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Strategies for Employee Retention in the U.S. Fast-Food Industry

Veronica Mason
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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Veronica N. Mason

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Walden University
2023

Abstract
Strategies for Employee Retention in the U.S. Fast-Food Industry

by

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MS, University of Maryland University College, 2003

BS, University of Maryland University College, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2023

Abstract

Fast-food leaders face challenges with retaining employees. Fast-food leaders are concerned about employee turnover because turnover hurts profitability. Grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies for employee retention in the U.S. fast-food industry. Data were collected through face-to-face semistructured interviews with five managers from different fast-food restaurants. Data were analyzed using Yin's five step process, and three themes were identified: (a) strategic communication, (b) rewards and compensation management, and (c) job satisfaction and motivation. A key recommendation is to create a work environment where expectations are clear and leaders are supportive, competent, and knowledgeable. The implications for positive social include the potential to reduce employee turnover, which can enhance self-worth, personal fulfillment, dignity, and prosperity for locally employed citizens.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee retention starts with the application process, the screening of applicants, and choosing whom to interview. Employee retention is the act of motivating an employee to stay for a considerable period (Sheraz et al., 2019). Employees are the driving force of an organization; therefore, employee retention and employee engagement strategies are crucial (Aguenza & Son, 2018). Employee retention is important to the success rate of an organization and essential to an organization's stability, growth, and revenue (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018). Business leaders who implement effective employee retention programs can increase organizational profitability (Sepahvand & Khodashahri, 2021). Experienced employees may remain in an organization when business leaders develop effective employee retention plans (Sepahvand & Khodashahri, 2021). Replacing key employees is expensive because knowledge is lost when the employee leaves, thus causing a decrease in productivity among the remaining employees (Alterman et al., 2021). Retaining and investing in employees is more cost-effective for an organization than time associated with recruiting, hiring, and waiting for a new hire to gain experience (Messer, 2021). The key to increasing employee retention is creating an environment where expectations are clear, work is recognized, and employees are motivated to accomplish goals (Bake, 2019). Business leaders who want to retain employees should establish policies and programs aimed at reducing employee turnover.

Background of the Problem

The fast-food industry is known for having a history of high employee turnover rates. Over 2 million employees leave jobs voluntarily every month (U.S. Bureau of

Labor, 2020). More than 70% of high-retention-risk employees indicated the intent to leave the organization to advance careers (U.S. Bureau of Labor, 2020). Employee retention can affect organizational performance and profitability (Baharin & Wan Hanafi, 2018). Business leaders who retain skilled employees can gain a competitive advantage (Singh et al., 2022). Key factors such as employee retention strategies help to keep experienced employees (Elsafty & Oraby, 2022). Employee retention is a long-term strategy that involves identifying talented employees and developing and utilizing the employees' skills to meet the demands of a growing industry (Uitzinger et al., 2018). Although employees tend to quit for several reasons, there are strategies business leaders can use to reduce employee turnover rates.

Talented employees bring a unique skill set and quality to their work. Talented employees are highly skilled or have organization-specific competencies that can make a substantial contribution to the organization (Uitzinger et al., 2018). Leaders should develop a clear vision to increase job satisfaction and employee retention by focusing on how to attract and retain key workers. Employee retention is more than records and reports. Employee retention involves actions the employer uses to retain employees and keep them from leaving the organization (Wright, 2021). Employee retention depends on how employers understand the concerns of the employees and how to resolve problems when they arise. Organizations spend time and money grooming new employees to ensure that the employees are ready. Organizational leaders suffer a loss when employees quit after they are trained (Patil, 2022). Employers who want to enhance employee retention should develop retention strategies that are both effective and methodical. The

greatest strength of an organization is the employees (Bharti, 2022). Talented employees tend to stay longer in their jobs when they are aligned with the values, vision, and mission of the organization.

Problem and Purpose

Retaining skilled employees is key to a firm's viability and competitiveness. Employee turnover can cost from 40% to 100% of an employee's annual salary, including lower productivity, recruiting costs, and longer transition and processing times (Hongal and Kinange, 2020, p. 68). In 2019, voluntary resignations accounted for 62% of employees who separated from employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020, p. 3). The general business problem is that ineffective retention strategies can negatively affect the profitability of organizations. The specific business problem is that some leaders in the U.S. fast-food industry lack effective strategies to retain skilled employees.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies leaders in the U.S. fast-food industry use to retain skilled employees. The targeted population was five fast-food restaurants in the Washington, DC metropolitan area that had successfully implemented strategies to retain employees. Leaders who implement effective retention strategies create employee, community, and economic benefits. Managers were interviewed to discuss successful implemented strategies used to improve employee retention within the business. The implications for positive social change in the study include more stable employment with less turnover, which can enhance self-worth, personal fulfillment, dignity, and prosperity for locally employed citizens.

Population and Sampling

The research study participants were managers from the fast-food industry in the Washington, DC metropolitan area who articulated experiences of and had implemented reduction strategies for increasing employee reduction rates. The small sample size for the study consisted of five managers from the fast-food industry. Data for the multiple case study came from interviews, direct observations, and interactions with the participants. The interviews used the same questions for multiple participants to help reach data saturation. The data saturation process involves the identification of (a) themes, (b) thematic definitions, (c) categories, and (d) coding based on the participants' responses (Sim et al., 2018). Data saturation happens when the researcher fails to identify any new (a) themes, (b) categories, (c) insights, or (d) perspectives for coding.

Nature of the Study

I considered three methods for the research study: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The qualitative method answers what, why, or how questions (Busetto et al., 2020). Researchers use qualitative methodology to ask open-ended questions to explore methods, understand processes, and identify connections (Busetto et al., 2020). Qualitative methodology was the choice for this study because open-ended questions address what or how questions to explore individual experiences. Quantitative researchers gather numerical data and generalize data across groups of people by testing hypotheses about variables, characteristics, or relationships. Quantitative research was not suitable for the research as I did not use deductive testing or empirical measurement or conduct a statistical analysis of variables' characteristics or relationships to assess the

hypotheses. Mixed methods include qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study or multiphase study (Busetto et al., 2020). I did not use mixed methods because I was not evaluating numerical factors and therefore did not need a quantitative arm for this study.

I considered ethnography, phenomenology, and case study design types.

Ethnography is the study and systematic characterization of human cultures (Burr & Wittman, 2020). The ethnography design was not the best choice because the goal of this study was not to understand a group's culture or norms in a real-life environment.

Researchers can use a phenomenological design to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon. A researcher can use a phenomenological design to focus on the unity of a lived experience within a particular group (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological design was not appropriate because I did not focus on perceptions or lived experiences of fast-food leaders.

Multiple case study was selected to conduct comparisons among the case findings from multiple organizations. A multiple case study involves using more than one case to understand the differences and the similarities among the cases and to aid in seeing if the results among the cases are similar or different (Yin, 2018). Multiple case study design provides a more robust, in-depth understanding of a case through comparison of similarities and differences than single case designs (Yin, 2018). Multiple case study provides evidence that is more convincing and has a better outcome than a single case study.

Research Question

What successful strategies do U.S. fast-food leaders use to retain skilled employees?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to retain skilled employees?
2. How do you evaluate the success of your strategies to retain skilled employees?
3. What strategies do you use to enhance employees' job satisfaction?
4. What strategies do you use to motivate employees?
5. What key barriers, if any, did you experience when implementing strategies to retain skilled employees?
6. In what ways does the work environment foster employee retention?
7. What leadership styles and characteristics do you use to enhance employee retention?
8. What leadership skills and knowledge have helped you to succeed in retaining skilled employees?
9. What else would you like to add regarding strategies that you used to retain skilled employees?

Conceptual Framework

Motivational factors include two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Herzberg et al. (1959) developed the two-factor theory. Herzberg et al. defined the first factor as motivators, which contribute to job satisfaction and are dependent upon what motivates a

person to achieve success. Hygiene factors relate to employees' working conditions, interpersonal relations, policies, and salary (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Alrawahi et al. (2020) posited that employees choose to engage in an activity when there is internal enjoyment or satisfaction in the activity (i.e., intrinsic motivation). Motivated employees are more likely to perform certain tasks when there is potential to receive a reward or recognition (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Motivational factors are important for the development and implementation of strategies for achieving and retaining a skilled and motivated workforce.

Employees might feel dissatisfied when hygiene factors are inadequate. Hygiene factors include extrinsic elements that influence job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Hygiene factors are the environmental features of an organization that support work (Ann & Blum, 2020). However, when hygiene factors are adequate, hygiene factors may not lead to higher motivation (Ann & Blum, 2020). Hygiene factors do not encourage employees to work hard because the factors are not motivational; however, employees could become dissatisfied due to the absence of hygiene factors. Employees who have a high-paying job with great benefits may still be dissatisfied if they do not have any responsibility at work and never feel a sense of achievement. Employees' motivation to stay in an organization may positively increase because of motivators, whereas employees may leave due to hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 1959). The two-factor theory was an appropriate lens for the study because it is helpful in what motivates employees to stay with an organization.

Operational Definitions

Employee retention: Employee retention is the effort by an employer to keep desirable workers to meet business objectives (Raziq et al., 2021).

Extrinsic motivation: Refers to the performance of an activity to attain an outcome (Derfler-Rozin & Pitesa, 2020).

Extrinsic rewards: An extrinsic reward is a visible reward given to an employee because of performing a job (Sharma, 2019).

Intrinsic rewards: An intrinsic reward happens when someone receives satisfaction from performing a job (Sharma, 2019).

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction is an individual's evaluations reflecting contentment and positive associations with jobs (Carter et al., 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Researchers should address assumptions, limitations, and delimitations when explaining a proposed study. Assumptions are issues or ideas found throughout the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Assumptions are out of the researcher's control and are things that cannot be proven, which involve the use of unverified data or unexamined related information but must be assumed true to investigate (Levitt et al., 2018).

Assumptions are ideas and issues found within a study that researchers could take for granted, which might cause a misunderstanding (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The first assumption was that participants might answer questions with truthful responses.

The second assumption was that my interview questions would lead to strategies that

business leaders could use for employee retention. The third assumption was that Herzberg's motivation theory was relevant for me to use as a conceptual framework for exploring the strategies that some business leaders have successfully used to retain employees.

Limitations

Limitations refer to sampling, measurement, data collection, and analysis of the study. A study's limitation is a weakness of a study that is outside of the researcher's control and can affect the results of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

Limitations are potential weaknesses or problems that the researcher identifies within the study (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Limitations are important because other researchers may attempt to replicate or expand the study (Ellis & Levy, 2009). One study limitation was the small number of study subjects, which is typical with case-study design studies. The second limitation was the limited geographical area of the study. A third limitation was the scope of the small study, in that it might not have been practicable for me to interview employees at all levels in the organization. Limitations may differ based on the research method and research design chosen by the researcher.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries that the researcher decides to include and exclude in the research study. Delimitations are restrictions that narrow the scope of a study, set limits, and ensure that the objective is possible to achieve (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Delimitations challenge the assumptions by showing inadequacies throughout the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018) and outline what is intended. Studies without

delimitations could make understanding the boundaries difficult (Ellis & Levy, 2009).

