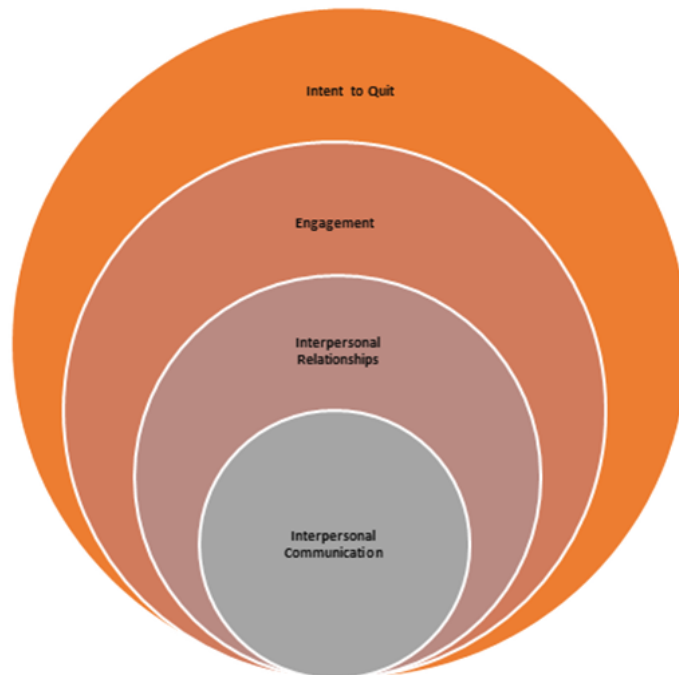
The concepts of interpersonal communication, interpersonal relationships, engagement, and intent to quit was relative in studies sharing a commonality in how building interpersonal relationships can improve engagement and turnover (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020; DiPietro et al.; 2019; Orlowski et al.; 2020; Soelton et al., 2020). Within these studies, the social exchange theory and the motivational needs theory were theories used to develop an understanding of concepts in how people treat, communicate, and engage with each other that build engagement, personal relationships, and improvements in turnover (Cook, 1987; McClelland, 1965).

Nature of the Study

For this critical instance case study, I used a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is used to understand a complex phenomenon, individuals, and groups in situations where experiences are conceptualized in a way that reflects personal meaning and interpretation and involves people, interactive observations, social settings, and communicative interactions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Sandelowski, 2011). The process of qualitative research is not linear but is a cyclical process of interactions building off one another that aids in providing meaning to the phenomenon of interest (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Quantitative research was not used because quantitative studies are based on numeric information to explain a phenomenon (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018; Patton 2015). I did not test the effects of variables to develop interpersonal communication. Hypotheses were not developed to accept or reject interpersonal communication as a method for improving engagement and turnover intent. The purpose of this study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement.

There are nine commonly used approaches to qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), but action research, ethnography, evaluation research, grounded theory, narrative, and participatory research did not relate to this study because of the research significance to real-life events. The approach used for this study was the case study, which involves the examinations of data sources, a person or people, direct observations,

interviews, documents, artifacts, or other various sources (Harling, 2012; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Case studies are used to either examine single or multiple experiments within the context of a problem (Yin, 2018). A single case study is used when examining a single experiment, whereas a multiple case study is used when multiple experiments are needed within a study and are based on one's perspective within the context of research (Yin, 2018). Cases, in the context of a study, are identified within the research question and the use of critical instance experiments are used to substantiate a theoretical proposition in a study (Yin, 2018). This study was a critical instance case study to explore specific instances of communication as a method for developing interpersonal relationships between managers and their employees in restaurants. The case within the study is strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships.

Definitions

Communication strategies: Methods that are used by companies to improve internal communication. These methods aid in transforming disengaged employees through adding values to the core of how organizations perform (Stegaroiu & Talal, 2014).

Communication: Being able to offer and attain information relative to specific subject matter from both personal and professional aspects, building an understanding of key elements in dialog, conducting honest conversations or feedback to improve oneself, and taking ownership and responsibility to build connective relationships (April, 1999; Sohmen, 2013; Griffin et al., 2019).

Communication: To share, make common, and the creation and interpretation of

meaning (West & Turner, 2020).

Connection: Having the ability to relate with people and identify with them which creates and improves the influence one has on any given circumstance (Maxwell, 2010).

Dialog: A form of communication that builds a level of understanding and raises an interest in creating authenticity in one another (Black, 2005; Johannesen, 2000).

Disengagement: Someone who protects oneself by disconnecting from the physical, cognitive, and emotional connection of working and personal roles to avoid personal threats (Kahn, 1990).

Employee empowerment: A transfer of autonomy, authority, and responsibility to employees from management-level positions (Ghosh, 2013).

Empowerment: A method used in promoting confidence in abilities, providing meaningful and encouraging circumstances for people to feel great about what they do and how they perform, helping those around you to feel motived in gaining meaning out of their personal best, and creating trust in ownership (Ghosh, 2013; Sohmen, 2013; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990)

Interpersonal relationships: The extent at which interpersonal behaviors form in social interactions and are accompanied by processes of personal exchanges amongst people (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Assumptions

Assumptions in research are aspects of a study that are believed to be true but have not been verified (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As the researcher, I assumed that interpersonal relationship between managers and employees is a subject of importance in

the restaurant industry. I also assumed that participants have strategies in building

relationships with employees that improve engagement and turnover. Another assumption

is that managers conduct routine one-on-one conversations with employees or that

conversations are handled in group settings. I further assumed that the participants would

answer the interview questions honestly, that the questions used in the interview process

are relevant, and that the participants have experience with employee turnover. Timing of

the interviews could affect the outcome of received information from participant

responses. An assumption may exist in their responses based on current issues that they

may be experiencing at the time of their interview. The experience a manager has in the

restaurant industry as a general manager could affect how a participant responds to

interview questions. Therefore, there was an assumption that the participants' experience

as a general manager in the restaurant industry will affect interview responses. Turnover

is a struggle that general managers continue to experience, which presents an assumption

that participants yield strong hiring practices resulting in employee engagement and

reductions in turnover rather than the interpersonal relationships they build with their

employees.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations are factors restricting the scope of the research (Yin, 2018). The

population of managers for this critical instance case study are restaurant managers in the

fast-casual restaurant industry locate in the western part of the United States.

Delimitation consists of boundaries used to specify the research study (Yin, 2018). For

this critical instance case study, the boundaries consist of research literature on

engagement, turnover, and communication used to explore ways in which managers interpersonally communicate with their employees to improve engagement and reduce turnover. The study included a small sample size of participants that could aid business leaders in the fast-casual restaurant industry located in the western United States who seek to improve turnover and engagement of employees working in restaurants through their communication with general managers.

Limitations

Limitations in qualitative research are restrictions within a study that are not able to be controlled (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). This critical instance case study includes many inherent limitations. First, there are numerous types of restaurant companies consisting of fast-food, casual dining, full service, fast casual, and quick service. Each type of restaurant company has its own set of issues related to turnover, engagement, and service standards, which can affect how people respond to the conditions of their environment. Size of the company, public or private companies, and established national or international brands could establish limitations considering brands have various ways of coaching, educating, and developing leadership and management roles that improve performance; key performance is based on specific brand expectations that may affect performance; and the financial position of the company may allow for higher wages, salaries, and bonus structures which influences performance. This study only consisted of only fast casual restaurants, which limits the findings to other industry issues related to engagement and turnover.

Second, only a small population of restaurants out of the western United States

were used for the study, which limits how the findings may improve other restaurant brands across the country. The study was also limited to only exploring the methods managers used to communicate with employee but not how the communication is being perceived by the employees. In addition, I explored methods of managers who have been successful with improving interpersonal relationships, leaving a void in understanding why managers who do not communicate will lose employees. The critical instance case study was also limited to issues related to the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak and how restaurant companies respond to forced governmental shutdowns for dine-in service, limited hours of operations, the increase in digital ordering, how customers and employees responded to COVID-19, eating out, and working in working in potentially unsafe conditions.

Employee turnover reporting, employee files, and any other relevant information was limited to only what the company was willing to share, which limited my ability to fully understand the company's engagement and turnover position. This study was limited to working with only general managers and their field support personnel who manage larger markets. I did not have access to making observations of in-restaurant operations, employees working, or understanding the physical location or condition of the restaurant and the market area in which the restaurant operates. Time of year when the participants were selected and when the interviews took place created limitations due to seasonality turnover. Current working conditions, pressures from company expectations, and managers having an adverse day, week, or month may have created limitations on interview responses leading to biases.

Each restaurant did operate the same but had different issues related to engagement and turnover, which created limitations. This included how people responded to social and economic issues, hiring practices of managers, cultural variations of restaurant employees, age groups of employees, and race, sexual orientation, and gender within the workplace. These factors affected why people choose to quit, how engaged they are at work, and how they responded to management. The findings presented in this critical instance case study were limited to a small sample size and do not apply to a broader population. Participant and researcher biases presented limitations in how information was generalized based on personal experiences in the restaurant industry.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

The significance of the critical instance case study was to explore how to improve the social aspect of engagement levels between managers and employees based on how people communicate with each other in the fast-casual restaurant industry. The study I conducted on interpersonal relationships in the restaurant industry is unique because of how it addresses the concept of building personal relationships in the workplace that are similarly found in relational building between people outside of the workplace (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012). Communication is a factor of building personal relations and has been found to be a leadership skill needed to improve the communication between managers and employees (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012). Managers who emotionally connect with their employees through one-on-one conversations improve productivity, employee engagement, commitment to the organization, and improvements in turnover rates

(Dalbec, 2011). Managers who develop acquaintances with their employees can influence autonomy, inspire, motivate, and create empowering environments (Tews et al., 2014). Communication enhances job performance and responsibilities rather than building associations with people at work (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012). Critical events are affected by issues with communication (Tews et al., 2014). Such activities support the gaps associated with understanding the relevance of how managers communicate and personally connect with their employees.

Significance to Theory

This research filled a gap in understanding relationships in the restaurant industry between managers and employees. This project was unique because it addressed issues found in problems related to workplace engagement due to the lack of relationships employees have with their managers (The State of Engagement, 2018) and how communication can improve interpersonal relationships (Tews et al., 2014).

Significance to Social Change

The actions a manager takes in the workplace will have an impact on employee's intent to quit through improving their interpersonal communication skills, building stronger interpersonal relationships, and engaging people in the workplace. As discussed earlier, the experience employees have is owned initially by their relationship with the manager (Employee Engagement and Experience, 2020). This relationship leads to a sense of purpose in the workplace, having a voice that is listened to, and inspiring a sense of purpose. People want to feel supported, understood, and valued in the workplace. They want to have a sense of purpose in what they do, feel good about their role within a

company, and have a desire to interpersonally connect with people in the workplace like the concepts discussed in the social penetration theory. The significance of this critical instance case study to social change will be to provide insights into what communication methods managers can use to conduct one on one conversations with employees resulting in improvements in workplace engagement and turnover trends. The relationships between managers and employees will lead to improvements in employee engagement and a reduction in turnover. Improving how managers lead their employees through interpersonal communication and relationship can lead to better working environments for employees which will have a profound effect on altering issues related to turnover in the restaurant industry.

Summary and Transition

Chapter 1 introduced a review of the social aspect of engagement levels between managers and employees based on how people communicate with each other in the fast-casual restaurant industry. This chapter included the background of the business problem, the problem statement, purpose statement, conceptual framework, and nature of the study. The chapter also included assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the critical instance case study. A thorough review of the concepts and theories around turnover, communication, and engagement were retrieved from existing literature to determine the problem and associated gaps in how interpersonal relationship in communication affect engagement and turnover. In Chapter 2, I will expand on the concepts, theories, and scholarly reviews of communication, engagement, and turnover. The literature review will consist of an in-depth exploration of the social penetration

theory and social exchange theory and the background of the current state of the restaurant industry, a review of literature related to turnover, engagement, engagement and interpersonal relationships, engagement and communication, engagement and empowerment, engagement and performance, interpersonal communication, work environment, and interpersonal communication and relationships.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. Job satisfaction reports conducted by industry survey companies showed that interpersonal relationships between employees and managers is a leading cause of issues related to job turnover and employee engagement (Employee Job Satisfaction, 2015, 2017; Engaging Restaurant Employees, 2017). The results of industry surveys also show that some hospitality managers lack strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement (Employee Job Satisfaction, 2015, 2017; Maurer, 2018). Hence, understanding what strategies managers use to develop relationships with their employees could benefit the restaurant industry in understanding how to improve turnover and engagement in the workplace. Keywords associated with the research topic were used in the literature review. In addition, other related subjects were used to develop themes for exploration.

Literature Search Strategy

Literature reviews are essential to defining unanswered questions in research and are used to develop a case to establish a comprehensive understanding of knowledge on a specific topic (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). This in-depth literature review includes a combination of literature on employee engagement, employee turnover, interpersonal relationships, and interpersonal communication. To find literature for this review, I searched academic databases for key terms associated with strategies that hospitality

managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees in the hospitality industry. Specifically, I used Walden University's library database to access ProQuest, SAGE Premier, EBSCO, Academic Search Premier, Business Source Premier, ABI/INFORM Complete, and Dissertations and Theses Full Text. I also researched academic articles through Google Scholar and various books on interpersonal relationship theories, interpersonal communication theories, social penetration theory, and human behavior theories. The use of keywords was a critical aspect in the development of the literature review. Keywords included in the critical instance case study are the following: *Social Penetration Theory, interpersonal relationships, interpersonal communication, employee engagement, employee turnover, turnover intentions, restaurant industry, hospitality industry, employee relationships, Social Exchange Theory, employee retention.* This critical instance case study consisted of 107 sources of which 75% was peer-reviewed journals, 16% were books on relevant topics, and 11% was other sources.

The literature was arranged by themes associated with strategies to improve interpersonal relationships between managers and employees in the hospitality industry. The conceptual framework for this study was the social penetration theory which was also complimented by the social exchange theory as a theoretical framework for addressing the foundation of communication in building relationships. The social penetration theory was the basis of the conceptual framework for this study that emphasized layers of patterns people use to build relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Each layer in the relationship building process is comparable to the ideals of peeling an onion. As layers are peeled, the relationship moves from a superficial point and on to a

deeper level where intimacy in the relationship could be met.

The organization of the literature review includes an overview of the social penetration theory and the underlining relevant social exchange theory. Other themes include a review of the restaurant industry, employee turnover, and employee engagement and interpersonal communication.

Conceptual Framework

The Social Penetration Theory

The term *social penetration* refers to the extent at which interpersonal behaviors form in social interactions and are accompanied by processes of personal exchanges among people (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Different levels of exchange in relationships develop through time and are based on a penetration process stemming from verbal exchange, non-verbal use of body languages, the use of the physical environment, and interpersonal perceptions (Altman & Taylor, 1973). These relationships can vary significantly from working relationships, lifelong friendships, golfing partners, husband and wife, father and mother, trusted friend, and many others. The course of how relationships between people are developed and dissolved through time aid in understanding various types of social bonds (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Altman and Taylor (1973) focused on personal characteristics, the outcomes of exchange, and situational context as three factors associated with describing the types of social bonds that create relationships. Personal characteristics include attributes such as biographical properties, personality features, and social need characteristics. Outcome of exchange factors describe how people respond to other individuals and whether the

exchange represents a feeling of something gained. Finally, situational context is the place or environment in which social bonds take place. The scope of the framework for the social penetration theory suggests that relationships begin with attempting to understand the overt and covert process in either the growth and development or the deterioration and dissolution of interpersonal relationships. Through time these processes serve as a function of rewards and costs, individual characteristics, and situational factors.

Based on the theory, relational behaviors of people are composed of layers of patterns similar to peeling an onion. As each layer is pulled back, a deeper level of intimacy is met. Entry into each level is signaled by reward and cost factors within the relationship building process (Baack et al., 2000). Rewards occur with people feel supported and cared for by their managers, valued by the brand, and understand as a person. However, the opposite can occur if the person does not feel valued, supported, understood, or cared for. These feelings create a cost in the relationship, which can create adversity in the decision-making process (Baack et al., 2000). Improvements in trust, how people feel towards each other, positive reinforcements, and bonded relationships strengthen as the relationship changes. As a result of rewards found in the relationship building process, the bond between two or more people becomes stronger.

The relational reward and cost process starts with an initial interaction between people. This interaction can be a friendly greeting, meeting for the first time, or having a conversation to get to know each other. During this first step, the parties involved in the interaction begin to evaluate the situation, character of the other person, or dyadic to

determine whether the reward of the relationship will be greater than the cost. The evaluation of the interaction leads to the decision-making process and the memory of an event. Through the decision-making process, an individual decides whether the reward factor will lead to continued improvements in the relationship. Through this step, a person will decide if they can trust in further pursuing or terminating the relationship. In the memory step of the interaction a person develops an internal pool of thoughts from the event. Their thoughts will dictate the response of future interactional events. Favorable interactions will lead to improvements in the relationship, uncertain interactions may cause an individual to play caution to continuing a relationship, and an unfavorable interaction leads to the termination of a relationship.

Employees and managers in various industries have used the concepts in the social penetration theory to influence knowledge sharing, self-disclosure, and relationship building. The process of peeling away the layers in building relationships affects the strength of output in the relationship. The social penetration theory is used to evaluate the layers within building relationships and provides that relationships develop in stages from superficial points to deeper levels of commitment and intimacy through reward and cost factors (Baack et al., 2000). As people continue to self-disclose information, whether personal or professional, layers that represent trust begin to peel away, creating a personal connection between people. Salesmen and buyers have typically used these types of relationship building processes to gain trust and respect in the purchasing process (Mangus et. al, 2020). Disclosure of information opens relationship empathy which signals strength in the customer-client relationship leading to increases in sales. In

the micro-blogging industry, Chinese employees found that the amount of depth, quality, honesty, and intent in self-disclosure improved the enjoyment of their work, trust in their relationship with management, enjoyment and trust in service providers, and enhancement in overall job performance (Lu et al., 2016).

Social Exchange Theory

Behaviors in work output are a condition of a social exchanges (Cook, 1987). These exchanges are weighted by rewards and costs that are created by value comparisons of situations and rational calculations to maximize utility in relationships. The way in which people interact socially through group and one-on-one interaction in a social environment is the premise for how the social exchange theory was developed. The social exchange theory was developed by psychologists such as Thibuat and Kelley in 1959, Homans in 1961, and Blau in 1964, who based their studies on small groups with dyadic relationships (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). They used the rewards and cost ideals from the game theory to evaluate how people hold interdependent power in relationships. The premise of their work suggests that the outcome of a relationship is developed throughout the aspects of behaviors people confide in each other.

In 1978, Homan evolved the social exchange theory based on the concepts of equilibration, belief, and righteousness in dyadic exchange (Cook, 1987). Homan suggested that relationships were built on the foundation of rewards and cost factors similar to what was developed through the social penetration theory. These factors were described as success propositions, stimulus, and deprivation-satiation levels. Successes are created when people feel that they are being rewarded for their actions. The more they

are rewarded, the more they tend to repeat the positive actions. Past stimulated experiences that end in positive rewards leads to positive responses when future events occur. The more often this experience occurs, the more likely the person will continue to respond to the stimulus. Thus, as people become deprived of being rewarded for good behaviors, their actions to repeat the same good behaviors diminishes and they become less likely to perform. Emerson's approach to the exchange theory was similar to Homan's in that dependence and power are the basis for relationships.

