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Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Beauty Salon Employer Strategies Used to Improve Employee Retention

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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

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MA, Ashford University, 2017

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Retention strategies are important to beauty salon leaders as they directly affect retaining a reliable workforce. Grounded in self-determination theory, the purpose of this generic qualitative case study was to explore retention strategies used by some SME beauty salon leaders in the United States to improve employee retention. The participants were five SME beauty salon leaders who retained at least two employees for 2 consecutive years. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and company documents. The four themes from the thematic analysis were leadership, psychological needs satisfaction, motivation, and engagement. A key recommendation is to have SME beauty salon leaders create and maintain a formal plan for employee retention. The implications for positive social change include the potential for SME beauty salon owners to retain employees to contribute to consistent and stable economic growth in their communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my mother, Ruth Ann McGary Loyd Mack. I would not be here if it were not for her example of education and excellence. She invested in my future before I even understood who I was. She saw in me greatness and never allowed me to forget it. She provided money to pay my student loan off so I could return to school in my 40s to finish my BA. We never dreamed that this would be my story. My mom returned to school in her late 60s to get her doctorate, but unfortunately, Alzheimer's disease prevented her from realizing her dream. Who knew that her dream would become my reality. I love you, Mom. I will never forget the sacrifices you made to place me here. I hope I made you proud!

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I would like to acknowledge my professor, Dr. Janie Hall. She helped me through all of my doubts and insecurities. She helped me realize that I could do this and guided me every step of the way. I thank my mom for investing in me my entire life. Without my mother, I would not be who I am. I would like to acknowledge my sister Keisha for inspiring my topic. Finally, I want to acknowledge my entire family for always supporting me in all my endeavors.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

This generic qualitative study was an in-depth study of successful retention strategies in the beauty industry's small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) beauty salon sector. Creating and maintaining a viable retention strategy should be a priority for SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers because of the need for skilled workers. Ohunakin et al. (2020) established that retaining loyal and highly skilled employees is a critical challenge for organizations in all industries. Li et al. (2018) discovered that although some SMEs must adapt to a certain level of retention attrition, organizations that structure aspects of needs satisfaction in the corporate culture experience higher retention rates. Abdullah Al Mamun and Nazmul Hasan (2017) established that employees who need more training and learning opportunities will leave the organization to pursue growth opportunities. SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers could benefit from the information discovered during this study to retain their skilled workforce through successful retention strategies.

Background of the Problem

Many beauty salons in America are SMEs that are a part of the personal service sector. Chung and D'Annunzio-Green (2018) revealed that due to the lack of a more systematic talent management structure, many SMEs experienced difficulties retaining a reliable workforce and found added difficulties in developing recruitment and retention strategies. Additionally, when employers replaced skilled and seasoned workers, excessive costs were associated with increased resources, recruiting, and time (Cloutier et al., 2015). Some researchers' studies revealed that when employers failed to invest in

comprehensive strategies to retain staff, they incurred inflated costs (Dachner et al., 2021). Beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers potentially experience an economic benefit from retaining skilled laborers by avoiding the increased costs associated with the replacement process.

Problem Statement

SMEs have experienced difficulties retaining a reliable workforce (Chung & D'Annunzio-Green, 2018). The annual average quit rate for service industries is approximately 1.5 million annually (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2021). The general business problem was that some beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers used ineffective employee retention strategies. The specific business problem was that some SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers lacked strategies to improve employee retention.

Purpose Statement

This generic qualitative inquiry aimed to explore strategies some SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention. The targeted population included five salon owners, managers, or hiring managers in the United States who successfully incorporated strategies to improve employee retention. Beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers used their retention strategies to enhance organizational development and employee engagement. The implications for positive social change include the potential for beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers to increase economic stability throughout the communities they serve by providing stable employment opportunities for the local citizenry.

Nature of the Study

I selected the qualitative research methodology to explore the contributing factors that relate to effective employee retention strategies in the SME beauty salon industry. Researchers who use the qualitative method sufficiently gather observational data, which is highly valuable for gaining a more in-depth cognizance regarding a topic. Metnitz et al. (2020) revealed that observational data collection is highly valuable in exploring the full scope of a study for a given topic. Qualitative researchers discover usable data by posing open-ended questions to the targeted population and analyzing their responses (Yin, 2018). Alternatively, researchers use a quantitative approach as an analytical approach to report data (Levitt et al., 2018). I focused on exploring the topic through thematic analysis rather than an analytical lens; the quantitative methodology was inappropriate for the study. I did not select the mixed method because I did not use a quantitative component to explore participants' experiences. Researchers use the mixed-method approach to incorporate qualitative and quantitative data (Levitt et al., 2018). I selected a qualitative method to study the overarching research question.

I considered five possible qualitative research designs for my study: generic, phenomenological, ethnography, case study, and narrative. I selected the generic qualitative design approach to analyze employee retention in-depth as a complex social phenomenon. Researchers who use generic qualitative design have the freedom and tools to explore a phenomenon through observation, semistructured interviews, and other unconventional data types. When researchers use case study designs, there are limits because they cannot comprehensively review an event. Retolaza and San-Jose (2017)

uncovered the case design as a powerful tool for exploring a subject that could be highly generalizable. Yin (2018) established requirements of need for more than one case to provide adequate contemporary data when the single case is not a unique representation of a generalizable phenomenon. Scarcella et al. (2021) used the case study design to study an experimental treatment for Italian children with childhood apraxia of speech using rapid syllable transition. The study was highly generalizable to all children experiencing childhood apraxia. Therefore, the case-study design was appropriate for this study. However, I did not select the case study design because the design of a case study would not have given sufficient data to be generalizable.

I considered using the phenomenological design to study the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons. Torcivia Prusko et al. (2020) used the phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of their participants when using specific technology for online learning. They found that using the phenomenological design supported their efforts because it was helpful to explore the participants' lived experiences. Researchers have frequently used the phenomenological design to support the exploration of a problem through participants' lived experiences (Groenewald, 2004). Researchers who have used the phenomenological design in writing have found that the design is ideal when the best exploration of the studied phenomenon is through the participants' lived experiences (van Manen & van Manen, 2021). However, I did not select the phenomenological design because my focus for this study was to determine the strategies that lead to employee retention in beauty salons. I studied the phenomenon by observing and gathering empirical data concerning the successful

strategies of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers rather than their lived experiences.

Further consideration of the appropriate qualitative study design led to the consideration of the ethnography design. Scholars use the ethnography design to research study participants rather than a problem under analysis (Levitt et al., 2018). Researchers have discovered that the ethnography design is the most useful when attempting to understand the practices of a given population (Levitt et al., 2018). Reigada et al. (2020) established the ethnological design as a powerful tool in healthcare research because they could promptly understand a specific community's practices and customs. The researchers used the ethnological method and gathered sufficient data by documenting the participants' lived experiences rather than using more complex data collection techniques (Reigada et al., 2020). Researchers have used the ethnography design to study a phenomenon from a cultural perspective and collect observation data of cultural group members in their natural settings over time (Levitt et al., 2018). The group's culture was irrelevant because my focus was on the effectiveness of employee retention strategies in the SME beauty salon sector; I did not select the ethnography design.

Finally, I considered the narrative design. I determined that the narrative design was not appropriate for this study because the focus of this design concerns the participants' experiences rather than a business phenomenon. Narrative research entails a list of the life events of the participants narrated by the researcher (Levitt et al., 2018). Instead, I studied the business problem through the lens of a generic design, and with

open-ended questions, I explored the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons.

Research Question

What strategies do salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to improve employee retention?

2. What quality measures do you use to measure the effectiveness of the retention strategies?

3. How often do you change your strategic approach to improve employee retention?

4. How do you determine when it is time to change your strategic approach to employee retention?

5. What were the key barriers to implementing strategies for improving employee retention in your salon?

6. What other information could you add that might help us further understand the strategies you used to improve employee retention?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this study was Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (SDT), theorized in 1985. SDT is an approach to human motivation and personality integration (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci theorized that SDT allows for empirical and theoretical methods that enable using a set of motivationally based developments. The two primary components of SDT are intrinsic and extrinsic

motivational factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Some workers have basic psychological needs that function as motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Researchers who use SDT have a foundation for identifying workers' top three psychological needs, including competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). I expected that the SDT could provide the appropriate lens for me to understand the strategies that salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention and offer a potential means for analyzing the findings' relevance to the research question.

Operational Definitions

Basic needs satisfaction (BNS): Ryan and Deci (2000) identified this state of being occurring in humans when basic psychological needs are satisfied.

Basic psychological needs (BPN): Ryan and Deci (2000) identified three human adaptive functions that need fulfillment to be at the highest functional state and satisfied: (a) autonomy, (b) competency, and (c) relatedness.

Employee retention: Employee retention is a strategy employers use to focus their efforts on keeping employees (Covella et al., 2017).

Motivational factors: Motivational factors are the drivers of human behavior that stimulate interest in or enthusiasm for achieving an objective (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Psychological needs satisfaction (PNS): A state of being in which humans have satisfied the three basic psychological needs of competency, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): Oztemel and Ozel (2021) discovered that although there is no universal definition of SMEs, the general definition of SMEs involves the number of workers, typically fewer than 20.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions in qualitative research is a term that means the researcher accepts a concept or a thing as accurate without concrete evidence (Ellis & Levy, 2009). The number of participants enabled me to establish the relevant themes from the interview data. The number of participants was sufficient for the proper weight of data to complete the study. The participants of the study answered the interview questions openly and honestly. The study participants provided the appropriate information for the research to result in data saturation.

Limitations

A research study's *limitations* are uncontrollable threats to the internal validity of a study (Ellis & Levy, 2009). There were unknown conditions and factors at the facilities where the participants worked or resided that could have biased the participants' responses. Furthermore, there were some recollections of events that may have been unreliable. There was a level of difficulty in understanding the varying context of the phenomenon. The data collected may need to be more robust to explain the complexity of the event.

Delimitations

Delimitations in a research study are the scope of the review; identifying the limitations of research enables a researcher to set the constraints or scope of the study (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Because the study concerned the successful retention strategies of beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers, the participants were beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers who had successful retention strategies. The United States area was the geographic location of the population. The results of this study may not be generalizable to other locations.

Significance of the Study

Exploring the strategies that some beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers used to improve employee retention may be helpful to beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers seeking to retain their skilled workforce. At the same time, they may experience an increase in their organization's value proposition. SME beauty salons are a sector in the service industry. SMEs generally struggle to retain a reliable workforce (Chung & D'Annunzio-Green, 2018). Andrews and Mohammed (2020) established that employee retention directly resulted from what employers did to affect employee turnover. Service industry employees directly affected service quality outcomes, customer satisfaction, loyalty, competitive advantage, and overall organizational performance (Kusluvan et al., 2010). Managers who developed practical strategies to keep employees with diverse backgrounds found increased employee retention (Cloutier et al., 2015). Beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers

could benefit from an effective retention strategy to maintain a skilled and seasoned workforce.

Contribution to Business Practice

Employee retention is an area of business that can be costly without a viable strategy. Andrews and Mohammed (2020) established that employee turnover adversely affects an organization across all areas. Andrews and Mohammed (2020) discovered that organizations that centered efforts on retaining staff outperformed those that did not have a viable strategy. Employee retention strategies offer employee training and development opportunities and increase an organization's value proposition (Cloutier et al., 2015). My study results demonstrated how employee retention strategies could expand growth by engaging employees and motivating them to increase production and service quality. Moreover, this study's findings may help managers and leaders in SME beauty salons because a critical aspect of increasing competitive advantage is developing and employing a viable strategy.

Implications for Social Change

An engaged workforce is reliable and consistent, allowing growth and increased value (Cloutier et al., 2015). Employees are workers, consumers, neighbors, friends, and family members of the communities they serve. Employees who feel a sense of belonging to an organization experience a heightened sense of achievement and satisfaction in the service process, thereby increasing positive behavior (Hou & Fan, 2013). SME beauty salon leaders may use this study to understand how to improve their employees' sense of belonging to foster a sense of economic stability for the community. Cloutier et al. (2015)

posited that beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers could promote growth in financial security through good employee retention strategies. The social change implications of this study include possible benefits to the community in the form of financial security through increased employee retention and stable jobs offered to local citizens.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Many theories of employee retention focus on motivational factors likely to affect an employee's intention to remain with an organization. Ryan and Deci (2000) posited that satisfying these three psychological needs follows a continuum of self-determination and is essential to an individual's psychological growth, optimal functioning, and well-being. Howard et al. (2016) discovered that intrinsic motivation and identified regulation positively affect productivity and retention. Johar et al. (2019) established that employee commitment is essential to satisfying psychological needs, and committed employees are likelier to stay with an organization. Demircioglu (2021) used SDT to explore job satisfaction's effects on basic needs satisfaction identified by SDT. Bilan et al. (2020) revealed no significant linkage between the economic success of an organization and its retention of skilled workers. Instead, Bilan et al. discovered evidence that more activities focused on psychological needs satisfaction directly affected employee retention. Many researchers exhibited findings illustrating a potential link between employee satisfaction and retention.

Researchers who have used the framework of SDT to examine successful employee retention in SME beauty salons have had a theoretical lens through which to

explore human behaviors related to job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Nazir et al. (2021) used SDT to explore employee engagement based on a sense of purpose and meaningfulness that the researchers used the framework of SDT to identify. Trépanier et al. (2015) found that researchers who used the framework of SDT to explore the role of motivation in employee retention had a robust framework to explore motivational factors that affected retention. Rigby and Ryan (2018) used SDT to explore the intrinsic motivators that affected management's employee retention efforts. Researchers may use the framework of SDT to enable the exploration of successful employee retention strategies of SME beauty salons by investigating the motivational effectiveness of their retention strategies.

The literature reviewed for this study included exploring the three BPNs identified by Ryan and Deci's SDT. The articles reviewed illustrated that the satisfaction of psychological needs may lead to job satisfaction, resulting in a higher level of performance, organizational commitment, and retention. Through examining the literature, I provided a critical analysis aligning with the overarching research question of this study: What strategies do salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention? The SDT was a useful meta-theory as the conceptual framework to explore the many facets of some SME beauty salons' successful employee retention strategies.

I used a generic qualitative design to explore the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons. This research included 137 primary literature sources in exploring the topic. Of the sources, 127 were peer-reviewed journal articles, which equated to 92%

of the sources. In addition to the journal articles, I included 10 additional primary sources that lacked peer review, representing 8% of the sources. Of the 74 sources within the literature review, 45 (60.8%) had publishing dates within 5 years of my anticipated graduation date. There are 137 primary sources in the proposal. Of the sources, 127 (92%) were peer-reviewed journal articles, and 10 were from other primary sources (8%). Of the sources cited, 93 (68%) had a publishing date within the 5 years of 2016 through 2021, which was my anticipated date of receiving Walden University's chief academic officer approval.

The literature review included an overview of SDT, which included an extensive analysis of the components of SDT. The analysis comprised literature on employee retention, engagement, leadership, and motivation. The focus of one third of the literature review concerned the human psychological need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence, as demonstrated by researchers using SDT. One third of the literature review was of peer-reviewed journal articles that explored motivation, engagement, and leadership as the methods that are useful to employers of SME beauty salons to retain skilled employees. In the final third of the review, I focused on research on how leadership, engagement, and motivation tenets intersect with the elements of SDT to help SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers develop successful employee retention strategies. The proposed organizational flow was to build a foundational knowledge of SDT that would contextualize the subsequent research.

Through this generic qualitative study, I aimed to explore successful strategies that some SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers used to improve

employee retention. The conceptual framework model used to explore this phenomenon was SDT. Deci and Ryan (1985) used SDT to conceptualize motivation as a form of behavioral regulation, which could be a significant indicator of employee retention. SDT is a motivation theory based on the premise that humans have an inherent motivation to satisfy the three innate basic psychological needs for (a) autonomy, (b) relatedness, and (c) competence (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Some SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers benefited from developing retention strategies grounded in SDT because the satisfaction of BPN was a significant motivator for skilled workers.

The Beauty Salon Industry

The beauty salon industry in the United States includes both retail sales of beauty products and the provision of specialized beauty services. In the United States, the services offered in SME beauty salons are both retail sales and services, primarily cutting, trimming, shampooing, weaving, coloring, waving, and styling hair; providing facials; and applying makeup (Brand & Ahmed, 1986). The beauty salon services industry in the United States employed 608,900 persons in 2021, while the number of SME beauty salons was 285,980, with approximately 558,700 working individuals in 2021 (BLS, 2021). From 2016 to 2017, the beauty salon industry's employment growth rate was 0.1%, but from 2018 to 2019, the rate was 1.4% (BLS, 2021). The raw data did not explain how some SME beauty salons retain their skilled workers and attract new ones. I used SDT to study how SME beauty salons' successful retention strategies in the United States worked in this industry and population.

I used my study to illustrate why employers in the 2022 global marketplace should focus on creating and maintaining an effective retention policy. Steel et al. (2002) cited multiple areas of focus to cultivate a viable retention strategy, such as identifying workers who are likely to quit versus those who are likely to stay. Liu et al. (2022) unearthed that basic psychological needs satisfaction is positively associated with job satisfaction and positive motivational factors that result in employee retention. Much research has focused on the role of leadership and employees' engagement and motivation as critical indicators for employee retention. The following discussion explores motivational, leadership, and engagement theories to explain why SDT was the best theoretical lens to examine the phenomenon of successful employee retention strategies of some SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers.