The first delimitation was that the study's geographical location was specific to the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The second delimitation was the focus of my research was on fast-food providers and not restaurants. Researchers might narrow the scope of study to make the research more manageable and relevant.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

This study could have a significant impact on business performance because strategies to retain employees might result in lower costs to hire and train inexperienced staff. Business leaders and coworkers may also benefit from retention strategies by avoiding understaffing and transference of the work burden to other employees, as well as eliminating workplace stress and absenteeism. The findings from this study could help fast-food managers retain skilled employees by using improved retention strategies. Effective retention strategies could have a positive impact on business leaders' abilities to operate more efficiently, resulting in improved financial performance.

Implications for Social Change

Implications for positive social change in the study include higher retention of skilled workers, which could reduce unemployment rates and reduce reliance on government services. Valuable employees who have been retained lead to economic growth of communities. Retained employees typically spend less time looking for new employment and devote more time to enriching relationships with family and friends. Positive social change could include fast-food managers hiring, training, developing, and

retaining employees to reduce unemployment rates. Using improved retention strategies, fast-food managers could retain employees in the organization, from which a positive impact might occur from stable employment and contributions to communities. Another positive change might be that retained employees typically spend less time looking for new employment and can devote more time to enriching relationships with family and friends.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature reviewed for the study explored employee retention trends. The current literature helped determine what information was known about employee retention and what specific strategies could be used to enhance retention. I described employee retention and motivation factors in the U.S. fast-food restaurants. The literature review included an overview of theories to include Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg's two-factor theory), Vroom's expectancy motivation theory, McClelland's achievement motivation, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, and Alderfer's existence, relatedness, and growth theory. The information from my literature review helped me in the contextual analysis of my data.

Leaders invest in employees by providing training and development. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore strategies that managers from fast-food restaurants use to retain skilled employees. The literature review consisted of peer-reviewed articles primarily published between the years 2018 and 2022 from various databases such as ABI/Inform, Business Source Complete, EBSCO, Sage Publications, and Thoreau. Another search engine used was Google Scholar. The following keywords were used to

locate peer-reviewed articles: employee retention, job satisfaction, leadership, organizational culture, workplace culture, motivation theory, employee engagement, employee turnover, and employee retention. Published articles were reviewed quarterly to remain informed on research pertaining to the subject matter.

The review of literature for the study included 175 total references, of which 148 were peer-reviewed journal articles. Eighty-five percent of the peer-reviewed references were published between 2018 and 2023.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources

Type of literature	Published within 5 years	Published beyond 5 years	Total	Total percentage five or less years
Peer-reviewed articles	97	6	103	94
Industry publications	44	19	63	69
Books	7	2	9	77
Total	148	27	175	100

Motivation Hygiene Theory

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, also referred to as the two-factor theory, was the conceptual framework for the study. Herzberg et al. (1959) introduced the two-factor theory in a book entitled *The Motivation to Work* (Caffrey, 2020). The theory reflects research on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and introduces more factors on measuring motivation in the workplace (Caffrey, 2020). Herzberg et al. wanted to assist management with a clearer understanding of employee satisfaction. Herzberg et al.

described how attitude affected motivation. The two-factor theory arose from an experimental study of a sample size of 200 engineers and accountants from nine companies.

Herzberg's motivators and hygiene factors theory included different assumptions than Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Herzberg introduced the two-factor theory of motivation and hygiene factors by arguing that satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not belong to the same dimension (Herzberg et al., 1959; Hur, 2018). Motivators are contributors to satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction, while hygiene is a contributor to dissatisfaction rather than satisfaction. Herzberg suggested that people choose courses of action based on motivators and revealed factors, which make employees feel motivated, satisfied, or dissatisfied (Herzberg et al., 1959; Hur, 2018). Business leaders could use the two-factor theory to determine employees' motivational intentions. Business leaders who try to motivate employees should first eliminate the hygiene factors that annoy the employee about the business and the workplace. Business leaders could improve employee retention by implementing key strategies to reduce employee turnover.

The motivation-hygiene theory addresses how job satisfaction and motivation influence employee performance and behavior in organizations. Herzberg found that employees' performances were based on physiological and psychological needs. Physiological needs include monetary rewards that employees receive in the workplace, and psychological needs are emotional needs gained through acceptance, empathy, and achievement (Herzberg et al., 1959). Physiological needs influence an individual's craving. Individual needs are essential and occur in many ways at various times.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory has been widely researched and has been the most argued theory of motivation in the workplace (Ozsoy, 2019). Motivation is a force that drives employees to perform and comes from inside employees.

Motivational factors relate to the job itself and increase the satisfaction level of employees. Hygiene factors are not related to work but may affect employees' attitude towards work. Motivator factors are associated with higher order needs, and hygiene factors are associated with lower order needs, as in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Hur, 2018). Herzberg developed the two themes and labeled the themes as motivator factors and hygiene factors.

Motivation Factors

For organizations to remain sustainable, the motivation level of employees' well-being should be kept high. The motivation of an individual can be tangible, such as money or gifts, or it may be intangible, such as a promise or acknowledgement (Alhassan & Greene, 2020). Employee motivation is important for an organization to remain functional and maintain a competitive advantage. Leaders who use motivational strategies can reduce high employee turnover (Alhassan & Greene, 2020). According to Derfler-Rozin and Pitesa (2020), increasing an employee's satisfaction through motivation factors does not necessarily mean that deficient hygiene factors (i.e., dissatisfiers) are corrected. Business leaders who create positive work environments are more likely to enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Motivation has a vital role because of the reinforcement of raising the confidence of employees to complete tasks more efficiently than unmotivated employees do.

Attitudes of individuals towards life are difficult to alter once developed after a certain age (Ozsoy, 2019). Herzberg suggested that individuals choose actions based on motivators (Herzberg et al., 1959; Hur, 2018). Motivation factors of an employee lead to satisfaction and motivation to increase performance, which might result in long-term job satisfaction (Derfler-Rozin & Pitesa, 2020; Hur, 2018). Employees cannot manage development when lacking motivation. Employees who are not satisfied may seek employment with another organization (Zhen, 2020). Job satisfaction, recognition, achievement, the work itself, personal growth, and responsibility are part of motivation factors (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Employees who understand work expectations and who are aware of opportunities for advancement are less likely to leave (Islam & Ali, 2013). Employees may be motivated and productive in performance when receiving accolades from leadership for efforts and accomplishments (Montani et al., 2020). Leaders can influence employee attitudes and behavior, and in turn affect work performance. Increased employee engagement could result from business leaders and employees having a good relationship (Montani et al., 2020). Non engaged employees could have a negative attitude towards jobs and provide poor customer service. Service-oriented organizations such as fast-food restaurants rely on the behavior and attitudes of employees to be successful.

Job Satisfaction. Job satisfaction might increase when there is respect for diverse ideas, honest feedback, and more opportunities in the workplace. Job satisfaction is the employee's overall attitude toward work experience, including attitude towards compensation, coworkers, and job functions (Alrawahi et al., 2020). A committed

employee who plays an intricate part in the mission of the organization could remain with the company (Brown et al., 2003). Hiring highly skilled employees becomes a benefit for a business, but if individuals are not motivated, individuals will become unproductive (Warrier & Prasad, 2018). Job satisfaction includes the importance of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, which is important for maintaining a healthy work environment (Monk-Turner et al., 2010). Factors that cause employees to stay are extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (Monk-Turner et al., 2010). Job satisfaction is how employees feel about their job.

Intrinsic rewards and extrinsic rewards are the opposite of each other. One reward is internally based, while the other is externally based. According to Udechukwu (2009), job security, pay increases, salaries, and threats of punishment are extrinsic characteristics of job satisfaction. For intrinsic rewards, employees work for satisfaction and believe that the work is meaningful to the business (Monk-Turner et al., 2010). According to Derfler-Rozin and Pitesa (2020), intrinsic motivation is driven by enjoyment rather than working towards a reward. Derfler-Rozin and Pitesa defined enjoyment as an intrinsic motivator, which describes the perception of how fun, entertaining, and pleasurable an activity can be to the employee. When employees are intrinsically motivated, they may engage willingly to improve their skillsets, which will bring better opportunities and allow desired goals to be reached (Derfler-Rozin & Pitesa, 2020). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to be more loyal to the organization and its goals.

Recognition for Achievement. Employees want recognition for their work in the form of acknowledgment. When management provides recognition, employees may feel better about the work (Alhassan & Greene, 2020). Employers use recognition as a tool that creates an environment of motivated employees, encourages working at a higher level of performance, limits turnover, and reduces safety issues and absenteeism (Aguenza & Som, 2018). When employers recognize employees, a positive effect could extend to teammates encouraging an increase in performance individually and collectively (Li et al., 2016). Leaders can implement recognition programs, which could be either nonmonetary or monetary (Li et al., 2016). Research has shown that recognition and reward for satisfactory performance have an influence on employee motivation (Rombaut & Guerry, 2020). When employers recognize employees, a feeling of appreciation is reflected, leading to a better work environment and less turnover.

Sense of Achievement. Employees with a sense of achievement tend to enjoy working alone, are willing to take risks, and appreciate regular feedback on their accomplishments. Positive achievement involves achieving success from completing a challenging task, solving issues and problems, or doing work that has positive results (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Sense of achievement is a learned trait, which comes from striving for excellence and not for rewards (Singh, 2011). An employee's pride is fulfilled when something difficult and worthwhile is accomplished (Hasani, 2020). Negative achievement involves failing to work progressively or poor decision making on the job (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Business leaders should set clear, achievable goals and standards to ensure that employees understand what those goals and standards are.

The Work Itself. When employees believe that their work is important and their tasks are meaningful, they are likely to be motivated. The work itself involves employees' opinions about job conditions and distributed tasks, which have a direct influence on employee motivation at work (Hur, 2018). Motivation levels of employees could or could not increase based on a positive or negative effect from tasks and assignments (Jing et al., 2017). Employees become bored or dissatisfied if the work is too easy. The work should be meaningful, interesting, and challenging for the employee to increase motivation (Jing et al., 2017). Business leaders should explain how employees' tasks and goals align with the organizational mission.