The elements of social exchange involve an explicit bargaining act between two or more people (Burns, 1973). Unlike the neoclassical economic theoretical views of exchange in relationships to build economic growth, social exchanges deal with the emotional acceptance within the relationship between people. The social exchange concept involves building trust, respect, and engagement amongst people to gain a more humanistic approach to building economic growth (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). The outcome of building trust with another person adds a reward factor of acceptance, support, and companionship, which triggers a sense of worth in the relationship. In the social penetration theory, the quality and nature of the exchange between people stimulates the bondedness of the relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Similarly, as people progress in the relationship building process, self-disclosure sets in. Leaders in organizations use these concepts to build trust with the relationships of employees (Wu & Lee, 2017). Leaders who engage their team in dialog and empowers team members to open in communication develop positive psychological resources within group behaviors leading to better knowledge sharing (Wu & Lee, 2017). For instance, performance and

knowledge sharing among team members within an organization can improve as the interpersonal relationship between the leader and employees develop (Wu & Lee, 2017).

Socially supported employees are resilient in their organizational commitment. Social exchanges between leaders, supervisors, and employees are considered an important part of building working partnerships in the working relationship between people (Meng et al., 2017) and is a mechanism for resilience. Resilience is referred as the development of one's mental function to overcome adversity and pressures within the work environment. However, resilience is manifested by gradual developments in the interpersonal relationships one builds with others. In turn, resilience relates to positive social support and affective commitment. Regarding the concept of social exchange, the most important part of developing the relationship between people that creates resilience is in how supervisors and team members interact (Meng et al., 2017). Social exchange is a means for helping employees to become more resilient in their roles within an organization, how they connect with others within an organization, and their overall performance (Meng et al., 2017). Thus, the exchange of social interactions between the supervisor and employees improves trust, moral, and the intent to build stronger performance and relationships in the workplace.

Literature Review

Background of the Restaurant Industry

Restaurant organizations working in the hospitality and tourism industry make up part of the world's largest employment segments (Backman et al., 2017; National Restaurant Association, 2019). By 2030, the restaurant industry is expected to reach $1.2

trillion in sales, the workforce will potentially exceed 17 million, U.S. employment will increase at an annual rate of .5% over the next decade, and employment is expected to rise 8.5% between 2018 and 2030 (National Restaurant Association, 2019). The landscape of the restaurant industry workforce is in constant change as well. Restaurant operators will continue to see slower growth in terms of the number of teenagers entering into the labor force, adults 65 and older will reach a record high of 16.1 million over the next decade, and restaurants will continue to improve the automation process of back of house tasks to enhance productivity and proficiency (National Restaurant Association, 2019). Though the food service industry continues to strengthen in year over year sales increases, challenges such as labor trends continue to weaken the industries market (McGuire, 2019). Restaurant industry companies are labor-intensive, and competition continues to grow creating challenges for competing in the labor market (McGuire, 2019).

Despite the success of rising sales in the restaurant industry, general managers continue to face challenges in operating business due to the evolving competitive market. The restaurant segment continues strengthen in terms of market saturation; however, this has resulted in a 17.6% reduction in restaurant margins (Coelho, 2017) and business growth. Managers operating in overly saturated markets fear losing competitive advantage with the rising employment competition (Maurer, 2018). Employees in the industry now have more choices for employment to choose from, increasing wages, and competing restaurant cultures and environments to attract them (National Restaurant Association, 2019). The need for strategies managers could use to improve the

relationships they have with their employees to reduce the intent to quit becomes critical for overall business success.

Job creation and economic growth in the restaurant industry is a critical component of the overall job market in the United States. According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, manager employment in the food service industry is only expected to grow by 1% between 2019 and 2029 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). As the landscape of the industry continues to change, management positions will become more responsible for food preparation and service execution as customers move from dine in services to ordering takeout or delivery services. Employment wages will also continue to increase, creating pressures on business financials as market saturation spreads the distribution of food service revenue (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). The median wage for management positions was $55,320 in 2019 with 10% earning less than $33K and 10% earning more than $93K. These salaries are complimented by long working hours, non-traditional shifts including late night hours and weekend shifts, managers and employees working over 40 hours work weeks, called in on short notice, including evenings, weekends, and holidays and in some cases while managing multiple restaurant locations. These changes and pressures will lead to a decline in employment growth which may result in additional team pressures due to the changing work environment and stresses that are part of operating restaurant businesses.

Management level position in the restaurant industry have other responsibilities in addition to food preparation, servicing guests, and managing the day to operations of the business. They also hire, train, and terminate employees, order food, beverages,

equipment, and supplies, inspect and maintain restaurant equipment, ensure employees comply with health and food safety standards, address food or service complaints, schedule staffing hours, manage budgets, and establish performance reviews for personnel (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Coupled with the quantity of tasks a manager is responsible for, the restaurant industry job market is slowing down leaving restaurant managers with limited hiring options (Maze, 2019). According to Maze, information from the labor department shows a decline in added jobs within the economy (Maze, 2019). The decline in the job market has fueled a shortage of labor which is resulting in restaurants having to increase wages to attract good workers. The shortage of employees has created a slower growth pattern for many restaurant companies as businesses are either closing due to a lack of employees or chains being forced to reduce unit counts due to reductions in staff leading to sales declines (Maze, 2019).

Strategic thinking is necessary for organizational success and plays a contributing factor in the failure of businesses (Rosali et al., 2016). A weakness in a manager's ability to think strategically in how they develop relationships in the workplace and operate can alter the culture of business, weaken customer and employee loyalty, and negatively affect the business environment or the physical surroundings and interactions that occur in the workplace (Glisson, 2015; Okeke et al., 2016). As sales in the restaurant industry are expected to reach 1.2 trillion by 2030 (National Restaurant Association, 2019), the workplace environment will continue to experience above average employee turnover (Lee et al., 2016). Therefore, the need for restaurant managers to develop strategies for improving employee relationships will aid in improving the success of operational and

financial business performance.

Turnover

Interpersonal relationships between managers and employees continue to be a challenge with engagement levels and turnover trends. (Employee Engagement Trends, 2017). Information from surveys on engagement show that managers are more engaged that employees in the work environment which adds negative trends in employee turnover (Employee Engagement Trends, 2017)). The survey showed that communication, building interpersonal relationships, value, integrity, and trust were the primary factor associated with improving engagement and retention (Engaging Restaurant Employees, 2017).

Managerial integrity is a key component to influencing team member turnover in the restaurant industry. The perception an employee has about their place of work and issues pertaining to issues within the job has since been a focus of concern for operators in the restaurant industry (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020). Workers want to be encouraged by their workplace, understood by their managers, and enthusiastic about the job they were hired for (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020). Triggers such as empowerment, which encourages creativity, influences turnover intent. Yet, this trigger is primarily a mechanism based on how effective a manager is at influencing a commitment to the workplace. In a study by Akpotu and Ozioko, management integrity and employee turnover intentions were investigated to determine a relationship exists between how a managers' disposition and behaviors in the workplace influence turnover in the fast-food restaurant industry (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020). A cross-sectional survey approach was structured using

questionnaire instruments from a sample of 138 respondents to evaluate managerial integrity and employee turnover intentions. The findings of the study showed a strong authentic relationship between managerial integrity regarding the reliability of a manager, integrity of a manager, and the constructiveness of a manager in terms of turnover intention. Integrity is having morals, values, and conducting oneself in an ethical manner.

The action of integrity is behavioral and expressed through ones' commitment to their duties and responsibilities and concern for others. Integrity evokes trust and respect which improves the consistency of relationships with employees which improves turnover intent (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020). Managers that possess integrity are authentic in their management and communication style, reliable, and constructive with their employees (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020). Authenticity of managers are among other attributes that affect turnover intent. Authentic managers can encourage job satisfaction amongst employees and workplace engagement. Therefore, authenticity and integrity are both factors' managers can use to improvement turnover.

Frontline workers in the hospitality are in the trenches of business operations dealing with customers, complaints, preparation, cleanup, and many other tasks that are not typically conducted by corporate employees. These are considered the frontline workers of the industry. They typically begin as minimum paid employees and are given small increments of pay increases as an incentive to continue their employment either once or twice a year. Employees in these types of environments are asked to perform at high levels of speed and accuracy but hold lower compensation levels. How these employees become bonded to their work relies on the relationship they have within the

culture of the business (Afsar et al., 2018) as well as the performance of the organization (Lee et al., 2016). The actions of a manager to conduct one-on-one conversations to build stronger communication channels with their employees were found to improve a team members' intent to quit (Afsar et al., 2018). Afsar et al., investigated the effect of job embeddedness on the relationship between work practices, supervisor trust, and turnover intentions (Afsar et al., 2018). Data was collected from 343 frontline workers in the restaurant industry from hotels in Thailand. The results of their study indicated that job embeddedness, or commitment, is based on trust in the supervisor and work practices.

Trust is the ability to be vulnerable to the action of others (Afsar et al., 2018). Employees expect their managers to be dependable to their words and actions as the leader of the business. When trust is high in the relationship between manager and employee, the expectation is that predictability, reliability, and positive actions follow in how the manager leads their team. When trust is low, motivation, engagement, and effort in work decreases. Employees in a low trusting environment and relationship with their manager are less likely to perform well, enjoy their job, and exert less energy in their work performance.

Employees feel that the relationship they have with their managers is the most important part of the environment that influences the intent to stay (Frye et al, 2020). They want to develop a sense of appreciation, belonging, and to receive support and work in a healthy environment. In their study conducted generation Y employees in the restaurant industry were examined to extract factors associated with why generation Y employees stay working in the restaurant industry (Frye et al, 2020). The result of the

study indicated that their intent to stay was based on the environment within the restaurant, empowerment, pay, and the relationship with management. The restaurant industry relies on young employees including, but not limited to, high school and college aged employees. Many students entering the restaurant industry are beginning their careers in the restaurant industry to gain experience and financial stability (Frye et al, 2020). Student schedules are typically consisting of long hours, day, nights, and weekend shifts which can affect academic and holiday commitments. The stress and pressures of this type of work environment can foster higher turnover rates. Employees in these work environments are not influenced to stay by the extrinsic factors but are intrinsically engaged by their work environment, recognition, sense of achievement, and other such non-physical rewards (Frye et al, 2020). Similarly, people want to feel valued, understand, and important to the organization they work with. A sense of value to their role, having the autonomy to do their job and feel supported throughout the process, and feeling a part of a community are determinants of burnout among hospitality workers (Asensio-Martínez, Á et al., 2019). How companies treat their employees and the pressures which are placed on the amount of workload one obtains induces stress on job performance (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2018). In the restaurant industry, stresses are represented in quantity of work related to food preparation, service standards with serving food to guests, and the many other tasks related to operating a quick service business. A relationship one has with a supervisor can affect the outcome of stress and the engagement level that connects an employee to the organization (Frye et al., 2020).

The relationship between employees and their direct supervisors has a direct

effect one's intent to quit (Employee Engagement Trends, 2017). Surface acting, deep acting, and having genuine emotions towards others is linked to the same behaviors that cause people to want to continue working for a company (Xi et al., 2017). The psychological well-being that employees have with their employers leads to improving the rates of turnover (Xi et al., 2017). Therefore, managers that create a sense of belongingness, develop interpersonal relationships with their employees, and create an environment where people feel empowered and engaged are more likely to improve turnover.

Managerial integrity, trust, employee perception, and the actions of a manager to develop interpersonal relationships with employees were three key concepts in developing an environment that improves ones' intent to quit. Akpotu and Ozioko shared that management integrity is a key component to improving team member turnover (Akpotu and Ozioko, 2020). Employees want to feel encouraged, understood, and enthusiastic about their workplace. The integrity built between managers and employees lies in the managers ability to develop an environment where employees feel this sense on belongingness. Afsar et al. shared that job embeddedness lies in the relationship between work practices and trust in the supervisor (Afsar et al., 2018). A manager who builds trust through their actions and develops interpersonal relationships can improve the engagement of employees leading to improvements in turnover. The relationship an employee has with the manager is a key component of improving workplace turnover. Frye et al. shared that team members want to have a sense of appreciation for their work, a sense of belongingness in the work environment, and to receive support for the work

they do (Frye et al., 2020). Managers that focus on building the interpersonal relationship of their employees create the sense of belongingness that influences employees to not quit. The primary attribute to improving turnover is developing strong interpersonal relationship between managers and employees. The integrity and trust managers develop with employees will strengthen the workplace environment, engage employees, and reduce turnover.

Engagement

Managing and working in restaurants is stressful and is known to challenge adversity, engagement, adversity, and the willingness to be able to work in the face-paced environment weakening engagement in the restaurant environment (2017 Employee Engagement Trends, 2017). Trust, feeling valued, interpersonal relationships, and communication are factors associated with improving employee retention (Engaging Restaurant Employees, 2017). The way a person feels in the workplace, about their job, and how they are treated by managers and others within an organization defines the level of engagement they have towards their role within a company. Engagement leads to satisfaction in the work environment leading to improvements in turnover and stems from fair treatment from supervisors (Lu et al., 2016).

Engagement was first introduced by Kahn where organizational commitment was a result of ones' cognitive, emotional, and physical attitude towards their work (Kahn, 1990). Rich et al. later described engagement as a personal commitment to a company involving the physical, mental, and emotional connection to ones' work and organization. In McClelland's study of achievement motivation, people are energized by a desire to

achieve high performance goals (McClelland, 1965; Rich et al., 2010). However, there is a difference between what a manager and an employee is energized by. While managers are more driven by achievement motivation; employees are driven by affiliation motivation (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982).

Employee engagement is essential to the success of any organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Previous studies show that workplace engagement is associated with an employee's intent to care more, become more productive, participate more, work better in teams, and be less likely to leave an organization (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gomez & Rosen, 2001; Harter et al., 2002; Lee & Ok, 2015). Researchers later shared that engagement influences empowerment, involvement, decision-making, goal setting, and being more active in making a difference in a company (D'Ausilio, 2008; Hui-Ling & Yu-Hsuan, 2011; Seijts & Crim, 2006).

The affiliation an employee has about their manager affects the output of their engagement levels in the work they perform (Orlowski et al., 2020). Management characteristics, such as, warmth, competency, and moral attributes, are key factors that enhance the engagement level with employees; thus, elevating energy, motivation, and inspiration in the workplace. These factors are considered inhibitors that enhance an employee's experience at work and are connecting factors in building interpersonal relationships with managers Orlowski et al., 2020. Their study examined the social perceptions of employees working in the restaurant industry with their supervisors on employee engagement and customer service behaviors. From a sample size of 477 employees, they were able to provide that warmth, competency, and moral behaviors

were characteristics promoting workplace engagement. The results showed that the interactions a supervisor has with employees influences strong engagement behaviors related to the physical, emotional, and cognitive investments within a workplace and were directly associated with the interpersonal relationships a manager has with employees. Therefore, the perception an employee has with their manager precedes the level of engagement they have with their work. The relationship becomes the fuel for enhancing engagement levels.

Employees are more likely to become disconnected from their work if managers are not able to elevate, motive, and inspire their people (Orlowski et al., 2017). Workers are less connected to managers they fail to have an interpersonal relationship. This creates a lower level of commitment they have with the organization. The correlation exists between the commitment to perform well on assigned tasks and the relationship they have with their manager (Orlowski et al., 2017). As the level of relationship between the manager and the employee improves; so does the performance of the employee.

Orlowski et al. investigated the perception of conflict with Generation Y employees in the restaurant industry and how management team conflict affects organizational commitment (Orlowski et al., 2017). Younger generation employees seek to hold relationships with their peers and managers in the workplace. The relationship with their managers is highly valued and is a strong reason why employees quit. Organizational commitment is the engagement an employee has based on their workplace relationship. Their involvement in their work, the acceptance of organizational goals and values, and the climate of which they work in (Orlowski et al., 2017). The results of the

study indicate that ones' commitment to their work is related to management conflict.

Engagement is more positively observed with managers versus employees (Jo & Shim, 2005; Lu et al., 2016). Managers are more confident in their role, are paid more, have greater authority, and are more encouraged by holding a higher position which allows them to feel more engaged with their work. On the other hand, employees have a harder time becoming fully engaged at work (Lu et al., 2016). In a study by Lu et al. (2016), employee positions were investigated against work-related variables such as work engagement, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Data was collected from line-level employees and managers from twenty-nine hotels. The results of their study showed that managers were more engaged in their work and had lower levels of turnover than line-level employees; yet job satisfaction stayed consistent amongst the two positions. The practical implication of this study showed that as work engagement improved with line-level employees, so did their confidence in their role, performance, job satisfaction, and the intent to quit (Lu et al., 2016). This engagement is stemmed by the relationship they have with their supervisor. While supervisors are less likely to quit and are more engaged, line-level employee engagement is mainly influenced by their environment, relationship with management, and how they are compensated. These factors are associated with how they perceive their environment and deal with situations in the workplace.

Studies show that engagement is linked to the accountability of the performance of individuals within an organization's environment through the development of team morale, diversifying environmental cultures, improves communication, and performance

of organizational initiatives (Nazir & Islam, 2017). Support within the organization, whether through company initiatives or one-on-one support from management, results in employee commitment and performance. Managers who provide direct support to their employees enhance the working environment and performance of their team. Managing people to improve engagement involves a great deal of dedication from managers and the organization to provide ongoing support to help people feel good about their role in the company.

Self-efficacy is a factor associated with how people deal with situations. How people feel about their working environment, their managers, and the employees they work with shape their beliefs in the engagement they exert in their work (Consiglio et al., 2016). Employees who are treat fairly with respect and dignity, are trained properly, have goals, and are treated as a part of the team are empowered in the workplace as masters of their roles and feel stronger in how they perform (Consiglio et al., 2016). In a study on self-efficacy, work engagement was examined against positive social changes with supervisors to find out if engagement was related to the relationship with the supervisor (Consiglio et al., 2016). The results showed that engagement was a feeling of being happy and absorbed into ones' work, a high level of self-efficacy resulted in positive workplace engagement, and those who had a positive relationship with their supervisor had stronger engagement in their work. Similarly, reactions within the work environment affect job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, performance, and how a person acts in the workplace. Okeke et al. shared that empowering workplace environments are friendly and harmonious (Consiglio et al., 2016). Environments are full of energy and happiness

where people are engaged in their work and encouraged by their surroundings. In their study, the environment triggers the level of satisfaction a person has with their job and personal relationships held with direct supervisors influence emotional wellbeing and job performance.

Research shows that the working environment encourages improvement in performance creativity and when increased, workplace performance also improves (Wu & Chen, 2015; Yeh & Huan, 2017). Employees who are supported and encouraged in a positive manner to perform show greater results in the quality and the quantity of the work. Yeh and Huan (2017) examined factors that influence creativity of restaurant employees. Data was collected from 304 full time employees working in kitchens of various four and five-star restaurants. The results of their study showed that the working environment, resources available, and autonomy influenced creativity in the workplace.