Motivation, Self-Determination Theory, and Retention

The following literature review illustrates that motivation is an extremely critical factor in organizations' ability to capitalize on work productivity, engagement, and commitment of employees. Suyono and Mudjanarko (2017) characterized motivation as a human mental characteristic that indicates an individual's level of commitment. Khoshnevis and Tahmasebi (2016) established that the essential motivational factors for most employees are success in working, identification of the individual, the work itself, responsibility, and development and growth. Gawel (1997) discovered that an employee's level of needs could be a determinative factor that dictates the rewards that could potentially satisfy employee needs. Pardee (1990) defined three primary qualities of motivation, which are (a) a presumed internal force, (b) energizes for action, and (c)

determines the direction of action. Understanding motivation and its effect on job satisfaction and employee commitment is essential to studying successful employee retention strategies. There are many existing theories of motivation relating to employee commitment and retention. The following discussion of two of the most known motivation theories demonstrates how motivation could correlate to employee commitment and retention.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

One of the most known motivation theories in the workplace is Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow theorized that all motives are interrelated and developed a theory of needs hierarchy. The needs hierarchy is a pyramid involving five categories of motives, with lower level needs on the bottom (to address first), leaving the higher level needs addressed last (Maslow, 1943). Maslow stated in the theory that motivated people seek to satisfy unmet needs in a hierarchical order, which prevents motivation to satisfy a need area unless all lower level needs have been addressed. The five levels of need from the bottom up are (a) psychological needs, (b) safety needs, (c) social needs, (d) ego needs, and (e) self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943). The SDT of Deci and Ryan (1985) echoed some of the findings of Maslow's theory. Deci and Ryan (1985) studied intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as a factor that drives the human need to satisfy the psychological needs of competency, relatedness, and autonomy. Maslow's theory was not a sufficient lens to view the phenomenon under study because Maslow did not focus on the other identified determinative factors of retention.

SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers may benefit from knowledge of Maslow's motivational theory to help them identify the motivations that may promote retention. Researchers who have used SDT have expanded their knowledge beyond motivation, encompassing internal and external regulation, as well as integrated and identified regulation as additional layers of focus (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Researchers have used the SDT approach to address other retention factors, such as leadership and engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Meyer and Gagnè (2008) unearthed that SDT could help to explain the psychological states and behavioral reactions that could result in the absence of engagement. Ryan and Deci (2000) described SDT as the investigation of the inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation and personality integration while exploring the conditions that foster positive processes. SDT was a more efficient approach to studying the phenomenon of successful retention in SME beauty salons because SDT supports exploring both employee motivations and the mechanisms in place to satisfy those motives.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Another well-known motivational theory that may help SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers understand the motivation of SDT is Herzberg's theory of motivators and hygiene factors. An essential element for understanding how motivation works in employees is understanding the drives, needs, meanings, relationships, and incentives that could satisfy the individual's psychological needs (Khoshnevis & Tahmasebi, 2016). Herzberg (1974) developed a two-dimensional paradigm of factors affecting people's attitudes toward work. Herzberg posited that

hygiene factors such as company policy, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and salary are not motivators. Herzberg used the theory to demonstrate how satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not on the same continuum, and the absence of hygiene factors could create job dissatisfaction. Gawel (1997) established that hygiene factors do not motivate or create satisfaction. According to Khoshnevis and Tahmasebi (2016), job dissatisfaction is not the opposite of job satisfaction; without motivational factors, employees could experience complete dissatisfaction. Herzberg's (1974) two-factor theory identified a separation between satisfiers and dissatisfiers and classified them as motives (satisfiers) and hygiene (dissatisfiers). Researchers who use the theoretical lens of the two-factor theory to study successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons may find limitations in their exploration to considering only two factors of psychological needs assessment.

An integral part of SDT deals with motivation and psychological needs satisfaction. SDT pulls from Herzberg's theory, in that the satisfiers—(a) achievement, (b) recognition, (c) the work itself, (d) responsibility, (e) advancement, and (f) growth—are elements of SDT's (a) autonomy (b) competence, and (c) relatedness. The dissatisfiers of company policy, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and salary are similar to the extrinsic motivations identified by Deci and Ryan (1985). Although Maslow (1943) and Herzberg (1974) captured the importance of motivation as a driving factor of employee commitment and retention, researchers using SDT have also explored additional motivation factors. Deci and Ryan (1985) also demonstrated through the lens of SDT how motivational factors propel the individual to satisfy the three psychological

needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy in the workplace. Researchers have substantiated a link between the satisfaction of the three psychological needs and job satisfaction, which may lead to commitment, which in turn could correlate to increased employee retention (Johar et al., 2019). Many factors affect employee retention, and a solid strategy should address the core interventions that create a positive long-term effect. SDT was a layered approach to exploring the phenomenon that some SME beauty salons were experiencing.

Self-Determination Theory: Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation

Ryan and Deci developed the SDT to study two forms of identified motivation, which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. SDT is a theoretical approach to the study of human motivation as well as personality. Deci and Ryan (2008) used traditional empirical methods and a naturally developed metatheory accentuated by the significance of the human evolution of inner resources that guide personality development and the self-regulation of specific behaviors to develop SDT. Deci and Ryan (2008) explored the nature of motivation by defining two categories of motivation, which are intrinsic and extrinsic. In the following discussion, I define intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as seen through the metatheoretical lens of SDT.

Intrinsic Motivation. Ryan and Deci identified and distinguished many types of motivation influencing psychological needs satisfaction. They defined intrinsic motivation as a motivation to achieve an internal reward and noted that it is a central focus determination that all humans require to meet the basic psychological needs

threshold. Humans can be internally motivated to satisfy precise psychological needs for the reward of personal satisfaction rather than an external object of need.

Extrinsic Motivation. Researchers who have used SDT have investigated how external objects of need influence behavior. Extrinsic motivation is a type of motivation driven by external factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) revealed that external factors, such as the promise of a thing of value to the individual, can motivate humans. Ryan and Deci (2000) discovered that extrinsic motivation could impede the satisfaction of psychological needs, adversely affecting commitment while bolstering motivation. The study of how external factors motivate employees is valuable to employers.

SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers may benefit from knowledge of SDT because employers control extrinsic factors. Researchers who have used the framework of SDT have provided a deeper understanding of why some retention strategies yield positive results and others do not. Research derived from using SDT as a theoretical lens has also helped employers understand the type of personalities that are more engaged naturally. While some tenets of SDT overlap with other theories, SDT has enabled researchers to use its layered study approach and uncover a more dynamic review of the retention phenomenon. Researchers who have used SDT have provided insights for employers that have helped identify employees' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and, through proper leadership, assess the best approach to satisfying employee needs to facilitate commitment and retention.

Leadership, Self-Determination Theory, and Successful Retention Strategy

Development

Leadership style was a decisive factor in motivation because the ability to motivate is perhaps a leader's best asset. Researchers revealed that motivation is lacking without the proper leader or leadership style (Fehr et al., 2013). Leadership styles could affect an individual's level of commitment and job satisfaction. Coun et al. (2019) established that leaders are incredibly critical in affecting knowledge sharing and an employee's perception of self-determination. Starzyk and Sonnentag's (2019) research suggested that a leader's style could influence the depth at which employees internalize specific values. Trépanier et al. (2015) established that managers could have a significant effect on how employees perceive job characteristics. Exploring leadership style and leadership theory were necessary components in laying a foundation to examine successful retention strategies of some SME beauty salons.

The theory of transformational leadership was highly relevant when researchers attempted to demonstrate the usefulness of SDT in employers' decision-making concerning the development of successful employee retention strategies. Tuan and Rajagopal (2019) posited that transformational leadership could positively affect SME employee retention. Coun et al. (2019) found that transformational leadership may promote employees' basic psychological needs satisfaction, which could result in enhanced job satisfaction and work engagement. Henderson et al. (2009) established that transformational leaders form high-quality Leader-member exchange (LMX) workgroups because transformational leaders motivate followers through individualized consideration

of their needs. Researchers who used the lens of LMX theory in conjunction with a

transformational leadership style have a robust lens to study the practice of SDT concepts

in the field.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders sparked ingenuity, creativity, and an elevated level of

commitment because transformational leaders were generally highly engaged with the

emotions, values, and the followers' need for autonomy. Dwyer et al. (2013) examined

the separate influences of personal motives as well as the effect of the behaviors of

transformational leaders on follower satisfaction along with the mediating processes of

self-determination theory. Dwyer et al. (2013) posited that since transformational leaders

are inspirational, they are influential leaders that support a person's need for interpersonal

connectedness and relatedness. Yamin (2020) found that Transformational leadership, as

introduced by Longshore and Bass (1987), indicates a strong relationship between

transformational leadership and employee retention. Subsequent studies link SDT and

transformational leadership. Yamin (2020) posited that motivated employees by leaders

who inspire, could positively change employee attitudes, beliefs, and values toward an

organization. Leaders who adequately assess the needs of their followers effectively

influence their behavior.

Leaders identify the needs that govern their followers' motives. Fehr et al. (2013)

revealed that leaders who adequately determine need may influence subordinate behavior

based on the reward they are willing to offer. Leaders who adequately determine needs

may meet the requirements of the followers they are attempting to influence (Fehr et al.,

2013). Transformational leaders inspire their followers by knowing how to appeal to their followers' needs.

Transformational leaders had a positive influence on employee retention. Yamin (2020) revealed that transformational leadership significantly influences employee retention and is possibly the second-highest construct when predicting employee retention. According to study findings, Osborne and Hammoud (2017) revealed that the transformational leader was the most identified and effective of multiple leadership styles. The respondents noted that transformational leaders motivated employees while creating an inspiring vision for the future (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Wong and Berntzen (2019) unearthed that transformational leadership was acceptable as a beneficial leadership style because of the leader's focus on transcending work goals, purposes, and higher-order intrinsic needs. Transformational leaders influence intrinsic motivation from employees, which inspires job commitment and satisfaction (Wong & Berntzen, 2019). Still, the quality of the exchange between subordinate and leader ultimately determines the motivating conditions of the relationship.

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

The LMX theory was a robust, valuable framework in guiding the development of positive relationships between staff and leadership that may create a positive psychological event positively affecting retention. LMX theory, as developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), stemmed from the vertical dyad linkage theory (VDL), which explored the vertical dyadic relationship between leader and subordinate (Covella et al., 2017). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) classified different leadership theories to explain the

role of leadership in organizational performance. They state that the leadership domains are follower, leader, and relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) studied the evolution of the LMX theory through four evolutionary stages.

Researchers found that stage one of the evolution of LMX theory was VDL. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) described the stage of VDL as the validation of differentiation within workgroups. LMX was a direct descendent of VDL, vertical-dyad linkage theory. Although the focus of LMX is the same link, LMX was a theory with a central focus on the exchange of leader and subordinate (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Stage two of LMX has a central focus on the validation of a differentiated relationship for organizational outcomes. During phase two of the evolution, the researchers studied the characteristics of LMX while analyzing the relationship between LMX and organizational performance (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) focused on leadership-making in stage three by exploring dyadic relationship development. In phase three, the research moves beyond in and out-group behaviors. Instead, the researchers focused on the individual relationships leaders need to cultivate with their subordinates. The final stage four in the evolution of LMX was team building. In stage four, Graen and Uhl-Bien focused on understanding the dyadic partnership's expansion on groups and networks (1995). Researchers found in step four that differentiated dyadic relationships combine to form larger groups that form a system of network assemblies (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) used the article to cite multiple studies that use LMX to prove the validity of the correlation between leader, subordinate, and organizational performance.

Leaders who use the principles of LMX to increase meaningful engagement with their followers have tools that could potentially increase organizational performance. Kauppila (2016) uncovered that leaders' relationships with their followers vary in quality, determined by individual variations of engagement from leader to member and member groups. Covella et al. (2017) researched leader-employee outcomes using the social exchange theory (SET) framework and LMX theory. They posit that the relationship between employee and employer has a measurable effect on an employee's engagement (Covella et al., 2017). Beginning with proper leadership affected an employee's feelings of inclusiveness and was the difference between an engaged worker and an unengaged worker.

The connection between LMX, transformational leadership, and the functionality of SDT was apparent and pertinent to uncovering successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons since Wilding (2015) established that SDT is a crucial component to establishing the elements of motivation for LMX groups. Researchers who used the theoretical lens of LMX have support for further exploration of how the tenants of SDT work to support a successful retention strategy. The SDT framework supported a researcher in the robust study of employee satisfaction and leadership's role in facilitating that satisfaction. SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers benefited from developing viable retention strategies rooted in the robust framework of applicable theories like SDT.

Employee Engagement, Self-Determination Theory, and Retention

The classification of employee engagement and motivation was two different sides of the same coin, with motivation representing the cause of an individual's action and engagement representing the commitment to act. Kmecova and Tlusty (2021) learned that using motivation as a tool in corporate culture provides a different level of engagement than in SMEs. Meyer and Gagnè (2008) established that in understanding some of the critical components of engagement, the SDT theory is a robust unifying guide to research and practice. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) uncovered that SDT is causally related to disengagement and personal engagement by establishing a quantifiable correlation between an employee's behavioral state and motivation to demonstrate the desired professional and individual behavior. The influence of motivation levels on an employee's emotional state and job satisfaction could directly affect their work engagement (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Researchers who used the theoretical framework of SDT to study successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons could benefit from an examination of engagement and its role in SDT.

Employee engagement plays a critical role in employee commitment, which could be causally related to retention. Kahn and Fellows (2013) defined employee engagement as the focus of employees on their roles where they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during job functions. Madan (2017) found that employee engagement could help to develop a strongly committed workforce. Shoaib and Kohli (2017) learned that motivation is the inherent quality of engaged employees, which could lead to higher organizational efficacy. Lee et al. (2018) conducted a literature

review of multiple studies on employee retention. The researchers established that by

monitoring several factors of employee engagement, such as job satisfaction,

organizational commitment, and job embeddedness, individual leaders could effectively

mitigate high employee turnover through a viable strategy (Lee et al., 2018). Andrews

and Mohammed (2020) revealed that several areas of external and intrinsic motivation,

such as recognition and rewards, training and career advancement opportunities, effective

communication, pay, etc., positively affect employee turnover reduction. Kahn and

Fellows (2013) posited that when individuals engage, they move closer to what matters to

them. SDT played a significant role in enabling researchers to identify those

psychological needs that influenced the type of engagement that promoted employee

commitment and retention.

Job satisfaction and employee commitment were two of the most referred to

indicators of retention, and an engaged workforce exhibited high levels in both states.

Valaei and Rezaei (2016) found that affective commitment to a job involves more

specific extrinsic motivators than intrinsic ones and that this satisfaction promotes

commitment. Bakker and Oerlemans (2019) established that, consistent with SDT,

momentary engagement most likely occurs when employees satisfy their basic needs for

relatedness, autonomy, and competence. Researchers expand on the knowledge of SDT

by demonstrating that employees could determine for themselves if their needs are

satisfied and that employees may proactively influence their work engagement (Bakker &

Oerlemans, 2019). Ali et al. (2020) learned that to ensure productivity, managers would

benefit from addressing factors that affect employee engagement. The SDT provided a

lens embedded with the elements of engagement, leadership, and motivation to understand further how the satisfaction of psychological needs affected job satisfaction and commitment.

The SDT was a substantial framework to explore successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons because of the overlapping theories of motivation, leadership, and engagement. One could not overstate the role of leadership in forming a viable retention strategy since an employee's level of engagement could correspond to employee retention (Covella et al., 2017). The primary key to any retention strategy relies on leadership's ability to facilitate buy-in from the stakeholders of an organization (Latham, 2013). Like motivation and leadership, engagement theory also overlapped with SDT. Researchers who studied the phenomenon of successful retention strategies of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers had in SDT a robust theoretical lens to study multiple contextual factors of the phenomenon.

Self-Determination Theory Defined

The SDT is a meta-theory developed by Ryan and Deci that researchers use to explore human behavior and personality development through the primary vehicle of motivation. Researchers used SDT as an analytical tool to differentiate types of motivation along a continuum from controlled to autonomous. Malinowska and Tokarz (2020) uncovered that SDT is incredibly useful in studying the motivational mechanisms involved in work engagement. Parker et al. (2010) revealed that SDT is a multi-dimensional conceptualization of motivation, which implies differing effects on employee outcomes. Li and Wu (2019) revealed that SDT is a sound motivational theory

researchers could use to explain why some motives have stronger relationships with positive or negative motivational outcomes than others. The SDT was a social psychological theory of human behavior concerning the inherent need in humans to achieve growth and satisfy the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Some researchers using SDT to explore employee retention had a framework that supported the study of human behavior that indicated employee commitment and retention.

The initial work of Deci and Ryan in 1985 was the theory of motivation. The researchers Deci and Ryan focused on the effects of extrinsic motivators on intrinsic motivation (2012). The initial findings supported the discovery that intrinsic motivation was an organic feature of human beings and is viewable as the precursor of psychological freedom or self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2012). They determined that the undermining or enhancement of psychological liberty or self-determination is quantifiable based on the level of support of the environment to satisfy the needs for competence and self-determination. Researchers who used the SDT to explore successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons have a meta-theoretical lens to investigate the human behaviors contributing to job satisfaction, commitment, and retention.