Personal Growth. Employees often feel motivated when there are opportunities for growth and professional development. Herzberg considered growth as a motivator because he found evidence during interviews that showed an increase or decrease with possibilities of growth (Herzberg et al., 1959; Jing et al., 2017). Employees benefit by experiencing satisfaction with the ability to achieve results on the job and taking responsibility for careers (Aguenza & Som, 2018). Personal growth is essential for businesses because growth of sales, growth of benefits, growth of profits, growth of employees, and growth of resources are included (Jing et al., 2017). Jing et al. (2017) posited that leaders should take responsibility for and guide the growth of employees. Employees' skillsets are weighed against positions; therefore, leaders should provide opportunities and training for employees to improve their performance and abilities. Leaders need to understand that an employee's motivation is crucial for long-term success (Welch & Brantmeier, 2021). Business leaders who provide incentives and

training strengthen employees' growth (Jing et al., 2017). Managers who provide training and development opportunities to employees can increase their skills, making employees more efficient in their positions, and instill a sense of pride that acts as a motivator.

Employees should take responsibility for personal growth, as this follows Maslow's self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is the continuous implementation of one's potential, talents, and gifts to complete or achieve a lifelong mission, leading to a better understanding and recognition of one's inherent nature (Jing et al., 2017). Employees use talents, abilities, and potential to be the best or become the kind of person they want to be.

Responsibility. Employees are likely to feel motivated when taking ownership of work. Leaders can provide employees freedom and power to conduct tasks. Alshmemri et al. (2017) stated that responsibility is gaining satisfaction from responsibilities and freedom to make decisions. When gaps exist between responsibility and authority, job satisfaction can be negatively influenced, leading to dissatisfaction (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Finding ways to implement challenging and meaningful work helps employees achieve more freedom to take on more responsibilities (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Employees should have freedom to conduct tasks without direct supervision.

Hygiene Factors

Leaders might reference Herzberg's two-factor theory to develop retention strategies. Hygiene factors cause short-term satisfaction (Hur, 2018). Alshmemri et al. (2017) posited that hygiene factors are least important to job satisfaction and related to avoiding unpleasantness. According to Herzberg et al. (1959), hygiene factors can lead to

dissatisfaction and a lack of motivation, if absent. Hygiene factors are principles of personnel management, administration, leadership, supervision, interpersonal relationships at work, and working conditions (Jameson & Jameson, 2008). Business leaders who try to motivate only on hygiene factors can experience high turnover.

Hygiene factors are not important to job satisfaction. Job satisfaction and the context of the work itself are decreased by hygiene factors (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Hygiene factors include salary, work conditions, status, job security, fringe benefits, and coworkers (Islam & Ali, 2013; Lamb & Ogle, 2019). Satisfaction of employees' basic needs is noted when demand is met and not satisfied when the demand cannot be met (Li et al., 2020). Hygiene factors are not strong contributors to satisfaction but are important and required to meet employees' expectations and maintain the level of job satisfaction and feelings of job dissatisfaction (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Herzberg's two-factor theory is significant to determine and identify the level of job satisfaction in research.

Herzberg developed the term *hygiene* to describe a person who tries to find long-term satisfaction. Sachau (2007) posited that hygiene factors contribute more to life dissatisfaction than to life satisfaction. Herzberg et al. (1959) also suggested that employees who chase hygiene highs will remain miserable because as hygiene needs escalate, employees will never find enough hygiene to be happy (Sachau, 2007). Herzberg et al. developed three caveats when using hygiene as a motivator: Employees are not happy with boring jobs; employees should be financially stable; and employee happiness results from benefits only. Organizations should be financially stable because employees might demand higher salaries and benefits as the need arises. Business leaders

might find that employees only care about hygiene factors because happiness could result from various levels of compensation (Sachau, 2007). Motivation is a critical aspect for employees to be successful and happy (Ozsoy, 2019). Motivation factors can lead to positive attitudes towards the job, while hygiene factors consist of doing the job.

Salary. Salary is a key role in motivation providing in exchange for services rendered in an organization. Employers have an advantage over employees because employees depend on income to survive and need jobs. Employees can be satisfied with work when salary is high, however when salary is low employees become dissatisfied (Jing et al., 2017). Employees' pay is an extrinsic reward, which fulfills the need for advancement and growth (Jing et al., 2017). Salary should be appropriate, reasonable, equal, and competitive (Jing et al., 2017). Business leaders can offer competitive salaries and benefits to maintain employee satisfaction and employee retention.

Work Conditions. The work environment influences employees' level of pride and work ethic. Space, lighting, ventilation of air and heat, and work equipment are part of the work conditions employees look to for satisfaction (Hur, 2018). When business leaders provide an excellent work environment, employees may be satisfied and proud to work for the organization (Alshmemri et al., 2017); therefore, employees must develop a better working environment, which encourages retention (Geh et al., 2021). Poor working conditions can affect employees' health and put them at risk.

Status. Employees who perform meaningful work tend to develop a sense of status. Status refers to employees' feeling of being significant in the organization (Hur, 2018). Status is a nonmonetary treatment, which meets an employee's needs (Jing et al.,

2017). When there is an improvement with status, employees can feel satisfied; however, a feeling may not motivate employees to improve performance (Jing et al., 2017).

Business leaders can create meaningful work, which can lead to employee retention.

Job Security. Employees may feel satisfied with their jobs when they feel secure in their positions. Ashton (2018) stated job security influences employees' job satisfaction with the expectation for stable work and can reduce risks for a person's life and property (Ashton, 2018). Job security should be open and interfaced between management and employees allowing lower needs to be satisfied (Stewart et al., 2018). When the lower-level needs are satisfied, employees become proactive. Job security is important to employees because the psychological need for safety allows a pursuit of higher needs and interests is satisfied (Stewart et al., 2018). Employees who feel a strong sense of job security are more likely to have a sense of purpose in their organization.

Benefits. Organizational benefit programs can help motivate employees. Benefits, which include better health care, vacation packages, or tuition reimbursement packages, are appealing to employees, leading to a willingness to want to work harder for the organization (Alhassan & Greene, 2020). Benefits are essential for attracting, retaining, and motivating employees towards organizational success (Alhassan & Greene, 2020). Business leaders can encourage employees by using benefits and incentives to want to work for an organization (Alhassan & Greene, 2020). Valued employees tend to increase performance and stay with the organization (Alhassan & Greene, 2020). Organizational benefit programs have a positive impact on employee recruitment and retention.

Coworkers. Friendships developed among the employees can contribute to greater job satisfaction for employees. The interpersonal relationship with employees, peers, superiors, and subordinates should be appropriate, acceptable and without conflict. Developing networking relationships with coworkers is important to employee retention and makes leaving an organization less likely (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Relationships with coworkers, leaders, and professional development are important motivating factors that were on the high end of positivity (Alrawahi et al., 2020). When supervisors are supportive of employees, workers' job satisfaction and motivation can be improved (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Relationships with work colleagues could also help to prevent dissatisfaction (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Employees might feel connected and supported by their peers, subordinates, and leaders.

Alternate Theories Considered

Expectancy Theory

Vroom's theory focuses on positive results because negative results decrease employee motivation. The expectancy theory introduced by Victor Vroom (1964) indicates when employees choose how to behave will depend on outcomes, and the one with the greatest reward is chosen (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). The expectancy theory focused on the performance reward relationship and effort performance relationship (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). The scheme of the theory is employees are motivated to perform in ways to achieve desired results (Vroom, 1964). Vroom approached the issue of human motivation differently than Maslow and Herzberg

(Abbah, 2014). According to Vroom (1964) individuals are motivated to seek achievement of goals based on the following three motivated elements (a) endeavor will generate satisfactory performance (expectancy), (b) performance will be recompensed (instrumentality), and (c) the significance of the rewards is positive (valence). An individual's motivation will depend on the value a person places on the outcome (Abbah, 2014). Employees might increase their work efforts when the reward has more personal value to them.

Expectancy. An employee's expectancy plays a key part in behavior. Expectancy is the belief that individuals' efforts result in the desired goal individuals believe can be achieved based on experiences, self-confidence, and difficulty of the goal (Nwankwo et al., 2018). The chance of success relies on one's capacity to achieve performance (Baciu, 2017). Performance goals, self-esteem, and confidence given from others, employees' knowledge, and skills, and abilities (KSAs), support from coworkers and supervisors, and work resources depend on expectancy (Baciu, 2017). Leaders can influence expectations from the following: organization of work to the extent that allows gradual learning, skills development, delegation of power; training policy, internal mobility, the attitude of superiors can affect self-esteem, and coaching as a form of supervision (Baciu, 2017). If organizational leaders fail to pay attention to the effort given, the employee will not make much effort to perform.

Instrumentality. If an employee's efforts go unrewarded, the employees may show a lack of motivation. Employees who receive a reward if performance expectations are met is called instrumentality (Baciu, 2017). Instrumentality for employees depends on

trust and company policies and is either objective or subjective (Baciu, 2017).

Instrumentality is objective when working elements are appreciation, remuneration and promotion and subjective when employees are optimistic or pessimistic about the elements (Baciu, 2017). Instrumentality for employees could be influenced based on promotion policy, appreciation system, payroll policy, and attitude of superiors, meritocracy elements, information given to employees on the elements outlined above, and information degree of veracity (Baciu, 2017). Business leaders should ensure reward agreements are fulfilled.

Valence. If an employee thinks their contribution benefits the organization and the award is not viable, the employee will become less motivated. Valence is the value an employee attributes to a reward (Baciu, 2017). Rewards must be meaningful to the employee and can be either positive (pay, promotions, interesting tasks) or negative (reprimands, sanctions, transfers). According to Baciu (2017), the type of valences offered to the employee might be influenced by the organization and consist of negative valences are sanctions, penalties, and redundancies and extrinsic valences (pay policy, and promotion), and intrinsic valences (interest in work). Business leaders should determine what the employee values.

McClelland's Achievement Motivation

McClelland's achievement motivational model describes how the needs for achievement, affiliation, and power affect employees' actions. David McClelland, an important psychologist who has had an impact on researchers, postulated his theory in 1961 (Mohn, 2020). The development of the need theory assesses how a person's needs

motivate his or her efforts in life (Mohn, 2020). McClelland suggested needs were reinforced through childhood, parental style, and social norms (Abbah, 2014; McClelland, 1961). McClelland investigated how motivations influenced people and believed the need for achievement is a need to improve on norms (Mohn, 2020). The theory includes three types of needs, which influence motivation: the need for achievement, the need for power, and the need for affiliation (McClelland, 1961). McClelland's achievement motivational theory explained employees have potential energy reserves (Barusman et al., 2018). Regardless of gender, culture, or age, one of the three motivators are dominant and dependent upon culture and life experiences (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). Employees who were motivated by affiliation are driven by the need to create and maintain relationships. Employees, who are power driven, were influenced by the desire to stimulate and inspire other employees (McClelland, 1961). McClelland attempted to tie his findings to real life situations encouraging the use of quantifiable data rather than speculation.