Employees want to feel that they have a sense of control over their work environment. The atmosphere management creates from staffing levels, organization, cleanliness, or having the right resources and tools to perform the job influences engagement. However, while these factors can improve the quantity of work completed, the quality aspect of performance is mainly influenced by the direct relational support they receive from management (Yeh & Huan, 2017). Creating a comfortable environment and making jobs more interesting and meaningful improves intrinsic motivation leading to engagement and job performance (Putra et al., 2017). Managers that create environments of trust, of interests, and meaningfulness improves ones' engagement in their job. This type of environment enriches the culture of how employees behave, act,

work together, function as a team, and perform in a fun and friendly way (Putra et al., 2017). Employees are more dedicated to their job and supervisor, more absorbed in the working environment, and yield more vigor in their actions to perform. In the center of this is the manager and how they engage with their employees. The working relationship between the environment and the supervisor improves the focus of employees in their roles, attentiveness, and the connection between people (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is built on the elements of pleasure, affection, inclusion, escape, relaxation, and control (Ruben et al., 1988). People connecting with people is at the forefront of these elements. The result of this communication allows people to feel pleasure and affection within the relationship, inclusion within a group, an escape from the reality of the world around them, a feeling of relaxation, and a feeling of being in control of the surroundings. The communication style used by people symbolizes ones' level of intent to interpersonally connect with other individuals and are meant to interpersonally connect with each other (Ruben et al., 1988).

Pleasure reflects entertainment and excitement in communication styles. Affection is a social ritual and shows a concern for others. Inclusion is an internal need to be around other people. Escape is the desire to not be around others and control represents a compliance gaining purpose (Ruben et al., 1988). Communication is a means of connecting with employees improving engagement levels (Lolli, 2013). The connection is observed through the body language a manager presents when communicating, what is being communicated and how it is said, the ability to listen with

intent, and how a person behaves around others. Interpersonal communication builds relationships and is necessary for effectively improving interpersonal relationships (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012). Communication is how people judge their own reality and is a transmission of information and is formed through how people plan how to communicate, produce the right form of communication, and process communication for interpretation (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). Graham et al. developed a continuation of interpersonal relationships through a communication model that relates how people communicate with each other and the effects on building personal relationships (Graham et al., 1993). Their study showed that interpersonal communication built improved inclusive relationships and affection towards others. The interpretation of how a manager communicates leads to trust which forms loyalty, satisfaction, and a decreased intent to quit (McManus & Mosca, 2015). Employees exposed to positive communication trust more because of their psychological instinct to feel safe (Kahn, 1990). Thus, the engagement aspect is observed in an employee's openness to share information, to feel valued and important, feel understood and supported, and have a sense of purpose in the business (McManus & Mosca, 2015).

Other research shows that communication is a means of improving employee engagement through the relationship a manager has with employees. The relationship a manager has with employees enhances motivation, control, and workplace performance which provides the fuel for improving stronger success within organizations (Ogbeide et al., 2017). Managers who empower their team members by influencing them to take the lead in resolving guest issues and taking action to use the tools and resources within the

restaurant to operate show stronger signs of operational results. Communication, in the form of empowering conversations, influences people to take control of their roles and to feel that they have the power to take care of the guests. Ogbeide et al. (2017) studied the concept of empowering team members coaching and teaching people to own the process of taking care of the guest, and the empowerment and complaint management concerning guest satisfaction. The results of their study showed that when employees are empowered to take care of the guest, complaints are minimized, guests are happier, and tend to recommend the establish to other people. Employees working in this environment, were properly trained to handled guest complaints and were given the freedom to take care of each guest, handle guest complaints, and resolve issues.

Interpersonal communication involves interpretating how people create shared meaning out of their interactions and be spontaneous to support personal and organizational growth (Rosalin et al., 2016). Restaurant owners do this by sharing their purpose, values, business strategies, and goals with their employees. They begin to connect with their employee interpersonally by sharing these concepts as well as allowing their team members to become a part of the decision-making processes in the business. Rosalin et al. (2016) explored the concept of communication in small family restaurants. Their work provided that clear and concise communication on strategy is needed in the workplace for employees to feel that they fully understand what is expected of them, how to perform tasks, and what the goals are that need to be achieved. Having clear and concise communication leads to less confusion and misunderstandings around what needs to be done in the workplace and having frequent one-on-one conversations with

employees on the progress keeps them engagement and supported (Rosalin et al., 2016).

Today's communication styles are different than those from the past. Communication requires reflection, adaptation, and personal adjustments due to the changes in demographics, technology, the relationships built in the workplace, and healthy living (West & Turner, 2020). This involves a process of thinking differently strategically about how one interacts with others to form trusting relationships, where personal messaging can be exchanged, and a process of consistently giving effort to evolving relationships through meaningful communication skills (West & Turner, 2020). Interpersonal communication is a skill of message exchanges where verbal and nonverbal skills are used to establish personal interactions and meaning by which communication is interpreted (West & Turner, 2020). The process is an ongoing activity of verbal, non-verbal, and social interactions that is in constant change. The result of these activities evolves in personal relationships and cultures (West & Turner, 2020).

Ghofar et al. (2018) suggested that interpersonal relationships in communication builds trust and respect in the work environment leading to improvements in organizational culture, performance, and turnover. Managers who work towards building a foundation of communicating with their employees also build loyalty towards a brand and the people they work with. Employees that have stronger working relationships with their managers through interpersonal communication have stronger work ethics, are more committed to their role within the company, are more self-engaged, are encouraged by building a successful business, and hold a stronger bond towards other employees, managers, and leaders within the company (Ghofar et al., 2018). Ghofar et al. (2018)

explored the relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace engagement. Their findings show that employee engagement is directly influenced by interpersonal communication. Organizations must maintain interpersonal communication with employees to build loyalty and trust with employees. Their study showed that interpersonal communication consisted of open dialog related to personal conversations, showing empathy, positive thinking towards employees, and maintaining equality in how each person is treated in the work environment. Interpersonal communication bonds people through a common vision, similar views, interests, and insights amongst other people. Interpersonal communication improves performance, organizational commitment, commitment to personal responsibilities, and self-engagement (Ghofar et al., 2018). The higher the level of interpersonal communication between employer and employee, the higher the commitment of performance.

Ghofar et al. (2018) shared that communication is a shared or mutual understanding, shared views, share perceptions of information, and a process of sending and receiving information. How an employee receives the information determines the outcome of work performance and engagement. Communication is translated by humans into symbols which allow people to encode, process, and respond. One-on-one communication, while not typically observed in the working environment, is an important concept that helps to improve how information is delivered and decoded, processed, and responded to. One-one-one conversations gives managers the ability to communicate in a more intimate environment so that the message can received more intimately (Ghofar et al., 2018).

The working environment is controlled by the manager and how they support their employees. Training, coaching, and developing people aids in supporting a positive working environment; however, the consistency in how often and the type of support is given influences the relationship of the job being performed and ones' intent to quit (Yousaf et al., 2019). Supportive environments lead to reductions in stress and performance improvements when managers create an environment where employees feel good about what they do, feel supported by their manager, and feel strong about the purpose they have in the work being completed (Yousaf et al., 2019). The emotional episodes stemming from supportive environments is perceived as either positive or negative depending on how employees feel about their work environment (Okeke et al., 2016). Employees feel enthusiastic when they have autonomy in their position, they have identity in the workplace, they feel their work is significant to the objectives of the company, and they feel their purpose is a contribution to the overall culture (Okeke et al., 2016). The ways team members get along with each other results in better performance and job satisfaction. When employees receive praise and recognition, they feel happy and gratitude for their contribution to the organization (Okeke et al., 2016).

Communication is used by Managers to improve the cultural environment of the business, relationship between the business, managers, and team members, emotional behaviors of people working in the restaurant, commitment levels, trust, and employee engagement (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012; Jo & Shim, 2005). Furthermore, proper communication builds trust, respect, openness, and connective relationships. Awad and Alhashemi (2012) found that relationships are developed based on the aspect of

communication. In their study, one-on-ones were studied to understand communication as a means of improving engagement and turnover rates. Managers who were effective at communicating were more open minded to their employees' thoughts and feelings and felt empathy for others. Additionally, the satisfaction one had with their job was linked to one-on-one communication. People who were challenged in a positive way, felt accountable for the work they did, and who felt a part of the overall team were more engaged and happier in their role (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012). Their findings showed that communication led to relaxation in the workplace environment, controlled emotional behaviors, and improvements in building interpersonal relationships (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012). One-on-one conversations between managers and employees trigger trust in people feeling an openness to share personal feelings (Tews et al., 2014). Managers that conducted interpersonal discussions improved the autonomy of their employees, motivation, and created a positive work environment. Managers using such conversations to build motivation do so through understanding their employees' feelings, getting to know them personally, and providing constructive professional feedback on their work performance (Black, 2005; Lolli, 2013). Hynes (2012) showed that inclusion and affection in the relationship was triggered by how effective management level positions were in building relationships through their communication efforts with employees.

In more recent studies on communication managers in the sales industry were studied against their relationship with customers who purchased products from their companies (Mangus et al., 2020). Sales managers who communicated frequently and

spent time getting to know their clients personally held better results in making sales

contracts. The clients had better trust in their sales manager and were more apt to buying.

The key instrument in this study was the method of communication used to build the

relationship and the result was disclosure which led to trust. This was observed in the

form of empathy which was diagnosed as the relationship tool that interpersonally

connected the client with the salesperson. Mangus et al. (2020) provided in their study

that interpersonally communicating through disclosure personally strengthens the bond in

the relationship. Disclosure consists of having the humility to speak freely about personal

topics or sharing personal feelings. Sales people also do this by thinking like their clients

or understanding how their clients feel and behave to really understand how they would

react to a sale (Mangus et al., 2020). They go to extents of taking clients out to dinner,

golfing events, or just showing up to their offices frequently to check in and conduct

conversations. This type of behavior begins to improve the personal relationship between

salesperson and clients based on the increased level of trust that build from the constant

disclosure in conversations. Restaurant relationships behave in a similar way when

managers work towards improving disclosure when building interpersonal conversations.

Employees seek to gain the same relationships in their workplace as they have

developed in their personal lives and included aspects of respect, feeling appreciated, and

cared for (Tews et al., 2014). The process managers take to spending one-on-one time

with their employees creates personal attachments with employees that develops into

interpersonal connections (Tews et al., 2014). As the bond between the manager and

employee strengthens, the employee will be engaged and feel less likely to quit. Tews,

Stafford, and Michel (2014) share that life events and the attachment of employees to their job are directly tied to why people quit. Consistent operations and working environments that are not constantly negatively changing enhances the work experience for employees improving a person's intent to quit increases. In their study, positive and negative external personal events and positive professional events influenced turnover in the business (Tews et al., 2014). Thus, people who are attached to their work are dedicated to what they do but the situations within the workplace will play a role in how one decided to stay or quit. Managers who work at getting to know their employees personally builds on the attachment discussed above. The frequency and quality of these conversations influences self-disclosure in relationship building, enjoyment of self and job functionality, trust in service providers (Liu et al., 2016). The result is a professional culture where people feel personally and professionally connected to the job, their managers, and other employees.

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 1 of the study included a summary of the background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose statement, conceptual framework, and the nature of the study. In Chapter 2, the literature review consisted of an in-depth exploration of the Social Penetration Theory and Social Exchange Theory, and the background of the current state of the restaurant industry, a review of literature related to turnover, engagement, engagement and interpersonal relationships, engagement and communication, engagement and empowerment, engagement and performance, interpersonal communication, work environment, and interpersonal communication and

relationships. The primary findings related to the topic of this study were that engagement levels within organizations are better enhanced when there is a connection between employees and their managers. Interpersonal relationships are built upon how people communicate with each other. Through these relationships, trust and respect are born leading to improvements in turnover, empowerment, and better working environments. What is not known through the review of literature, and is the focus of this study, is what methods of communication managers use to communicate with employees leading to engagement and reductions in turnover. In Chapter 3, I will provide an overview of the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, the participants of the study, the research method and design, population sampling, the data collection method, analysis technique used in the study, and assurances of reliability and validity.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this critical instance case study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. By gaining an in-depth understanding of relational communication, the gap associated with employee relationships in the restaurant industry can be addressed to improve workplace engagement and the intent to quit. The critical instance case study was the research method used in this research project to explore what can be learned from understanding strategies managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees. Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale for the study, the role of the researcher; methodology with participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection method; data analysis plan; issues of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures; and a summary of the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

Building relationships through how people communicate with each other is a foundational approach for improving interpersonal relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Murphy & Servert, 2017). The critical instance case study was the research method used in this research project to explore strategies managers use to establish interpersonal relationships with employees. The overarching research question was "What strategies do hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement?" Critical instance

case studies are used to explore one or few phenomena within the context of an occurrence (Yin, 2018). The critical instance aspect of the study was based on exploring a single case critical to the conceptual framework, which was strategies managers use to establish interpersonal relationships with employees. Using the critical instance case study, I sought to understand how connecting interpersonally through conversations can improve the engagement of employees and reduce their intent to quit.

Qualitative research method is used by researchers to understand the viewpoints of lived experiences and perspectives of participants (Yin, 2017). The qualitative research method was appropriate for this study because the intent was to understand what strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. A qualitative design was used to develop knowledge around the phenomenological experiences 10 general managers in the quick service restaurant industry had with building interpersonal relationships with employees based on managing through the adversity of developing employee engagement and reducing turnover. The managers chosen had at least 3 years of experience managing people in the restaurant industry and had a proven track record of reducing turnover. Participating managers used in this critical instance case study had a deep understanding of managing employees in the restaurant industry and had experience with improving employee engagement and turnover through building interpersonal relationships.

I used the critical instance case study design to conduct in-depth interviews to obtain information from general managers in the fast-casual restaurant industry that could

lead to an understanding of the phenomenon in its real-world context. Interviews were conducted outside of the restaurant setting to protect the integrity of the information gathered from the interviews. Throughout the interview process, I sought to understand rich and textured knowledge from the phenomenological experiences of each participating manager to gain a deeper understanding of the methods they used to improve interpersonal relationships with employees.

Quantitative research was not used in this critical instance case study considering the focus of quantitative studies in based on the analysis of numeric information to explain a phenomenon (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018, Patton 2015). The intention of this critical instance case study was not to test the effect of variables creating interpersonal communication. Hypotheses were not developed to accept or reject interpersonal communication as a method for improving engagement and turnover intent.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to select participants who fit the needs of the research being conducted, collect information from the participants, analyze and interpret information being collected, facilitate of the interview process, and use the research questions to guide participants resulting in expository results (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As the researcher for this critical instance case study, my role included responsibilities such as recruiting participants, collecting information through a semi structured interview process, and interpreting in an unbiased manner. Once I recruited the participants, each was invited to meet with me for a 1-hour in-depth interview to discuss their experiences with building interpersonal relationships with the employee they work with in the

restaurants they manage. I wanted to explore and develop a deeper understanding of the methods they used to improve interpersonal relationships leading to employee engagement and reductions in turnover.

Qualitative research is interpretive and may draw concerns with biases, values, and personal background in the study that may shape the interpretation of the critical instance case study (Creswell, 2008). I have been working in restaurant industry for over 25 year and have held leadership positions in many large restaurant brands. Much of my experience has been in management and field operations working closely with managers and frontline restaurant workers. I have managed, owned, operated, and led multiple field operational teams supporting restaurants, and I have held executive leadership positions in the quick service and fast-casual restaurant industry. Much of the work I have done as a leader in the restaurant industry has been around improving workplace engagement and retaining employees as a method for improving restaurant operations and financial stability. I have used my own personal methods for building interpersonal relationships with employees as a means for engaging them in their work and keeping them inspired and motivated to continue building their career with the companies I have worked with and have had success in the results of improving engagement and turnover. In addition, much of my work now involves teaching field leaders and restaurant general managers how to lead their employees through engagement by building interpersonal relations. As the researcher, I had no personal or work-related connections with the participants in the study, had not led or managed any participant used in the study or had selected an individual who has worked with or for any manager from my past work experiences.

Positionality within a qualitative study is considered the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This consists of the settings in which the research will be conducted, the topic of the study, and the broad context that shaped the research. Bias in the positionality of my research was managed through ensuring the location for conducting interviews was not conducted in a restaurant location or setting, that the research questions were developed to give context to addressing the problem of the critical instance case study, and that any personal bias from my experience was not influenced in the analysis of the critical instance case study. Though my experiences in the restaurant industry are tied directly to workplace engagement and operating restaurants, I only addressed, collected information on, and analyzed methods used to build interpersonal relationships with employees. The context of how the research was shaped was based directly on how the participants responded to the interview questions and interpreted solely on their responses without biases of personal experiences.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Qualitative research depends on quality research to develop a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. Choosing participants was an important part of ensuring the utility of the findings expresses an accurate representation of integrity and reliability in answering the research questions. Having more than one source of information is valuable to the integrity of the research (Lucero et al., 2016). People who have experience with the research phenomenon are more valuable to a study's research (Yin,

2018). The primary questions used to determine the best possible decision for selecting the right participants for the critical instance case study was based on who needs to be included, the reason for choosing them, and for what purpose they were chosen. In addition, which type of individuals do are sought to learn from and whether their specific experiences, roles, occupations, perspectives, and relationships the participants have that would aid in the research collection process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

For this critical instance case study, I chose a company that has built a cultural foundation of supporting the development growth of their employees, believes in building interpersonal relationships with each other, and places the relationship building process as a top priority for the company. The general population of participants came from a single fast-casual restaurant company based out of Chicago, IL operating as a national brand. The company was founded in Palm Springs, CA in 1994 and has had success in building strong employee engagement and retention from the restaurant locations around the country based on the culture, vision, and brand values it has built its operational structure. Therefore, the general managers selected for this critical instance case study had the knowledge and experience in developing interpersonal relationships with employees who had been valued as a part of improving employee engagement and retention.

The target population consisted of general managers located in Colorado, Illinois, and California who understood the concept of building interpersonal relationships with restaurant employees, had two years of experience, had success with developing engaged teams, and had a track record of retaining employees. The candidates chosen had the

knowledge and a deep understanding of successfully operating restaurants through

developing a team of engaged and empowered team members and was validated by their

company as having sustainable success. Though the sample size of the participants only

consisted of 10 general managers, their knowledge and experiences spoke directly to

valuable methods used to improve employee engagement and reduce turnover intent.

Purposeful random sampling is a method for selecting participants that adds credibility to

a study by selecting individuals that have specific and unbiased knowledge about a

subject (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This method is useful for when there could potentially be

numerous cases within a single study that could distract from the main purpose of the

study or create biases in answers to the research questions. Since the primary focus of this

critical instance case study was to explore on the experiences general manager have with

strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that

reduced turnover and improved employee engagement, only managers who are

knowledgeable of these experiences were chosen. To meet the criteria, I consulted with

the restaurant company selected to assist with the selection process to ensure that the

qualifications were met.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument used for this critical instance case study was the

researcher. The human observer is the instrument of choice in qualitative studies while

not making claim to reliability and validity of the instrument and that the relevance lies in

the art of observation (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). In addition, Creswell (2009) provides

that the researcher is the primary instrument that collects information through

examination of documents, observations, or interviewing participants directly. I was the

primary instrument for this critical instance case study and collected information through

semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were the primary source for

gathering information for the study. I conducted these interviews with restaurant general

managers who had been successful in building interpersonal relationships with employees

that reduced turnover and improved employee engagement. The semi-structured

interviews included open-ended questions and were conducted in a location away from

the restaurant, and in a relaxed setting suggested by the participants. Using open-ended

questions gave the participants the freedom to openly discuss their experiences with

reducing turnover and improving employee engagement.