The Six Minitheories of SDT

When studying SDT, I found considerable research concerning the social conditions that facilitated or hindered human growth and stability. Ryan and Deci (2017) developed SDT as a theoretical construct to understand what humans need from their psychological and social environments to function and thrive fully. The SDT was

functional as a vehicle for researchers to observe how variations in motives, external and internal, as well as regulatory factors, affect psychological growth and development (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Researchers who used SDT could identify and measure motivational regulation and the conditions that foster them (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Parker et al. (2010) found that being self-determined is having the capacity to choose (autonomy) rather than letting external or internal determinants dictate actions or behaviors. Chen and Jang (2010) discovered that SDT addresses autonomy, relatedness, and competency as determinants of motivation. The development of SDT was a construct to study motivation and the regulatory factors that stimulate one to satisfy three basic psychological needs competency, autonomy, and relatedness. In Ryan and Deci's endeavor to study the phenomenon of motivation, they developed six mini-theories to explore new phenomena that support the SDT model.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET). The first mini-theory to come from SDT was CET. A central focus surrounding CET was intrinsic motivation and extrinsic reward, which was the foundational research of SDT. The introduction of CET happened in 1975 by Deci as a social psychology and personality perspective (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Researchers who used CET argued that events could negatively affect a person's experience of autonomy or competence and will diminish intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). They used CET to argue further that events that support perceptions of autonomy and competence will enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). They used this theory to argue that competence and autonomy satisfaction is necessary to

sustain intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci used CET to explain further how intrapersonal relationships affect intrinsic motivators.

Ryan and Deci used CET to explore the external influencing factors that affect intrinsic motivation, and instead, they contextualized the influences of intrapersonal experiences on the phenomenon. They used CET to expand the knowledge of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to examine the functional significance of events in inter and intrapersonal behaviors and explain their possible impact on intrinsic motivational outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The researchers, Lee et al. (2015), learned that employees exercise cognitive evaluation of working conditions without emotional judgments before reaching the affective state of job satisfaction. Krajcsák (2019) found that the cognitive evaluation theory enables research that explains how the behaviors, both innate and learned, as well as social and environmental factors, have an impact on internal motivation. CET was an essential element of SDT. A researcher who used CET may find that it supported the central theme that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators determine whether or how individuals attain their innate psychological needs of competency, relatedness, and autonomy.

Organismic Integration Theory (OIT). The OIT was the second mini-theory of SDT, focusing on the internalization and differentiation of extrinsic motivation. Researchers who used CET may emphasize intrinsic motivation and the extrinsic motivational factors that affect it. Researchers who used OIT may focus on extrinsic motivation's varying causes and consequences. Ryan and Deci (2017) used this theory to study people's inherent tendencies to assimilate and integrate social regulations that

govern inter and intrapersonal actions and behaviors. They used OIT to argue that

internalization is a natural tendency toward organization and integration. Ryan and Deci

used the SDT to apply the concept of internalization, defined as the process of

incorporating values, beliefs, or behavioral regulations from external sources into one's

own. Based on their findings, the assumption of an inherent integrative tendency was by

supporting the basic psychological needs, and impaired by sabotaging the basic

psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Researchers who used SDT benefited from

understanding how to evaluate the positive and negative effects of extrinsic motivators on

how inter and intra-personalization could affect outcomes of internalization from

extrinsic motivators.

Researchers who used OIT to support the concepts of SDT could differentiate

extrinsic motivators and their diverse sources to determine the influencing effect on an

individual's internalization of a group or social behaviors. Ryan and Deci (2017) used

OIT to identify four major categories of extrinsic motivation, which are (a) external

regulation, (b) introjected regulation, (c) identified regulation, and (d) integrated

regulation. Komiyama and McMorris (2017) discovered that the extrinsic motivation that

controls internal feelings of shame or pride is introjected and external regulations, which

represent the desire to perform because of external controls. Krajcsák (2019) established

that the most internalized regulation is integrated regulation, where an individual's

actions occur when it supports their values or beliefs. Zhang et al. (2016) learned that

identified regulation could predict interpersonal and adaptive performance, which were

vital work performance indicators. The framework of OIT enabled researchers to use

SDT to investigate the negative and positive reactions of individuals who fully internalize extrinsic motivators.

Causality Orientations Theory (COT). The COT was the third mini-theory of SDT that researchers used to explain the individual differences in and priming motivational orientations. CET and OIT focus on contextual influences on intrinsic motivation and internalization of extrinsic motivators, but COT focuses on motivational styles and how individuals process them. Ryan and Deci (2017) proposed with COT three orientations of causality that are (a) autonomous, (b) controlled, and (c) impersonal. They found that when people are highly autonomous, they take an interest in events and see possibilities for choice and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When individuals lean heavily towards a more controlled orientation, they typically focus on controlling factors of the environment and external rewards and social pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Individuals with an impersonal orientation see environments through the lens of uncontrollable or nonmotivating factors (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Researchers who used SDT to study the phenomenon of SME beauty salon employee retention found the COT helpful in determining the proper strategy and motivational orientation that could result in higher employee retention.

Researchers who used SDT may benefit from the focus of COT on the implications of the motivational orientations of self-determination. Ryan and Deci (2017) found that causality orientations help explain why people in the same social context react differently to health, effectiveness, and joy. Malinowska and Tokarz (2020) learned that when strongly autonomy-oriented individuals achieve full integration, their behavior

depends on their values and structure. Øverup et al. (2017) established that ego-driven people tend to have a more controlled motivation orientation, and they regulate behavior according to external and internalized controls, making them react more defensively in interpersonal situations. Dağ and Şen (2018) uncovered that internal control and autonomous orientation have positive effects on statistically significant predictors for psychological needs satisfaction, but external controls and an impersonal orientation have shown negative effects on the fulfillment of psychological needs. Researchers who used SDT to study the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons could benefit from understanding the effectiveness of priming the motivational orientations of an individual. The benefit derives from the decisive way that specific orientations correlate to PNS and general well-being.

Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT). The BPNT was the fourth mini-theory of SDT concerning the satisfaction and frustration of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as it relates to psychological well-being and optimal functioning. Ryan and Deci (2017) used this mini-theory to explain the establishment of the three universal basic psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy, which control a sense of well-being and wellness. The cornerstone of SDT was BPNT because Ryan and Deci (2017) argued that greater basic need satisfaction would result in enhanced wellness, and more significant need frustration could diminish wellness, regardless of conditional factors. Researchers find that the degree to which satisfaction with autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs correlate to wellness is quantifiable using the lens of BPNT (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Researchers who used SDT to study retention strategies of

SME beauty salons benefit from the study of BPNT because they may experience an enhanced ability to predict an employee's ability to be fully functional based on the effects of environmental factors on the ability to achieve basic psychological needs satisfaction.

Researchers found that basic needs satisfaction was the key to wellness and fulfillment and that individuals have an innate need to attain this satisfaction, which evolved over a lifespan. Ryan and Deci (2017) argue that satisfaction with competence, relatedness, and autonomy are interdependent and essential for a person to function fully. Saether (2019) found that individuals who satisfy their basic psychological needs in an optimal environment experience a greater fit with their environment and are more likely to express higher levels of autonomous motivation. Wang and Hou (2015) discovered that intangible benefits could enhance autonomy-oriented motivations, while external controls could diminish individuals' autonomy-oriented motivations. The researchers posited that autonomous orientations help satisfy the basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. In contrast, controlled and impersonal orientations do not positively contribute to satisfying basic psychological needs (Wang & Hou, 2015). The BPNT was a substantial expansion of the psychological needs satisfaction element of SDT, and researchers who studied retention strategies of SME beauty salons had a substantial lens to assess the extrinsic motivational and environmental factors that enable basic psychological needs satisfaction.

Goals Content Theory (GCT). The GCT was the fifth mini-theory of SDT concerning why individuals engage in behaviors such as aspiring for life goals and the

varied consequences of having them. Ryan and Deci (2017) discovered that many life

goals fall into two broad categories of extrinsic and intrinsic motives and that these

distinct categories of goals relate differently to well-being. As defined by Ryan and Deci

(2017), intrinsic goals involve pursuing the valued, such as personal growth. Extrinsic

goals focus on external rewards like money (Ryan & Deci, 2017). They found that

focusing people on attaining extrinsic goals led to less well-being, more ill-being, and

more unsatisfactory performance because extrinsic aspirations do not directly satisfy

basic needs (Deci & Ryan, 2012). When Deci and Ryan focused on individuals attaining

intrinsic goals, greater well-being and less ill-being were associated with satisfying basic

psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2012). GCT was a vital aspect of SDT because

researchers used GCT to quantify the correlation between specific goal attainment and

need satisfaction.

Researchers who used the lens of SDT to study successful retention strategies of

SME beauty salons benefited from understanding the tenants of GCT because the

appropriate goal content and attainment enhanced the individual's needs satisfaction,

which correlated to job satisfaction and retention. Ryan and Deci (2000) established that

intrinsic aspirations are positively associated with well-being indicators such as self-

esteem, with the opposite occurring when placing substantial importance on extrinsic

aspirations. Greguras and Diefendorff (2009) learned that individuals connect to

organizations with similar values and preferences because doing so enables them to attain

their goals. Parker et al. (2010) found that a more self-determined motivational style is

associated with more task-oriented coping, increasing subsequent goal attainment and

positive affect. Zhang et al. (2018) established that intrinsic goal orientation could positively affect varying types of performance, and an extrinsic mindset may further promote this performance. Researchers who used SDT as a theoretical lens to study successful retention strategies in SME beauty salons had a tool in GCT that enabled a more in-depth inquiry into the effects of the strategy on the individual.

  Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT). The sixth mini-theory of SDT was RMT and concerned with how the quality of close relationships affected the needs satisfaction of relatedness. Ryan and Deci (2017) learned about the connection between autonomy and relatedness satisfaction and that fulfillment of one connects to the fulfillment of the other. RMT argues that feeling relatedness with others is an intrinsic and basic psychological need contributing to an individual's overall well-being. Ryan and Deci (2017) use RMT to argue that one could not be fully functional without relationships that satisfy the need for relatedness. Coun et al. (2019) found that the need for relatedness represents the need to feel connected to others. If this need is satisfied when an individual feels connected to a group, they experience some feelings of community and could develop close relationships that promote overall well-being. Researchers who used the RMT may use SDT to explore the phenomenon of retention to investigate how deep connections led to an overarching sense of satisfaction that may promote retention in SME beauty salon employees.

  Researchers who used SDT to explore successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons could benefit from understanding the tenets of RMT because the quality of relationships between employer and employee could significantly affect retention

outcomes. Wilding (2015) uncovered that when individuals achieve a high level of

relatedness in groups, they perform better and experience a heightened level of belonging

and well-being. Guillaume and Kalkbrenner (2019) found that relatedness or the ability to

form and maintain collaborative relationships with others could play a crucial role in self-

determination for employees on the tenure track within different organizations. Groen et

al. (2017) discovered that satisfying the human need for relatedness in the workplace

could increase existing autonomous motivation and raise job performance. Researchers

benefited from understanding how RMT works to support and expand knowledge of SDT

concepts concerning relatedness.

The six mini-theories of SDT were substantial building blocks that enabled

researchers to explore the phenomenon of successful employee retention in SME beauty

salons by examining the psychological conditions that promote the outcome. Ryan and

Deci (2017) discovered that employees display better performance and well-being when

they internalize the value of their effort and are more autonomously motivated. Krajcsák

(2019) found that organizational commitment could be associated with regulation and

motivation, as SDT prescribes. Zhang et al. (2016) used SDT to determine that managers

should focus on the internalized version of autonomous motivation and extrinsic

motivation as a core factor in predicting job performance. De Cooman et al. (2013) used

SDT to find that autonomously motivated employees display more significant levels of

job satisfaction and have fewer turnover intentions. Researchers used the SDT to assess

the factors of organizational commitment, job performance, and satisfaction as key

indicators of employee retention.

Retention Strategies of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Beauty Salons

Researchers who used SDT to study successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons have a robust theoretical lens to study the human behaviors contributing to employee retention. Greguras and Diefendorff (2009) learned that a predictor of affective commitment and performance was psychological need satisfaction, as proposed by SDT. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) studied how engaged employees have lower turnover rates and higher retention. In comparison, Kundu and Lata (2017) uncovered that a perceived supportive work environment could promote employee retention. Vlacsekova and Mura (2017) revealed that motivational tools help influence levels of employee satisfaction. Multiple research studies revealed a linkage between the motivational outcomes of SDT to quantifiable factors regarding employee retention, and the following discussion focuses on three key elements.

Organizational Commitment and Employee Retention

Organizational commitment could be a relevant indicator of employee retention, and SDT was a dynamic tool for researchers attempting to explore the motives contributing to the behavior. Boswell et al. (2017) identify active organizational commitment as an employee's identification with, as well as an emotional attachment to, an organization and its goals. Patel and Conklin (2012) identified an increased organizational commitment to reducing turnover by increasing an employee's identification with the goals and values of the organization. Sarmad et al. (2016) found that organizations aiming at nurturing organizational commitment amongst employees for long-term retention should devise a comprehensive motivational process. Organizational

commitment was a factor in many positive employee outcomes, such as motivation, employee job satisfaction, and employee retention (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). Researchers who used the self-determination theoretical lens to study successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons rely on the six mini-theories of SDT to explore the motives, leadership styles, and engagement schemes that may conduce employees to sustain higher levels of organizational commitment.

Job Performance and Employee Retention

Multiple research studies explored job performance as a significant indicator of job satisfaction. Shin et al. (2019) defined job performance as reflecting how employees fulfill their job requirements. Ngo and Hui (2018) discovered that individuals with high organizational commitment likely have a strong intrinsic motivation to strive for personal growth and improve their job performance. Wu et al. (2020) uncovered that well-being is essential to job performance. Research demonstrates that job satisfaction could be related to several employee outcomes, such as job performance and turnover behavior (Ngo & Hui, 2018). Andrews and Mohammed (2020) revealed that during the lifetime of an organization, repeated employee turnover negatively affects organizational performance. Researchers who used SDT to study successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons studied the environmental conditions that satisfy extrinsic and intrinsic employee motives that promote positive job performance and lead to employee satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction and Employee Retention

Job satisfaction may be an essential element of employee retention, and SDT was a valuable tool to explore the correlation between the satisfaction of basic psychological

needs, job satisfaction, and retention. Liu and Liu (2015) studied the hair-dressing industry in Taiwan concerning the relationships between employees' stock ownership, employees' dedication to work, and the meaning of work for employees. The researchers found that when an employee achieves inner satisfaction (intrinsic motives), instrument satisfaction (identified regulation), and external satisfaction (extrinsic motives), it enhances an employee's cognitive needs (competency and autonomy) and job involvement, as well as an employee's organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Liu & Liu, 2015).

Pittino et al. (2016) discovered that motivation-enhancing practices that enhance employees' willingness to use their daily skills and knowledge to align with organizational goals and objectives could lead to heightened organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and retention. Lohmann et al. (2016) uncovered that motivation with an internal locus of causality related to better performance, higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and well-being, affecting turnover in varying settings. An employee's level of job satisfaction was not the single indicator of an employee's intent to stay.

Many variables contributed to employee retention. Albalawi et al. (2019) identified that some factors of perceived organizational commitment fostered employee commitment and mitigated the risk of turnover intention. Much research indicates a direct and indirect linkage between organizational commitment, job performance, and job satisfaction to an employee's intent to stay with an organization. Researchers who explored successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons benefited from identifying

the behaviors contributing to organizational commitment, job performance, and job satisfaction since they are vital indicators of a successful employee retention strategy.

Summary

This generic qualitative study aimed to explore some successful employee retention strategies of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers. I used the theoretical lens of SDT to assess and contextualize the data. The review of relevant literature regarding SDT illuminated six foci of interest when assessing retention data, which were: (a) motivation, (b) leadership style; (c) engagement; (d) organizational commitment; (e) job performance; and (f) job satisfaction. The literature review demonstrated the interrelatedness of the focus areas and how the SDT lens was demonstratively effective in supporting the data analysis.

The literature review revealed the primary factors to successful retention strategies that employers could affect. I found in the peer-reviewed literature that leadership quality could positively influence worker engagement and motivation related to retention (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017), (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). Osborne and Hammoud (2017) discovered that authentic leaders influence active worker engagement. Inabinett and Ballaro (2014) observed that for SMEs, a transformational leadership style could significantly affect employee retention with effective communication of organizational values. Kundu and Lata (2017) recognized that supportive leaders who recognized employees' contributions and showed concern for their well-being could reduce anxiety, induce job satisfaction, and enhance employee retention. The peer-reviewed literature in this study demonstrates that it is the leadership's responsibility to

engage an employee by motivating them. Researchers using SDT could reveal the most effective leadership style to engage an employee through extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors that may result in retention.

Transition

Elements of Section 1 included the background of the problem and the introduction of the research topic. Section 1 included an explanation for the study of the problem many SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers face concerning employee retention. This generic qualitative study aimed to explore some strategies that SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention in the United States. The goal of the study was to expand the existing body of knowledge concerning the tenets of successful retention strategies of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers.

Section 1 included a brief overview of the research approach selected for this study, the interview questions used to collect accurate data, and the responses from eligible participants to the research question. The following subsections are related to the details of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. The subsequent subsections explain why this study may be of value to SMEs as well as contribute to positive social change. The theory of SDT was the conceptual framework for this study and is the basis of the subsequent review of the literature.

The literature review included an in-depth exploration of the SDT and was the appropriate theoretical lens to answer the research question: What strategies do salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention? The review

began with discussing the SME beauty salon industry to lay a contextual foundation for the subsequent discussions. The broadly defined scope of the SDT model is helpful in evaluating the cause and effect of varying types of motivation on employee retention. Within the scope of the SDT model, the identification of six mini-theories enabled a researcher to explore six identifying elements of retention occurred.