Need for Achievement (nAch). An employee performing an action to reach a goal or complete a project is an achievement. According to McClelland (1961), employees exhibit the need for achievement and want to accomplish challenging goals through their own efforts (Abbah, 2014). Employees strive for personal achievement rather than rewards and differentiate themselves from others by desiring to be better (Ungvarsky, 2020). The need for achievement is a motivator employees develop (McClelland, 1961). Employees are motivated by achievement from overcoming difficult issues and problems and often reluctant to take risks for fear of failing (Ungvarsky,

2020). Achievers tend to effectively work alone or with others who have the same achievement goals; similarly, achievers seek efforts that have a moderate degree of risk, which allows more control in overachieving goals (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). Motivated employees tend to seek out situations and projects that align with their skillsets.

Need for Power (nPow). Employees with a need for power strive to influence, control others, and enjoy competition. Employees with a high need for power were successful when in charge and exceed in performing purposeful tasks (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). Employees tend to want to exercise control over others and look towards maintaining leadership positions (Abbah, 2014). According to Verma (2017), individuals who display power know how to get things done and influence others. When employees focus on building power through influence versus individual achievements, the concern is not about what others think, but about what should be accomplished (Verma, 2017). Individuals seek power to be better and encourage others to excel which gives greater power and negotiation skills (Ungvarsky, 2020). Employees who were motivated by power and frustrate easily may leave an organization in search of recognition.

Need for Affiliation (nAff). Employees may require different types of motivation from their workplace. The need for affiliation is when a person has need to feel a sense of involvement, belongs within a social group, and desires approval by others with positive interaction (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). Employees who have a high need for affiliation enjoy collaborating with individuals and developing relationships (Ungvarsky, 2020). Employees enjoy being part of a team when motivational interactions exist. McClelland's theory focusses on boosting morale in employees (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). McClelland

believed the needs of humans change due to life experiences and culture. McClelland (1961) described motivators as learned because whether gender, culture, or age, employees will be a dominant motivating driver and will be dependent on culture and life experiences. The theory is important to identify motivational drivers to establish effective goals and design jobs (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). A reason for a person to act in a certain manner, take on an action, which drives, directs, and selects the behavior of an individual is called a motive (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). Theorist criticized McClelland's theory because he argues the three needs were subconscious and individuals will not know the identified need at the time, thus making the need hard to measure (Riak & Bill, 2022). Employees who were motivated by affiliation may need consistent feedback on their performance.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The hierarchy of needs is most helpful when assessing performance of motivation. The hierarchy of needs is an instrument used to understand motivation for behavioral change. Maslow (1943) developed the hierarchy of needs theory which includes levels of a pyramid where lower levels were met before higher needs were addressed. Human motivation is created by meeting goals and fulfilling needs. The basic needs must be satisfied from the bottom up for the individual to move to the next level (Stewart et al., 2018). It is important to organizational commitment, leadership, and personal needs of employees who influence workforce retention (Allen & Shanock, 2013). Individuals with a strong higher-order need are more likely to receive satisfaction from performing challenging tasks versus tasks which have a weaker higher-order need (Beehr et al.,

1976). According to Beehr et al. (1976), when employees experience too many demands, unsuccessful performance and frustration can happen. According to Maslow (1943), hierarchies need to motivate humans to care for themselves and have a rich life. Maslow also stated people do not need to satisfy one need for the next need to emerge. Individuals can have each of the needs partially met by lower-level needs where the most progress happens (Beehr, 1974; Maslow, 1943). According to the theory, individuals were motivated by five levels of needs: physiological, security, social, esteem, and self-actualizing needs.

Physiological Needs. Physiological needs consist of air, water, food, sleep, clothing, and shelter. The first stage is the physiological or survival stage where a person begins a new phase in life, which consists of the most basic needs required to maintain (Fisher & Royster, 2016). Physiological needs are important and met first. Physiological needs are physical requirements for survival and met; if not individuals cannot function and will eventually fail (Nwankwo et al., 2018). When an individual does not experience satisfaction, sickness, irritation, pain, and discomfort could be experienced (Fisher & Royster, 2016). Hunger and thirst are the most important needs for human life and are more of the motivating factors than any other needs. As physiological needs subside, the individual will move to the next phase of the hierarchy (Fisher & Royster, 2016). According to Stewart et al. (2018), physiological needs are achieved by employee income. When physiological needs are met, individuals can focus on safety needs next.

Safety Needs. This level is reached when an employee has job security and defined responsibilities, or structure. Safety needs occur by establishing stability and

consistency in one's life to include personal and financial security, health, and wellbeing. Once physiological needs are satisfied, the second stage begins with safety needs, which is psychological in nature (Nwankwo et al., 2018). The safety needs stage takes into consideration protection from bodily harm and environmental stability. Maslow suggested the absence of security creates an important level of stress, absenteeism, injuries on the job, a decrease in performance, and a lack of motivation (Maslow, 1943). Employees feel employment safety needs consist of job tenure and protection, savings, and insurance. During this stage, employees' surroundings are not threatening (Nwankwo et al., 2018). Safety needs may be different depending on where the individual may be in life.

Love and Needs of Belonging. After meeting safety needs, the third level is interpersonal and involves feelings of belongingness, feeling gratified, acceptance, intimacy, friendship, and trust. The sense of belonging occurs when an individual focuses on the desire to build relationships with others (Maslow, 1943). Individuals have a sense of desire to belong, a need to be loved, and accepted by members of groups such as societies, clubs, professional associations, churches, and religious groups (Harkins, 2019). In the workplace employees want to be a part of the group, included in the work, and accepted by others, especially the individuals who are around the most (Nwankwo et al., 2018). Maslow stated friendly and intimate relationships are essential human needs. If a low sense of belonging exists this could cause anxiety and withdrawal (Harkins, 2019). The absence of this need can be harmful to an individual's ability to form and maintain significant relationships such as friendships, intimacy, and family.

Self-Esteem Needs. Self-esteem needs involve the desire to feel good about ourselves. Self-esteem needs are a positive view and high-level evaluation of oneself (Mehnaz & Ali Shah, 2021). The stage of self-esteem needs happens when individuals feel confident and good, respected by others, and have a desire to master his or her work (Wang et al., 2021). The esteem need represents the human desire of acceptance and value by others (Fisher & Royster, 2016). The need is broken into two components: self-worth and esteem - need for respect from others. Self-esteem needs include the desire for strength, achievement, adequacy, confidence, independence, and freedom (Fisher & Royster, 2016). Employees view esteem as something that comes from others, which includes recognition, appreciation, and social status (Harkins, 2019). When needs are not met, the employee experiences loss of confidence, depression, and inferiority (Fisher & Royster, 2016). Self-esteem has an impact on an individual's needs and positive or negative self-esteem will affect affiliation, esteem, and self-actualization (Arnolds & Boshoff, 2002). Self-esteem needs are internal factors which include self-respect, achievement, and external factors such as status, recognition, and attention.

Self-Actualization Needs. Self-actualization is a drive to become what one can become which includes growth, reaching potential, being self-directed and integrated, and moving towards self-fulfillment. The final stage self-actualization needs refer to a person's full potential and the realization of the potential (Fisher & Royster, 2016; Nwankwo et al., 2018). Taormina and Gao (2013) posited self-actualization are one of the most difficult needs to define because of the highest level of the theoretical hierarchy and is a more abstract concept. Individuals who have met lower order needs are

progressing to fulfill potential by identifying and adapting to physical, social, intellectual, and emotional aspects of life (Fisher & Royster, 2016). According to Maslow (1943), no one is ever completely self-actualized. Individuals are consistently striving to be better and use newly established talents in new ways. Maslow described this type of person as someone who is accepted and accepts others. Employees at this level identify with empathy, sympathy, compassion, respect for others, and have a deep interpersonal relationship with others (Whitson, 2019). Employees are spontaneous in thinking, focusing on problems outside themselves, rather than being self-centered, and enjoy solitude and privacy.

Maslow suggested needs are the drivers of behaviors associated with work attitudes and be assigned at any level. Maslow and Herzberg's theories have influenced the understanding of satisfaction by providing descriptions of the level and type of needs that are associated with behaviors which demonstrate employee satisfaction (Udechukwu, 2009). However, Herzberg contrasted the theory by suggesting needs influence work attitudes, met intrinsically or extrinsically, and job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction result from different causes (Udechukwu, 2009). Maslow describes satisfaction as a need which is met or unmet, whereas Herzberg differs in theory as he describes satisfaction as an employee who experiences low level satisfaction, but that does not mean the employee is not satisfied.

Existence, Relatedness and Growth (ERG) Theory

Three categories of human needs, which can influence a worker's behavior, are existence, relatedness, and growth. Alderfer (1969) developed the existence, relatedness,

and growth (ERG) theory which is based on Maslow's theory of human motivation. Alderfer's ERG theory enhances an understanding of potential employee retention strategies. Alderfer ERG theory recognized order is important but may vary from person to person (Berg & Smith, 2017). Alderfer was interested in understanding what helped people to flourish (Berg & Smith, 2017). The development of the theory expands Maslow's hierarchy of needs, however, the findings contrasted. Alderfer believed relationships are key to growth, creativity and one's work influenced by one's stage of life (Berg & Smith, 2017). There is a need for employers to understand each employee has needs, which must be satisfied, and if the concentration focused on one need, the motivation of the employee may not occur (Berg & Smith, 2017). If growth is not provided, the employee might revert to lower-level needs such as relatedness for motivating fulfillment due to frustrations (Snow, 2019). Accordingly, three groups motivate man: existence, relatedness, and growth. Research has regarded Alderfers' ERG theory as the most valid version of the need hierarchy (Arnolds & Boshoff, 2002). The main strength of the theory is the job-specific in nature, referencing existence needs, physiological and safety needs, relatedness needs, and growth needs (Poulou & Norwich, 2019). ERG theory acknowledges the three categories may vary for each employee, and business leaders should understand employees' different needs.

Existence Need. Basic requirements for living include food, shelter, health, safety, schedule, and security. According to Yang et al. (2011), material needs are a resource required for an individual's living, which includes food and clothing. The prevention from fear, anxiety, threat, and danger are safety needs (Yang et al., 2011).

Existence needs correlate with physiological and safety needs in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. According to Chang and Yuan (2008), existence needs are the most tangible, and easiest to verify. Existence needs are the basis for human existence.

Relatedness Need. Relatedness needs include a sense of security, belonging, and respect. Having a sense of security involves having mutual trust in people. Relatedness refers to social and external esteem which consists of creating and sustaining constructive relationships (Alderfer, 1969). Relatedness is the need to care for and be cared for by others and the feeling of connection to others without a motive (Arnolds & Boshoff, 2002). Having a sense of belonging refers to prevention of suffering, such as isolation, loneliness, and distance. Having a sense of respect is a feeling of social status and importance (Yang et al., 2011). According to Alderfer (1969), relatedness needs exist when workers are motivated to satisfy social needs, which reflects the position. Relatedness also refers to an individual's desire to maintain important relationships (Arnolds & Boshoff, 2002). The need is less tangible than existence needs because the relationship is dependent on more than one person (Chang & Yuan, 2008). The need to belong is giving and receiving love and acceptance from others.