Qualitative researchers can use multiple sources to collect information around a

topic or phenomenon. These sources include methods such as social observations,

individual or group observations, semi-structured interviews, archival records and

artifacts, or a combination of these approaches (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used semi-

structured interviews to explore the concepts within the study by asking questions and

listening to the responses provided by the participants. The use of semi-structured

interviews consisted of predetermined questions that allowed the participants to reveal

more details of their experiences throughout the interview (Yin, 2019). The semi-

structured interview questions consisted of questions that enabled the participants to

elaborate on strategies they used to build interpersonal relationships with employees

leading to improvements in turnover and employee engagement. Additionally, these

questions aided in producing results that provided an understanding of the general

managers' experiences, views, and ideas behind these strategies.

As another source of information, I collected company documents to review strategies and initiatives the company used to develop engagement in the workplace. This included articles such as training materials used by various levels within the company to learn and understand company policies and operating standards. Documents such as training manuals were relevant to a case study because they maintain stability in how a company approaches operating procedures and they are consistent with brand standards (Yin, 2018).

The questions used during the interview process aligned with the purpose of the research and developed to build discussions around the phenomenon of interest. The interview instrument was the primary tool used throughout this critical instance case study (see Appendix B). The interview instrument was used as a guideline for inquiry-based conversations with each participant and included possible follow-up questions. The questions used during the semi-structured interviews focused on the experience's managers have in improving interpersonal relationships with employees and knowledge-based questions that focused on the facts and information managers know about the topic of study. Follow up questions were derived from the interview process and were noted in the interview collection worksheets used to journal participant interview content. An audio recorder was used to collect content from the interview process and transcribed to ensure high fidelity was observed. Participants used in the critical instance case study received a copy of the interview instrument at the time of the interview to keep for their records.

The interview instrument, member-checking, and triangulation was used to ensure the validity and reliability of the information collected. A summary of the research was shared with the participants as a method of member-checking. This process ensured the information captured during the interview process was accurately reflected and gave the participants an opportunity to validate their responses for accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the critical instance case study (Creswell, 2009). Triangulation was conducted by using the responses to the interview questions, additional information collected from the company, and the information received from member-checking.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted using 3 participants who had worked in the restaurant industry and had experience with strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees reducing turnover and improving employee engagement. The study commenced once approval had been achieved through the IRB process. Walden University's approval number for this study was 11-15-22-0665553. The analysis of information collected in the interview process consisted of a four-step process called thematic coding used to develop themes within the context of information based on the meaning of words and sentence structure. The four-step process was used to evaluate the transcript from the interview process in the critical instance case study to familiarize myself with the information in the transcript, conduct open coding, construct themes associated with the codes, and then consolidate themes into primary themes related to the research question. A sample chart depicting the formation of the interview transcript, coding, and the development of themes can be found in appendix A. Analysis for the

critical instance case study started with a review of the field notes and journal entries to

identify potential codes. In this step, initial codes were developed through analysis of

information collected in the interview process and transcribed into the coding tool found

in appendix A under the initial codes and emerging categories sections. Examples came

from excerpts from the transcript with notes regarding where the sources came from.

Once examples were notated, emerging categories were developed and clustered with

other codes.

Once the interview transcript was transcribed from the field notes taken during the

interview process, I familiarized myself with the data developed through the coding

process. Using the coding tool found in appendix A, I used the categories and emerging

themes section to journal the initial developed codes. Excerpts from the transcription and

notes from initial codes were then clustered to produce secondary cycle codes. The

category codes that emerged were annotated in the margins of transcribed notes and

given a color code organized in the frequency of the code occurrence. From this point, I

began to refine the granular details of the transcript codes which led to matching codes to

specific quotes. Key words from quotes within the transcription were coded, grouped

together, and then categorized into constructing themes. I then journaled the themes into

the coding tool from appendix A under the themes section. In this section I provided

examples of quotes from the transcripts and then analyzed the notes into emerging

themes. Smaller codes were scrutinized further to construct larger themes and then

commonality within the information collected. I then consolidated alike themes and

compared them to the research question to determine relevance regarding the study. I

then began using the research question to compare against the themes associated with these strategies. Based on the research question, I was able to develop themes associated with relevant codes to the critical instance case study. Any themes not associated with the research question or study were removed.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I contacted a national restaurant company located in Chicago, IL to request permission to select general manager participants with knowledge about strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The procedure used to determine how participants were identified, contacted, and recruited followed the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements for selecting participants and conducting research. 10 general managers from a national brand restaurant company were chosen for the critical instance case study once approval from the IRB was received. I then began contacting the national restaurant company to request permission to conduct the research and select participants. Once selected, the participants received assurance of their rights throughout the process by a consent form used to explain the research process. Participants were carefully selected to ensure the appropriate information for the critical instance case study was gathered in the information collection process (Patton, 2015). One-on-one semi-structured interviews were used for the interview process. Information collected from the interviews were secured in a safe location for 5 years and then shredded or deleted from electronic files.

The interview process was conducted virtually using the Skype software program.

The interview process was limited to one-hour sessions and was conducted over a period of 2 consecutives months after approval was granted by the IRB. Participation was voluntary for the participants. Participants were able to opt out of the study at any time before or during the interview process. Once the interviews were concluded, I notified the participants that the study was concluded and provided them with my email and phone number as a contact reference if they had questions following the interview. I also provided each participant with a transcript of their interview as a method for validating member checking. Member checking gave the participants an opportunity to validate the interpretation of meaning and confirm the accuracy of the recorded information (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Information from the interviews was collected during the semi-structured interview process by means of audio recording. I used a Sony handheld audio recorder to collect the information and then transcribed into Trint and then onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The Microsoft Excel spreadsheet consisted of the names, dates, and other pertinent information related to the participants as well as their transcribed interviews. The interview information was first de-identified to protect the confidentiality of the partner company and participants and then analyzed through ATLAS.ti which is an online qualitative software program designed to evaluate interview content collected from qualitative interviews. ATLAS.ti provided a software resource to collect multiple documents from the interview process, took information to code, provided a system of meaning around the content, and gave this critical instance case study more depth in developing associated themes.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of this study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The data analysis for establishing meaning for this phenomenon was procreative and defined in continuum through application of repeated definition of coded themes related to content collected from participants knowledgeable of these strategies. The collection instrument was the interview questions used to collect interview content from participants during the semi-structured interviews (Appendix B).

As a part of the data analysis, the following phases were conducted to ensure the content collected during the interview process was properly diagnosed and themes generated aligning with the purpose and conceptual framework of the critical instance case study. The phases to analyze the content are familiarizing myself with the content, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the report. The following is a description of each phase in the analysis process.

Phase 1: Familiarize with the Data

The analysis plan included familiarizing myself with the interview content to search for patterns, trends, and meaning within the content, generating initial codes based on the information received, using ATLAS.ti to assist with the coding process, and searching for themes by categorizing codes relative to the commonality of content. I then reviewed the developed themes to determine which ones stand alone, can be combined with others, or ones that needed to be discarded. Once reviewed, I defined, named, and

captured the relationship of various themes to the research questions in the study. A report was produced to provide merit and validity of the analysis. A sample of the coding used for this critical instance case study can be found within the appendix (Appendix A) and was used in the analysis section in Chapter 4.

I familiarized myself with the content and began to identify potential themes associated with the critical instance case study. In doing so, I immersed myself into establishing any conclusions through evaluating any potential patterns, trends, and contextual meaning. This process involved making sense of the text captured from the interview process and developing a deeper understanding of the collected content (Creswell, 2009). The information was read multiple times to adequately capture the essence of meaning within the content as ideas may change, new ones evolve, and the interpretation was properly captured.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Codes are primary concepts that emerge from information collected and are evolved to develop coded sets. Codes become the primary concepts that allow a researcher to develop themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Generating codes occurred after the interview content had been collected and evaluated. Coding involved organizing the information into segments before developing any meaning to the content, organizing sentences, labeling categories into terms associated with the language used by the participants (Creswell, 2009). The codes were grouped together and represented the various common strategies managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement.

The coding process included a review of the entire transcript, collecting ideas from commonalities within the content, determining the meaning from within the content, listing primary topics together into similar topics, abbreviating the topics into codes, finding descriptive wording for the topics, turning them into categories, making a final decision on the abbreviation for the categories, and turning them into codes (Creswell, 2009).

Data triangulation was used as the process for coding content. This process involves taking different perspectives from various participants and examining conclusions from various viewpoints to merge into common themes associated with a study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The benefit to using data triangulation for this critical instance case study was that I was able to collect interview content from multiple participants who had different perspectives, strategies throughout their experiences in the restaurant industry as a method to creating validity in the developed themes and being able to answer the research questions associated with this critical instance case study.

I triangulated the various codes into specific patterned themes representing the different strategies common to each participant. The themes were documented with a description of their meaning and the associated codes that assisted with the development of the themes. I then reviewed the research questions for the relationship of codes to themes and the conceptual framework to analyze in thematic ways. A second review of the coded information with the associated themes was completed to determine if any themes or subthemes were missing. I concluded by developing a story of the developed themes in writing that included supported findings, explained how the themes fit into the

understanding of the findings, the relationship of themes to the research questions, and a consideration of how theory informed the themes.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Searching for themes involved using the coding process to develop descriptions of the setting, categories, or themes for the analysis (Creswell, 2009). Themes represent specific concepts once categorized into information sets through codes (Creswell, 2016). The use of Microsoft Excel was used to assist with coding and identifying themes associated with the content retrieved from the participants. The use of the Microsoft Excel software ensured consistency in the analysis process and was a simple and user-friendly tool used to quickly collect and analyze information. Interview content was collected and then analyzed through ATLAS.ti which is an online qualitative software program designed to evaluate information collected from qualitative interviews. ATLAS.ti provided a software resource to collect multiple documents from the interview process, takes information from the content to code and provides a system of meaning around the content, and gave this critical instance case study more depth in developing associated themes. Using ATLAS.ti was used as a secondary method for collecting and interpretation during the interview process. The program was used in conjunction with the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and Trint to ensure validity and reliability of information was obtained in the results of the coding process. The process for developing themes began by coding all content retrieved from participants. In this section I used the codes developed from the content to create themes associated with the strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that

reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. Each individual case and different cases were analyzed to develop the themes.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

The themes were reviewed, redefined, and analyzed further to ensure the right ones were chosen to represent the phenomenology of the purpose of the critical instance case study. Themes were broken down, combined, or discarded to develop a path of uniform representation of the purpose of the critical instance case study. Each theme represented the whole of the study and interconnected the individuality of each case. The themes were broken down into three specific themes with various tactics that represented patterns that appeared in the major findings of the critical instance case study.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

The themes aligned with the perspectives of those involved in the interview process and represented the totality of the evidence representing the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2009). During this phase, the themes continued to be further defined and refined. I advanced the analysis of the themes by developing a narrative of how the various themes were obtained as well as the relationship between the themes and the research questions.

Phase 6: Producing the Report

A final report was written once the themes were analyzed and defined. This process involved making an interpretation or meaning of the information collected in the interview process (Creswell, 2009). This process included a personal interpretation of the interview content based on an understanding from working experiences in the restaurant

industry as well as a comparison of the findings from the literature. The report included an analysis of the content, an argument supporting the research questions, and suggested new questions regarding the critical instance case study that could be used for future research.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Establishing credibility in this critical instance case study involved minimizing errors and biases that may prevent the study from having any value towards future research (Yin, 2018). Credibility involved determining the complexities presented and dealing with unexplainable patterns within the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This critical instance case study included a deep understanding of the methodology used to develop the research design, the instruments used to collect content information, and the content collected from the participants. Using a qualitative research method in a critical instance case study allowed me to collect and interpret real life experiences from managers that had success with strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement.

Credibility was established by accounting for personal biases that may influence the findings within the interview content, denoting limitations within the research, acknowledging any biases in the sampling size of participants used in the critical instance case study, describing how records of information was collected and maintained, including rich descriptions from participants, clarifying the procedures for data collection and analysis, validating the responses from participants, and checking data triangulation.

Participants can present limitations in how information is generalized based on personal experiences in the restaurant industry. This critical instance case study included many inherent limitations including the type of restaurant company used in the study, size of the company, key performance of the brand, the financial position of the company, employee turnover data and other relevant data the company was willing to share, time of the year when participants were selected and interviews took place, current working conditions, and how the participants were responding to current economic conditions. Second, only a small population of restaurant managers were used for the critical instance case study which limited how the findings may improve other restaurant brands across the country. The study was limited to only exploring the methods managers used to communicate with employee but not how the communication was being perceived by the employees, issues related to the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak, employee turnover data, and any other relevant data the company was willing to share. The findings presented in this critical instance case study were limited to a small sample size and did not apply to a broader population.

Credibility was established by choosing only participants who had success in building strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees and enhanced the richness of the findings through their own personal real-life experiences. Furthermore, I contributed to the authenticity of the results of this critical instance case study without accounting for any personal biases from my experiences in the restaurant industry. Once the interview process had been completed, the participant answers were collected and documented, transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed. A copy

of the interview analysis was provided to each of the participants for review to ensure the

information collected was not misrepresented or altered. Triangulation was used to

establish plausible findings in the research collected from the participants.

Transferability

Transferability refers to how the research will be applicable to other studies while

maintaining consistency in the richness of its' context (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The

researcher is responsible for ensuring the content within the findings of the study can be

transferred to other similar settings or population in future research (Ravitch & Carl

2016). The research was transferrable to future research related to similar topics of study

based on the thick and rich descriptions that was collected from participants in the study

based on consideration to issues within the restaurant industry regarding turnover and

employee engagement. The findings in this critical instance case study produced meaning

for outsiders reviewing methods managers use to improve the interpersonal relationships

with their employees leading to improvements in engagement and reductions in turnover

(Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The findings established a gateway to exploring engagement

and turnover through the lens of the manager rather than through the employee which

was applicable for future research related to the topics of engagement and turnover.

Dependability

Dependability relates to the stability and trustworthiness of the information

contained in the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability accounted for changes within

the context of information found within the study taking into account any biases found in

the research method and personal experiences (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This provided

a way for me and the participants to build a closer rapport with each other.

For this critical instance case study, I used qualitative research to explore strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. A background of the problem, purpose of the critical instance case study, and conceptual framework was developed to ensure uniformity in how this critical instance case study was developed and explored. The critical instance case study was developed from a systematic exploration of existing literature regarding employee engagement and turnover in the restaurant industry.

A detailed literature review of the history of the restaurant industry, issues related to engagement and turnover in the restaurant industry, theories related to the topic of study, and interpersonal communication and relationship was provided to align previous research with the problem and purpose of this critical instance case study. Steps were taken to ensure a detailed track record was established in the data collection process, that the interview process abided by the IRB requirements, and participants were provided an opportunity to evaluate the data collected from the interview process for accuracy. I used random sampling to select participants and information was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews to allow the research questions to be asked and follow up questions to evolve in a way that created a contextual format for collecting data. The content was collected, and triangulation was used to develop themes that provided richness in answering the research questions and provided context to the problem from the research.

Confirmability

The findings of this research evolved in the subjectivity of critical instances that occurred in the lives of managers who work in an industry where employee turnover is high, and engagement built on the foundation of their environment. Confirmability involves ensuring that the information collected can be confirmed by other researchers and establishes a means for qualifying and establishing that the results are not subject to the researchers bias or personal interpretation but based purely from the information collected from the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Qualitative research is not objective and relies on the subjective formality of minimizing bias and prejudices in research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). My role as the primary instrument in this critical instance case study was partially to be subjective in the interpretation of the future data collect but also to ensure my subjectivity was not skewed in bias from my experience in the restaurant industry. A detailed audit trail of content from the interview process was collected and recorded in verbatim with the participants exact words and content interpreted to develop themes to avoid bias in personal interpretation. Transparency was established by providing a rich description of the research steps taken from the start of the research project to the development and findings of the research and a record of the research path was kept throughout the critical instance case study.

Ethical Procedures

Before beginning the interview process, I gained permission from Walden University's IRB and from the partner restaurant company to choose participants for the critical instance case study. Walden University's approval number for this study is 11-15-

22-0665553. I consulted any necessary professional standards that related to the type of study I conducted and ensured these standards were met throughout the interview process. I gained approval for the site that was used to conduct participant interviews as well as the proper approval process for identifying and securing participants for the interview process. The site that was selected for the interviews was in a location not subject to power issues with other researchers. Credit for the work completed was given to those that credit was due, and permission was requested for any material considered proprietary.

At the beginning of the study, I first contacted the participants by phone and email to inform them of the general purpose of the study using the consent form. The American Psychological Association (APA) outlines a series of goals that researchers must follow for research with human participants (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). The guidelines of the research were developed to ensure scientific knowledge is accurate, to protect the rights and welfare of the participants, and to protect the intellectual property rights (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). An introductory email contained a consent form including the details of the study, a disclaimer stating that their participation was voluntary, and that they could remove themselves from the study at any time. The consent form for this critical instance case study was developed to ensure the guidelines for human participation was adhered to and participants were well-informed. The form included a description of the researcher who conducted the critical instance case study, why the participant was chosen to participate, what the time commitment was for the interview process, the benefits of, any risks such as emotional, psychological, physical, social, economic, or political, an

explanation of the study, and an explanation that the critical instance case study was voluntary (Appendix A). A copy of the consent form was given to each participant via email, and they were asked to respond to the email with consent to participate in the study. The signed copy was retained for my records and locked in a secured safe located for five years.

Interview content was collected from participants first gaining trust by conveying my interest in collecting relevant facts from them related to the purpose of the critical instance case study. I reiterated the purpose of the study and discussed how the content was used to report my findings. Participants in the critical instance case study received a list of the interview questions and a copy of their translated interview once the interviews were concluded and a $50 Amazon gift card as an incentive for their participation. The collected information for this critical instance case study was confidential and was not disclosed to any other individual or institution. Content was collected using a Sony handheld recorder and transcribed onto an Excel spreadsheet developed to assist with the coding process through Trint. To ensure the confidentiality of the information, neither the participants' names nor the businesses used in the critical instance case study appeared in the final study. I identified the company used as the national restaurant company operating in the United States and identified participants in numeric identifiers such as P1, P2, and P3. An external thumb drive was used to secure the information obtained from the participants and remained in my possession in a safe and secured location for five years. After five years, I will destroy all information pertaining to the interviews, any other relevant information by shredding paper documents, and destroying all thumb

drives containing information regarding this critical instance case study. I also avoided

leading questions, withheld sharing personal impressions, and disclosing sensitive

information to anyone.

Interview content was analyzed by reporting multiple perspectives from the

information collected from the participants. I reported any contrary findings during the

interview process as relevant information to the results of the critical instance case study.

Fictitious names were used for each participant as well as to describe the name of the

company being used in the critical instance case study. Composite profiles were

developed to secure the identity and content collected during the interview process.