The literature review also included a critical review of motivational, leadership, and employee engagement theories. The in-depth literature review helped illuminate SDT as the appropriate theoretical lens to study the phenomenon of retention in SME beauty salons. Further exploration of SDT's motivational theory relating to retention included an in-depth critique of job performance, satisfaction, and organizational commitment in an employee's intention to remain with an organization.

In Section 2, the details of the role of the researcher and the selection process for potential participants, and subsequent contact are complete. A substantial portion of Section 2 covered the population and sampling method. Extensive explanations of ethical responsibility, the research topic, method, and design, including the data collection approach and data analysis procedures, are in Section 2. Information regarding processes to ensure the dependability, credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability of the data is in Section 2, as well as the study's outcomes.

Section 3 included the research study's findings and the presentation of the results. The detailed analysis presented includes the identification of emergent themes from the analysis of data and a discussion involving the contribution of the SDT lens with its six mini-theories to understanding the findings. The discussion in Section 3 demonstrated a

practical application to professional practices, implications to social change

recommendations for future actions, and research derived from extensive analysis of the

primary research data triangulated against secondary sources of data and information.

Finally, section 3 concluded with reflections and a detailed conclusion of the significance

of the findings.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I detail the methodology and research processes for the study. This research study was a generic qualitative study design used to explore the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons in the United States. In Section 2, I explain instrumentation and design to explore the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons. The findings of this study could be valuable for some SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers to develop successful retention strategies that could add value to the organization. Section 2 includes descriptions of the role of the researcher, details on participants for the study, and justification for the selected research method and design of the study. Finally, I conclude Section 2 with a discussion of multiple processes for population sampling, participant selection, data collection, analysis, and technique, as well as the significant measures implemented to ensure qualitative reliability and validity of the study's findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore strategies that some beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention. The targeted population included five salon owners, managers, or hiring managers in the United States who successfully incorporated strategies to improve employee retention. Beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers used their retention strategies to promote organizational development and employee engagement. The implications for positive social change include the potential for beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring

managers to increase economic stability throughout the communities they serve by

providing stable employment opportunities for the local citizenry.

Role of the Researcher

I used the generic qualitative approach as the design for this study. As the

researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument. My duties were to collect,

categorize, and analyze the data, as well as interpret the data by developing a thematic

analysis system. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) unveiled that qualitative researchers

conducting a generic qualitative study are interested in three primary focus areas to

understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences. The three areas are (a)

how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what

meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative

researchers are an essential aspect of a study with duties such as recruiting the

participants, collecting data, analyzing the results, and interpreting the data free from bias

(Karagiozis, 2018).

Bias was a concern because I had an extensive history as a beauty salon hiring

manager and administrator. I identified two types of bias that could affect my research

findings: researcher bias and participant bias. Bias could plague a study with an influence

that distorts the results (Galdas, 2017). I was a weekly customer of my local beauty salon

and had developed close relationships with many stylists for years. Additionally, I had a

history of previous employment in a beauty salon as the operational manager, and I

worked to improve policy, procedure, and strategy for the beauty salon. Documenting,

recognizing, and understanding research bias was essential to determining my study's

credibility. The most critical measurement of reliability and validity in qualitative studies is the quality of the research findings (Yeong et al., 2018).

I took multiple steps to mitigate research bias, such as excluding my former employer and employees from participation and excluding all beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers with whom I had a personal relationship. In selecting my participants, I randomly chose SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers using the open call method and BLS data to find appropriate SME beauty salon establishments.

I used an interview protocol to ensure a systematic approach and minimize possible bias when gathering the interview data. An interview protocol supports a researcher's efforts to obtain comprehensive information to increase the effectiveness of an interview (Yeong et al., 2018). I used an interview protocol that included member checking to mitigate potential biases. Kornbluh (2015) established strategies for member checking to understand the population, convey the data analysis process, reconstruct data collection memories, and maintain openness to change. The interview protocol was a systematic approach to gathering data (Yeong et al., 2018). Through the use of the interview protocol, I collected quality data and avoided researcher and participant bias.

Roth and von Unger (2018) indicated that qualitative research designs involve complex ethical responsibilities. I maintained mindfulness of any ethical issues that could arise during the research. Cohesive procedures guided my actions to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the participants' data. My research procedure was the three governing principles of the Belmont Report protocol: respect for persons,

beneficence, and justice ("The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research," 2003). In addressing the assumptions of individual autonomy and my responsibility to respect and protect individual autonomy, the principles of the Belmont Report protocol were my guide. "The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research" (2003) uses The Belmont Report protocol to assess and document the potential equity in the risks and the benefits of research. The Belmont Report protocol could be helpful to researchers when confronted with the more abstract and subjective judgments involved with human research (Cragoe, 2019).

Participants

I identified the number of SME beauty salons using the Google database. Additionally, I identified SME beauty salons currently in business in the United States as potential participants for this study. I conducted an open call using an Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved flyer posted to social media platforms on participant pages and in-person recruitment efforts. Researchers discovered that recruitment and retention challenges often arise with human participants, causing many researchers to fail to meet recruitment targets within initial timelines (Dichter et al., 2019). I used BLS data from 2020 to determine if the overall number of SME beauty salons was viable to ensure sufficient data for the research. Dichter et al. (2019) observed that the criteria for the selection process of participants in qualitative interviews should be interest, availability, and willingness to participate in a recorded interview.

The Google search engine also enabled me to gather the needed contact information for SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers in the United States, such as their physical location, phone number, and email address. Steils and Hanine (2019) discovered that recruiting qualified participants is challenging when using initiatives that seek to attract a large and diverse crowd, such as an open call for participation online. I did not use the open-call method, but I used the search results to gain access to many potential participants and condense the list based on their willingness to participate in the study.

According to the 2021 BLS data, there were approximately 285,980 licensed cosmetologists and barbers in the United States. The participants were five SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers in the United States who demonstrated successful retention strategies. SME beauty salon leaders in the United States who had a minimum of two employees and had a history of maintaining a minimum of two employees remaining with the company for a minimum of 2 consecutive years met some minimum thresholds of consideration for participation.

I compiled the list of potential participants into a database containing their contact information in preparation for the initial engagement. The database includes each salon's name, location, and phone number and is on a secure external drive to ensure portability and confidentiality. Additional recruiting efforts included a digital open call using a flyer on various participant websites.

The qualitative approach is a solid methodology for many types of research studies, and offers many ways of appropriately gaining participants. Li et al. (2018) used

a qualitative approach to explore participants' experiences relating to the phenomenon of talent management, TM, in China. The researchers used an established selection criterion that ensured participant selection variation and consistency (Li et al., 2018). Blijleven et al. (2019) used a qualitative design to explore the critical success factors for Lean implementation. The researchers applied three selection criteria to enhance the validity of the study. Vitolla et al. (2016) explored integrated corporate social responsibility and driving factors. Vitolla et al. used a specific selection criterion to focus on cases that would yield information-rich responses through a semistructured interview process. Researchers who have used the qualitative approach have benefited from the standardization of participant selection and data collection methods.

The prior professional and personal contacts I maintained with SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers helped me access this study's population of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers. I had multiple sustained relationships in the industry due to my administrative work history in the United States. Interviewing at least five SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers from the database ensured retrieval of adequate participant data aligned with my overarching research question, achieving data saturation.

I engaged all potential participants for screening after receiving the approval of the IRB to collect information. Researchers who establish well-defined inclusion criteria can utilize essential tools that help them evaluate the external validity of a study's results (Patino & Ferreira, 2018).

After identifying viable subjects through the initial phone screening, I sent an email containing a letter of introduction and invitation explaining the study's interview process, purpose, and scope. Additionally, I obtained consent via email with the words "I consent," explaining how I would keep participants' identities confidential and how valuable the data were. Each participant needed to have 2 or more years of a fully developed and successful retention strategy, demonstrated by their statistics of voluntary employee turnover for the past 2 years.

One cannot overstate the importance of establishing a positive and trustworthy relationship with participants because the researcher in a qualitative study accesses and seeks to understand participants' subjective experiences. The researcher-participant link operates on a conscious, preconscious, and unconscious level for both the participant and the researcher (Harvey, 2017). Failing to establish a positive working relationship with participants can adversely affect the validity and volume of the data retrieved from a subject (Harvey, 2017).

I applied close attention to all aspects of the interview process to ensure the gathering of information-rich data from each participant. The key to successful data collection is establishing a viable strategy to engage participants properly. The interpenetrative and intersubjective nature of the researcher-participant relationship affects both parties during their interactions (Harvey, 2017). Qualitative researchers should continuously strive for balance in developing their relationships with participants between being overly casual or distant (Harvey, 2017).

The strategy to establish an optimal working relationship with participants began with the initial contact. I contacted each participant by phone to provide information about the study and to retrieve their email addresses if they were interested in participating, to forward the introduction invitation letter and consent form. The act of obtaining consent from each participant established the study's validity and ensured confidentiality for the subjects, creating a trusting environment. The participants' and organizations' identities remain confidential because I did not disclose any identifying information in my study. All interviews were conducted by video instead of face to face due to COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore, the plan was to conduct interviews in a private atmosphere of mutual agreement, allowing the participant to have a sense of control over the environment.

When setting a time and place with the interview participants, I advised them to select a quiet and private place where they felt comfortable and fully engaged in the interview process without onlookers or any additional distractions. I adhered to the same environment as private and quiet while conducting the interview and when interviewing and analyzing the data. Participants must trust that their identity is secure and confidential, and when they do, they are more likely to share viable unbiased data.

Research Method and Design

When approaching the study of the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons, I considered three research methods: (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed method. The process to determine the most appropriate methodology for my research focused on the overarching research question and the most appropriate methods

of data collection and analysis, as well as reporting findings. I found that using the qualitative approach was the best way to fully explore the participants' perceptions and experiences.

Next, I considered the five designs of the qualitative research method, which are (a) phenomenological, (b) ethnography, (c) case study, (d) narrative, and (e) generic. The process of selecting the proper research design occurred after selecting the appropriate research method to study the business problem. In determining an adequate research design, I focused on the most substantial design that supported adequate gleaning of the data to fully explore the phenomenon of the effectiveness of employee retention strategies in SME beauty salons. A generic qualitative design is the best strategy to collect enough usable data to ensure data saturation.

Research Method

The first research method I considered was the quantitative method. A researcher who uses quantitative methodologies gathers numerical data to prove a hypothesis concerning the correlation of variables (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Reijseger et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study using variables to measure the correlation between high-quality performance, employee motivation, and engagement. Covella et al. (2017) conducted quantitative research concerning leadership's role in employee retention. The researchers measured person-job fit, turnover intention, and employee work engagement factors such as vigor, dedication, and absorption (Covella et al., 2017). I was not seeking to quantify the variables associated with employee retention. Instead, I explored a phenomenon by gathering data concerning the experiences and observations of employers

who had successful retention strategies. My focus included subjective data, which were difficult to quantify using quantitative methods. I did not choose the quantitative approach to study the phenomenon.

The second method I considered was a mixed method. Researchers who use the mixed method approach give a complete vision of an event in a way that quantitative or qualitative analysis alone cannot. Saad et al. (2018) characterized the mixed method approach as useful as they conducted interviews to establish reliable quantitative themes to quantify and factor correlation. The mixed-method approach could be for the triangulation of data and as a support to multiple data collection methods. Sánchez-Gómez et al. (2017) adopted a mixed-method approach to get a broad picture of a phenomenon. Researchers who use the mixed-method approach can integrate their results to combine a discussion that makes inferences, to better understand and expound upon a comprehensive vision of a phenomenon (Sánchez-Gómez et al., 2017). Researchers could use the mixed method approach to find substantial data concerning the phenomenon of employee retention in SME beauty salons. However, the qualitative approach alone was sufficient to ensure data saturation through triangulation, guaranteeing a robust exploration of the phenomenon.

I selected a qualitative research method to explore the contributing factors to inadequate employee retention strategies in SME beauty salons. Qualitative researchers aim to understand a phenomenon by examining and observing participants' experiences and perceptions (Kornbluh, 2015). The use of qualitative methodology enabled me to sufficiently gather the critical observation data needed to gain a more in-depth

understanding of the phenomenon. Through open-ended questions, researchers who use the generic qualitative design approach can examine participants' lived experiences and how those experiences shape the business problem and its resolution (Groenewald, 2004). Qualitative methods are the tools that researchers use to discover data about a phenomenon by posing open-ended questions to the targeted population and exploring their responses through four designs (Campbell, 2014).

Research Design

I selected the generic qualitative design since the generic qualitative design allows for an in-depth analysis of complex social phenomena (Yin, 2018). Although a central theme of all qualitative studies is that individuals generally could construct reality when interacting with their social worlds, researchers who use the generic qualitative design could gain a deeper understanding of the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved (Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Yazdani et al. (2022) used the generic qualitative design to study parental decision-making for children with life-limiting conditions. The researchers used the generic design to conduct a qualitative thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report specific themes regarding the phenomenon under study. I selected the generic qualitative study design since a case study design does not provide adequate contemporary data to analyze the phenomenon fully (Yin, 2018). Likewise, I found that the other qualitative designs of ethnography, narrative, and phenomenological were equally inadequate to fully explore the phenomenon of SME beauty salon employee retention.

Montsion (2018) defined ethnography as a method to observe other people's cultures through their activities and experiences. Montsion (2018) established that interacting with participants over a period and seeing the participants' world from their perspective yielded sufficient data through participation and observation. The purpose of my study concerned how some beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers had effective employee retention strategies, so while the ethnographic design could help isolate valuable data, it was not the type of data that would further illuminate my topic.

The phenomenological design was a robust design that supported the full exploration of a phenomenon through participants' lived experiences (Groenewald, 2004). The use of the phenomenological design enabled researchers to collect valuable observation data, but the limits were only to the participants' perspectives. Makhubele et al. (2018) used the phenomenological design to explore the phenomenon by understanding participant perceptions concerning their lived experiences with the phenomenon. The limits of the phenomenological design are substantial, and I would not have the freedom to explore the phenomenon beyond the participants' perceptions.

Researchers who use narrative design could provide insight into a phenomenon through the art of storytelling rather than source data. Corner et al. (2017) used the narrative design to explore the perspectives of entrepreneurs concerning venture failure, focusing on the emotional and psychological costs for the entrepreneur rather than the business processes that failed, which facilitated venture failure.

Researchers who use the narrative design could demonstrate the individual's point-of-view by ascertaining meaning from the events in their lives and how this

meaning is perpetual through varying life events (Clarke et al., 2016). My research aims to analyze the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers. The primary use of my study is to demonstrate how retention strategies help salon owners, managers, or hiring managers retain their employees, which contributes positively to their competitive advantage in their market. The narrative design is not a robust design that would enable me to gather sufficient useful data concerning the phenomenon that will ensure data saturation and enable data triangulation.

Through my use of the generic qualitative design, I used various data sources to explore the phenomenon, thereby helping to achieve data triangulation and saturation. The multiple sources include six sources of evidence, as identified by Yin (2018), which are interviews, direct observation, documentation, archived records, participant observation, and physical artifacts. Hagaman and Wutich (2017) found that researchers need about five interviews for each new occurrence of common themes and that it takes about sixteen interviews to achieve saturation of the most common themes.

I used semistructured interviews to gather contemporary evidence of the phenomenon and analyze the documentation of theoretical perspectives as my primary data sources. Additional interviews occurred if new themes arose that aligned with the overarching research question. Yin (2018) demonstrated the effectiveness of interviews for data collection and triangulation in a generic qualitative design.

Data saturation limitations existed to acquiring robust interview data because there were multiple sources of data to consider. The data sources contributed to achieving data saturation and data triangulation. Fusch and Ness (2015) found that the triangulation

of data contributes to measuring data saturation. Typically, a researcher who triangulates their data selects data from multiple sources, such as publications concerning the topic, semistructured interviews, or survey data (Dewasiri & Abeysekera, 2022). I used semistructured interview data to analyze the phenomenon, which included (a) a summary from the interview, (b) digital notes from the semistructured interview, (c) any records of intentional efforts of employee retention such as memorandums and emails that the participants agreed to share and (d) data from past studies regarding the phenomenon. Using multiple data sources helped me achieve data saturation, which added to the validity and credibility of my study.

Population and Sampling

The aim of the generic qualitative study is to explore the strategies that some beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention. There are approximately 298,890 licensed cosmetologists and barbers in the United States (BLS, 2021). Qualitative researchers make initial decisions regarding the sampling approach using a study's research questions and conceptual framework as a guide to focus the research synthesis factors that may be contextual, methodological, or conceptual (Farrugia, 2019). The researcher used purposeful sampling to study the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers.

Researchers who use the purposeful sampling method could collect information-rich cases to study the phenomenon in-depth. Benoot et al. (2016) found that the power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Researchers who use purposeful sampling examine the event as critical factors associated

with the phenomenon (Suri, 2011). Researchers who use the criterion method of purposeful sampling identify and select all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Palinkas et al., 2015). The strategy that I used is the snowball sampling method.

The estimated appropriate sample size is five cases because a sufficient amount of data with overlapping themes should be available, which should trigger data saturation. Researchers suggest that sample size determines the relationship to the information power of a given sample (Sim et al., 2018). Gurbuz et al. (2019) used a sample of five cases in their qualitative study; they were able to achieve data saturation and explore the phenomenon. Duarte and Cruz Machado (2017) conducted a qualitative study using five cases and found that the sample size was sufficient for qualitative sampling. Five cases that meet the inclusion criterion should be adequate to achieve data saturation. I relied on the quality of the data rather than the quantity of data to establish saturation. The retrieval of sufficient information-rich data concerning the phenomenon requires five participants to establish the study's validity. Roberts et al. (2019) discovered that the number of participants could limit the researchers' ability to achieve data saturation, although having many participants does not guarantee that data saturation is achievable. It is critical to obtain data saturation to demonstrate the study's reliability and validity (Roberts et al., 2019).