Growth Need. The growth need aligns with two of Maslow's hierarch of needs. Workers have a desire to be meaningful, engaged, and creative (Alderfer, 1969). Having the need for self-esteem is the ability to pursue, seek knowledge, achieve, control, build confidence, be independent and feel competent (Yang et al., 2011). Self-actualization is achieving goals and developing their own personality (Yang et al, 2011). An employee experiences a sense of fullness when satisfied with growth needs (Snow, 2019). The

growth need is satisfied when the employee finds opportunities to develop their full potential (Alderfer, 1969). Since the objectives of the growth need depend on the person's uniqueness, the need is less tangible (Chang & Yuan, 2008). Alderfer (1969) developed seven schemes to describe the relationship between human needs and desires. The seven schemes are: (a) when existence needs are less satisfied, more will be desired; (b) when relatedness needs are less satisfied, the more existence needs will be desired; (c) when more existence needs are satisfied, the more relatedness needs will be desired; (d) when relatedness needs are less satisfied, the more individuals will be desired; (e) when growth needs are less satisfied, the more relatedness needs will be desired; (f) when more relatedness needs are satisfied, the more growth needs will be desired; and (g) when more growth needs are satisfied, the more individuals will be desired.

Employee Intent to Stay

Work relationships also influence an employee's intent to leave or stay. Bangwal and Tiwari (2019) posited the intent to stay refers to an employee perceived probability of staying at an employing organization. Having a sense of organizational belonging could lead employees to undertake greater responsibilities and encourage retention (Subramaniam et al., 2019). Providing organizational opportunities for employees to advance in their careers is a method of creating loyalty among employees (Ramalho Luz et al., 2018; Subramaniam et al., 2019). With work interactions, employees develop feelings of trust, confidence, and dependence toward supervisors and coworkers (Subramaniam et al., 2019). Leaders who share earnings with employees could increase the intention to stay, reduce turnover, and improve the business performance (Rozsa et

al., 2019). Leaders who develop and implement retention strategies were better prepared to reduce employee turnover.

Employees were more likely to leave if they were not satisfied with a variety of factors within the organization. Social factors such as having coworker relationships could influence an employee's intent to stay (Rozsa et al., 2019). Coworker relationships exert a positive impact on employee motivation and the intent to stay (Subramaniam et al., 2019). As coworker relationships become important, leaders benefit from effective teamwork (Subramaniam et al., 2019). An employee's intent to stay with an organization comes from work attitudes, organization commitment, job satisfaction, engagement, and workplace spirituality (Milliman et al., 2018). A connection between the employer brand and employee can influence the employees' decision to stay in the organization (Singh et al., 2022). According to Bangwal and Tiwari (2019), job satisfaction and organization commitment is a strong predictor of employee intent to stay. According to Pranee et al. (2020), when employers fail to fulfill obligations or if employees feel the organization has not fulfilled an obligation, employees are more likely to leave an organization. Employees who are less empowered in the day-to-day operations of the organization do not stay with the organization (Pranee et al., 2020). Employees working in a positive environment might be motivated to do their best.

Fast-Food Industry

Retaining employees has become important for the fast-food industry because the restaurants are highly service oriented. Employee retention is the key factor for success, as well as reducing expenses and improving employee motivation (Ghani et al., 2022).

Retention of good employees for the fast-food industry is highly challenging due to employee demand and job-hopping (Ghani et al., 2022). The fast-food organizations offer job salary and wages to compete with other organizations to increase efforts to attract and retain employees (Nawar et al., 2022). Typically, employees are individuals who just finished high school looking for part time jobs while waiting for other opportunities such as college or permanent jobs. Organizations investing in finding the right person discovered the task is not easy and requires a considerable amount of time and money. Leaders should identify and understand the critical factors which impact employee retention.

Barriers and Challenges of Retention

The most important strategic driver for an organization is to attract and retain key talent. Barriers to retention include challenges, which arise from organizational structures (Wong et al., 2021). Identifying, hiring, and retaining the right people are some of the biggest challenges for an organization (Lohr, 2019). However, the workforce has several types of generations such as veterans, baby boomers, generation X'ers, and generation Y'ers. Each generations' value different things and motivation are different, which is forcing leaders to re-evaluate the meaning of retention (Lohr, 2019). Organizational leaders should identify and implement retention strategies to reduce retention barriers.

Pay Barrier

The need for more income is usually the primary reason employees leave. Income is related to employee retention; however, regardless of income employees will still leave the organization in less than 2 years (Newswire, 2017).

Work–Life Balance

Work–life balance is another challenge for leaders because of the focus on quality of life issues. When an employee does not receive the opportunity to be able to balance work and personal life may leave the organization (Kaushalya & Perera, 2018; Nerges et al., 2022). The impact of non work factors such as job stress and burnout may influence an employee’s intent to leave an organization. When an employer invests in providing leisure and recreation opportunities, employees may respond by investing time in the organization. Business leaders should consider work–life balance because of the importance to employees’ lifestyle.

Leadership Style

Effective leaders should know what makes themselves tick. The attraction of organizational leadership has increased among organizational researchers with a list of leadership theories (Gilbert et al., 2016). Such literature has shown consideration on how leadership in organizations affects the behaviors and attitudes of employees (Gilbert et al., 2016). Some researchers have described leaders who want to engage in effective leadership behaviors; but not necessarily motivated to engage in effective leadership behaviors (Gilbert et al., 2016). Leadership style and motivation have a relationship with employee performance (Benson, 2021). Leadership relies on understanding the needs of theories of motivation, for instance Maslow's hierarchy of needs, McClelland's need theory, and Herzberg's hygiene theory of job satisfaction (Benson, 2021). A leader is most effective when there is an understanding of needs, which will optimize the

performance of the employees and organization (Benson, 2021). A business leader should understand their chosen leadership style which may affect and influence employees.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is critical in securing organizational success. According to Nassif et al. (2021), transformational leaders are charismatic, articulate visions; encourage employees to challenge the status quo; and offer personal support. Transformational leadership styles have a positive effect on employees and organizational performance (Nassif et al.). Transformational leaders motivate employees to work with a clear sense of guidance and inspire employees to support the goals of the leader (Biscontini, 2020). A study conducted by Peng et al. (2020) examined transformational leadership as translating into organizational commitment. Peng et al. (2020) found a relationship between transformational leadership and commitment, which established both personal and corporate traits. According to Peng et al. (2020) leadership, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and trust are important processes for an organization. Leadership has a significant importance when originating people dealings for the sake of organizational success (Biscontini, 2020). The core ingredients of transformational leader should be a clear vision and effective communication along with individual consideration (Biscontini, 2020). Employees' mood, job satisfaction and commitment along with psychological trends involve variables.

Leaders who align the mission, objective, and goals may reach favorable outcomes from employees. Leaders are focusing on transformational leadership as a way of transforming and changing employee behavior (Biscontini, 2020; Manzoor et al.,

2019). According to Burch and Guarana (2014), transformational leadership encourages, supports, and motivates employees to reach organizational goals. The idea of transformational leadership is preferred because of the desired motivational outcome (Peng et al., 2020). The following four dimensions define transformational leadership: individual consideration, intellectual stimulus, inspiration, charisma (Sivarat et al., 2021). Brown et al. (2020) posited there is a shortcoming of transformational leadership, which is the lack of concern for an employee's goals, rather than imposing goals on employees. Transformational leadership brings empowerment to followers to achieve a higher level of morale and motivation.

Individual Consideration. Individual consideration is an element of transformational leadership which is focused on building positive relations with individual employees. Individualized consideration references a leader's efforts to promote interpersonal connection with employees (Sahu et al., 2018). Individual consideration occurs when a leader shows personal attention and treats each employee individually by offering training and advice. Individual consideration is the behavior of the leader to pay attention to the individual needs of the employees (Sahu et al., 2018). Employees feel supported and valued when leaders listen to their ideas.

Intellectual Stimulus. Intellectual stimulus is another element of transformational leadership, which can encourage employees to be innovative. Leaders stimulate intelligence, rationality and careful problem solving when the leader activates the employees to be risk-taking and innovative at work (Sahu et al., 2018). Intellectual stimulation references a leader's effort to encourage creative and proactive problem-

solving approaches with the employee. The way leaders get things accomplished is by displaying enthusiasm and energy, which can have a positive effect on employees.

Business leaders can increase employees' ability to complete tasks, generate innovative ideas, solve problems, and express new ideas.

Inspiration. Leaders who communicate a future vision for their firms were more likely to inspire employees to adopt and make the vision their own. Inspiration references a leader's effort to convey belief in and elevated expectations of employees (Rolfe, 2011). The leaders set elevated expectations and use symbols for employees to concentrate on efforts in a simple manner. The leader provides a vision to the followers and motivates employees to work in the direction using inspiration (Sahu et al., 2018). Employees were more likely to be motivated by having a sense of purpose to achieve their goals.

Charisma. Charisma is essential for business leaders to help influence employees and gain their trust. Behr (2021) defines charisma as a quality located within an individual, who then exercises power over a group. Charisma references the leader's self-confidence and assertiveness in inspiring trust and respect in employees (Rolfe, 2011). Charisma is about making the leader powerful, which innovates, inspires, and motivates employees to increase loyalty, commitment, job satisfaction and performance (Rolfe, 2011). Charisma is important in transformational leadership, and when used correctly is highly effective (Rolfe, 2011). Business leaders who use charismatic leadership style tend to make emotional connections with employees.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leaders do not tolerate challenges to authority or questioning of decisions. Transactional leadership style is about motivating employees by establishing targets that clarify the roles and requirements of the tasks along with adopting rewards or punishments when the targets are not met (Biscontini, 2020). Transactional leaders rely on authority to motivate employees and believe leaders should delegate tasks and supervise and employees should do as told (Biscontini, 2020; Frangieh & Rusu, 2021). Transactional leadership often causes low job satisfaction and low employee retention rates (Biscontini, 2020). This type of business leader believes employees work out of self-interest and threaten to punish any employee who falls short of the goal.

Transactional leadership is less effective because the leader avoids unnecessary risks, completes required tasks, and inspires employees toward predetermined agreements. Transactional leaders' function by using contingent rewards, contingent punishment, and management-by-exception (active and passive) toward employees to create the culture of trust and confidence (Biscontini, 2020). Transactional leadership describes four dimensions such as contingent reward, active management by exception, and passive management by exception, and laissez-faire (Biscontini, 2020). Transactional leaders are a poor choice for an organization which needs a new direction.