Findings were reported honestly using composite stories to protect the identity of

participants used in the critical instance case study. Appropriate language was used to

translate the collected information and written in a way that the audience was able to

understand while also avoiding any plagiarism. I avoided falsifying my findings and

conclusions by ensuring personal biases were avoided and only using exact language

from participants was provided in the manuscript. Copies of the report were shared with

the participants and stakeholders for the company used in the critical instance case study

once the final report was completed. No funders were involved in this critical instance

case study and no one individual, group, or organization will profit from the results of the

study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers used

to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover

and improves employee engagement. In Chapter 3, I addressed the purpose of the study,

the role of the researcher, the methodology for the critical instance case study, procedures

for recruitment, participation, data collection, the data analysis plan, and issues with

trustworthiness. Purposeful sampling was used to select quality candidates that have

experience with strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships. 10

participants were selected for this critical instance case study that have experience with

establishing appealing interpersonal relationships with employees. The data collection

process involved semi-structured interviews that were conducted virtually using a

handheld audio recording device, transcribed using Microsoft Excel, and ATLAS.ti as a

software tool for coding. Data triangulation was then used as a method for confirming the

results of critical instance case study. Chapter 4 includes the research setting,

demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results

of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this critical instance case study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. By gaining an in-depth understanding of relational communication, the gap associated with employee relationships in the restaurant industry will improve workplace engagement and the intent to quit. The overarching research question was "What strategies do hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement?"

Chapter 4 includes a brief description of the pilot study and any impact it had on the main study, a description of any personal or organizational conditions that influenced the participants or their experience during the study that may have impacted the results, and demographics and characteristics on the participants relevant to the study. The chapter also describes the data collection including the number of participants, location, frequency, and duration of data collection for each data instrument, how the data were recorded, variations in data, and any unusual circumstances encountered in the data collection process. The Data Analysis section reports the process used to code and develop categories and themes, describes the specific codes, categories and themes, qualities of cases, and how they were factored into the analysis. There is also an evidence of Trustworthiness section, the Results sections, and a summary of the chapter.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted using three participants who had worked in the

restaurant industry and had experience in strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The pilot study commenced once approval was given by the IRB. The analysis of information collected in the interview process consisted of a four-step process using thematic coding. Thematic coding is a type of qualitative analysis that finds themes within the context of information based on the meaning of words and sentence structure (Patton, 2015). The four-step process was used to evaluate the transcript from the interview process in the critical instance case study to first familiarize myself with the information in the transcript, conduct open coding, construct themes associated with the codes, and then consolidate the themes into the primary themes that relate to the research question. A sample chart depicting the formation of the interview transcript, coding, and the development of themes can be found in Appendix A.

Analysis for the pilot study started with familiarizing myself with a review of the field notes and journal entries to identify potential changes needed in the instrumentation, research questions, or data analysis. One of the pilot study participants suggested that I include questions related to what organizations are doing to improve turnover and engagement in the workplace. This participant wanted to connect what managers thought about organizational involvement in workplace engagement to their own strategies. I felt that this was good advice but for future research since it did not relate to the purpose of this critical instance case study. Based on the remaining feedback from the participants in the pilot study and the analysis of the field notes and journal entries, there were no additional changes needed. All the pilot study participants felt that the questions were

relevant to the purpose of the study, aligned with answering the research question, and relevant to helping the growth of the restaurant industry in terms of identifying ways to improve turnover and engagement.

Research Setting

The data collection process for this critical instance case study was conducted between December 2022 and February 2023. During this time of the year, the restaurants for the partner company are slower in revenue stream due to seasonality changes. Therefore, many of the restaurant general managers I spoke with were struggling with staffing levels and managing labor during the slower season. This created obstacles in being able to schedule participant interviews. But the interview questions were designed to focus on past and present conditions of strategies the managers are using to improve engagement and turnover in their restaurant. Additionally, the company was also going through organizational changes in management and in the process of opening new restaurants within an area where one of the participants was involved in.

Restaurant managers in Colorado were faced with challenges related to management turnover and were involved in overseeing multiple restaurants and then having to manage the process of turning around difficult restaurant situations. California managers were better equipped to discuss their strategies but were faced with challenges of not having direct leadership support to assist in their markets, thus having to manage their business without support from upper management. The Chicago restaurant managers were closer to company headquarters and did not have the same obstacles as those further away. Operational constraints were observed during the interview process.

These constraints included, staffing, limitations with employee wages compared to competition, organizational changes, communication issues between the corporate office and restaurants, corporate management, seasonal turnover, and menu complexity.

Demographics

Participants in the critical instance case study resided in southern California, northern California, Colorado, and the Chicago, IL region. All participants were seasoned general managers in the restaurant industry with three or more years of experience with leading restaurant teams. Participants in the California markets have been employed with the partner company for multiple years, have experienced numerous changes within the company, and have at least 1–2 years of managing their respective restaurant location. The restaurant locations in California struggle mainly with wages and finding employees who want to work for the minimum working wage. For this reason, the general managers are more acutely aware of the need to create a good working environment. Management in Colorado is primarily led by a veteran manager for the company with at least 2 years leading at the partner company. The Colorado market also struggles with the working wages and has a tougher time with finding employees in the market willing to work in restaurants. For this reason, a couple of the restaurants struggle with staffing levels. General managers in the Chicago market have more than two years' experience with the partner company. These managers work closer to the corporate headquarters and seem to have a closer relationship with upper management due to working in the headquarters' market. Staffing levels at these restaurant location struggle with finding employees but are not as affected by critical staffing levels as those outside of Chicago.

Data Collection

I contacted a national brand restaurant companies located in Chicago, IL to request permission to select general manager participants with knowledge about strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The procedure used to determine how participants identified, contacted, and recruited followed the Walden University IRB requirements for selecting participants and conducting research. Ten general managers from the partner restaurant company were chosen for the critical instance case study. The participants were in southern and northern California, the Denver area of Colorado, and Chicago, IL. Participants were carefully selected to ensure the appropriate information for the critical instance case study is gathered in the information collection process (Patton, 2015).

The frequency for the interview process began with conducting virtual interviews using Skype. The interview process was limited to 1-hour sessions and was conducted over a period of 2 consecutives months after approval was granted by IRB. Participants were notified 1 week prior to their scheduled interview day and were given the opportunity to adjust their scheduled interview based on any operational issues that may have presented itself on the interview day. Once the interview took place, I transcribed the data collected using the software program Trint. Trint is an internet-based program that transcribes data from video and handheld recording devices then converts the data to a Word-based document.

The duration for each interview averaged 54:77 minutes with a 10-minute buffer

to answer any questions the participant had regarding the critical instance case study. The duration for P1 was 52:33, P2 was 50:32, P3 was 51:43, P4 was 56:13, P5 58:54, P6 was 52:01, P7 was 53:42, P8 was 59:29, P9 was 57:01, and P10 was 57:26.

Participation was voluntary for the participants. Participants were able to opt out of the study at any time before or during the interview process. Once the interviews were concluded, I notified the participants that the study was concluded and provided them with my email and phone number as a contact reference if they have questions following the interview. I also provided each participant with a transcript of their interview as a method for validating member checking. Member checking gives the participants an opportunity to validate the interpretation of meaning and confirm the accuracy of the recorded information (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Information from the interviews was collected during the semi structured interview process by means of audio recording. I used a Sony handheld audio recorder to collect the information, transcribed into Trint, and then coded in ATLAS.ti. The interview information was first de-identified to protect the confidentiality of the partner company and participants and then analyzed through ATLAS.ti, which is an online qualitative software program designed to evaluate interview content collected from qualitative interviews. ATLAS.ti provides a software resource to collect multiple documents from the interview process, takes information to code and provide a system of meaning around the content, and gave this critical instance case study more depth in developing associated themes. No variations occurred in the data collection process based on how the process was described in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The data analysis was procreative and defined in continuum through application of repeated definition of coded themes related to content collected from participants knowledgeable of these strategies. The collection instrument was the interview questions used to collect interview content from participants during the semi-structured interviews (Appendix C). The phases used to analyze the content were familiarizing myself with the content, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The following is a description of each phase in the analysis process.

Phase 2: Familiarize with the Data

The analysis plan included familiarizing myself with the interview content to search for patterns, trends, and meaning within the content, generating initial codes based on the information received and using the software systems Trint to transcribe the interviews and ATLAS.ti to assist with the coding process. ATLAS.ti was used to develop themes by categorizing codes relative to the commonality of content. I then reviewed the developed themes to determine which ones stand alone, can be combined with others, or ones that needed to be discarded. Once reviewed, I then defined and named the themes to capture the relationship of various themes to the research questions in the study and then produced a report that provided merit and validity of the analysis.

I familiarized myself with the content and began to identify potential themes

associated with the critical instance case study. In doing so, I immersed myself into establishing any conclusions through evaluating any potential patterns, trends, and contextual meaning. This process involved making sense of the text captured from the interview process and developing a deeper understanding of the collected content (Creswell, 2009). The information was read multiple times to ensure I had adequately captured the essence of meaning within the content as ideas may change, new ones evolve, and the interpretation was properly captured.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Generating codes occurred after the interview content had been collected and evaluated. The codes were grouped together and represented the various common strategies managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The coding process included gathering a sense of the entire transcript and ideas from commonalities within the content, determining the meaning from within the content, listing a clustering all the topics together into similar topics, abbreviating the topics into codes, finding descriptive wording for the topic of the critical instance case study, turning them into categories, making a final decision on the abbreviation for the categories, and turning them into codes.

Based on the data collected, 28 initial codes emerged from the transcript describing strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The initial codes were job satisfaction, emotions, relationships, employee well-being,

attitudes and behaviors, team dynamics, workplace relationships, interpersonal skills, communication and collaboration, interpersonal relations, positive affection, workplace culture, organizational effectiveness, workplace culture, teamwork, workplace dynamics, professional development, collaborating and career development, personal traits and qualities of a manager, leadership styles, positivity, trust, solving workplace issues, information seeking, problem solving, workplace management, management, time investment, and stress.

The following are examples of how some of the codes were developed. Participants, such as P1, shared that "You have to be an active participant and engage conversations with them. I think it's important to always greet your employees, even if they were at the restaurant before you arrived." In this quote, building relationships with people and dynamics in the workplace codes were formed. Another example of how codes were developed was from P3 who stated, "having a positive work environment builds interpersonal relationships." In this example, helping people feel good about their job and relationships in the workplace were the developed codes.

Data triangulation was used as the process for coding content. This process involves taking different perspectives from various participants and examining conclusions from various viewpoints to merge into common themes associated with a study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The benefit to using data triangulation for this critical instance case study was that I was able to collect interview content from multiple participants who had different perspectives and strategies throughout their experiences in the restaurant industry as a method to creating validity in the developed themes as well as

being able to answer the research questions associated with this critical instance case study. An example of triangulation used to develop codes was found P9 who stated, "I feel like if you take the employees complaints seriously, then they will feel like you're actually listening to what you say, depending on the degree," P6 who stated, "I appreciate the opportunity to talk about my employees needs and desires," and P1 who stated,

> "Everyone who's coming in to work in our restaurant has their own reasons for needing a job. And I think it's important that you realize their reason for being here may not be the same as mine or the other person standing."

In this example, care and appreciation for people emerged as one of the developed codes.

I triangulated the various codes into specific patterned categories representing the different strategies that were common to each participant. The categories were documented with a description of their meaning and what associated codes assisted with the development. I then reviewed the research questions for the relationship of codes to categories and the conceptual framework to analyze in thematic ways. A second review of the coded information with the associated categories was completed to determine if any themes or subthemes were beginning to emerge. Based on this analysis, eight categories were developed from the coded data. The categories were building relationships in the workplace through personal connection and collaboration, which derived from codes team dynamics, workplace relationships, interpersonal skills, communication, and collaboration. The second category was a leadership style based on positive intentions and self-awareness, which derived from codes personal traits/qualities and positivity. Interpersonal relationships based on caring for people's well-being derived

from codes job satisfaction, emotions, relationships, employee well-being, attitudes and behaviors. Developing a strong workplace culture through teamwork was developed from organizational effectiveness and teamwork. Team dynamics came from dynamics in the workplace. Having a strong development system for people came from collaboration and career development. Quickly solving problems to build trust derived from workplace issues, information seeking, and problem solving. Managing time and people in the workplace came from codes workplace management, time investment, and stress management.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Searching for themes involved using the coding process to develop descriptions of the setting, categories, or themes for the analysis (Creswell, 2009). The use of ATLAS.ti was used to assist with coding and identifying themes associated with the content retrieved from the participants. Using ATLAS.ti ensured consistency in the analysis process and was a simple and user-friendly tool used to quickly collect and analyze information. The process for developing themes began by coding all content retrieved from participants and then evolving the codes into categories. Based on the identified categories eight themes emerged. The themes that emerged were communicating and connecting with people interpersonally, personal characteristics of a manager, caring and appreciating people, developing a strong workplace culture, diversification of team dynamics, having a strong development system for people, solving problems quickly and providing feedback, and effective workplace management.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

The themes were reviewed, redefined, and analyzed further to ensure the right ones were chosen to represent the phenomenology of the purpose of the critical instance case study. Themes were broken down, combined, or discarded to develop a path of uniform representation of the purpose of the critical instance case study. Each theme represented the whole of the study and interconnected the individuality of each case. The themes were broken down and represented patterns that appeared in the major findings of the critical instance case study. Based on the conceptual framework in Figure 1, I corelated the themes from the data analysis to the layers in the framework. The themes communicating and connecting with people interpersonally and personal characteristics of a manager were related to interpersonal communication from the model. Caring and appreciating people, developing a strong workplace culture, and diversification of team dynamics related to interpersonal relationships. Having a strong development system for people, solving problems quickly and providing feedback, and effective workplace management were relative to engagement. The combination of all eight themes were associated with one's intent to quit or retaining employees.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

The themes aligned with the perspectives of those involved in the interview process and represented the totality of the evidence representing the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2009). During this phase, the themes continued to be further defined and refined. I advanced the analysis of the themes by developing a narrative of how the various themes were obtained as well as the relationship between the themes and the

research questions.

Phase 6: Producing the Report

A final report was written once the themes were analyzed and defined. This process involved making an interpretation or meaning of the information collected in the interview process (Creswell, 2009). This process included a personal interpretation of the interview content based on an understanding from working experiences in the restaurant industry as well as a comparison of the findings from the literature. The report included an analysis of the content, an argument supporting the research questions, and suggested new questions regarding the critical instance case study that could be used for future research.

How Data Analysis Aligns with Chapter 3

The critical instance aspect of the study was based on exploring a single case critical to the conceptual framework which was strategies managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees. I used the qualitative research method as a means for exploring interpersonal communication as an active change process for improving engagement and ones' intent to quit in the restaurant industry. Using the critical instance case study, I sought to understand how connecting interpersonally through conversations can improve the engagement of employees and reduce their intent to quit.

The data analysis aligns with Chapter 3 of this critical instance case study. Each phase was conducted to ensure the content collected during the interview process was properly diagnosed and themes generated aligning with the purpose and conceptual

framework of the critical instance case study. The data from each participant was reviewed and coded for likeness of content. The content was coded according to similarities and then grouped into themes. I reviewed the themes for accuracy based on the quotes from the data and then compared the themes to the conceptual framework. Once this process was completed, I developed a report based on my findings. This process aligned with the data analysis process developed in Chapter 3.

Assembling the Data with Categories and Themes

I began the process of assembling the data by reviewing each participants' transcripts for similarities in content. I color coded the content based on the likeness of the data based the questions asked in the data collection process. For example, the first question asked was "*How do you build relationships with your employees?*". Based on the first question, P2 shared "the first thing I do when I'm meeting new employees is I introduce myself and I open up so that I can give them the ability to trust me" and "have to establish friendship if we are to work together. I try to give them the support they need and help them out when they need it". The code that was created for this example was *being affectionate with employees*. P1 shared that, "you have to engage in conversations with them", "make contact with your employees and be engaged with them", "give them a sense of assuredness", and "it's important to recognize your people for what they are doing". The code that was created for these examples were *building relationships* and *effective management*. P3 gets to know the employees and connects with them through conversations. P3 shared that, "I find common ground is the conversation I have with the employees", "I engage with the employees by working side by side with them, providing

them with feedback on how they are doing, and am constantly understanding how they are doing and what they need from me for support". In this example, a *strong teamwork* was the code created. I then grouped the codes based on similarities and developed emerging categories associated with quotes from the data. See table 1 in *Appendix A: Example of Coding* for examples of how the codes identified in the data were formed into emerging categories.

Next, the emerging categories were grouped into similar categories and linked to the three specific sections of the conceptual framework which were engagement, building relationships, and interpersonal communication. This process was conducted by carefully reviewing the data for relational comparisons from various quotes associated with the conceptual framework sections. This part of the analysis process was important for the critical instance case study in that I needed to ensure that data amongst each participant showed signs of commonality in specific emerging strategies and that these strategies were linked directly to the conceptual framework. The emerging themes identified through this process became the basis for the specific strategies managers used to improve engagement and reduce turnover. See table 2 in *Appendix A: Example of Coding* for examples of how the emerging categories identified in the data were formed into emerging themes.

The last step in the analysis process was to take the emerging themes and group them into similar themes associated with the conceptual framework. What I found throughout this process was that the emerging themes were specific strategies each participant was using to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees

that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. Each of the emerging themes were found in the data collected and aligned with the research question and conceptual framework. I then grouped the emerging themes into their similarities and identified three primary themes which evolved into the main strategies the managers used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The three themes were engagement of the team, building relationships in the workplace, and having strong communication skills. Since the emerging themes were closely related to the specific strategies, the themes of engagement of the team, building relationships in the workplace, and having strong communication skills became the overarching strategies and the emerging themes became the specific strategies used to accomplish the overarching theme strategies. See table 3 in *Appendix A: Example of Coding* for examples of how the emerging themes identified in the data were formed into the primary themes.

Alignment with Research Questions

The research question of this critical instance case study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. By gaining an in-depth understanding of strategies managers in the restaurant industry use, the gap associated with employee relationships in the restaurant industry will improve workplace engagement and the intent to quit. Based on the interviews conducted, three emerging themes derived from the data with specific tactical themes the participants use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and

improves employee engagement. The three themes were having strong communication skills, building relationships in the workplace, and the engagement of the team. These themes were identified in the data collection process were evident across all participants in the study as strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees. In addition, these strategies were also evident with each participant as methods they used for reducing turnover and improving employee engagement.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Establishing credibility in this critical instance case study involved minimizing errors and biases that may prevent the study from having any value towards future research (Yin, 2018). Credibility involved determining the complexities that present themselves and dealing with unexplainable patterns within the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This critical instance case study included a deep understanding of the methodology used to develop the research design, the instruments used to collect content information, and the content collected from the participants. Using a qualitative research method in a critical instance case study allowed me to collect and interpret real life experiences from managers that had success with strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement.