The researcher used five semistructured interviews to provide overlapping themes and no new data. Establishing data saturation could be arduous in qualitative studies because there is no one way to achieve saturation (Palinkas et al., 2015). However, Fusch

and Ness (2015) revealed that there are three general principles of data saturation (a) no new data, (b) no new themes, and (c) no further coding. Researchers who selectively choose information-rich cases that could yield insights and in-depth understanding regarding the phenomenon rather than empirical generalizations strengthen the quality of qualitative research (Benoot et al., 2016). Furthermore, member checking and reviewing archival data further supported and proved data saturation, proving the research study's quality and validity.

Researchers who use the data collection method of semistructured interviews could experience challenges when attempting to obtain information-rich data. Morse (2015) found that having a relatively rigid structure and guidelines in semistructured interviews helps determine reliability. Researchers must contend with outside influences that could taint or restrict the process, and the environment could play a decisive role in hampering the data collection process during semistructured interviews. Hove and Anda (2005) found that the planning and conducting of the interview drive the quality of the data obtained from semistructured interviews. While participants who take part in the study must meet the study selection and eligibility criteria, they must also agree to a suitable environment to conduct the interview.

Each interview was a length not longer than 60 minutes. In order to increase engagement and focus, the interviews took place in a quiet and private video conferencing environment. Researchers find that the right environment for an interview could produce the participants' maximum engagement (Hove & Anda, 2005). Researchers found four areas central to the planning and conducting of interviews: (a)

estimating effort, (b) assurance that the interviewer is appropriately skilled, (c)

strategizing good interaction between interviewer and interviewee, as well as (d) using

interview protocols and company artifacts to validate interview data (Hove & Anda,

2005).

I ensured an environment that was a quiet zone (i.e., shut down all electronic

devices except interview tools during the interview) than in a video conferencing

environment. Hove and Anda (2005) uncovered that it is critical to ensure that

interviewees feel comfortable with the interviewer to enhance the quality of the

information-rich data they are willing to share concerning their experiences with the

phenomenon under study. I provided a video conferencing environment free from outside

distractions to help the interviewee give information-rich data that furthered data

saturation using five cases.

Ethical Research

Ethical research practices are fundamentally the responsibility of the researcher

conducting a study. Some researchers argue that the concept of ethical conduct is an

ongoing, critical, and dialogical engagement with moral and political questions of

conducting research (Roth & von Unger, 2018). Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) must

have guidelines that adhere to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) standards for

ethical conduct in formal research studies. Roth and von Unger (2018) iterated that the

nature of most qualitative research involves complex ethical responsibilities that are

dynamic, emergent, and interactional. In executing my role as a qualitative researcher, I

adhered to my ethical responsibilities by reading and adhering to Walden University

guidelines when collecting data for and writing my doctoral study.

The IRB at Walden University ensures that all Walden University research

complies with the university's ethical standards as well as U.S. Federal Regulations. The

establishment of human research ethics boards was due to controversial research

practices using human subjects during the 1950s and 1960s (Roth & von Unger, 2018).

Consequently, I had IRB approval before contacting prospective participants or

beginning the interview process. Researchers must provide the IRB assurances of

privacy, safety, and confidentiality for participants and take all additional measures to

protect vulnerable populations ("The Belmont Report," 2003). I obtained approval from

the IRB for all documents, such as consent forms, using the guidelines of the Belmont

Report. Cragoe (2019) stated that the Belmont Report identified three basic ethical

principles of research (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. Researchers

and scholars structure qualitative studies using the three underlying principles of the

Belmont Report, designed to be broad yet comprehensive to facilitate individual synthesis

("The Belmont Report," 2003). I used the three ethical principles of the Belmont Report

to inform my decisions on my process of data collection from human subjects.

Before interviewing participants, I must begin the informed consent process.

Before I started the informed consent process, I received an IRB number # 11-02-21-

0629594 indicating IRB approval to collect data from human subjects. I included the IRB

number in my final study. The informed consent process is crucial in research to ensure

that anyone participating in research does so voluntarily and that their treatment is ethical

by adhering to IRB and NIH codes of conduct. Prospective participants for the study received an initial phone screening, and upon meeting the criteria to engage in the research study, an email followed.

The email included an invitation and a letter of introduction explaining the study's rationale and intent. I emailed a consent form with a statement of consent to all respondents of the invitation expressing interest in participation. Individuals who agreed to participate in the research study responded to the email with "I consent," indicating their agreement to the terms of participation in the study. Finally, I set up appointments to meet with interviewees.

Before beginning the interview process, study participants received a full explanation regarding the research process to ensure that they fully comprehended their right to participate in the study or withdraw from it at any time without fear of negative reprisals. I offer participants a specific remedy if they no longer consent to participation in the study. Participants could withdraw their participation in writing by submitting the requests via email or verbally at any time, with no negative consequence.

An explanation of the consent included an acknowledgment that there is no offering of compensation for their participation in this study. Additionally, participants would not suffer any potential harm or risk, both personally and professionally, due to their involvement with the study. Participants have the right to understand the possible purpose, cost, and advantages of the study findings (Ogden & Edwards, 2016). Furthermore, participants could withdraw their participation in writing or verbally at any time with no negative consequence.

The identity of participants in the study is confidential since I used pseudonyms to conceal their identities. Roth and von Unger (2018) discovered that using pseudonymization to protect participants' confidentiality is vital to ensuring that participants do not suffer adverse consequences for the data they provide. I used a letter and number combination as the pseudonyms to conceal participant identity (i.e., P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5). Researchers who use this type of system could facilitate the proper level of confidentiality for the participants while allowing for a simple organization of the data. I did not release, label, transcribe, or disseminate any data without using pseudonyms to prohibit the identification of participants.

Storage of all participant data, including the database of potential participants, remains on an external encrypted hard drive warehoused in a fireproof safe located in a secure environment for a minimum of 5 years to further protect the participants' confidentiality. I prevent any unauthorized access to the fire-proof safe by maintaining a unique numeric combination, and I have exclusive access. My knowledge of the location of the fire-proof safe further ensures the confidentiality and protection of the participants' data. After 5 years of storage, I will delete all the information on the thumb drive and shred all files and paper notes. Researchers and scholars who guarantee the privacy and security of participant information meet the requirements of IRB and NIH to fulfill the commitment to conduct ethical research by protecting participant rights.

Data Collection Instruments

I am the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data for this qualitative study. The primary data collection instrument is the qualitative researcher, and it is vital

to minimize researcher bias while collecting, coding, and sorting qualitative data through sound data collection techniques (Clark & Vealé, 2018). I gathered information from multiple sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and other seminal works. I used video-conferencing due to COVID-19 protocols to conduct semistructured interviews to collect data to establish themes and help organize essential data. Sánchez-Gómez et al. (2017) iterated that qualitative data collection and analysis aim at integrating results by carrying out a combined discussion to allow the researcher to make inferences to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. Researchers who used semistructured interview processes ensured they could explore the event in-depth by posing interview questions to the participants and recording the data (Yeong et al., 2018). Before interviewing participants, I obtained consent to use audiotaping and handwritten notes to preserve the interview data for further analysis during or after the interview process. A reliable interview protocol could provide the researcher with the tools to obtain quality interview data (Yeong et al., 2018). I used an interview protocol to ensure consistency and quality.

Semistructured interviews are the vehicle that I used to explore the success of retention strategies for SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers in the United States. The experiences of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers in using retention strategies to decrease their voluntary employee turnover may be insightful to future researchers exploring the phenomenon. I used thematic analysis to identify and categorize themes and patterns using MAXQDA software. Researchers use the process of thematic analysis to codify and present revealed themes embedded in the

data useful in a qualitative study (Williams & Moser, 2019). Data triangulation is essential for data validity and quality (Desmond et al., 2018). I used data triangulation to validate data saturation using (a) results of the SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers' semistructured interviews and, if available, (b) industry documents (i.e., professional blogs, professional websites, professional vlogs, etc-.).

The two primary sources for data collection included in-depth videoconferencing (due to COVID–19 protocols), semistructured interviews, and the review of organizational documents such as the policies, procedures, and personnel manuals of the SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers. I used the generic qualitative study protocol to initiate a logical process of data collection regarding the phenomenon under study, which assisted me in proving the validity and reliability of my study findings. Bhat et al. (2019) revealed that using five cases in their qualitative approach improved the generalizability of the data effectuating the reliability and validity of the study findings. Li et al. (2019) ascertained that establishing reliability and validity occurs when using a minimum of five cases because the data is generalizable.

Researchers who use generic qualitative designs have various data collection tools and protocols that help them ensure the integrity and accuracy of the data (Yin, 2018). I triangulated the data sources to facilitate the validation of data by cross-verification and exploring strategies to retain employees in SME beauty salons. I obtained, organized, and analyzed interview data maintaining the confidentiality of the participants by labeling the data with nonpersonal identifiers such as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5.

Researchers who use member checking for the follow-up to interviews ensure the interview summary represents the participants' expressed experiences and perceptions. Validation strategies such as member checking allow the researcher to ensure the accuracy of participant perceptions and recollections of their interaction with the phenomenon under study (Yeong et al., 2018). Reliability and validity are two critical aspects of qualitative research to test the trustworthiness of findings (Cypress, 2017). I used the tool of member checking to reconcile my analysis and interpretations with the perceptions of the participants.

The interview protocol that I created included scheduling a date for a follow-up session to conduct member checking or sending an email with the interview summary requesting that the participant review the data and respond affirming its validity, which consists of no more than two pages. Morse (2015) found that a well-developed concept for semistructured interviews is reliability, provided that a relatively rigid structure and guidelines are in place. Qualitative researchers must be proactive in ensuring the rigor of a study, and member checking is one of the strategies that affect the reliability and validity of a study (Cypress, 2017). Researchers who provide a synthesized analysis of the interview data enable participants to evaluate the appropriateness and validity of the conclusions.

Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique I used in my generic qualitative study is the semistructured interview and the review of organizational documents such as the policies, procedures, and personnel manuals of the SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring

managers. A researcher conducting a qualitative study uses semistructured interviews as the primary method for data collection (Kaliber, 2018). Qualitative researchers gain access to the participants' natural environment to collect and analyze data (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Semistructured interviews provide astuteness, meaning, and understanding of a social phenomenon (Kaliber, 2018). Thematic analysis with coding and sorting techniques in qualitative research are useful because qualitative data is present as words from participant observation field notes, interview records, journals, and documents (Clark & Vealé, 2018).

The participation of interviewers in the data collection process of semistructured interviews makes the interviewer a part of the interaction they are attempting to investigate (Karagiozis, 2018). Researchers shape semistructured interviews in qualitative research through the interrelationship between the researcher and the participant (Karagiozis, 2018). The exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of semistructured interviews with data collection is essential to shaping the quality of the research study.

One of the primary advantages of using the semistructured interview process is that the interviewee could provide information-rich responses that could uncover previously hidden facts concerning the phenomenon under study. Karagiozis (2018) discovered that a shaped interview can have three primary factors: (a) the skills of the researcher, (b) the recollection and reflective capabilities of the interviewee, and (c) the quality of the researcher-participant relationship. A researcher who uses semistructured interview data in combination with published works concerning the subject minimizes the

potential for bias. Qualitative research could become both a vehicle and a target for ethical, political, and methodological attacks (Karagiozis, 2018). Clark and Vealé (2018) revealed that researchers seeking to explain a topic under inquiry should reduce or disclose their assumptions and biases while collecting, coding, and sorting qualitative data. Researchers who contrast different perspectives help in the exploration of the phenomenon by guarding against potential bias.

A significant disadvantage of using semistructured interviews as a primary data collection technique is the potential for not achieving data saturation due to inadequate participant engagement. Hove and Anda (2005) uncovered that data quality is contingent on how a researcher conducts the interview and that facilitating an interviewee's comfort could help ensure their willingness to share helpful information. Researchers extensively affect the depth and quality of the interview data when using factors such as (a) active listening, (b) understanding, (c) warmth, (d) genuineness, and (e) acceptance which demonstrate sensitivity and respect for the individuality of participants (Karagiozis, 2018). In executing my interview strategy, I focused on the above factors and ensured active engagement during every phase of the interview process.

Once receiving IRB approval to interview participants, I began collecting data. I used the semistructured interview process and an interview script (see Appendix A) to gain the maximum focus of the participant during the interview process. Researchers use an interview protocol to ensure the collection of quality data (Yeong et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers must understand that their biases may influence the study's outcomes (Clark & Vealé, 2018). I used the interview questions to gain an in-depth

understanding of the phenomenon by listening intently to recognize and reduce occurrences of personal bias.

I used multiple data sources to present a functional understanding of the phenomenon through the quality and depth of the research facilitating data triangulation. Researchers triangulate interviews with other source data to help understand the actual circumstance of the phenomenon (Yeong et al., 2018). Qualitative interviewing tools, field observations, and document analysis are the primary ways qualitative researchers generate and collect data for their research studies (Heath et al., 2018). I recorded the semistructured video-conferencing interviews using interview notes and audio technology. Audio recorders are robust tools for capturing full explanations and gleaning a more profound understanding of responses (Soto & Ambrose, 2016). My overarching concern in the data collection process is to protect participants from harm or breach of confidentiality and to ensure reliability as well as the validity of the findings.

I transcribed each interview and provided a summary of the interview data to the participants for member checking. The researcher who uses member checking could validate the data's adequacy of interpretation (Heath et al., 2018). I performed member checking to ensure I accurately captured each participant's perception of the phenomenon. If participants' recollections differ from my interpretations, I will align the summary accordingly. I ensured confidentiality by labeling each participant interview with a pseudonym containing distinct letter and number combinations. The letter and number combinations include P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers who use data organization techniques at every phase of the data collection process could adequately keep track of all data and appropriately label the data for usage. Oliveira et al. (2016) found that researchers using computer-assisted quality data analysis software, CAQDAS, to organize and analyze qualitative data experience enhanced rigor, a more flexible analysis from multiple perspectives, and an easier replication and exchange of data. I organized all data using a CAQDAS called MAXQDA software and designed a functional Excel spreadsheet to track all the various source data. Some qualitative researchers use CAQDAS to categorize, codify, quantify, and confine data to appease concerns regarding the rigor, transparency, and validity of qualitative research (Le Blanc, 2017). I used MAXQDA software to easily find and retrieve references from my computer and external thumb drive and easily import data from Excel. Le Blanc (2017) discovered that CAQDAS has a code-and-retrieve logic that researchers use to enable the crafting of a standardized, replicable, unambiguous knowledge narrative. I used CAQDAS to enable the facilitation of robust analysis, supporting constant comparison, as well as the derivation of themes.

The data organization process included the reduction of data collected through interviews and organization artifacts. Researchers use three significant activities to aid in the analysis and organization of data, which are: (a) data reduction, (b) data display and drawing, and (c) verifying conclusions (Mayer, 2015). I organized all data using MAXQDA software and an Excel spreadsheet. I used MAXQDA to aid in organizing and

coding common themes throughout the proposal. Excel spreadsheets helped the researcher track and organize data sources.

Researchers must ensure the privacy of the participants. Roth and von Unger (2018) found that confidentiality and participants' privacy are overarching themes in research studies. Researchers use the IRB protocol because of the guidance offered concerning the requirements to protect the human rights and privacy of my research participants. Therefore, I conducted interviews in a private atmosphere of mutual agreement, which allowed the participant a sense of control over the environment. When setting the time and place for the interview with the participant, I advised them to select a quiet and private place where they could feel comfortable and fully engage in the interview process without on-lookers or any additional distractions. I adhered to the same environment as private and quiet while conducting the interview and analyzing the data. Roth and von Unger (2018) discovered that concealing the identity of a participant with a formal commitment to avoid revealing the person's participation or identity is an essential element of qualitative research. I followed the IRB's requirements by password-protecting all electronic data, audio tapings, databases, and text data on thumb drives. Researchers who use IRB requirements to ensure privacy for research participants document all additional measures to protect privacy, safety, and confidentiality (Cragoe, 2019). I also had paper notes, files, and thumb drives safely secured in a fire-proof safe for the required minimum of 5 years. After which, I will delete all the information on the thumb drive and shred all files and paper notes.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique I used to scrutinize the qualitative data is data triangulation. Fusch et al. (2018) found that the triangulation of multiple data sources in qualitative research adds depth to the collected data. Researchers who use data triangulation may achieve a comprehensive and definitive analysis because multiple sources could be more reliable than single-source data. Mayer (2015) found that data triangulation is the use of multiple research methods resulting in findings that could stand the rigor of validity and reliability testing because of the convergence of answers concerning the phenomenon. Researchers and scholars believe that data analysis is perhaps the most critical aspect of qualitative research because of its significant influence on the reliability of the research findings (Mayer, 2015).

Data triangulation is collecting data using multiple methods, sources, and timeframes to obtain a more comprehensive and copious explanation of the phenomena (Abdalla et al., 2018). The multiple sources of data I used to demonstrate the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons included (a) public industry documents, (b) open-ended interview questions, (c) member checking, and (d) field notes.