Contingent Reward. Contingent reward is an approach of rewarding employees to fulfill their tasks. According to Hilton et al. (2021), leadership and contingent reward have a positive relationship with organizational performance. Transactional leadership is the contingent reward dealing with the exchange of rewards to persuade employees to

meet performance goals (Hilton et al., 2021). Contingent reward is effective for transformational leadership because performance predicts work-related outcomes, helps employees fulfill interests, minimizes anxiety, and focuses on clear objectives (Hilton et al., 2021). Contingent reward is an effective way to motivate employees as consistent expectations between leaders and followers (Hilton et al., 2021). Contingent rewards include bonuses, promotions, recognition, and appreciation.

Active Management by Exception. Active management by exception involves controlling and monitoring tasks, employee performance, and outcomes. Active management by exception is not as effective as contingent reward, but is essential in certain circumstances (Hilton et al., 2021). Active management by exception is the positive predictor of employee motivation, commitment, and organizational goal achievement (Rana et al., 2016). Active management by exception involves leaders intervening at early signs of problems to correct and fix the problem, while punishing the employee who caused the issue (Kleinman, 2004). Business leaders tend to monitor employees, anticipate problems, and employ corrective actions when necessary.

Passive Management by Exception. The passive management by exception approach has advantages and disadvantages. Passive management by exception leadership gives team members more freedom to work and the leader only interferes when mistakes occur, or problems arise (Rana et al., 2016). Although passive management by exception provides more freedom, there is still a bit of punishment towards the employee who caused the problem. Passive management by exception works well in repetitive organizations where employees repeatedly perform tasks and

performance are viewed by the outcome (Rana et al., 2016). Leaders using a good passive management by exception approach provides necessary clarity to the employee and reiterates which circumstances prompt an interference from the leader.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership is a passive and ineffective way for business leaders to lead. Laissez-faire behaviors demonstrate a lack of involvement from leaders in important decisions (Kleinman, 2004). Laissez-faire leadership is associated with unfavorable employee outcomes and has a negative effect such as reducing trust (Hancock et al., 2021). Leaders do not interfere with employees and avoid leadership responsibilities, refers to as non leadership (Hancock et al., 2021). Laissez-faire leadership undermines the employees' satisfaction and prevents employees from receiving pertinent information, feedback, and support (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). Business leaders can use the method of laissez-faire leadership to assess the unique talents of employees and assign duties accordingly.

Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leaders use communication skills and interpersonal relationships to influence or persuade employees. Charismatic leaders can inspire followers through the willingness to take risks and through commitment of change vision (Hansen et al., 2020; Le Blanc et al., 2021). Burch and Guarana (2014) described a charismatic leader as one who has a well-articulated vision and a way to communicate the vision to others. Leaders who display a charismatic leadership style transform the self-focus of followers (Burch & Guarana, 2014). Charismatic leadership can lead employees to invest in the vision of the

leader, and employees would go above and beyond to ensure the achieved vision. Leaders can transform employees' behavior to respond to change, assuring high performance during times of external pressures (Benson, 2021). Business leaders use empathy and humor to encourage employees to achieve goals in stressful times.

Transition

Identifying strategies for employee retention is an important process for the fast-food industry. Section 1 stated the background of the problem, problem and purpose, population and sampling, nature of study, conceptual framework, interview questions, and the assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of the study, the significance of the study and a literature review of the study. Section 1 concluded with an analysis of the conceptual framework and other supporting theories and theorists, and employee retention.

Next Section 2 will describe the role of the researcher, participants, research methods, research design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis, reliability, and validity. Section 3 will describe the introduction, presentation of findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and conclusions.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies leaders in the U.S. fast-food industry use to retain skilled employees. The population was five fast-food restaurants in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Five managers were interviewed to discuss successfully implemented strategies used to improve employee retention within the business. The implications for positive social change include employee retention, improved economic and social conditions, and reduced unemployment.

Role of the Researcher

Respect for people entails treating individuals as independent people who can make decisions and providing protection against exclusion of individuals from activities, which may cause them harm. The purpose of the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) was to present guidelines that are useful for avoiding issues surrounding the conduct of research involving human participants. The Belmont Report includes a summary of ethical principles and guidelines used for solving or avoiding problems that might affect research (Montgomery, 2021). According to Montgomery (2021), the basic ethical principles described in the report include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The protection depends on the nature of the potential risk of harm.

Researchers conduct an informed consent process during which subjects are provided necessary information to make an informed decision to participate in a study.

Beneficence is the assessment of potential risks against the anticipated benefit (Montgomery, 2021). Researchers should develop mechanisms that maximize benefits and reduce risk. Justice involves seeking fair treatment for all and a fair distribution of the risks and benefits of the research (Montgomery, 2021). Researchers must verify that potential subjects are appropriate for their research and that the recruitment of volunteers is fair and impartial. A researcher should determine when to create space for an interviewee to convey ideas where the interviewee may disagree without betraying beliefs (Collins & Stockton, 2022). Researchers facilitate research, take responsibility for making sense of the data and ensuring honest and ethical communication. In addition, a researcher selects a methodological design, recruits participants, collects data, explores new knowledge, and analyzes the data through an objective perspective (Cumyn et al., 2019). To establish trust and rapport, I conducted face-to-face interviews. During the interview process, open-ended questions were asked to the participants to discuss topics in more detail (Yin, 2018). Biases were mitigated because I did not have a working relationship with the participants.

Participants

The eligibility requirements for participants in the current study indicated that participants needed to be managers of a fast-food restaurant who worked in the Washington, DC metropolitan area and had successfully implemented employee retention strategies. I established trust with the participants in the hope that responses would be more detailed. I also assured the participants that the interview was confidential and

assigned identifiers to each interviewee. The participants meeting the requirements received an informed consent form that outlined the study's purpose.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

There are three methods of research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Researchers select the appropriate research method that might answer their research questions (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Qualitative research is a multi disciplinary, cross-section methodology used in a variety of fields, including social sciences, health sciences, and the humanities (Naganathan et al., 2022). This study was qualitative and used a multiple case study approach to better understand the reasons employees stay in positions and to explore strategies that fast-food industry managers use to retain employees. Qualitative interviewing is an appropriate method to collect the meanings and interpretations of participants' points of view, to gain and gather insight, and to address a problem.

Quantitative researchers use instruments such as surveys to identify and analyze the differences in variables. Quantitative researchers examine the relationship and differences among variables or the cause and effect. The quantitative method was not suitable for the study because I did not intend to examine hypotheses or compare variables. Researchers who use mixed methods combine qualitative and quantitative research arms to address issues in a more complex design to obtain more comprehensive findings.

In this research study, I did not test hypotheses or seek to assess the correlational strength among variables. I did not use any statistical analysis to test a hypothesis; the approach was not appropriate for the study. The qualitative method is valuable to gain a larger understanding of how leaders can increase employee retention in the organization. The qualitative method was suitable for this study because open communication should facilitate understanding about participants' strategies to fix the business problem of insufficient employee retention.

Research Design

I used the multiple case study design by employing semistructured interviews to obtain the data. I used in-depth interviews to analyze retention strategies in organizations to retain employees. Using open-ended questions in the semistructured interviews allowed me to explore strategies fast-food industry managers use to retain employees. The use of the case study approach allowed me to collaborate with the participants and allowed the participants an opportunity to share business retention experiences (Anderson et al., 2014). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies the fast-food industry managers used to retain their workforce. Ethnography research is a method researchers use to learn about the lives of other people, societies, and cultures. I determined that ethnography was not an appropriate research method for the study because a systematic recording of human cultures was not conducted.

Data saturation ensures validity and credibility and saves a researcher time and energy. According to Hennink et al. (2022), a researcher uses the following techniques to reach data saturation: selecting appropriate sample sizes, using purposive sampling,

asking the same questions, collecting data, and performing methodological triangulation. To ensure data saturation, I continued to ask the participants the same question until no new information emerged.

Population and Sampling

In this study, the target population consisted of managers from the fast-food industry in the Washington, DC metropolitan area with hiring responsibilities who had successfully implemented employee retention strategies. The targeted population had knowledge and experience with the implementation of employee retention strategies, which was appropriate for this study.

Purposive sampling allows a researcher to improve trustworthiness and confirmability (Patton, 2015). Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because of the requirement of selecting managers who had successfully retained employees. I used purposive sampling to ensure participants met the criteria needed to answer the research question. I chose participants who met the following criteria: managers in a fast-food restaurant in the Washington, DC metropolitan area who had 5 years of experience and had demonstrated success in improving employee retention.

The interview process is part of data collection. The interviewer's purpose is to collect information using a semistructured format (Patton, 2015). The interviews were conducted at a convenient time and were free of distractions. I ensured that I reached data saturation by asking the participants the same questions until no new information emerged. The participants should be at ease during the interview process to prevent any

physical and emotional discomfort. Data saturation is achieved by using semistructured interviews to validate the data collected (Hennink et al., 2022).

Participants were advised that the study information would be stored for 5 years, as per Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, in a locked cabinet or on a password-protected flash drive. Once the 5 years have passed, all documentation will be destroyed.

Ethical Research

I used a coding mechanism for confidentiality to protect the participants' personal information and privacy. Ethical approval is required for the participants by providing confidentiality of the information given to the researcher (Montgomery, 2021). The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies fast-food industries use to retain employees. According to Montgomery (2021), ethics is the science of how humans should treat others. I obtained approval from the ethics committee before collecting data for the study. My goal was to be authentic, open, attentive, and respectful, and I avoided slang during the process (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Informed consent forms were sent to each participant, and I encouraged the participants to ask questions regarding the project.

I notified the participants that participation was voluntary and that the participants would not be penalized if they chose to withdraw during the study. Risk was mitigated by following a structured interview process and ignoring personal beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge on the subject matter. The interviews were documented, and the participants

were sent the review of their interview via email with a request for validation of the information to ensure that the information was correctly captured.

Data Collection Instruments

As the primary data collection instrument, I played a central part in generating and interpreting data. I designed the study, conducted the interviews, and transcribed, analyzed, and verified the data. At the beginning of the interview, I reviewed the consent form and asked the participants to sign it. I verified whether the participants had any concerns before providing company information. Qualitative researchers use interviews to collect data, according to Yin (2018). When the researcher uses a case study design, two sources from the following six choices must be kept: (a) archived records, (b) initial observations, (c) documents, (d) interviews, (e) participant perceptions, or (f) physical artifacts (Yin, 2018). The purpose of the interview was to collect and analyze data the participants provided that might answer the research questions. Data were collected through in-depth, face-to-face, semistructured interviews in a quiet area that was convenient for the participants.