Credibility was established by accounting for personal biases that may influence the findings within the interview content, denoting limitations within the research, acknowledging any biases in the sampling size of participants used in the critical instance

case study, describing how records of information was collected and maintained, including rich descriptions from participants, clarifying the procedures for data collection and analysis, validating the responses from participants, and checking data triangulation. Participants can present limitations in how information is generalized based on personal experiences in the restaurant industry. This critical instance case study included many inherent limitations including the type of restaurant company used in the study, size of the company, employee turnover data and other relevant data the company was willing to share, time of the year when participants were selected and interviews took place, current working conditions, and how the participants were responding to current economic conditions. Second, only a small population of restaurant managers were used for the critical instance case study which limited how the findings may improve other restaurant brands across the country. The study was limited to only exploring the methods managers used to communicate with employee but not how the communication was being perceived by the employees, employee turnover data, and any other relevant data the company was willing to share. The findings presented in this critical instance case study were limited to a small sample size and did not apply to a broader population.

Credibility was established by choosing only participants that had success in building strategies used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees and enhanced the richness of the findings through their own personal real-life experiences. Furthermore, I contributed to the authenticity of the results of this critical instance case study without accounting for any personal biases from my experiences in the restaurant industry. Once the interview process had been completed, the participant

answers were collected and documented, transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed. A copy

of the interview analysis was provided to each of the participants to review to ensure the

information collected was not misrepresented or altered. Triangulation was used to

establish plausible findings in the research collected from the participants.

Transferability

Transferability refers to how the research will be applicable to other studies while

maintaining consistency in the richness of its' context (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The

researcher is responsible for ensuring the content within the findings of the study can be

transferred to other similar settings or population in future research (Ravitch & Carl;

2016). Considering issues within the restaurant industry regarding turnover and employee

engagement, this research was transferrable to future research related to similar topics of

study based on the thick and rich descriptions that was collected from participants in the

critical instance case study. The findings in this critical instance case study produced

meaning for outsiders reviewing this critical instance case study regarding methods

managers use to improve the interpersonal relationships with their employees leading to

improvements in engagement and reductions in turnover (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The

findings established a gateway to exploring engagement and turnover through the lens of

the manager rather than through the employee which is applicable for future research

related to the topics of engagement and turnover.

Dependability

Dependability relates to the stability and trustworthiness of the information

contained in the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability accounts for changes within

the context of information found within a study takin into account biases found in the research method and personal experience biases (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This provides a way for the researcher and the participants to build a closer rapport with each other.

For this critical instance case study, I used qualitative research to explore strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. A background of the problem, purpose of the critical instance case study, and conceptual framework was developed to ensure uniformity in how this critical instance case study was developed and explored. The critical instance case study was developed from a systematic exploration of existing literature regarding employee engagement and turnover in the restaurant industry. A detailed literature review of the history of the restaurant industry, issues related to engagement and turnover in the restaurant industry, theories related to the topic of study, and interpersonal communication and relationship was provided to align previous research with the problem and purpose of this critical instance case study. Steps were taken to ensure a detailed track record was established in the data collection process, that the interview process abides by the IRB requirements and participants were provided an opportunity to evaluate the data collected from the interview process for accuracy. I used random sampling to select participants and information was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews to allow the research questions to be asked and follow up questions to evolve in a way that created a contextual format for collecting data. The content was collected, and triangulation was used to develop themes that

provided richness in answering the research questions and provided context to the problem from the research.

Confirmability

The findings of this research evolved in the subjectivity of critical instances that occurred in the lives of managers who work in an industry where employee turnover is high, and engagement built on the foundation of their environment. Confirmability involves ensuring that the information collected can be confirmed by other researchers and establishes a means for qualifying and establishing that the results are not subject to the researchers bias or personal interpretation but based purely from the information collected from the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Qualitative research is not objective and relies on the subjective formality of minimizing bias and prejudices in research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). My role as the primary instrument in this critical instance case study was partially to be subjective in the interpretation of the future data collect but also to ensure my subjectivity was not skewed in bias from my experience in the restaurant industry. A detailed audit trail of content from the interview process was collected and recorded in verbatim with the participants exact words and content interpreted to develop themes to avoid bias in personal interpretation. Transparency was established by providing a rich description of the research steps taken from the start of the research project to the development and findings of the research and a record of the research path was kept throughout the critical instance case study.

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Study Results

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The overarching research question for this study was, "What strategies do

hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement?" Ten general managers from the partner restaurant company were chosen for the critical instance case study. The participants were location in southern and northern California, the Denver area of Colorado, and Chicago, IL. Participant interviews took place over Skype video and were conducted at a time and place where the participants were able to be in a secluded room and felt comfortable providing a detailed response to each of the semi structured interview questions (see appendix B). In addition to the semi structured interviews, I reviewed any additional information provided from the company to triangulate and confirm the data provided.

The conceptual framework for this critical instance case study was the Social Penetration Theory. The concept of the Social Penetration Theory is that personal relations are built on the foundation of rewards and cost benefits associated with building personal relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973) which was found in Cook's Social Exchange Theory and symbolizes relationship building as an analogy of peeling back layers within communication to increase the levels of relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Cook, 1987). I reviewed the framework within the study to develop a better understanding of the strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. Several participant responses supported the concepts within the Social Penetration Theory.

Response to Interview Questions

How do you Build Relationships with your Employees?

      The relationship people have with each other stems from their ability to interpersonally connect with one another. As discussed in the Social Penetration Theory (Altman & Taylor, 1963), relationships are built on the foundation of stages. First, people meet, then they socialize and communicate with each other, and finally the relationship begins to build. Relationships begin to strengthen through trust as people continue to build upon the relationship. The steps it takes to strengthen the relationship is secured by adding value to the relationship building process but can be deducted when poor relationship building behaviors are exerted. Ghofar et al. (2018) suggested that interpersonal relationships in communication builds trust and respect in the work environment leading to improvements in organizational culture, performance, and turnover. Managers who work towards building a foundation of communicating with their employees in ways that build loyalty towards a brand and the people they work with. The participants in this critical instance case study exerted behaviors that speak to these types of communication methods leading to improvements in building relationships with their employees. P2 established friendships by working together with the employees. "So, I'll get in there, figure out what's going on, and try my best to do what I can to give them support or help them". "It makes them feel great. It makes them feel appreciated and makes them feel like they're cared for. And to show that someone is there to listen, which is the most important thing". P4 stated, "I try to be as positive as possible with staff when it comes to critiquing anything they're doing. I mean, you know, I overshare

with them from time to time. But I think, you know, just by leading by example in that circumstance can create a sort of safe space for people. Yes. I must say, when it comes to how everyone else thinks about how I speak to them, you know, they're not someone underneath me. They're an equal to me. And that is how I do my interaction and in my work with my staff". In both examples, the participants connect with their employees through one-on-one interactions and conversations. They get to know the employees, work side by side with them, and treat them as equals in the workplace.

People also want their voice to be heard and want leaders that are strong in their ability to lead great operations. Leaders that allow their people to be heard gain results in building trusting relationships in the workplace. P2 shared that, "Lot of people would like to feel like their voice is heard". "I have one on one conversations to ensure I can hear everything they are saying and hear if there's anything I can do to help them improve their experience here. Also encourage them to let me know. Like, basically, I have open door policy if there's anything troubling you in or outside of work". Positive reinforcement by managers can aid in the process of getting employees to become more open in the relationship building process. P4 shared that, "I like to critique the employees work but praise them for the efforts that they are making to open and close the restaurant". P5 enjoys finding commonalities with the employees "I try and find something in common with them and then bond in ways that helps them to feel important and willing to share their feelings and thoughts with me". By listening to the employees and having a management style that is supportive and trusting, employees are more

willing to interpersonally connect with the manager. Thus, leading to improvements in the relationship and ones' intent to quit.

What Role Does Relationship Building Play in Reducing Turnover and Where Would You Place Priority on Relationship Building Versus Other Priorities of Retention?

The role that relationship building plays in reducing turnover can have a direct impact on whether an employee quits. In a study conducted by Baack et al. (2000), the social penetration theory was used to study the effects of ethical decisions in the workplace. Social penetration was described as a process that people go through to make relationship decisions. These decisions were known as rewards and costs. When a person feels that they are valued, supported, understood, and cared for, a feel of rewards allows the relationship to strengthen. A cost is observed a person does not have these feelings (Baack et al.; 2000). As the relationship changes, so does one's trust and feelings for another person. When a person feels and received positive reinforcements from another, the bond of their relationship will begin to strengthen. The result becomes a stronger bonded relationship. All participants in the critical instance case study indicated that building relationships was the number one strategy they had with engaging their employees and helping to reduce turnover.

What Interpersonal Communication Skills Do You Use to Improve Employee Turnover in the Workplace?

Proper communication builds trust, respect, openness, and connective relationships. The foundations of relationships are developed from the aspects of communication such as one-on-ones (Awad and Alhashemi, 2012). Managers who

effectively communicate are more open minded to their employees' thoughts and feelings and felt empathy for others. People who are challenged in a positive way, felt accountable for the work they did, and who felt a part of the overall team were more engaged and happier in their role (Awad and Alhashemi; 2012). The participants in the critical instance case study shared that caring for and building a strong culture in the workplace was a way that improve the overall engagement of the team and the relationship with employees. P3 shared that, "development of the people, doing one on one conversations, and getting to know them on a personal level" was a strategy used to improve the turnover in the restaurant and that "building that bond of knowing things about each other" helped to strengthen the performance of the individuals and team. P6, P7, and P8 were similar in their strategies and explained that the efforts they put into building the relationship showed success in the performance of the restaurant. P6 stated that, "you need to let them know what the expectations are and that anyone can reach them" which meant that over communicating goals and expectations with the team helped the team understand what they were responsible for and what was needed to achieve their goals. Communication needs to be fair, and managers needs to be approachable in their tactics. P6 used this type of tactic to build upon the relationship with the employees and stated that "you have to keep things fair, attainable, and be approachable in helping the team throughout their journey".

The working environment is controlled by the manager and how they support their employees. Training, coaching, and developing people aids in supporting a positive working environment; however, the consistency in how often and the type of support is

given influences the relationship of the job being performed and ones' intent to quit

(Yousaf et al., 2019). Interpersonal communication builds inclusive relationships and

affection towards others. The interpretation of how a manager communicates leads to

trust which form loyalty, satisfaction, and a decreased intent to quit (McManus & Mosca,

2015). P7 shared that helping to reduce turnover means you must "give them ownership

in their work and aid in the process of developing the talent on the team". P6 noted the

same but added that, "you must be consistent in your approach, whether in expectations,

how you communicate, when you communicate, and to be kind and fair in your approach.

Being intentional in this process is key to leading an engaged team. P6, P8, and P9 used

an intentional approach to building the strength of their team. P6 stated that, "being

intentional with how you model your communication style and sharing your expectations

with your team" influence stronger engagement. P9 "over shares information with the

team" which helped employees feel that they always knew what was going on in the

business and company and P8 said that the number one way to communicate with

employees is to "have great listening skills". The tactics shown by the participants

aligned with the conceptual framework in the interpersonal communication skills they

used improved the interpersonal relationships they had with their employees leading to

increased engagement levels and reductions in turnover.

What Interpersonal Communication Skills Would you use to Improve Employee

Engagement in the Workplace?

Interpersonal communication as a means of improving engagement elevates the

level of loyalty and trust an employee has with their manager and place of work. Ghofar

et al. (2018) explored the relationship between interpersonal communication and workplace engagement and found that employee engagement is directly influenced by interpersonal communication. Their study showed that interpersonal communication consisted of open dialog related to personal conversations, showing empathy, positive thinking towards employees, and maintaining equality in how each person is treated in the work environment. Interpersonal communication bonds people through a common vision, similar views, interests, and insights amongst other people, improves performance, organizational commitment, commitment to personal responsibilities, and self-engagement (Ghofar et al., 2018). The higher the level of interpersonal communication between employer and employee, the higher the commitment of performance.

Communication is a shared or mutual understanding of shared views, share perceptions of information, and a process of sending and receiving information. How an employee receives the information determines the outcome of work performance and engagement. Communication is translated by humans into symbols which allow people to encode, process, and respond. One-on-one communication, while not typically observed in the working environment, is an important concept that helps to improve how information is delivered and decoded, processed, and responded to. One-one-one conversations gives managers the ability to communicate in a more intimate environment so that the message can received more intimately (Ghofar et al., 2018).

The participants in this critical instance case study shared similar strategies in their interpersonal communication strategies that influenced strong employee

engagement. They engaged with their employees by "getting to know their people and making them feel comfortable" as shared by P3 or "recognizing and acknowledging people" and "sharing ideas and thoughts" as stated by P9 and P8. All the participants used a strategy of having a strong development system for improving the engagement level of their teams. P5 said that "the only way I was able to turn around my business was by showing and acting on a commitment of developing the crew" and that "the success of my business was solely because I took time to train, develop, and build a strong culture in the restaurant". All participants in the critical instance case study embraced their employees and challenged them to be the best versions of themselves. P3 explicitly stated, "my employees come before me" and that "I do everything I can to elevate them". This stated was powerful in terms of strategy and was observed in other participants data. P9 and P10 both shared that "doing everything I can for the employees meant sacrificing personally to ensure they had a great experience". This type of strategy helped to build trust and respect in the workplace which aided each of the participants with engaging their teams.

How Have Any Strategies You've Used to Establish Interpersonal Relationships Improved the Performance of Your Team?

The relationship a manager has with employees enhances motivation, control, and workplace performance which provides the fuel for improving stronger success within organizations (Ogbeide et al., 2017). Managers who empower their team members by influencing them to take the lead in resolving guest issues and taking action to use the tools and resources within the restaurant to operate show stronger signs of operational

results.

The integrity a manager has is a key component to improving the performance of the team and reducing turnover in the business (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020). Employees want to feel encouraged, understood, and enthusiastic about their workplace. The integrity built between managers and employees lies in the managers ability to develop an environment where employees feel this sense on belongingness. Job embeddedness lies in the relationship between work practices and trust in the supervisor (Afsar et al.; (2018). A manager who builds trust through their actions and develops interpersonal relationships can improve the engagement of employees leading to improvements in turnover. P3 shared that "I build relationships by trying to the best manager I can be towards my people. I challenged them to be the best, I work side by side with them, and I'm empathic to their needs. Doing this has helped me to build strength in my team". P6 built a stronger team by "developing a partnership with the people which has led to improvements in turnover". P6 said that being a "rock for the people" meant challenging them to "be great at what they do, challenging them to be better, and empowering them to take ownerships". P7 shared similar strategies by added that "I've gotten to the point where my team executes without me even getting out what I need them to do". All participants were successful in building trust and respect from their teams and that led to the improvements of the performance of the team. P7 stated that "I believe there's a level of trust with most of them and they can be honest and open with me". P7 further shared that, "I see less self-interest and more people going the extra mile to perform".

How Have Any Strategies You've Used to Establish Interpersonal Relationships
Improved the Performance of Individuals on Your Team?

Creating a comfortable environment and making jobs more interesting and meaningful improves intrinsic motivation leading to engagement and job performance (Putra et al., 2017). Managers who create environments of trust, of interests, and meaningful improves ones' engagement in their job. This type of environment enriches the culture of how employees behave, act, work together, function as a team, and perform in a fun and friendly way (Putra et al., 2017). Employees are more dedicated to their job and supervisor, more absorbed in the working environment, and yield more vigor in their actions to perform. In the center of this is the manager and how they engage with their employees. The working relationship between the environment and the supervisor improves the focus of employees in their roles, attentiveness, and the connection between people (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Research shows that the working environment encourages improvement in performance creativity (Yeh & Huan, 2017) and when increased, workplace performance also improves (Wu & Chen, 2015). Employees who are supported and encouraged in a positive manner to perform show greater results in the quality and the quantity of the work. P3 develops these types of connections and shared that "it feels like a respect that people have now, they want to do a good job because they know that I have responsibilities and that we're going to take care of them". P6 finds ways to elevate the employees by "trying to find a way that I can support them, that it might be elevating their day jobs" and "being a mentor, realizing their potential, and spending some time

with this person". P7 shared that the performance of the individuals on the team has improved greatly. The participants stated "I think what comes to mind is that each person on the team feels important. They are developed properly, encouraged to be the best, and welcomed as a part of the working family". The employees, "think more from a guest perspective and treat the business in the same manner". P5 explained that using communication strategies, being a good leader for the employees, and caring for them has "led to individuals on the team to want more from a career in the restaurant industry," "they want to grow more in their role, are inspired to be a part of the team," and "have a stronger sense of purpose in the business".

How Have Any Strategies You've Used to Establish Interpersonal Relationships Improved the Performance of Your Restaurant?

Supportive environments lead to reductions in stress and performance improvements when managers create an environment where employees feel good about what they do, feel supported by their manager, and feel strong about the purpose they have in the work being completed (Frye et al., 2019). The emotional episodes stemming from supportive environments is perceived as either positive or negative depending on how employees feel about their work environment (Okeke et al., 2016). P6 stated that, "I think whenever you have people's buy in and you can pivot a lot easier because they're bought into the person delivering the message or bought into the greater good, they're brought into the organization more and they feel connected to folks higher up or conformed connected to more people in the organization because again, they know that you've made a ton of relationship deposits and so you need to make a withdrawal. This

has led us to improving the overall performance of the restaurant". P6 had seen improvements in the performance of the restaurant because, "when people are feeling like they're in survival mode or when they are not taken care of, they don't perform. There's a kind of a propensity for them to do the bare minimum. But when you want more and invest in your people, it becomes a lot easier when folks feel like you've invested in them". P7 has "seen food go out with a little bit of more care, you know, and shown a little pride in things. I've had people come to me. Identifying issues rather than just ignoring them, which has really made a big difference" and "we've seen scores improve in the restaurant and in different ways. We've actually seen a more general trend towards some better feedback from guests because of the work done to improve the relationship with the employees".

Emerging Themes

Based on the interviews conducted, three emerging themes derived from the data with specific tactical themes the participants use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The three themes were having strong communication skills, building relationships in the workplace, and the engagement of the team. The tactical themes for strong communication skills were communicating and connecting with people and the personal characteristics of a manager. The tactical themes for building relationships in the workplace were caring and appreciating people and developing a strong workplace culture. The tactical themes for engagement of the team were having a strong development system for people, solving problems quickly and providing feedback, and

effective workplace management. The following Figure 2 shows the relationship between the primary themes and their tactical themes identified from the data collected from the participants compared to the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 1.

Figure 2

Key Strategies Managers Use Compared to Conceptual Framework
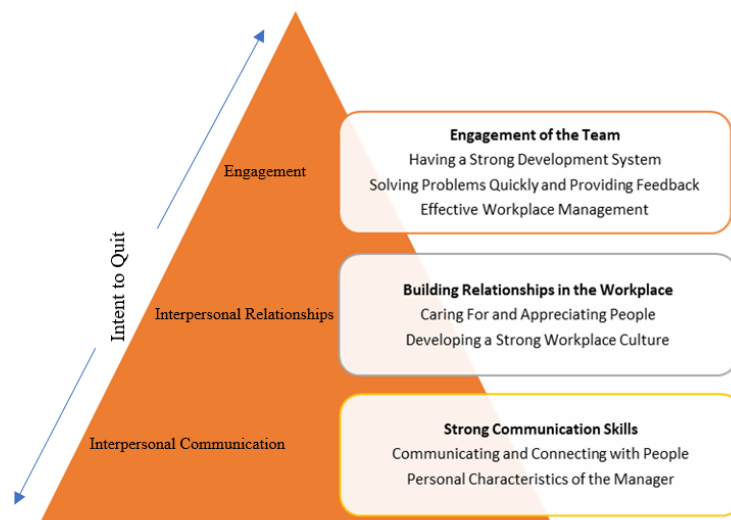
Emergent Theme 1: Having Strong Communication Skills

The emerged tactical themes were (a) communicating and connecting with people and (b) the personal characteristics of a manager.