I used multiple data sources and collection methods to provide evidence, verification, and validity to my analysis of the phenomena. Researchers who use data triangulation could make it possible to assess if multiple and independent measures lead to the same conclusion and provide a more accurate picture of the phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018). I conducted and audiotaped semistructured interviews using the interview protocol while taking field notes concerning additional observations for accuracy during

the interview process. I entered the interviews in text format in their entirety and uploaded the data, including audiotapes, and field notes, to CAQDAS software MAXQDA. Maher et al. (2018) uncovered that MAXQDA as a data analysis tool is well-tested and valid in qualitative studies. Researchers who use MAXQDA software as a qualitative analysis tool could use each interview's data to expand and establish themes (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Participants' responses to the interview questions should reveal experiences, factors, and strategies of successful employee retention strategies in SME beauty salons.

After completing a written record of the interview data, I uploaded the data and perceptivities gleaned from secondary sources into the CAQDAS MAXQDA software to aid the analysis. I used MAXQDA software to identify key themes related to the central research question, participants' interview responses, and the conceptual framework. Researchers and scholars found that the use of CAQDAS aids thematic analysis by (a) speeding up the process of analysis, (b) enhancing rigor, (c) providing flexibility in interpretation due to differing perspectives, (d) facilitating the reproduction of data; and (e) allowing researchers room for more excellent reflection by reducing operational activities (Oliveira et al., 2016). I focused on correlating the critical themes with peer-reviewed studies published since writing the proposal to facilitate additional thematic analysis if needed. Thematic analysis is a primary way to analyze nonnumerical data because it is a form of pattern recognition whereby themes or codes emerge from the data forming categories for analysis (Roberts et al., 2019). I completed the data analysis when there was a compilation of all collected and coded data; thematic analysis finalized, data

saturation assured, and powerful emergent understandings of the phenomena were attainable.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

The reliability and validity of qualitative studies are impossible to measure and difficult to prove because of the subjective and interpretative nature of qualitative research. Cypress (2017) uncovered that establishing reliability and validity throughout the qualitative research process is vital because the researcher's subjectivity could cloud the interpretation of the data. In qualitative research studies, establishing trustworthiness demonstrates the quality of the study. Cypress (2017) posited that trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the findings' quality, authenticity, and truthfulness. Qualitative researchers must ensure that the reliability and validity of findings demonstrate the trustworthiness of the study through replication and consistency of process and design. Fusch and Ness (2015) established that the application of data triangulation and data saturation helps researchers enhance reliability and validity. I ensured the research findings' trustworthiness using data triangulation and member-checking techniques to explain, establish, and maintain reliability and validity.

Validity

The validity of a study is measurable by the quality, precision, and veracity of the study findings. Abdalla et al. (2018) found that the strategy of triangulation contributes to validity by providing a more trustworthy picture of the phenomenon through convergence. Credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation are the

components of the validity criteria I used to prove the validity of my process and findings.

Credibility

The credibility of research relies on the researcher's ability and effort and the data's quality. Morse (2015) identifies credibility factors in qualitative research as (a) prolonged engagement, (b) persistent observation, (c) triangulation, (d) peer debriefing, (e) negative case analysis, (f) referential adequacy, and (g) member checks. I used data triangulation to bolster the credibility of my research study. Researchers and scholars believe that credibility is one of the most critical factors in producing trustworthiness in qualitative research (Abdalla et al., 2018). Member checking in concert with data triangulation contributes to establishing credibility in qualitative research (Maher et al., 2018).

Transferability

The transferability of this generic qualitative study is measurable by providing thick descriptions of a robust data collection technique resulting in information-rich data detailing every aspect of the phenomena under review. Morse (2015) describes transferability as the ability of future researchers to transfer the original findings to another context or individual. Maher et al. (2018) discovered that in qualitative research it was vital that thick descriptions of the research context are available so that the reader could determine transferability to their situation. Researchers who use validation strategies must enhance those with confirmability techniques to further establish the study findings' trustworthiness.

Confirmability

Researchers who use confirmability techniques guard against researcher bias. Abdalla et al. (2018) revealed that confirmability in qualitative research is related to the measures taken to ensure that the researcher's bias is not influencing the interpretation of participant data. Morse (2015) found that establishing confirmability using triangulation strategies and the audit trail is feasible. I used semistructured interviews to collect data, and field notes provided contexts such as environment and body language. Additionally, I used the process and framework for procedural decisions to help establish the confirmability of study findings and analysis. Abdalla et al. (2018) uncovered that the primary criterion for confirmability is the researcher's account of their bias. Researchers using s detailed accounting of all methodologies and techniques involving data collection and analysis should be able to establish the reliability and validity of the study sufficiently.

Data Saturation

Achieving data saturation assisted in proving the validity and reliability of the study findings. Cypress (2017) learned that evaluation through the researcher's ability to achieve data saturation helps to establish validity during data generation. I achieved data saturation by continuing to collect data until no new information related to additional themes emerged. Fusch and Ness (2015) revealed that data saturation occurs when enough information to replicate the study compiles with no ability to obtain additional new information making further coding no longer feasible. I used MAXQDA software to aid in thematic analysis. Oliveira et al. (2016) perceived that the MAXQDA program

helps enable substantial data organization based on the established themes and allows relationships among the data to be determined faster. There is a direct link between data saturation and triangulation (Fusch et al., 2018). The strategy to use data triangulation and member checking should enable the sufficient establishment of the reliability and validity of the study.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 began with the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research methodology, and ethical research standards. Subsequent subsections include the population and sampling method, data collection instruments, techniques, organization, and analysis methods. Finally, Section 2 provided explanations for proving the dependability, credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability of the data and the outcomes of the study. Section 2 included specific details on the use of the qualitative method and the generic qualitative study design to explore the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons. Researchers who use semistructured and videoconferencing (due to COVID-19 protocols) interview techniques could collect information-rich data that should address the research question. In Section 3, the focus is on the presentation of the findings. Section 3 also had the categorization and interpretation of the data collected to establish relevant themes that represent the experiences of participants implicated by the data. Section 3 also covers the presentation of study findings, which included the application of the research to professional practice, the implications for social change, and the recommendations for action. Finally, Section 3 concluded with reflections and concluding thoughts provoked by the research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

This generic qualitative inquiry aimed to explore successful strategies some SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention. I collected data from five beauty salon owners who maintained at least two employees for over 2 consecutive years. I conducted face to face interviews as a primary source of data collection. The participants were highly knowledgeable about the strategies resulting in their successful employee retention statistics. I used member-checking to gain additional percipience regarding employee retention in SME beauty salons. Additionally, I analyzed follow-up questions to explore more information-rich responses until no new themes, patterns, or codes emerged. I used MAXQDA software to cross-check the interview data with the document data for theme identification.

The participants validated the interview summaries provided during the member-checking process. I used thematic analysis to analyze the data and data triangulation to increase the validity of my research. Using data from previous research studies, interview data from my population, and document data from the participants' online sources, I developed the themes revealed during the data analysis. Collins and O'Riordan (2022) used data triangulation when confirming how learning occurs in zoo environments. Collins and O'Riordan used data triangulation to overcome the limitations of sparse data regarding their inquiry because they could answer their overarching research question and prove the validity of their findings by combining the data from multiple sources.

I developed my codes and themes through thematic analysis. I used the six-step process of Braun and Clarke (2006) to develop quality codes and themes. I used this analysis method because it is the most flexible, and its processes aligned with my design and approach. The six steps of thematic analysis are (a) familiarizing oneself with the data, (b) generating codes, (c) combining codes into themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) determining the significance of themes, and (f) reporting findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The themes that I developed through analysis are (a) motivation, (b) engagement, (c) leadership, and (d) psychological needs satisfaction (PNS). Several relevant clusters of codes resulted in an added understanding of the findings. The analysis results helped me to establish areas of agreement and divergence from the literature, which furthered the understanding of SME beauty salon leaders' successful retention strategies. The following presentation of findings is the product of the thematic analysis and data triangulation.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question I used to guide this study was the following: What strategies do salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention? The data collection process deployed was semistructured interviews with five salon owners who maintained at least two skilled employees for at least 2 consecutive years. I used six open-ended questions to allow participants to express their experiences and give sagacity to how they successfully retained their employees. Additionally, I used industry documents related to employee retention strategies to cross-reference the

participant data gathered through the semistructured interviews. The participants were knowledgeable and skilled in maintaining their workforce over significant time frames.

Each interview conducted was in an environment of the participant's choosing that would be the most conducive to the interview process. I wanted the participants to be where they felt the most comfort. I followed the interview protocol to ensure uniformity in my approach to mitigate the risk of bias. I used audio tape to preserve the complete content and context of the interview. I ensured the anonymity of the participants by using pseudonyms to document the interview responses. They gave information-rich data that resulted in significant realizations concerning employee retention in SME beauty salons. Postinterview, I created full transcripts from the semistructured interviews I conducted and summarized those data.

I provided the participants with their interview summary for member-checking to further demonstrate the findings' validity. Using the summaries to conduct member-checking, I created the opportunity to revisit some relevant themes. I then investigated commonly known industry documents to further my understanding of successful employee retention strategies common to the SME beauty salon industry. Through data triangulation and thematic analysis, I identified significant themes, strategies, and sapience regarding the success of some SME salon owners' employee retention methods. Using MAXQDA software, I developed code and theme analysis that enabled me to aggregate the data to provide a complete and compendious exposition of successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons. Subsequently, I revealed more information-

rich data through follow-up questions to the participants, resulting in data saturation where no new themes were evident.

Theme 1: Leadership

My research demonstrated that solid leadership is a significant component of a successful retention strategy in SME beauty salons. During the data analysis, I uncovered the subject of leadership in congruence with PNS, motivation, and engagement resulting in employee retention. The theme of leadership had many components, such as leadership style, leader-member exchange, leadership growth, effective management, and belief system. In the review of the literature, I learned that leadership played a pivotal role in the ability to retain staff. Martins Abelha et al. (2018) found that subordinates report higher levels of job satisfaction from transformational leaders. Job satisfaction is one of the leading indicators of retention (Martins Abelha et al., 2018). The data from the research demonstrate that leaders influence many aspects of PNS, motivation, and engagement, indicating that transformational leaders engender intrinsic motivation, ultimately resulting in retention (Yamin, 2020). Other leaders rely on extrinsic motivating factors to influence loyalty, such as bonuses, increased pay, education, and training, or consequences for neglecting to meet expectations (Mardanov, 2021).

In my research on retention strategies of SME beauty salons, I unearthed considerable literature regarding the relationship between transformational leaders and their ability to motivate, inspire, and engage employees, resulting in retention. Tuan and Rajagopal (2019) found that a transformational leadership style had a meaningful and positive effect on job satisfaction. The results of the study demonstrated that job

satisfaction led to other measurable positive factors, such as inspirational motivation, and they revealed that utilizing this leadership style could build strong relationships with employees (Tuan & Rajagopal, 2019). They found that strong relationships between leaders and followers could result in employee retention (Tuan & Rajagopal, 2019). Many studies substantiate the link between transformational leadership and intrinsic along with extrinsic motivating factors resulting in retention.

Some SME beauty salons could be vulnerable to high turnover and an inability to retain skilled workers due to leadership. Saeed and Jun (2021) discovered the influence of leaders as highly consequential to employee satisfaction and job embeddedness. The researchers found links to retention realized through the dynamic of transformational leaders and motivating factors (Saeed & Jun, 2021). Research on transformational leaders and retention demonstrated that successful retention strategies executed by transformational leaders inspire their subordinates to achieve work activities rather than by force (Tian et al., 2020). Through data analysis, I discovered that the participants as leaders exhibited elements of transformational leadership per their descriptions of how they led through inspiring their followers. I reviewed the data for the coded segments of transformational and leadership to illustrate the assertion. See Table 1 containing responses indicating how leaders identified as transformative.

Table 1

Transformational Leader Elements Identified in Participants

Participant	Excerpts of interview
P1	"Offering help and being able to take constructive criticism first myself in order to be able to give constructive criticism" (Loyd_A_P1_Fullytranscribed interview, Pos. 32)
P2	"I just do what's right and what's best for everyone, or at least I try to. I do everything with that in mind, what's best for everybody." (P2 complete interview transcript, Pos. 86)
P3	"We just kind of laid back, and even our customers, they like coming in here because we just kind of chill, talk, cut up, laugh." (P3_full transcript interview recording.m4a, Pos. 16)
P4	"Honestly, just being me, just being real. I feel like if you've been real and being yourself and being positive, you succeed" (P4 full transcript.m4a, p. 1)
P5	"Preparing staff to be successful in the future is also an incentive to my employees to remain with my company (P5 full transcript.m4a, p. 1)

Note. Each excerpt is an example of participants' recollection of moments of leadership that they identified as transformative.

The participants demonstrated their inspirational leadership style by responding to the interview questions. The retention efforts led by them were successful because of the positive effects of transformational leadership on employee retention. Researchers discovered that transformational leaders could positively affect job satisfaction because those types of leaders inspire the need to accomplish a given activity for the sake of accomplishment (Raziq et al., 2021). This display of intrinsic motivation indicates

elevated levels of worker satisfaction, and studies show that these higher levels of worker

satisfaction could result in employee retention (Raziq et al., 2021). In reviewing the

literature, I unearthed that study after study confirmed the linkage between the themes of

(a) leadership, (b) motivation, (c) PNS, (d) engagement, and (e) retention. I explored the

interview data and industry documents to assess which themes, if any, were elements in

their expressed retention strategy. I posited that each theme should be a component of

their successful retention strategy. I identified the elements of a strong retention strategy

by reviewing the literature, which eventually developed into themes. I used those findings

to analyze the interview data, looking for coded segments that corresponded to the

themes. Postanalysis, I reviewed my documentation to assess if any elements were

present in the strategies.

Table 2 contains responses from the participants that intersect with the elements

of a strong retention strategy.

Table 2

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Beauty Salon Retention Strategy Elements

Elements of retention	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Leadership	15	26	17	18	16
Motivation	10	4	7	4	9
PNS	5	2	11	7	5
Engagement	29	6	4	8	8

Note. The number represents occurrences where the code appeared in the interview data

and corresponded to the participant's responses.

I learned from the data that leaders influence motivation through their interactions

with staff. The influence of leaders governs many of the motivational exchanges between

them and the worker and affects employees' relatedness in groups. When I gathered my data, I focused on speaking to the people who created and implemented successful retention strategies. In SME beauty salons, that person is usually the owner, manager, or hiring manager. I determined that to answer the research question and give contextual meaning, I needed to explore the relationship between a leader and a worker. I also needed to understand how their dynamic could affect retention outside a successful strategy. I considered the type of leaders who affect retention and how their relationship could be a factor in a successful retention strategy.

I researched LMX theory because it emphasized the relationship between employer and employee influencing engagement, employee loyalty, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Based on my literature review, I found that employee-employer relationships and the distinct types of motivation they inspire could result in a higher retention rate. Manelkar et al. (2022) discovered that LMX significantly affected employee retention. The researchers sought to prove that work-life balance significantly affected employee retention more than the relationship between the leader and the employee (Manelkar et al., 2022). They found that managerial support positively affected employee satisfaction, increasing retention rates more than work-life balance (Manelkar et al., 2022). The relationship between a transformational leader and an employee and the quality of their exchanges/communication significantly affect employee retention (Manelkar et al., 2022). I discovered a strong connection between the positive effects of leaders and the exchange between them and their workers as vital retention factors.

The caliber of a leader can improve and affect employee engagement. I unearthed multiple studies that all pointed to leadership affecting engagement and indicated that engagement efforts led by effective leadership could result in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Manelkar et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Furthermore, motivational factors could directly affect many determinant aspects of employee engagement leading to retention (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Each participant acknowledged that they had strong relationships with their workers. The participants also stated that they always looked for opportunities to spend time outside of work with their employees. The participants spoke of their relationships with employees outside of work, which engendered loyalty. I analyzed the data to assess how often leadership, motivation, and retention were co-coded throughout the data. Table 3 indicates the strong relationship between leadership, motivation, and retention.

Table 3

Relationship Between Leadership, Motivation, and Retention Within the Participant Data

Participant	Leadership	Motivation	Retention	Combined
P1	15	10	8	10
P2	26	4	2	1
P3	17	7	4	6
P4	18	4	9	5
P5	16	9	6	3

Theme 2: Motivation

Motivation is a crucial element of a strong retention strategy, as evidenced by my literature review and analysis of the participant responses. Deci and Ryan's SDT is a motivational theory used to understand human motivation (1985). Motivation separates into two buckets (a) intrinsic and (b) extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). There

were several considerations that the interview data revealed as subcomponents of motivation, such as profit, well-being, environment, and motivational practices (Pincus, 2022). Through the analysis of the interview data, I uncovered that participants reported motivational factors as a part of their strategy in 104 coded segments. I revealed that motivation could be my population's top driver of retention.

My literature review revealed a direct link between leadership, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and employee retention in some SME beauty salons. Liu and Liu (2015) studied how extrinsic motives could positively affect employee retention. The researchers learned that when offered stock options, salon employees show a significant increase in work dedication, engagement, job satisfaction, and retention (Liu & Liu, 2015). Education and training are substantial extrinsic motivational factors that contribute positively to employee retention through job satisfaction and employee growth (Zámečník & Kožíšek, 2021). Chahar et al. (2021) demonstrated a significant relationship between motivational factors and employee performance and retention. The researchers quantified that engagement through education and training had an overwhelming impact on an employee's intent to stay (Chahar et al., 2021). The use of SDT as a framework enabled the needed tools used to quantify the weight of motivational factors in employee retention efforts within the population.