Data Collection Technique

The chosen data collection technique was semistructured interviews. I used semistructured interviews following an interview protocol (Appendix B) to ask open-ended questions. Semistructured questions allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' views. Researchers frequently use semistructured interviews in qualitative research because they offer flexibility and versatility (Carollo & Solari, 2019). Face-to-face interviews allow the researcher to respond to any questions

that may arise as well as observe the body language of the participant. Semistructured interviews were helpful in exploring the participants' thoughts and beliefs; however, a disadvantage of interviews could have included reluctance from the participant to speak openly, or the possibility that the participant might not listen carefully and might not be fully engaged, making probing questions harder to ask. Lastly, asking leading questions might have encouraged a biased response from participants (Yin, 2018). Semistructured interviews provide one advantage over mailed questionnaires, which is that the researcher can ask the participant clarifying questions.

Using company documents to analyze and compare the information from the interviews is another means of collecting data (Carollo & Solari, 2019). An advantage to using documents is the written evidence regarding how the participants operate, background information, and an understanding of the historical background of a specific issue (Carollo & Solari, 2019). A disadvantage to using documents is the possibility of reviewing insufficient information because the business did not prepare records for research, or information may not be retrievable (Carollo & Solari, 2019). Data should be in a locked and secure storage cabinet for 5 years (Carollo & Solari, 2019). Per IRB requirements, I stored the study information on a password-protected flash drive, where the data will be stored for 5 years. Once the 5 years have passed, all documentation will be destroyed. There were no incentives other than my appreciation for participation.

Data Organization Techniques

Once IRB officials approved this research project, I contacted the participants via telephone or video calls. Cleary et al. (2014) stated that a researcher may use any

interview type to collect data, such as (a) focus groups, (b) face-to-face interviews, (c) phone interviews, and (d) electronic mail. Researchers use semistructured interviews when completing a case study design as such interviews all of them to ask follow-up questions for clarification (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2018), a journal should be kept for writing down any observations with the participants. The rationale for obtaining IRB approval is to protect the moral rights of the participants and prevent risks by following research protocol (Liberale & Kovach, 2017). The interview questionnaire was documented, labeled, and transcribed. I saved the transcription on an electronic folder, transcribed using Microsoft Word on a personal password-protected laptop. I labeled each transcription to protect the identity of the participants. All data will be stored securely for 5 years.

Data Analysis

The purpose of conducting data analysis is to uncover themes that may address the research questions. The process researchers use to find themes and patterns for answers to the research questions is called data analysis (Yin, 2018). NVivo, a software program used to analyze data, imports and supports multiple formats and data types and can be a helpful tool for sorting, organizing, and analyzing qualitative data (Dhakal, 2022). Data analysis ensured that the data captured were unbiased and dependable. NVivo software was used to transcribe data and show patterns, themes, and coding used for analysis (Min et al., 2017). According to Alam (2020), NVivo helps with the analysis of large information in qualitative research because deeper analysis of data obtained

through interviews is provided. Data were coded manually by highlighting in distinct colors words and phrases frequently used in the interview.

I used NVivo to organize data into codes and themes using the bracketing technique. In qualitative research, the first phase of analysis is coding (Dhakal, 2022; Eakin & Gladstone, 2020). Coding is the most common methodological approach for qualitative data analysis (Beresford et al., 2022). According to Soares et al. (2015), using data coding is an important part of qualitative data analysis. Coding involves labeling and creating categories for sections of data (Allsop et al., 2022; Dhakal, 2022). According to Soares et al., the bracketing technique is composed of notes of interactions, events, and concepts to explore insights and learning experiences. Interview data and notes were uploaded into NVivo to help decode, organize, store, and develop themes within the data. The review of the transcribed notes and information was stored in Microsoft Word and then copied into NVivo to determine if there were any common themes. The coding included identifying notes using key phrases, which might help to answer the research questions.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

I enhanced reliability and validity through data saturation, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Qualitative research begins when a researcher is interested in understanding the meaning and interpretation of a phenomenon (Ali & Yusof, 2011). Reliability provides reassurance that another researcher investigating the same issue or working with the same data set could have the same findings (Ali & Yusof,

2011). Wienclaw (2021) defined reliability as the degree to which a data collection or assessment instrument consistently measures a characteristic or attribute. All the participants in the study received the same interview questions to ensure reliability. Reliability relates to the evidence and integrity of the researcher's findings, and other researchers should be able to replicate the findings with reduction of error and biases (Yin, 2018). I used the same open-ended interview questions, reviewed related themes, validated participants' responses, and used triangulation to achieve reliability.

Validity

I validated information to promote accuracy when explaining the research.

Validity of the study entails the research methodology, design, size of the sample, and data collection methods and analysis as data relates to the research question (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Validity refers to the accuracy of the measurement and shows how a specific test is suitable for a particular situation (Anderson & Aydin, 2019). Research is valid when the results were accurate according to the situation, explanation, and prediction.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is important to consider when ensuring valid data in qualitative studies. Data saturation requires the researcher to collect data until there is no additional data, which can be collected (Mwita, 2022). Data saturation ensures validity and credibility and saves the researcher time and energy. According to Hennink et al. (2016), data saturation uses the following techniques: selecting appropriate sample sizes, using purposive sampling, asking the same questions, data collecting, and methodological

triangulation. To ensure data saturation, I continued to ask the participants the same question until no new information emerged. Data saturation was achieved by using semistructured interviews to validate the interpretation of data collected.

Credibility

Member checking was used for all participants to gain an understanding of the successful strategies used by the five managers in the U.S. fast-food industry. Credibility is the trustworthiness of the study findings (Messner et al., 2017). Before data saturation began, I conducted member checking to ensure the accuracy of the responses. Emailed transcript summaries from interviews were sent to each participant for review and verification.

Transferability

I used accurate descriptions to allow the reader to understand the data collection, and analysis to show transferable findings. Transferability compares a result of the study with another review in a different context (Bengtsson, 2016). According to Korstjen and Moser (2018), transferability refers to how researchers could apply the study findings to other studies. I confirmed the study has sufficient information for the readers to interpret the results of the study in other settings.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the last criteria of trustworthiness, which a qualitative researcher must establish. Confirmability entails how other researchers might validate the accuracy of data (Korstjen & Moser, 2018). Confirmability involves establishing data to assure the interpretations of the research findings were not fabricated but were data oriented

(Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Confirmability assures when the data is checked and rechecked the results will be repeatable.

Transition and Summary

Employee retention is an ongoing problem leaders continue to face which affects the ability to provide services. The purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore strategies leaders use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. In Section 2, I recapped the purpose statement and discussed the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instrument, data collection technique, data collection organization, data analysis, reliability, and validity. In Section 3, I provided the introduction of the purpose of the study and the findings, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research and conclusions of research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

Fast-food entrepreneurs have provided many employees with their first paying job (Gould, 2009). Employees are the most valuable assets in an organization (Kossivi et al., 2016). Managers not only need to attract the best employees, but also should retain them for the long term (Kossivi et al., 2016). In this study, I focused on the significance of employee retention in the fast-food industry. Identifying key factors that influence employee retention was important. Previous researchers have suggested multiple reasons that an employee may leave an organization (Halim et al., 2020). These reasons can be low pay, better career opportunity, environment, culture, or being bullied by coworkers (Halim et al., 2020). Managers facing this challenge need to adopt new retention strategies and identify ways to motivate employees. Motivation is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and fast-food managers should consider various motivational factors, which may be different and individualized, when understanding and leading each employee.

Employee retention is a growing problem and could be resolved using various retention strategies to improve turnover rates. Employee retention is not about managing retention but about managing people (Halim et al., 2020). If managers know how to manage people, employee retention will take care of itself (Halim et al., 2020). A good leader puts in the time and effort needed to ensure that successful motivational factors are in place. It is critical to the success of an organization that managers understand how to retain and motivate employees (Ruiz & Davis, 2017).

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies for employee retention in the U.S. fast-food industry. A qualitative multiple case study provided the best approach because the purpose was to understand the participants' responses to open-ended interview questions on employee retention. The semistructured interview questions asked allowed the participants the ability to share their experience of retention practices and helped in answering the research question.

I conducted a semistructured, face-to-face interview to explore the perspectives of five fast-food managers. The data in this study included semistructured interviews with five managers from the U.S. fast-food industry located in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The participants were all fast-food managers with hiring responsibilities and had a history of implementing successful strategies to improve employee retention. The participants provided real-life experiences with applying employee retention strategies in their restaurant. I analyzed all the data and was able to identify three themes from the study: (a) strategic communication, (b) rewards and compensation management, and (c) job satisfaction and motivation. In the findings of the study, I revealed effective employee retention strategies that may strengthen the fast-food industry's ability to attract and retain quality employees.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was as follows: What successful strategies do U.S. fast-food leaders use to retain skilled employees? I answered my research question by reviewing peer-reviewed literature on employee retention. I transcribed interview data from five fast-food leaders from five different fast-food

restaurants located in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The interview questions were designed to allow participants the opportunity to offer their views on strategies they used to retain their key employees. The data collection included contacting potential participants in person to introduce myself, explain the focus of the study, and request their participation. Each semistructured interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and took place at the participant's location. The primary sources for data collection used were semistructured interviews to gain an understanding of the strategies fast-food restaurants used to improve employee retention.

Herzberg's two-factor theory was used as the scope and the data analysis for this qualitative multiple case study. With the interview findings, I provided an understanding of employee retention strategies used by fast food managers. At the completion of each interview, I assigned the participant an identifier, which consisted of a letter and a number, to protect the participant's information. I used alphanumeric codes S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5 as identification. The five participants were able to answer nine questions related to strategies that successful fast-food industries use to retain employees. Data saturation was reached when no new information, coding, or themes emerged and after the five participants from five different fast-food restaurants were interviewed.

The participants' answers centered on motivation and job satisfaction factors, which are associated with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. Hygiene issues such as salary and supervision decrease employees' dissatisfaction with the work environment (Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivators such as recognition and achievement make employees more productive, creative, and committed (Herzberg et al., 1959).

I compared my study findings with a comparative analysis with Herzberg's two-factor theory. Herzberg's two-factor theory was used as the basis for the conceptual framework, coding, and themes for the presentation of findings (see Table 2). Herzberg's two-factor theory provides insight into key factors that motivate employees. The two-factor theory could be used to understand what motivates employees. Herzberg defined reasons why employees are satisfied or dissatisfied with their job. The two-factor theory offers a deeper look into the employees' mind and identifies what internal factors drive employees. The two-factor theory, as applied, was appropriate for the study of management strategies for retaining employees in an organization. Hygiene factors need to be present in a job to obtain a level of satisfaction, and motivation factors contribute to fulfillment in the workplace (Herzberg et al., 1959).