Communicating and Connecting with People. Having strong team dynamics, developing workplace relationships, having strong interpersonal skills, collaborating with people, and being empathic to others were tactics used by the participants to communicate and connect with people aided with this emerging theme. The participants shared that communicating with their employees and connecting with them interpersonal was a strong way to build relationships and trust in the workplace. P1 stated,

"You have to be an active participant and engage conversations with them. I think it's important to always greet your employees, even if they were at the restaurant before you arrived. Just making sure you go around and make contact with everyone. Check in, see how they're doing. Let them know that you're engaged and are happy that you're there being there with them".

P2 share that "if you're working with someone, I think you should get to know them on a personal level" and P3 stated that "definitely the getting to know someone first and building that bond of knowing things about each other" are most important to them when connecting with their employees.

The Personal Characteristics of a Manager. A managers' style of managing, their personal characteristics, traits, and having a positive mindset were specifics tactics used by the participants describing this emerging theme. P2 shared that having a positive attitude "makes them feel great. It makes them feel appreciated and makes them feel like they're cared for. And to show that someone is there to listen, which is the most important thing". P2 also shared that his management style is more "caring and loving in nature and that this style brings a lot to the table. It helps the employees open up more and get closer to me" and that "my style improves the morale of the team and that if my morale slows down; the team's morale will do the same". P2 stated that having a positive attitude "helps to improve their experience", "encourages them to open up more", and "builds a family environment".

Having one on one conversations and maintaining consistency was another leadership style approach used by participants to communicate with employees. P6 shared that,

"So when, when I know I'm going to have a direct report type relationship or maybe it's a peer relation of someone that I know I'll work with in a closer capacity, more than just a meet and greet with maybe entry level folks in the organization. I'll set up the cadence depending on the relationship, but if it's a direct report or someone I work with routinely, I set up a like a weekly cadence with them. I feel like a week of weekly touch basis is better than biweekly or once a period",

and that "I think that adds a lot of trust in equity as well. But giving them visibility one on one and visibility in a group setting I think is an important partnership to building relationships". P6 also shared that not putting too much pressure on employees and being fully transparent is an effective way to build operational results in the statement,

"I'm in the relationship building season, so I'm not going to apply pressure or try to execute results. And I think you can do both if you do it the right way. But it comes with transparency. And this is the objective, you know, that we're that we're striving for. But I think as long as you recognize as you're supporting their path toward those results and they know that and they can feel that you're with them on that, it doesn't feel like you're delegating tasks while trying to build relationships, feels more like a partnership is growing".

P3 had a similar style of leadership and shared that "getting to know people and making them comfortable and provided more engagement and builds trust and respect because you're on that on a different level and improves the personal connection that we've developed and that definitely improves". P8 stated, I don't ever treat them like they're less important than anyone else", "everyone to me is equally important to have an equal say in everything, regardless of what their position is or what their skill level is when they start", and that leaderships is "treating them like an equal, treating them with respect and not going into the relationships as the boss and they are supposed to do what I say". P8 also shared that, "you want to inspire them. So, you inspire them by building that relationship with them and making them feel like they're as important as everyone else".

Emergent Theme 2: Building Relationships in the Workplace

The emerged tactical themes were (a) caring for and appreciating people and (b) developing a strong workplace culture.

Caring For and Appreciating People. Employees within the workplace want to feel good about their environment and those they work with. The key tactics used by the participants shaping this emerging theme were emotional behaviors of management, helping develop a culture where employees felt satisfied with their work, active listening, and caring for employee's well-being. P9 shared that "I feel like if you take the complaints seriously, then they will feel like you're actually listening". P1 stated, "I make sure I go over and I thank them and I let everyone else really thank them and whatever it takes to make that recognition feel positive" and P10 shared that, "caring for people involves active listening and doing whatever it takes to support their personal and

professional needs" and "caring is about not only listening but also being willing to give tough feedback, support through encouraging personal growth, and giving your people constant feedback on their performance". P8 shared that the number one way to care for people in the restaurant is to be an active listener. P9 stated, "I would say the number one communication skills would be listening" and that "I think one of the things that really, you know, turns people away from wanting to work somewhere or to stay is not feeling listened to". Similarly, P10 shared that, "I think actively listening to them, to what they say, and what they don't say is an important way to show you care for them". P4 confirms active listening as a method for caring and appreciating employees with the statement, "I found that when I pay attention to what the team wants and needs, they connect with me better because I take action on the things they are telling me".

Developing a Strong Workplace Culture. People want to work in an environment where they feel a part of a team, cared for, inspired, nurtured, and empowered. These were considered soft skill tactics the participants used to develop a strong workplace culture. P8 stated,

> "I don't ever treat them like they're less important than anyone else. And everyone to me is equally important to have an equal say in everything, regardless of what their position is or what their skill level is when they start. So that's how I start. The relationship with him is treating them, treating them like an equal, treating them with respect and not going into the relationships" and "you want to inspire them. So, you inspire them by building that relationship with them and making them feel like they're as important as everyone else".

P4 "gives employees specific tasks, makes them feel a part of the team, and engages with employees throughout the workday". This is also done by,

> "Working side by side where one person handles the back half of the store, and then I work on cleaning the bathrooms, counter toilets, scrub, you know, cleaning mirrors. I take turns with everyone doing so they see that I'm out here doing the exact same things so that they see that I am willing to do the same things they are required to do".

P10 also works in building a strong culture by working side by side with the employees. P10 shares, "I work side by side with my people. They need to know that we are a family and that I am no different than they are." P10 stated that, "as a manager you have to build a culture where everyone is treated the same, fair, and given the opportunity to be a part of a family environment". P3 had a similar approach and shared that, "building a connection with the team helps to develop a culture where they feel comfortable and more engaged leading to trust and respect".

Emergent Theme 3: The Engagement of the Team

The emerged tactical themes were (a) having a strong development system for people, (b) solving problems quickly and providing feedback, and (c) effective workplace management.

Having a Strong Development System for People. Employees want to feel that they have a development path for their careers. They want advancement whether it's career-based or just to have more responsibility in the workplace. Having professional development systems in place and collaborating with employees on their development

path were tactics used by participants to create a development system for people. P5

shared that "developing people is a primary strategy used to establish relationships" and

that "people are always looking for ways to improve and grow in his restaurant, so I like

to develop people a lot and look for ways to develop people individually". P2 stated that,

"cross training and development of people leads to higher levels of engagement". P5 also

"cross trains people in order to give them more responsibilities and help them to feel

stronger as individuals". P10 places training at the top of strategies to improve

relationships and ones' intent to quit and shares,

> "I trained people quickly from the start of being hired in order to help them feel
>
> confident in what they are doing. I then immediately begin cross training them to
>
> help them become the expert in all positions. This way they all feel confident in
>
> what they are doing and engaged in the business."

P9 stated, "training people is the most effective way we've been able to retain people,

build confidence, and engaged the team in feeling a part of the restaurant". P9 also shared

that "training is the number one strategy used to empower and engage the team".

Solving Problems Quickly and Providing Feedback. Gaining trust with

employees was a tactic used by participants to develop stronger engagement in the

workplace. The participants shared that seeking information and solving problems

quickly improved their ability to gain trust with their employees. P9 shared, "I want to

know what is going on with employees so that I can help them to resolve any issue they

have. The quicker I can take care of an issue, the more trust I can build with them". P9

also stated that "when you have good people, you want to make sure you take care of

them by quickly fixing problems they have. For example, if something isn't right in the restaurant and they approach me about it, I need to quickly address the issue and resolve it in order to build trust with them". On the other hand, P9 also shared that "I also need to make sure I am being openly honest with my team and providing them with feedback that will help them to become better at what they are doing". P3 had similar views on solving problems in the workplace. His approach was simply to "build strong interpersonal relationships with the employees to help reduce the pressure of the work environment". P3 accomplished this by "building a relationship with them where they felt comfortable with providing a problem knowing that the problem would get corrected quickly". P3 said that "building trust in the workplace means making sure you are taking care of employees' needs quickly, addressing areas of opportunity with them, and celebrating success when it occurs". P10 also addressed issues quickly and provides open feedback to opportunities and areas of success. She stated, "I'm not just telling them what they want to hear. I'm telling them what they need to hear and in doing so, it may be difficult to hear but it's open, honest, and only fair to them that I communicate with them that way in order to build trust with them". P10 also states that "being open and honest in your communication leads to better relationship because the employees know what to expect and are never blind-sided". Furthermore, she shared that "if you're honest with them; they will in turn be honest with you".

     Effective Workplace Management. Creating a stress-free environment and time management skills were two tactics participants used to create effective workplace management. Building interpersonal relationships with employees occurs with the start of

their journey at work. P2 shared that "from the start of an employees' employment, he introduces himself and ensures the new employee follows the correct orientation process for beginning their work". In doing so, the new employee, "feels engaged, knowledgeable, and informed from the beginning leading to improved work habits". P1 found that great time management skills lead to stronger workplace management. He stated, "there are a lot of hours in the day, and you need to come to work with a plan. If you don't have a plan, stuff just starts flying at you which leads to frustration since there is not direction or a timeline of when things need to be prepared or completed". He also comments that,

> "For me, I know each day of the week what's my expectation of myself to accomplish for that day? And you kind of set up your timing throughout the day to have little pockets where you knock out good, important things but are still on the floor and ready to engage with the team and guests so that they feel and understand that you're not just checked out while you're doing your own thing".

Time management, as well as creating a stress-free environment, was observed with ensuring the right people were on the team and that timely decisions were made to terminate people that did not fit into the culture of the company. P8 stated,

> "When I first started in this role, I was not allowed to remove the bad apples from my team per instruction from my superior. This created a very toxic work environment with other on the team. When I was finally able to make my own decisions on who I wanted on the team, I made the decision quickly which turned around the engagement level of the team".

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. Based on the results of the study, managers in the hospitality industry have three primary strategies and seven strategy tactics they use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees to reduce turnover and improve employee engagement. The first is that the manager must possess strong communication skills by communicating and connecting with people interpersonally and having influential management characteristics that inspire and empower employees. The second strategy is to build relationships in the workplace by caring for and appreciating people while also establishing a strong workplace culture. The third strategy is to engage the team by having a strong development system, solving problems quickly, providing feedback, and having effective workplace management skills. The combination of the three primary strategies and the seven tactics was a focus the participants in the study used to help improve the engagement level and intent to quit of their employees which aligned with the conceptual framework and other literature used in the study. In Chapter 5, I will summarize the interpretation of the findings, define any limitations of the study, provide recommendations based on the study, describe implications for social change, and provide a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this critical instance case study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. By gaining an in-depth understanding of relational communication, the gap associated with employee relationships in the restaurant industry can be addressed to improve workplace engagement and the intent to quit. For this critical instance case study, I used a qualitative research method, which is used to understand a complex phenomenon, individuals, and groups in situations where experiences are conceptualized in a way that reflects personal meaning and interpretation and involves people, interactive observations, social settings, and communicative interactions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Sandelowski, 2011). Quantitative research was not used in this critical instance case study because they are based on numeric information to explain a phenomenon (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2018; Patton 2015), and I did not test hypotheses or the effects of variables.

Interpretation of Findings

Three primary themes that define strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement evolved from this critical instance case study. The first theme was that managers in the restaurant hospitality industry focus their attention on developing strong communication skills. These skills were linked to interpersonal communication, which was identified in the conceptual framework and discussed in the literature review. This involved connecting interpersonally with people and having management

characteristics that influence and empower employees to perform their work and enjoy their job. The second theme was that managers in the hospitality industry build strong relationships in the workplace. They do this through caring for, appreciating people, and developing a strong workplace culture. These skills were also linked to the conceptual framework for interpersonal relationships and discussed in the literature review. The third theme was that managers in the hospitality industry work toward building the engagement of the team. They do this through having a strong development system, solving problems, providing feedback quickly, and being effective in the management of the workplace.

Emergent Theme 1: Developing Strong Communication Skills

The results of the study showed similarities with the literature in that the connection the manager made with their employee through various communication and the type of management styles inspired a less stressful work environment and improvements in employee engagement leading to reductions in turnover. Having strong communication skills through communicating and connecting with people and having positive manager skills and characteristics is supported by researchers who suggested that the perception employees have about their manager affects the output of their engagement levels in the work they perform (Orlowski et al., 2020). The participants in the study shared that creating environments where one-on-one conversations were a part of their management routines to develop interpersonal relationships influenced stronger restaurant cultures leading to improvements in engagement and reductions in turnover. Management characteristics such as warmth, competency, and moral attributes enhance

employee engagement and help build interpersonal relationships with managers

(Orlowski et al., 2020). When employees feel good about what they are doing, are less

stressed at work, and do not feel burned out in their job, they are less likely to quit

(Soelton et al., 2020). In the study, successful positive management behaviors helped

with team, individual, and restaurant performance, which aided in stronger engagement.

Having strong communication skills through communicating and connecting with

people and having positive manager skills and characteristics aligns with the social

penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973). How individuals communicate with others

has a direct effect on the free will of employees to engage in interpersonal relationships

with management. How people make ethical decisions, why they make those choices, and

how they come up with the decisions are based on personality, characteristics, and

leadership behaviors exerted through those they surround themselves with (Baack et al.,

2020). The cycles of these behaviors are influenced by deeper patterns of rewards and

costs (Baack et al., 2020) associated with how they are treated, communicated with, and

influenced. Managers in the study showed that their strong communication skills were

imperative to the success of connecting with their people and were considered one of the

most important strategies used to develop engagement and reductions in turnover in the

workplace.

Emergent Theme 2: Building Relationships in the Workplace

Managers in the study noted that the nurturing care they had for their people made

a significant effect on interpersonal relationships, leading to improvements in

engagement and reductions in turnover. Building relationships in the workplace through

caring for and appreciating people and developing a strong workplace culture is supported by the literature (Frye et al., 2020). Intent to quit is reduced when managers place relationship building as a topic priority in leading teams (Frye et al., 2020). Employees want to feel appreciated, have a sense of belongingness, and feel that they have support from their managers (Frye et al., 2020), which also aligned with strategies the participants utilized with their employees. The intent to quit when a strong culture is built is further reduced when the actions of a manager to build loyalty in the workplace, develop a culture of encouragement, and helping employees feel good about their role is action-based (Akpotu & Ozioko, 2020). The results of this critical instance case study concluded that developing a strong culture of giving meaning and purpose to ones' work influences performance leading to engagement. Furthermore, when managers develop a culture of caring and appreciation, interpersonal relationships begin to develop leading to improvements in the engagement of employees (Afsar et al., 2018; Frye et al., 2020). This was apparent in each of the managers' strategies used to develop an environment where people felt a part of a team, appreciated, and supported.

Building relationships in the workplace through caring for and appreciating people and developing a strong workplace culture aligned with Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory and Cook's (1987) social exchange theory, which support a need to build relationships by creating a nurturing, encouraging, and influential environment for people to improve relationships. As layers are peeled back in the relationship building process, the relationship moves from a superficial point and on to a deeper level where intimacy in the relationship could be met (Cook, 1987). Caring for

and having appreciation for employees adds to a positive working environment. In this environment relationships become stronger (Altman & Taylor, 1973). A culture where social exchanges are introduced builds working partnerships and a mechanism for resilience in the workplace (Meng et al., 2017).

Emergent Theme 3: Engagement of the Team

The engagement of the team through having a strong development system for people, solving problems quickly and providing feedback, and effective workplace management emphasized that engagement is a result of being satisfied and treated fairly at work (Lu et al., 2016). Strong development systems improve the overall performance of employees and gives them a sense of knowledge and understanding in the workplace which leads to engagement, empowerment, involvement, and being more active in the role (Hui-Ling & Yu-Hsuan, 2011). The managers in the critical instance case study placed development of their team as a top strategy for supporting the growth of engagement in the workplace and shared that when people felt more knowledgeable of their job, they were less likely to quit.

The affiliation an employee has about their manager affects the output of their engagement level in the work they perform which is emphasized when managers solve problems quickly and provide consistent feedback (Orlowski et al., 2020). The level of support a manager provides through quickly addressing issues, solving problems and the training they receive enhances the working environment creating a sense of dedication to the organization (Consiglio et al., 2016; Nazir & Islam, 2017). The participants used the strategy of solving problems quickly as a method for gaining trust and respect. Their

employees appreciated them more when problems were resolved quickly, their questions were answered, and various tasks were taken care of in a timely manner. Additionally, the participants were not afraid to provide feedback to their employees whether it was good or bad. This tactic helped the employees know where they stood with job performance and what they needed to do to get better.

The engagement of the team through having a strong development system for people, solving problems quickly and providing feedback, and effective workplace management aligned with the Social Penetration Theory where how one performs in putting effort into the relationship building process will lead to increased levels of engagement in the relationship (Altman & Taylor; 1973). On the other hand, if little effort is given to process, decreased levels of engagement occur. The concept of building relationships found in the Social Penetration Theory is based on the needs of people, what people look for in relationships, and how they interpersonally connect with each other; therefore, when managers provide training, quickly resolve problems, and are effective in managing the workplace, the relationship grows stronger leading to increased levels of engagement.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations in qualitative research are restrictions within a study that are not able to be controlled (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). This critical instance case study included many inherent limitations. First, there are numerous types of restaurant companies consisting of fast-food, casual dining, full service, fast casual, and quick service. Each type of restaurant company had its' own set of issues related to turnover, engagement,

and service standards which affected how people responded to the conditions of their

environment. Size of the company, public or private companies, and established national

or international brands created limitations for this critical instance case study. This was

considering brands have various ways of coaching, educating, and developing leadership

and management roles that improve performance, key performance based on specific

brand expectations affecting performance, and the financial position of the company

allowing for higher wages, salaries, and bonus structures which influences performance.

This study consisted of only fast casual restaurants which limited the findings to

potentially other industry issues related to engagement and turnover. Second, only a small

population of restaurants in the United States were used for the study which limited how

the findings may improve other restaurant brands across the country. The study was

limited to only exploring the methods managers used to communicate with employee but

not how the communication is being perceived by the employees. In addition, I explored

methods that managers who have been successful with improving interpersonal

relationships with employees which left a void in understanding why managers who do

not communicate well lose employees. The critical instance case study was limited to

issues related to the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak and how restaurant companies responded

to forced governmental shutdowns for dine-in service, limited hours of operations, the

increase in digital ordering, how customers and employees responded to COVID-19,

eating out, and working in potentially unsafe conditions.

Employee turnover reporting, employee files, and any other relevant information

was limited to only what the company was willing to share which limited my ability to

fully understand the company's engagement and turnover position. The study was limited to working with only general managers and their field support personnel who manage larger markets. Time of year when the participants were selected and when the interviews took place created limitations due to seasonality turnover. Current working conditions, pressures from company expectations, and managers having an adverse day, week, or month created limitations on interview responses leading to biases. Each restaurant did not operate the same and had different issues related to engagement and turnover which created limitations. This included how people responded to social and economic issues, hiring practices of managers, cultural variations of restaurant employees, age groups of employees, and race, sexual orientation, and gender within the workplace. These factors affected why people chose to quit, how engaged they were at work, and how they responded to management. The findings presented in this critical instance case study were limited to a small sample size and did not apply to a broader population.