Researchers who use SDT have a robust meta-theory comprised of 6 mini-theories. Using the six mini-theories enables a researcher to examine all relevant aspects of human motivation. Researchers who used SDT could investigate a motivational phenomenon, from what environmental stimulants cause it to the different behaviors

derived from it (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When I used SDT as a framework to study

successful employee retention in SME beauty salons, I explored all the underlining

elements used to create the success of the retention strategies. To adequately answer the

research question, I needed the space to explore all directions of why the retention

strategies were successful. SDT was a broad theory that enabled my deep exploration of

the topic. Motivation in humans can happen through different environmental factors, both

internal and external (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The researchers used SDT to demonstrate that

humans innately seek to satisfy three basic psychological needs (BPNs) (Ryan & Deci,

2017). When BPNs are satisfied, motivation in humans to accomplish many positive or

negative activities occurs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). A leader could accomplish having

motivated employees be engaged in work activities if they create an environment that

allows workers to feel competent, act autonomously, and feel connected to their

collogues (Andrews & Mohammed, 2020). SDT was a robust framework to research

motivation in humans and how to create and use it to ensure specific outcomes that result

in employee retention.

I found a strong relationship between extrinsic motivation and successful

retention strategies of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers. I

analyzed the responses from the participants and coded segments of the text identified as

extrinsic motivation or an element of it. Additionally, I discovered coded text with

extrinsic factors and retention strategies to establish the relationship between them.

Subsequently, I revealed limited intrinsic motivating factors in the reported retention

strategies, although some leaders reported intrinsic motivation concerning staff retention.

Table 4 contains the relationship between extrinsic motivating factors and the strategies reported by the participants. The data is from the number of times retention strategy and extrinsic motivation are co-coded. The values in the table represent the total number mentioned by the participants.

Table 4

Relationship Between Extrinsic Motivation and Participant Retention Strategies

Retention strategy	Extrinsic motivation	Combination
5	4	4

Theme 3: Psychological Needs Satisfaction

The theme of PNS is the central focus of SDT. Deci and Ryan (1985) used SDT to examine the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors when humans satisfy three BPNs. The researchers discovered that when the experience of PNS in humans occurs motivation arises in varying ways (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The BPNs are competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) is a mini-theory of SDT that focuses on the satisfaction of BPN as a central controller of human happiness and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Through PNS, a worker could experience a higher level of engagement in work activities resulting in retention (Martins Abelha et al., 2018). Psychological fulfillment may result in engaging behavior in the workplace if PNS is a primary source of motivation (Schoofs et al., 2022). I learned that the participants reported sustaining an environment where workers could experience PNS.

I used the data to reveal that in environments where employees experienced PNS, the leaders had the environmental conditions that allowed them to use extrinsic motivation in their successful retention strategies. In the workplace, PNS is an essential driver for positive behaviors and the promotion of well-being (Schoofs et al., 2022), (Ntoumanis et al., 2021). Deci and Ryan (1985) posited that human motivation occurs when the satisfaction of three BPN occurs. Competence is a need to feel qualified or knowledgeable, and humans experience a sense of fulfillment or accomplishment when they feel competent (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Relatedness is a BPN that is the human need to feel a connection and sense of belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Humans experience the fulfillment of relatedness when they create and sustain meaningful relationships (Coun et al., 2019). When they establish relationships in the workplace, it could be with leaders or colleagues (Coun et al., 2019). Finally, the need to act autonomously defined as the need to feel self-determining, as if one has complete control over their actions (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Fulfilling this need in the workplace causes humans to feel a sense of control, allowing them to possibly act on internal impulses to actively engage in work activities rather than external compulsions (Demircioglu, 2021). When workers experience fulfillment through work activities, the possible result could lead to a higher level of engagement resulting in retention (Demircioglu, 2021). In the data, I discovered evidence of the participants striving to create an atmosphere conducive to PNS. Table 5 shows quotes from the participants regarding the 3 BPNs that support the above assertion.

Table 5

Participant Quotes Regarding Psychological Needs Satisfaction

Autonomy	"Even though they're kind of like employees, they're individual contractors. And so, it's almost like, hey, you have your own business inside my business."
Competence	"So, then you had to have a certain skill level. Because another one of my lessons was that people will go on social media, and they don't just bash the person who f***up their hair. They bashed the person whose shop it is."
Relatedness	"I was just lucky. I got a good group of people. They like each other. They get along."

Theme 4: Engagement

The theme of engagement emerged through my research into successful retention strategies because the foundation of a successful strategy is how to persuade others to participate and engage in its execution. Engagement, a work-related state, refers to a positive and enthusiastic state of mind that is fully immersed, dedicated, and motivated regarding work activities (Ghosh et al., 2020). The theme engagement had several constituents: (a) continuing education, (b) organizational development, (c) job satisfaction, (d) organizational commitment, and (e) effective communication. Figure 1 lists those constituents and how often they appeared in the interview data.

Figure 1

Number of Occurrences of the Components of Engagement in the Interview Data
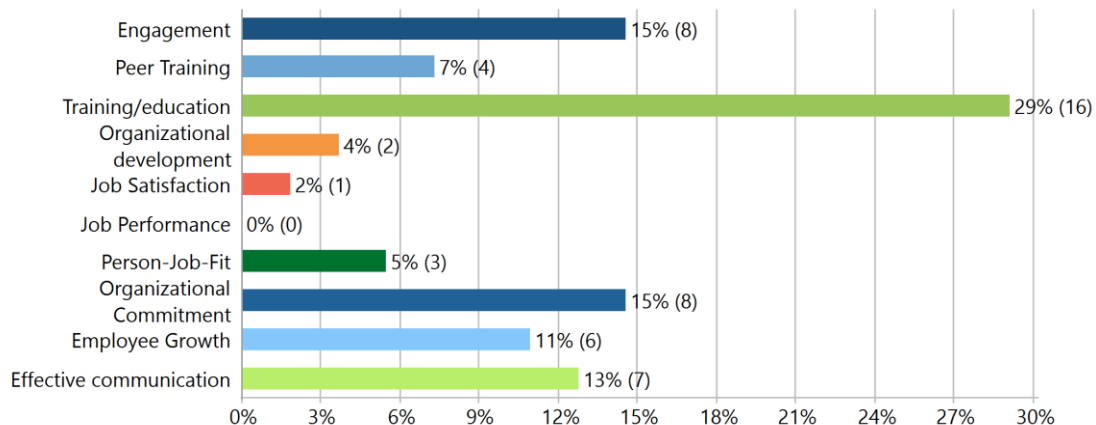
My literature review exposed a link between engagement and motivation, revealing that some level of motivation must be present to engage humans, positive or negative, both intrinsically and extrinsically. Engidaw (2021) found a direct correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and employee engagement. Furthermore, I learned that any successful plan regarding employee retention requires some level of motivation to trigger engagement. Engaged employees can be more committed to the organization and display a positive output regarding the completion of tasks (Tyagi, 2021). Leaders play a significant role in employee engagement, from how they lead to clarifying organization expectations (Moore & Hanson, 2022). Work environment and employee engagement are two leading determinants of employee retention (Andari et al., 2021). I uncovered through my literature review that engagement is the linchpin to all the other retention factors.

The element of leadership could be the driver of creating an environment where employees could realize PNS (Ryan & Deci, 2017), which creates motivating conditions

that could result in engagement (Ghosh et al., 2020). The fulfillment that employees

could experience due to PNS and work satisfaction could result in motivational actions

that lead to engagement (Ghosh et al., 2020). This type of motivated behavior could

result in employee retention. Tian et al. (2020) found a positive relationship between

transformational leaders and employee retention in SMEs. They revealed that leaders

with a compelling vision could give workers a sense of purpose, prompting positive

forms of engagement (Tian et al., 2020). Training and education are other huge

motivators that promote engagement (Chahar et al., 2021). Leaders who invest in

appealing to their employees' motives could experience elevated levels of employee

motivation, leading to increased employee engagement (Chahar et al., 2021). My data

analysis bore comparable results to the literature review, demonstrating that motivation

plays a role in engagement. Motivation and leadership intersect as a causal nexus to

engagement, and the realization of engagement elements could align with certain types of

leadership.

     The data analysis revealed that transformational leaders could create a PNS

environment for their workers. Furthermore, using the components of SDT centered

around motivation could result in increased positive engagement, which could result in

employee retention. Liu and Liu (2015) discovered that extrinsic motivation, such as

offering employees stock options, enhanced employee retention and job satisfaction for

organizations in the hairdressing industry. Pittino et al. (2016) uncovered that extrinsic

and intrinsic motivating factors positively influenced employee retention. Multiple

studies concur that certain types of motivation could enhance employee retention efforts.

Further literature review exposed components that affect employee motivation, such as leadership and engagement. Yamin (2020) found that transformational leadership positively affects employee retention. Yamin examined multiple ways of engagement directed by a transformational leader and found that those efforts increase employee satisfaction and boost organizational commitment, positively affecting employee retention (2020). Covella et al. (2017) recognized that when leaders are involved with workers in positive and meaningful exchanges, employees exhibit important levels of engagement. The researchers also recognized that elevated levels of engagement resulted in a higher level of organizational commitment, which eventuated in higher levels of employee retention (Covella et al., 2017). Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate the elements of a strong retention strategy that I identified through the review of the literature as well as the data analysis of the participant data. The figures represent the number of times the elements appeared in coded segments.

Figure 2

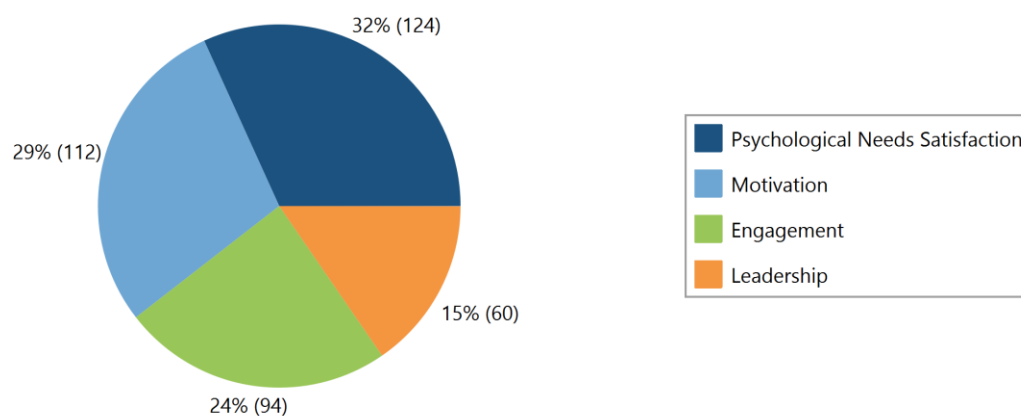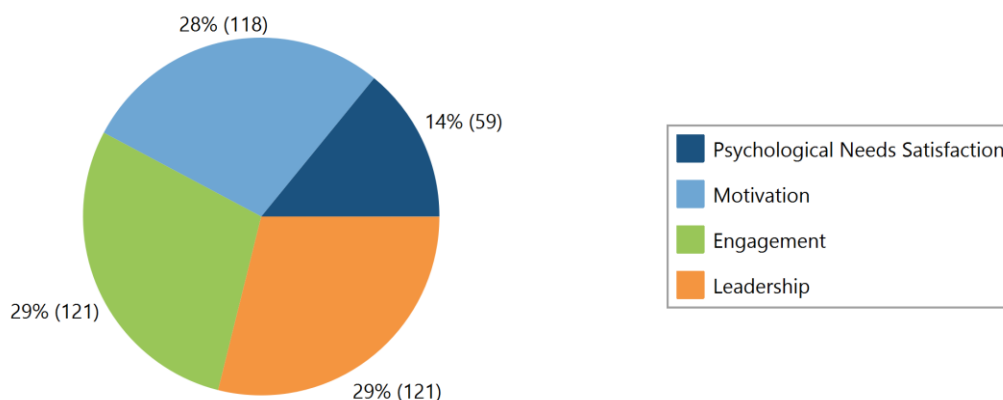*Elements of a Successful Retention Strategy Review of Literature*

Figure 3

Elements of a Successful Retention Strategy Participant Data

Self-Determination Theory Framework

The framework of SDT is a vigorous theory that was a helpful guide in the probe of successful employee retention strategies used by salon owners, managers, and hiring managers of SME beauty salons. SDT is a motivation metatheory developed by Ryan and Deci (2017) to examine how PNS is a motivator with both positive and negative motivational outcomes. The examination of literature regarding SDT revealed how PNS is a driver of employee retention based on intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors. Li and Wu (2019) used SDT to examine the motivations of volunteers' intentions to continue with nonprofit organizations. Li and Wu found that autonomous motivation was more of a predictor of intentions to remain than controlled motivation. Wang et al. (2020) used SDT to evaluate the perception of some college students' ability to transfer their knowledge. Chen et al. (2020) used SDT when examining the influence of management on autonomous motivation. When I used SDT as a framework to examine the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons, I discovered it to be helpful in considering

whether motivational factors affected employee retention and, if so, whether they were present in the cohorts' successful retention strategies.

The four overarching themes uncovered through analyzing the data I collected duly addressed the research question. The themes that emerged correlated to the themes established by the literature review. The themes of (a) leadership, (b) motivation, (c) PNS, and (d) engagement were elements of the participants' strategies that had proven to be successful for them in increasing their employee retention rates over time. I used semistructured interviews to ask six open-ended questions. The responses to the questions were information rich, resulting in an abundance of data to analyze.

When reviewing the literature, I focused on finding research that provided information concerning the elements of a strong retention strategy. I soon began to understand that the elements that promote employee retention are the elements that form a successful retention strategy. The participants' responses to the interview questions clarified why their retention strategies were successful, and I learned that motivational factors were present in their strategies. Using SDT as a framework enabled me to discern and disclose the impact that retention strategies could have when the elements of PNS, motivation, leadership, and engagement combine and deploy in the strategy.

Conclusion of Findings

I used my research question to guide my study of successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons. The research question was simple, "What strategies do salon owners, managers, or hiring managers use to improve employee retention?" SME beauty salons were where I began my research. I wondered how vital this information would prove to

be for the industry. Many SME businesses in the service industry find great difficulty in

retaining their employees (Tian et al., 2020). Businesses across many free markets

recognize the need for skilled workers to accomplish organizational goals (Covella et al.,

2017). SME beauty salons are not exempt from suffering because of this issue, and I

addressed the business problem by first researching retention.

Table 6

Core Elements of Retention

Retention elements	Quotes from the data	Source
Leadership	"Honestly, just being me, just being real. I feel like if you've been real and being yourself and being a positive yourself and you succeeding, then they're going to want to stay with you because they see you're growing too, and they feel like, okay, if he can do it, I can do it."	P4
PNS	"You have to make them feel that you value them more than just an employee."	ID
Engagement	"I would say one of the main retention strategies is being able to manage and talk to people, being able to communicate effectively with the people that work there, having team meetings, having motivation and motivating the workers."	P1
Motivation	"A highly motivated and loyal team of salon employees is the key to business success."	ID

I uncovered that there were specific core elements of retention. Greguras and

Diefendorff (2009) found that organizational commitment may be achievable through

PNS. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) recognized that engaged employees were less likely

to leave an organization. Vlacsekova and Mura (2017) discovered that employee

satisfaction influenced by certain motivational factors could lead to employee retention.

Tian et al. (2020) revealed that the role of leadership in influencing employee retention is significant and vital in executing a successful retention strategy. The core elements identified by the review of the literature were (a) leadership, (b) PNS, (c) motivation, and (d) engagement. Through my evaluation of the data, the participant responses and industry documents correlated with the findings in the literature. Table 6 summarizes a few excerpts from the data that substantiate my conclusions.

I uncovered multiple studies concerning employee retention. The articles were relevant to how leadership, engagement, and motivation all played a substantial role in the outcomes regarding retention. Yamin (2020) found a causal relationship between transformational leadership engendering motivation leading to employee retention and performance. Starzyk and Sonnentag (2019) discovered that transformational managers could motivate and engage low-initiative workers when an environment that promoted PNS is present or perceived by the worker. Yee et al. (2010) recognized that employee loyalty in the service industry is a top indicator of their intentions to remain with the organization. Yee et al. (2010) also discovered elevated levels of engagement among staff that report organizational commitment. The literature shows how transformational leaders could create environments where employees could experience PNS (Tuan & Rajagopal, 2019). Motivated workers who realize PNS could be more likely to increase their engagement in work-related activity (Riyanto et al., 2021). Engagement in work activities could increase job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job embeddedness, resulting in continued employment (Moore & Hanson, 2022). The data gathered through

semistructured interviews and industry documents also supported the conclusions presented throughout this study.

Applications to Professional Practice

The composition of the beauty salon industry is multiple and diverse groups. Retail groups sell salon equipment and supplies (BLS, 2023b). Other groups specialize in servicing varying areas of cosmetology, such as make-up artists, waxing, nails, barbering, and haircare (BLS, 2023a). BLS data in 2022 contains that 608,900 jobs were in this service industry sector (BLS, 2023b). Beauty salon employees account for an average of 980,000 nationwide, with 92.2% being women (BLS, 2023b). Across industries, attracting and retaining skilled workers is becoming increasingly difficult (Riyanto et al., 2021). Zainal et al. (2022) found that many service industry organizations are finding increased difficulty in attracting and retaining employees. Steel et al. (2002) found that employee retention increases organizational profitability. The researchers uncovered that employee turnover costs continuously increase due to the cost of training and recruitment efforts for highly skilled employees (Steel et al., 2002). I focused the study on the successful employee retention strategies of SME beauty salon managers, owners, and hiring managers because of the massive retention problem and its excessive costs to organizations in the service sector.