Recommendations

The purpose of this critical instance case study was to investigate strategies hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. Managers in the hospitality industry should adopt strategies that aid in improving the engagement of employees, inspire employees to be the best versions of themselves, and create an environment where employees feel good about what they are doing to support the overall functions within the operations of the business. Managers who adopt such strategies are more likely able to retain their employees.

The results of this critical instance case study are relevant to restaurant organizations with field leadership, hospitality management teams, and human resource managers. Implementing effective strategies to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees are important for hospitality managers who want to reduce turnover and improve employee engagement. The participants in this study were successful in improving turnover and engagement levels by utilizing the strategies identified in the critical instance case study. This study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with ten general managers working in the restaurant industry for a smaller regional brand located in Chicago, IL. The primary limitations found in the critical instance case study were the variability of size, structure, and uniformity of various restaurant companies, the company used was limited to the quick service industry, the population size used for the study, the perception of the strategies used by the employees, issues related to post COVID working environments, the lack of materials provided by the company, and overall variations in working environments.

To address these limitations, I recommend that future researchers explore other hospitality industry companies that vary in size and demographics. Larger national or global companies are more adapted to providing stronger diversity in restaurant portfolios. Results in these types of companies may be able to expand on various other strategies managers use based on training capabilities the brand possesses and expanded levels of operational support.

I recommend expanded knowledge in future research by exploring the research topic in other hospitality concepts. These concepts include, but are not limited to hotels,

full service, fast casual, fast-food, dining, virtual restaurants, ghost restaurant concepts, and cafés. Each of these types of concepts are different in how they operate, their training materials used, their hours of operations, their organizational structure, the type of employees they hire, the amount of compensation for managers and team members, type of food being served, and overall strategies used to develop and maintain focus on operational strategies. Exploring other types of restaurant concepts would provide a stronger worldly view of various strategies managers used to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. Additionally, other restaurant concepts also have their own set of issues and struggles related to turnover and engagement that future research could benefit from.

Another limitation found was that it is unknown as to whether or not the strategies managers in this critical instance case study use are perceived as effective ways to improve ones' intent to quit and workplace engagement. I recommend that future research be conducted on how employees in the hospitality industry respond to the strategies identified in this critical instance case study. Timing of this critical instance case study was achieved during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak which may have created subjective variables in how employees were perceiving management strategies based on the condition of the working environment. I further recommend that any topic related to the subject of this study may have differing outcomes due to not being conducted during the pandemic. By researching these limitations, we will have a better understanding of the acceptance of strategies managers use rather than the assumption that these strategies are related to improving turnover and engagement due to pandemic

working conditions.

Implications

The phrase "people don't leave their job; they leave their boss" is typically used to describe why people leave a company. This phrase held importance to this critical instance case study and one that must be addressed to reshape how managers lead their people. The actions a manager takes in the workplace will have an impact on employee's intent to quit through improving their interpersonal communication skills, building stronger interpersonal relationships, and engaging people in the workplace. This relationship will lead to a sense of purpose in the workplace, having a voice that is listened to, and inspiring a sense of purpose.

People want to feel supported, understood, and valued in the workplace. They want to have a sense of purpose in what they do, feel good about their role within a company, and have a desire to interpersonally connect with people in the workplace similar to the concepts discussed in the Social Penetration Theory (Altman & Taylor, 1963). The significance of this critical instance case study to social change was to provide insights into what specific strategies managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement. The relationships between managers and employees will lead to improvements in employee engagement and a reduction in turnover. The social change aspect of improving how managers lead their employees through having strong communication skills, building relationships in the workplace, and engaging their team can lead to better working environments for employees which will have a profound effect

on altering issues related to turnover in the restaurant industry.

The conceptual framework used in this critical instance case study was built on the foundation that interpersonal communication, interpersonal relationships, and engagement affects the degree to which employees in the workplace make decisions on their intent to quit. Each of these levels contained tactics that drove performance in ones' intent to quit. Strong communication skills involved communicating and connecting with people and having strong personal management characteristics. Building relationships in the workplace involved caring for, appreciating people, and developing a strong workplace culture. The engagement of the team involved having a strong development system, solving problems quickly and providing feedback, and effective workplace management. Interpersonal communication led to stronger interpersonal relationships which in turn led to improvements in engagement. As the three levels improve; so does the degree to which an employees' decision to quit also improves. As related in the study, the strategies of having strong communication skills, building relationships in the workplace, and engaging the team works as levers to increasing or decreasing ones' intent to quit. I found in the study that participants who possess these three strategies were effective in improving ones' intent to quit. Similarly, the same type of result to building relationships was also found in the relationship building process discussed in the Social Penetration Theory (Altman & Taylor, 1963). The improvement in ones' intent to quit, based on the three strategies identified in the study, can have a direct impact on helping the restaurant industry, leaders within the industry, and hospitality managers improve the working environment affecting how people make decisions on either stay

with or leaving a company.

My recommendation for practice is for hospitality companies to implement a system for effectively communicating and connecting with people and ensuring manager characteristics fit into the mold of treating people with respect and dignity, are empathetic and authentic to who they are, and are caring and supportive to their employees. Companies would develop strong workplace cultures where employees feel supported, inspired, and motivated in their role. They need to care for their employees and show appreciation for the work they are doing. Finally, companies should embrace a strong development system for personal growth regardless of the position one holds, ensure that managers are effectively solving problems quickly and provide effective and consistent feedback to their employees, and managing the business in a way that avoids stress and pressure from the day-to-day operations of the business. Adopting these strategies will have a direct impact on the engagement of employees and their intent to quit.

Conclusions

People, regardless of the positions they hold within an organization, just want to feel inspired, empowered, and motivated by their contribution to the company. They want to truly be a part of the overall importance of the environment in which they work in and they want to feel loved and cared for by their managers. They want to feel engaged as a part of an empowered ecosystem and they want to know there is a development path for personal growth within the company.

This study was meant to bridge the gap in the relationships between managers and their employees leading to engagement and turnover. As simple as the message may seem

within the context of the findings of this study, great communication, the ability to build relationships, and engaging people is the premise for successful management strategies leading to improvements in turnover. The art of accomplishing this lies in ones' ability to adopt the strategies outlined in this study, practice them daily, and effectively change the behaviors leading to turnover and disengagement of teams. Doing so will lead to growth and prosperity for not only the personal attributes of managing teams but also the positive cultural changes that can be achieved through team engagement and retention.

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Appendix A: Example of Coding

Table A1

Initial Coding into Categories

Initial Code	Example from Data	Emerging Categories
Desire for change/leaving, Employee engagement, Work enjoyment, Success/achievement, Success, Goal-setting, Fun at workplace Employee satisfaction	P9: "I feel like if you take the complaints seriously, then they will feel like you're actually listening" P1: "I make sure I go over and I thank them and I let everyone else really thank them and whatever it takes to make that recognition feel positive" P10: "caring for people involves active listening and doing whatever it takes to support their personal and professional needs" and "caring is about not only listening but also being willing to give tough feedback, support through encouraging personal growth, and giving your people constant feedback on their performance" P8: "the number one way to care for people in the restaurant is to be an active listener" P9: "I would say the number one communication skills would be listening" and that "I think one of the things that really, you know, turns people away from wanting to work somewhere or to stay is not feeling listened to" P10: "I think actively listening to them, to what they say, and what they don't say is an important way to show you care for them" P4: "I found that when I pay attention to what the team wants and needs, they connect with me better because I take action on the things they are telling me".	Interpersonal relationships based on caring for people's wellbeing: job satisfaction, emotions, relationships, employee wellbeing, attitudes and behaviors
Workplace dynamics, responsibilities/Duties, Work experience, Training/Teaching, Training programs, Team dynamics, Social Interaction, Relationship Building, Professional development, Prefer collaborative management, Management skills, Management experience, Interpersonal relationships, Interpersonal communication, Importance of personal	P1: "You have to be an active participant and engage conversations with them. I think it's important to always greet your employees, even if they were at the restaurant before you arrived. Just making sure you go around and make contact with everyone. Check in, see how they're doing. Let them know that you're engaged and are happy that you're there being there with them" P2: "if you're working with someone, I think you should get to know them on a personal level" P3 "definitely the getting to know someone first and building that bond of knowing things about each other" P2: "the first thing I do when I'm meeting new employees is I introduce myself and I open up so that I can give them the ability to trust me" P2: "have to establish friendship if we are to work together. I	Building relationships in the workplace through personal connection and collaboration: team dynamics, workplace relationships, interpersonal skills, communication, and collaboration

connection/relationships, Communication Skills Job security, Workplace culture: Manager strategies, Performance Improvement, Protection, Safe space, Turnover, Work-life balance

try to give them the support they need and help them out when they need it".

P8: "I don't ever treat them like they're less important than anyone else. And everyone to me is equally important to have an equal say in everything, regardless of what their position is or what their skill level is when they start. So that's how I start. The relationship with him is treating them, treating them like an equal, treating them with respect and not going into the relationships"

P9 "you want to inspire them. So you inspire them by building that relationship with them and making them feel like they're as important as everyone else"

P4 "gives employees specific tasks, makes them feel a part of the team, and engages with employees throughout the workday". This is also done by, "working side by side where one person handles the back half of the store, and then I work on cleaning the bathrooms, counter toilets, scrub, you know, cleaning mirrors. I take turns every everyone doing that so they see that I'm out here doing the exact same things so that they see that I am willing to do the same things they are required to do"

P7: "I work side by side with my people. They need to know that we are a family and that I am no different than they are."

P10 "as a manager you have to build a culture where everyone is treated the same, fair, and given the opportunity to be a part of a family environment"

P3: "building a connection with the team helps to develop a culture where they feel comfortable and more engaged leading to trust and respect"

P3: "I find common ground is the conversation I have with the employees"

P3: "I engage with the employees by working side by side with them, providing them with feedback on how they are doing, and am constantly understanding how they are doing and what they need from me for support"

Developing a Strong Workplace Culture through teamwork through organizational effectiveness and teamwork

Professional growth, Career Development: Professional development, Personal Development, Leadership potential, Education, Career transition, Career Career progression, Career path, Career growth, Career advancement and Career development

P5: "developing people is a primary strategy used to establish relationships" and that "people are always looking for ways to improve and grow in his restaurant, so I like to develop people a lot and look for ways to develop people individually"

P2: "cross training and development of people leads to higher levels of engagement"

P5: "cross trains people in order to give them more responsibilities and help them to feel stronger as individuals"

P10 "I trained people quickly from the start of being hired in order to help them feel confident in what they are doing. I then immediately begin cross training them to help them become the expert in all positions. This way they all feel confident in what they are doing and engaged in the business."

Having a strong development system for people: collaboration and career development

P9 stated, "training people is the most effective way we've been able to retain people, build confidence, and engaged the team in feeling a part of the restaurant"

P9 also shared that "training is the number one strategy used to empower and engage the team".

Addiction, Admiration, Autonomy, Criticism, Cynicism, Difficult decision-making, Directness, Emotions, Empathy, Endurance, Honesty, Laziness, Loyalty, Motivation, Negative attitude towards work, Openness, Risk-taking, Trustworthiness and Uncertainty

P1: "you have to engage in conversations with them"

P2: "make contact with your employees and be engaged with them"

P5: "give them a sense of assuredness"

P6: "it's important to recognize your people for what they are doing".

P2: "a positive attitude makes them feel great. It makes them feel appreciated and makes them feel like they're cared for. And to show that someone is there to listen, which is the most important thing"

P2: "caring and loving in nature and that this style brings a lot to the table. It helps the employees open up more and get closer to me"

P2: "my style improves the morale of the team and that if my morale slows down; the team's morale will do the same":

P2 stated that having a positive attitude "helps to improve their experience", "encourages them to open up more", and "builds a family environment".

P6: "So when, when I know I'm going to have a direct report type relationship or maybe it's a peer relation of someone that I know I'll work with in a closer capacity, more than just a meet and greet with maybe entry level folks in the organization. I'll set up the cadence depending on the relationship, but if it's a direct report or someone I work with routinely, I set up a like a weekly cadence with them. I feel like a week of weekly touch basis is better than biweekly or once a period"

P6: "I think that adds a lot of trust in equity as well. But giving them visibility one on one, but visibility in a group setting I think is an important partnership to building relationships"

P6: "I'm in the relationship building season, so I'm not going to apply pressure or try to execute results. And I think you can do both if you do it the right way. But it comes with transparency. And this is the objective, you know, that we're that we're striving for. But I think as long as you recognize as you're supporting their path toward those results and they know that and they can feel that you're with them on that, it doesn't feel like you're delegating tasks while trying to build relationships, feels more like a partnership is growing".

P3: "getting to know people and making them comfortable

A leadership style based on positive intentions and self-awareness: personal traits/qualities, positivity

and provided more engagement and builds trust and respect because you're on that on a different level and improves the personal connection that we've developed and that definitely improves"

P8 "I don't ever treat them like they're less important than anyone else", "everyone to me is equally important to have an equal say in everything, regardless of what their position is or what their skill level is when they start"

P8: "treating them like an equal, treating them with respect and not going into the relationships as the boss and they are supposed to do what I say"

P8: "you want to inspire them. So, you inspire them by building that relationship with them and making them feel like they're as important as everyone else".

Seeking information, Requesting elaboration, Requesting Contact Information, Request for examples, Request for email confirmation, Offer of help, Need for attention, Interviewing and Inquiry	P9: "when you have good people, you want to make sure you take care of them by quickly fixing problems they have. For example, if something isn't right in the restaurant and they approach me about it, I need to quickly address the issue and resolve it in order to build trust with them." P9: I also need to make sure I am being openly honest with my team and providing them with feedback that will help them to become better at what they are doing". P3: "build strong interpersonal relationships with the employees to help reduce the pressure of the work environment" P3 "building a relationship with them where they felt comfortable with providing a problem knowing that the problem would get corrected quickly" P3 "building trust in the workplace means making sure you are taking care of employees' needs quickly, addressing areas of opportunity with them, and celebrating success when it occurs" P10 "I'm not just telling them what they want to hear. I'm telling them what they need to hear and in doing so, it may be difficult to hear but it's open, honest, and only fair to them that I communicate with them that way in order to build trust with them". P10 "being open and honest in your communication leads to better relationship because the employees know what to expect and are never blind-sided and if you're honest with them; they will in turn be honest with you".	Quickly solving problems to build trust: workplace issues, information seeking, and problem solving
Team building, Staffing problems, Staffing patterns, Retention Strategies, Retention,	P2: "from the start of an employees' employment, he introduces himself and ensures the new employee follows the correct orientation process for beginning their work"	Managing time and people in the workplace: workplace management, time investment, and

Pride in work, Personnel changes, Mentoring, Management style, Management skills, Management, Job mobility, Job hiring, Job experience, Employment engagement, Employee retention, Employee Relations, Employee management, Employee loyalty, Employee engagement, Employee development, Employee connection, Coach-athlete relationship, Workplace relationships, Workload, Workplace, Workforce management, Work experience, Turnover reduction, Turnover, Training and Workforce management: Toxic work environment	P2: "feels engaged, knowledgeable, and informed from the beginning leading to improved work habits" P1: "there are a lot of hours in the day and you need to come to work with a plan. If you don't have a plan, stuff just starts flying at you which leads to frustration since there is not direction or a timeline of when things need to be prepared or completed". P1: "for me, I definitely know each day of the week what's my expectation of myself to accomplish for that day? And you kind of set up your timing throughout the day to have little pockets where you knock out good, important things but are still on the floor and ready to engage with the team and guests so that they feel and understand that you're not just checked out while you're doing your own thing". P8: "when I first started in this role, I was not allowed to remove the bad apples from my team per instruction from my superior. This created a very toxic work environment with other on the team. When I was finally able to make my own decisions on who I wanted on the team, I made the decision quickly which turned around the engagement level of the team"	stress management

Table A2

Emerging Categories into Emerging Themes (Strategies)

Emerging Categories	Notes on Emerging Themes	Emerging Themes (Strategies)
Interpersonal relationships based on caring for people's wellbeing: job satisfaction, emotions, relationships, employee wellbeing, attitudes and behaviors	Looking after your employees, supporting them and caring for the work they do shows that you care and appreciate them. This leads to engagement and the intent to stay.	Caring and Appreciating People
Building relationships in the workplace through personal connection and collaboration: team dynamics, workplace relationships, interpersonal skills, communication, and collaboration	Communicating with the employees builds interpersonal relationships that connects them to their work, the organization, and the managers.	Communicating and Connecting with People Interpersonally
Developing a Strong Workplace Culture through teamwork through organizational effectiveness and teamwork	The culture in the business pulls and connects people together, builds bonding relationships, and attracts people to their work and place of work.	Developing a Strong Workplace Culture
Having a strong development system for people: collaboration and career development	Developing people builds strength in the job, empowers people, and builds capabilities, and is a path for growth.	Having a Strong Development System for People
A leadership style based on positive intentions and self-awareness: personal traits/qualities, positivity	How a manager leads their people through good intent builds trust in the workplace leading to engagement, relationships, and improves ones' intent to quit.	Personal Characteristics of a Manager
Quickly solving problems to build trust: workplace issues, information seeking, and problem solving	Employees like to feel that their problems are being resolved quickly. Shows signs of integrity and trust leading to engagement.	Solving Problem Quickly and Providing Feedback
Managing time and people in the workplace: workplace management, time investment, and stress management	How a manager leads their place of business improves the environment leading to engagement and reductions in turnover.	Effective Workplace Management

Table A3

Emerging Themes (Strategies) into Themes

Emerging Themes (Strategies)	Themes	Notes on Relationships between Emerging Themes and Themes
Having a Strong Development System for People		Developing people, quickly solving problems quickly and operating an effective business was found to improve the engagement of the team.
Solving Problem Quickly and Providing Feedback	Engagement of the Team	
Effective Workplace Management		
Caring and Appreciating People		Employee relationships improve when managers care and appreciate their people and develop a workplace culture where employees feel supported, important, and empowered.
Developing a Strong Workplace Culture	Building Relationships in the Workplace	
Communicating and Connecting with People Interpersonally		How a manager manages their team, communicates with them, and interpersonally connects improved engagement and intent to quit.
Personal Characteristics of a Manager	Strong Communication Skills	

Appendix B: Copy of Research Instrument

Interview Questions

RQ1: What strategies do hospitality managers use to establish appealing interpersonal relationships with employees that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement?

Participant Interview Questions

How do you build relationships with your employees?

What role does relationship building play in reducing turnover?

Where would you place priority on relationship building vs other priorities of retention?

What interpersonal communication skills do you use to improve employee turnover in the workplace?

What interpersonal communication skills would you use to improve employee engagement in the workplace?

How have any strategies you've used to establish interpersonal relationships improved the performance of your team?

How have any strategies you've used to establish interpersonal relationships improved the performance of individuals on your team?

How have any strategies you've used to establish interpersonal relationships improved the performance of your restaurant?

What type of feedback do you get from employees to improve engagement in the workplace?

How do you manage your time to be able to build interpersonal relationships with your employees?