I used the SDT framework to extensively analyze SME beauty salons' successful employee retention strategies to uncover the key to their success through the leaders who implemented the plans. Malik et al. (2018) discovered that engaged workers drive a company's profitability. Yee et al. (2010) uncovered a link between company profitability

and employee loyalty and commitment. Moore and Hanson (2022) found that many

companies lose employees due to a simple lack of engagement. Moore and Hanson

(2022) also discovered that leaders who lack the skills to engage their workers creatively

could cause a loss of employees. In my research of successful retention strategies, every

successful plan had four significant elements (a) leadership, (b) PNS, (c) motivation, and

(d) engagement. I revealed how these combined elements could contribute to a successful

retention strategy. I created a table matrix (Table 7) to illustrate how these combined

elements could result in employee retention.

Table 7

Application for Professional Practice

	Retention element	Recommendation for professional practice
1	Leadership	A leader with transformational traits of leadership enacted every successful retention strategy in my participant pool. Invest in leader development activities geared towards transformational leadership style.
2	PNS	The experienced transformational leaders who participated in this study created a space for employees to realize PNS. Transformational leaders must develop the tools to inspire and focus employee BPN to achieve PNS.
3	Motivation	Transformational leaders who participated in this study influenced motivation through a positive environment engendering PNS. The result was that positive forms of extrinsic motivation resulted in higher levels of engagement. Leaders must find ways to motivate their workers to engage more in work activity through extrinsic or intrinsic motivation, such as bonuses or other internal motives.
4	Engagement	Motivated employees enthusiastically participate in activities such as education and training, which could lead to retention. Leaders must offer activities such as training and education to incentivize engagement in work activities.
5	Retention	Use the elements of retention that work in a strategy. Always brainstorm for new ideas to continue the trend.

SME beauty salon leaders who create and implement retention strategies should be transformational leaders. Tian et al. (2020) found that transformational leaders are highly influential in varying positive ways, including motivation, engagement, and employee satisfaction. How employees respond to transformational leaders could enhance employee retention (Tian et al., 2020). Employers benefit from being transformational in their approach to employees because of the positive effects that type of leadership could have on work engagement (Yamin, 2020). The data shows that transformational leaders could positively affect the outcomes for the other retention elements.

The data surrounding PNS is interesting because the data I collected did not substantiate an assertion of the absolute need for this element to have a successful strategy. However, the literature was clear that positive motivation would be dormant if the employee is in an environment where there is no environment conducive to PNS (Malinowska & Tokarz, 2020) and that PNS creates the atmosphere for motivation to occur (Ntoumanis et al., 2021). Johar et al. (2019) substantiated a link between PNS which could lead to motivating behaviors resulting in job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Coun et al. (2019) found that PNS could enhance job satisfaction and work engagement. Employees who achieve PNS could be more susceptible to motivational tactics (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SME salon leaders could benefit by creating a PNS friendly environment because this could lead to motivation which could result in employee retention due to employees achieving a higher level of engagement.

The data showed that extrinsic motivations could positively affect retention when used in strategies for some SME beauty salons. The results aligned with the peer-reviewed literature on motivation and retention (Pincus, 2022). Deci and Ryan developed SDT to understand how PNS could lead to a motivated state (1985). Deci and Ryan (1985) found additional applications for the SDT. BPNT is one of the six mini-theories of SDT that proves a correlation between PNS and motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SME salon leaders benefit from leading with a retention strategy that incorporates extrinsic motivational factors such as bonuses or specialized free training (Pincus, 2022). The research showed that motivated employees are engaged, and engaged employees have an increased likelihood of remaining with the organization (Ryan & Deci, 2017), (Pincus, 2022), (Malinowska & Tokarz, 2020). SME salon leaders should use motivational factors of extrinsic motivation to engage workers, which could lead to a more robust retention strategy.

The final application to professional practice is incorporating activities that engage workers in any retention strategy. Employee engagement is a substantial part of retention and should be a focal point in creating a successful strategy (Andari et al., 2021). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are a prominent staple of the psychological state of the engaged worker and encouragement by leaders and additional environmental factors in the workplace could further positively engage them (Engidaw, 2021). The primary effectiveness of leaders rests on a bottom-up approach relying on the engagement level of employees as the determinant factor of a successful retention policy

(Moore & Hanson, 2022). The participant data aligned with the review of literature that employee engagement is an essential factor of retention.

The lessons learned from this study were substantial for the application of successful retention strategies in SME beauty salons. Using insights from the data and assertions from the literature, salon leaders could create and properly implement retention strategies to mitigate voluntary employee turnover. Transformational leaders could create the conditions conducive to helping employees achieve PNS, which could lead to motivated behaviors leading to greater engagement in work activities (Schoofs et al., 2022), (Steil et al., 2022), (Fulmore et al., 2023). Retention strategies with extrinsic motivators could affect an employee's intrinsic motivation leading to greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Mardanov, 2021). SME beauty salon owners, hiring managers, or managers could benefit from using extrinsic motives such as bonuses, commission, or training and education in their retention efforts to increase engagement that could result in job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Implications for Social Change

SME beauty salons can be a staple of the community. BLS data showed approximately 980,000 employees in the beauty salon sector of the service industry (BLS, 2023b). A destabilization of employee retention in the beauty salon sector could have reverberating effects throughout communities in the United States. Andrews and Mohammed (2020) found that the sudden loss of employees in the SME beauty salon industry could have lasting effects on the community it serves. During the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders struggled to retain skilled staff, especially in the service industry (Uhl-

Bien, 2021). The socioeconomic effects on communities due to a lack of employee

retention during the pandemic were adverse (Mohammed Said Al-Mughairi et al., 2021).

Due to the pandemic, many service industry employees suffered unrecoverable job losses

because many businesses never returned or workers decided to leave and begin new

careers in other industries (Mohammed Said Al-Mughairi et al., 2021). SME beauty

salons sometimes fail to retain highly skilled workers, and the community can suffer in

multiple ways. Some of the ways a community can suffer are (a) client displacement, (b)

a lack of available services, and (c) the variables that adversely affect communities that

experience high unemployment and business closures.

SME beauty salon leaders could use this study to understand how to improve their

employees' sense of belonging. Employees can fulfill the need for relatedness and

experience job satisfaction, which could lead to retention, resulting in a stabilizing

economic effect in the community. The public could benefit from stable companies in

their communities because high business turnover can destabilize economically

(Mohammed Said Al-Mughairi et al., 2021), creating more risk for abandoned storefronts

where there were once vibrant businesses supporting substantial localities. Engaged

workers are reliable and consistent, allowing growth and increased organizational value

(Cloutier et al., 2015). When SME beauty salons retain a highly skilled workforce, they

become more economically stable, and that stabilization affects the community.

SME beauty salon owners, hiring managers, and managers who use the

information from my study could improve their employee retention strategies resulting in

better employee retention, which could strengthen the communities they serve. Salon

employees are not only workers for their organization but also consumers, neighbors, friends, and family members of the communities they serve. Managers who successfully use employee retention strategies could promote growth and financial security (Cloutier et al., 2015). My research has implications for social change due to the stabilizing effects that employee retention could bring to a community through the financial security of an organization that retains its skilled workforce.

Recommendations for Action

I offered the recommendations for action to beauty salon owners and hiring managers of SME beauty salons in the United States region. The findings presented in this study offer relevant and critical information to help salon owners and hiring managers establish successful retention strategies or enhance successful retention strategies that could positively affect their ability to retain their highly skilled employees. Dissemination of the results of this study might experience completion via publishing this study in a peer-reviewed journal. I will make the study available to attendees of salon conferences and expos/hair shows because many salons participate in these shows annually, where they often attend classes on leadership and general business practices. Finally, I will also make the study available for salon industry professional websites, blogs, and vlogs, where most SME salon owners, managers, and hiring managers seek advice and guidance on creating policies and strategies. I will make this study available for SME beauty salon owners and hiring managers that use peer-to–peer training to create and improve protocols around employee retention. SME beauty salon owners, hiring managers, and managers have multiple venues and platforms to access information from

this study to enhance current retention strategies, leadership styles, and engagement practices to possibly increase the likelihood of retaining their skilled workers.

The key themes that emerged from the research included (a) motivation, (b) engagement, (c) leadership, and (d) PNS. Steil et al. (2022) established that job satisfaction is a crucial element of retention, and the retention of highly skilled workers is an essential element to the success of an organization. Chin (2022) uncovered that the level of investment in employees could significantly affect employee retention rates. Niemiec (2020) found that the following positive outcomes in employee retention stem from transformational leadership styles; (a) employee trust in the organization, (b) positive feedback from managers, (c) belief in one's ability to contribute to the organization, (d) identifying opportunities for advancement, (e) a sense of security, (f) job satisfaction, and (g) a high level of enthusiasm for work. The participants in the study revealed additional information that further supports a focus on retention as a strategy to enhance the viability of their business and increase their overall company value proposition.

The themes that emerged from semistructured interviews with hiring managers and owners of SME beauty salons further support the correlation between (a) leadership, (b) PNS, (c) motivation, and (d) engagement with successful employee retention. Multiple recommendations for action concerning creating and sustaining successful retention strategies for SME beauty salons surfaced during this research study.

The first recommendation is to have reliable, innovative, and inspirational leadership. Creating and implementing a viable retention strategy is challenging without

reliable and inspirational leadership. An inspirational leader who could create an environment where employees could realize PNS sets the stage for a successful retention strategy. The second recommendation was to design a positive and nurturing environment where workers could experience PNS. When employees experience PNS, the result could lead to an openness to motivational factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic.

Leaders who promote their employee's autonomy, the feeling that they control their fate may help an employee unlock internal motives that could propel them to be more engaged in work activities. Positive exchanges of communication between leader groups and employee groups, as well as employee groups to each other, could increase an individual's relatedness and make them feel interconnected with the team and the organization. Moreover, employees who feel competent to complete goals or tasks could experience higher engagement. Each element of the three BPNs acts as a catalyst to open the door of motivation. The third recommendation is to create an employee retention strategy that uses extrinsic motivating factors to engage workers.

Beauty salon employees respond well to positive extrinsic motivation such as bonuses, skills training, and celebrations. However, intrinsic or extrinsic motivation may only result in positive retention if an employee is engaged. The engagement factor must be present to achieve the successful retention outcomes I found during my study. Employees motivated by achieving PNS were likelier to exhibit a higher level of engagement. The final recommendation is to engage employees through training, meetings, and group activities. Employee engagement may prove to be the most significant indicator of employee retention. Job satisfaction and organizational

commitment were some of the leading results of a highly engaged worker, and both lead to positive employee retention. SME beauty salon owners, managers, and hiring managers could benefit from the recommendations that emerged from my study because I presented literature and data that could enhance their employee retention strategy.

Recommendations for Further Research

This generic qualitative study aimed to explore the successful retention strategies of some SME beauty salons in the United States. The population for this study was a sample of salon owners, hiring managers, and managers who implemented successful retention strategies, as evidenced by maintaining at least two employees for a minimum of 2 years. I chanced upon potential participants using the database.

The study's findings revealed a need for a more in-depth analysis of the phenomenon to replicate successful retention rates of employees in this industry. BLS data revealed that the beauty salon industry could experience 11% growth over the next 10 years (BLS, 2021). However, the same data reveals a high turnover rate in this industry. Therefore, further research is necessary to ensure salon owners, hiring managers, and managers possess sufficient information to improve their retention strategies and retention rates for their skilled workers.

The study's limitations included unknown conditions and factors at the facilities where the participants worked or resided that could bias the participants' responses. Some participants' recollections of events may be unreliable, leading to difficulty in understanding the phenomenon's varying context. The sample size for this study was five participants because I accomplished data saturation with five participants. However, a

larger sample size and varying types of data collection, such as surveys, may provide more information-rich data, yielding a complete understanding of the phenomenon's complexity.

I recommend a quantitative study or a mixed-method study approach. A quantitative approach to studying the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons may allow the researcher to extract a larger sample giving specific information related to the phenomenon. I believe the results may reveal a weighted accounting of the phenomenon due to the possibility of the sample size. However, researchers opting for a mixed-method approach may experience exploring the phenomenon more fully by examining subjective and quantifiable data.

Reflections

As an independent scholar at Walden University, I learned about the successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons in the United States. I became interested in studying employee retention strategies for my DBA because I chanced upon many studies citing unsuccessful employee retention as a significant factor in SME business failure. According to Banerjee (2019), retaining the best employees ensures entrenched organizational knowledge and learning that imparts client satisfaction, increased product sales, peer satisfaction, and effective succession planning. Ghani et al. (2022) uncovered that employee retention is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century for SME businesses, and harmful employee retention could adversely affect the organization's bottom line. Multiple studies cite many difficulties in retaining highly skilled staff in the United States.

Approximately 20 years ago, I witnessed a family member losing multiple employees at their SME beauty salon. The walkout almost destroyed their business. I watched as the owner rebuilt their business, which continues to thrive. Watching the growth of their business planted a curiosity in me that left me wanting to know why one employee leaves a job and the other stays. What are the drivers for each? As a student at Walden, I began to find answers to some of those questions, making me want to know even more. Conducting this study expanded my knowledge and understanding of retention strategies and the psychology of work, engagement, and leadership.

I faced many challenges in obtaining a total commitment from potential participants because they hesitated to share privileged information with strangers. Additionally, the number one consideration for any potential participant was money because time is their money for this population. Therefore, I had to seek out participants willing to sacrifice a little time to contribute to a study that could benefit them and their colleagues. In researching the industry, I uncovered that there is not a significant amount of academic research focusing on business administration, human resource management, or business management for SME beauty salons. Instead, I found significant scientific research regarding diseases and various beauty treatments. It seems that there are limits concerning qualitative research regarding business practices in American salons. The peer-reviewed literature is minimal, primarily related to employee retention, demonstrating a need for further research in employee retention and SME beauty salons.

I uncovered that the limited research indicates a direct correlation between employee retention and SME beauty salons' longevity and success. When I began this

research, I thought employee retention was a simple matter of providing the proper amount of compensation. However, through the peer-reviewed literature, I found that factors such as person-job fit, autonomy, competency, motivation, engagement, relatedness, and leadership quality drive turnover. Additional economic and geographic impacts could also affect employee retention. I learned through research that a solid strategy and planning are necessary to ensure sufficient employee retention in this economic environment. After completing this study, I believe it will assist SME beauty salon owners and hiring managers in building successful retention strategies.

Conclusion

Beauty salons offer a wide array of services that include but are not limited to hair care and styling, nail care and nail art, skincare and cosmetic art, body hair waxing/removal, body massage, barbering, and retail merchandise sales (BLS, 2021). Salons can provide numerous services, but qualified, licensed, and trained providers must facilitate the service. SME beauty salons could experience a loss in profitability when they fail to retain their staff. The service/hospitality industry experiences high turnover, and according to Zhong et al. (2022), the employee turnover rate of the modern service industry is increasing annually. SME beauty salon leaders must focus on employee retention to maintain and increase profitability.

My goal was to discover successful retention strategies amongst SME beauty salon hiring managers, owners, and managers so that the findings could help some maintain and further their competitive edge in the marketplace. I wanted to reveal applicable and transferable knowledge of employee retention efforts that could be

successful in helping other SME beauty salons experience the same positive effects as found in the literature review regarding the subject. During my research into successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons, I needed to know if there were motivating factors leading to employee retention. My findings support the conclusion that these factors exist.

Motivation is a huge factor in an employee's intention to stay with an organization. SDT was a robust theory to use as a framework to study the phenomenon of retention in SME beauty salons because SDT is a motivation theory that researchers can use to explore every aspect of motivation. I learned that motivation is complex because it could cause a human to react positively and negatively based on external and internal factors. Further research revealed that engagement is one of the most significant factors of a successful employee retention strategy.

Most studies concerning employee retention focused on engagement as an outsized influencer of employee retention. Some SME beauty salons engage employees in retention strategies through training and education opportunities, celebrations, community service, and out-of-office activities such as hair shows. I discovered that when employees come together to accomplish anything, the results could lead to higher engagement and successful employee retention. My research revealed leadership and PNS as additional elements of SME beauty salons' successful retention strategies that went beyond engagement, even though employee engagement was a significant element of a successful retention strategy.

Successful retention strategies of SME beauty salons had powerful elements of a transformational leadership style with tenacious and knowledgeable leaders as well as PNS. Both were interrelated to motivation and engagement, needing a leader to create the PNS environment and orchestrate the retention strategy. Motivation efforts will likely fail if the appropriate leader does not create a PNS-friendly environment for employees. When humans cannot experience PNS, positive motivation will fail likely. If motivation does not occur in humans, they will be less likely to engage in work activities. Without engagement, there could be diminished job satisfaction, negligible work commitment, and reduced organizational commitment resulting in a lack of retention.

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Appendix: Interview Script

1. Open with a brief ice–breaking dialogue with the beauty salon owner, manager, or hiring manager to engender a more relaxed environment.

2. Briefly discuss the consent and the confidential nature of the study and offer a hard copy of the informed consent form for their records.

3. Briefly discuss the possibility of artifacts to be received and how they might help demonstrate their retention strategies' effectiveness.

4. Use the script to hone the purpose of the interview.

5. Begin the script as follows:

   Good afternoon (Participant Name)

   I am researching successful retention strategies of SME beauty salon owners, managers, or hiring managers to determine the strategies that improve employee retention in SME beauty salons. Thank you for your participation in this process. The length of the interview is not more than 60 minutes. The interview questions' design aims to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon as you perceive it.

6. Begin the interview questions.

7. Wrap up interview thanking participant.

8. Schedule follow–up meetings for a member checking interview or relay to the participant a follow–up email with summary for their review will follow that will act as verification of interview data commentary.