In the presentation of the findings, I describe the three emergent themes from my study: (a) strategic communication, (b) rewards and compensation management, and (c) job satisfaction and motivation to address the overarching research question. I determined that the three themes were related to the overarching research question. From the data I collected, I confirmed that the three themes were relevant in answering the research question and were in alignment with the literature review, and the conceptual framework of this study. The participants' responses supported Herzberg's two-factor theory. After completing the interviews, I transcribed the collected data and provided a summary of each participant's responses for validation. I analyzed data by reading transcripts, reviewing notes, and using NVivo 12 software. Evidence from the literature review of

peer-reviewed articles and other seminal sources validated data from my primary interview data source.

Table 2

Frequency of Themes and Number of Participants

	Theme Frequency	Participants
Strategic communication	34	5
Rewards and compensation management	35	5
Job satisfaction and motivation	25	5

Theme 1: Strategic Communication

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of the participants' responses was how strategic communication improves employee retention. According to Coffey et al. (2022), strategic communication is the cornerstone to promote retention. The participants stated that effective strategic communication was essential for employee retention strategies. Employees considered effective and honest communication as a method for trusting their employers, even if the information was good or bad. Employees want their managers to practice open-door policies. The participants agreed that strategic communication should be frequent. All participants in this study acknowledged the importance of using strategic communication to improve employee retention. Interaction with managers may influence employees' desire to stay at an organization.

Employees developing a positive relationship with their leaders might stay at an organization (Johnson, 2020). Strategic communication is a means for managers and

employees to respond to situations to benefit the organization. Herzberg et al. (1959) stated that managers need to address the motivating factors associated with work to create satisfaction.

Participant S1

S1 discussed the importance of how effective communication was to improve employee retention. Top talent is hard to attract and retain because of the competitive market in the fast-food industry. S1 discussed how effective communication helps to keep the current employees and potential employees informed about organizational challenges, updates, and changes. S1 believed that all employees want to feel valued and it was the managers' duty to keep their employees abreast of things going on within the organization. Employees wanted to know firsthand what was going on in the organization, and it was the manager's responsibility to provide a communication approach. When employees are unaware of their employer's direction, they might decide to leave.

S1 stated that communicating with employees ensures that the employee understands the information discussed and provides the employees with an opportunity to share any issues or concerns they may have. S1 noted the need to treat my employees how I want to be treated when I was in their position." S1 discussed how managers should ask employees what they like or dislike about the organization. Managers should ask employees what changes they want to see take place in the workplace. Managers should provide an open dialogue with employees.

Participant S2

S2 discussed the importance of communication as a means of improving employee retention. Communication can enable employees to add value and creativity when employers allow employees to share their ideas and maintain a close connection with the organization. S2 stated that managers should know their employees and not be afraid to listen to their concerns. Managers should find out what skills the employees bring to the table.

When managers invest an interest in their employees, employees tend to show more loyalty. Managers should maintain a positive relationship with employees. Communication and feedback are necessary when retaining employees. S2 mentioned that having one-on-one communication sessions provides the employees with a chance to express their concerns about issues within the organization. S2 discussed the importance of internal communication to improve employee retention. Internal communication allows employees to share ideas and maintain a connection in the organization.

Participant S3

S3 discussed the importance of having open communication to improve employee retention. Managers should be transparent in their communication whether information is good or bad. When managers are transparent with their employees regarding organizational policies and decision-making, employees may feel more loyal and invested in the organization. Communication should inspire employees' confidence in themselves, their colleagues, and the company itself. S3 stated that managers should acknowledge and address employee concerns, provide feedback, listen to employees'

questions, and implement suggestions to maintain open communication. S3 also stated that an open-door policy is a wonderful opportunity for managers to listen and provide meaningful input to their employees. A manager's job is to ensure that employees feel a connection to the organization.

Participant S4

S4 discussed the importance of constant communication to improve employee retention. Managers who use various communication tools distribute information by keeping employees informed and improve retention. These communication tools can include email, surveys, one-on-one sessions, and questionnaires. Managers in the fast-food industry could use open-door policies to communicate with employees. Managers who have an open-door policy help to build employees' trust with management.

Participant S5

S5 discussed the importance of individual communication sessions to improve employee retention. S5 used individual communication sessions to provide employees an opportunity to express their concerns when they were reluctant to discuss them in team meetings. S5 stated that if an employee understands their contribution to the vision and purpose of the organization, they know that no job is unimportant.

Researchers have shown that poor communication between coworkers leads to poor employee retention (Halim, 2022). All participants agreed that managers should interact and ask questions about the employees' daily work. Managers should ask questions such as "What is going on? What is hindering you during the day? How can I help support you?" Managers increase employee commitment while reducing employee

turnover using communication. Managers' implementation of effective strategic communication in the workplace can help with teamwork, workplace issues, and maintaining cordial relationships with colleagues and customers (Chakravarti & Chakraborty, 2020). Managers implementing effective strategic communication in the workplace is an important aspect of business practices. Feedback plays a key role in the strategic communication process (Chakravarti & Chakraborty, 2020). Desirable communication is seen as engaging in a personal, intimate way (Stehle, 2023). Managers who use strategic communication as a tool can help employees realize their potential and feel confident to stay with the organization.

The participants provided responses that broadened information on how managers communicate in ways that create and maintain constant interaction. I indicated that strategic communication helps working relationships improve commitment, morale, and productivity in the study's findings. Strategic communication plays a key role by creating an open environment where employees have opportunities to speak up or make suggestions regarding the organization's growth (Ghani et al., 2022). The data collected from the interviews were consistent with effective business practice literature, which indicates that strategic communication is an effective strategy to improve employee retention. The retention of employees was linked with the theme of communication. Strategic communication improves the relationship between managers and employees, thus improving employee retention (Popli & Rizvi, 2016). Leaders who use effective strategic communication practices were more likely to build positive employee morale and motivation, which can help improve employee retention.

Theme 2: Rewards and Compensation Management

The relationship between rewards, compensation, and retention has been the subject of many studies (Kossivi et al., 2016). According to Kossivi et al. (2016), researchers have not been able to agree on the impact of pay on retention. Rewards and compensation are provided to employees for their performance, which consist of financial and nonfinancial rewards (Al-Harthy et al., 2022). Employee rewards and compensation constitute a significant practice of strategic human resource management encompassing the need to attract, retain, and motivate employees. Rewards and compensation are essential to attract, motivate, and retain qualified employees and can help encourage employees to stay in the workplace for an extended period.

Higher compensation can only increase retention in the short term. The second theme in this study was rewards and compensation management, which can improve employee retention. The participants in this study acknowledged the importance of rewards and compensation to improve employee retention. Rewards and compensation management are important in retaining employees and were mentioned more frequently than any of the other hygiene factors. Rewards and compensation are crucial factors that affect employee retention. Employees who were not satisfied with their rewards and compensation were more likely to leave. Employers should recognize that compensation is not an easy solution to employee retention. Employees have diverse needs, and employers should tailor their compensation packages to accommodate those needs.

Participant S1

S1 discussed the importance of good pay and improving employee retention. S1 stated, compensation helps to improve employee retention. According to S1, employees were willing to stay with the organization if they received a decent salary. S1 indicated paying slightly above minimum wage because everyone has bills. If possible, conduct a market analysis to see if salary offerings were fair. S1 also mentioned how compensation has a significant impact on whether an employee was satisfied with the job. S1 discussed how pay was a significant factor in retaining employees and provided job satisfaction. S1 stated compensation helps to retain employees. S1 discussed the longer an employee stays with an organization the more income they make.

Participant S2

S2 discussed the importance of compensation to improve employee retention. S2 mentioned pay equity is an issue when competing with other larger fast-food restaurants. Compensation is a method of rewarding a person for a job well done. S2 discussed how compensation leads to turnover intention among employees. S2 advised that this restaurant look at peer reviews to determine compensation for employees. S2 believed leaders should reward employees with adequate compensation and benefits if you can. Managers should consider giving employees a type of bonus or other benefits.

Participant S3

S3 discussed the importance of rewards to improve employee retention. S3 stated, performance rewards were a terrific way to recognize hard working employees.

According to S3, the employees' performance was recognized with rewards annually. S3 stated when employees and their work were valued, productivity increases.

Participant S4

S4 explained compensation is a significant motivation for employees to remain with the organization. Rewards and benefits are a way managers attract and retain employees. Compensation improves retention in the organization. S4 also indicated the importance of pay and mentioned poor pay raises can cause turnover.

Participant S5

S5 discussed the importance of training and development and having the employee's performance linked with reward and compensation practices. S5 mentioned the use of compensation is a successful strategy used to retain employees.

Reward and compensation practices were key determinants for employee retention. Reward and compensation practices have significant and positive effects on employee retention (Hassan, 2022). Fast-food managers who provide adequate salary as a part of a compensation package enhances motivation of employees, which results in employee retention. Bonuses, which recognize the performance of employees, enhance employee retention (Hassan, 2022). Herzberg's two-factor theory comprises of motivators and hygiene factors, which could improve employee retention. Hygiene factors such as basic salaries were factors which influenced employee retention.

Reward and compensation are not a motivating factor but a hygiene factor (Herzberg et al., 1959). When compensation does not meet the expectations of

employees, turnover can happen. This finding of the study aligns with Herzberg et al. (1959) two-factor theory affirming compensation is a driver of employee retention.

Theme 3: Job Satisfaction and Motivation

Employee retention referred to employees who remain with an organization whether or not the organization has a positive work environment (Hassan, 2022).

Employees with high job satisfaction levels remained with their organizations.

Communication is important to retaining levels of personal and professional satisfaction.

This happens when allowing employees to be open, collaborative, trustworthy, and even confrontational when needed. Job satisfaction was linked to Herzberg's motivation

theory. Motivation and job satisfaction have been identified as key factors for employee retention. Job satisfaction can enhance when employees believe their work is valuable.

Job satisfaction plays a critical role in obtaining employees and enhancing organizational performance. Managers should identify crucial factors which may affect job satisfaction.

Employees who were satisfied with their jobs were more likely to stay with their employers. However, job satisfaction could be influenced by factors such as the nature of the work, the work environment, the relationship with the manager, and the opportunities.

Employees want to work in a place where they feel comfortable, safe, and respected.

Fast-food leaders can improve job satisfaction by creating a positive work environment for their employees. Fast-food leaders can foster a positive work environment by

promoting open communication, respect, and loyalty.

Participant S1

S1 mentioned how job satisfaction makes employees want to stay with the organization longer. S1 discussed how knowing your employee was important. This may help the leader understand the employees and know what they want. S1 stated managers should not let any job be a thankless one. Showing appreciation for the employee will go a long way. Benchmarking is another way of determining job satisfaction. Are they staying or leaving? Six to nine months is a recommended time to measure the success of turnover. This period allows managers to measure if retention is a success or failure.

Participant S2

S2 mentioned giving employees a sense of having a buy-in with decisions may lead to job satisfaction. Job satisfaction could be increased if a workplace has a cooperative environment. This type of environment has respect for diverse ideas and opinions, honest and constructive feedback, and mentoring opportunities. Motivating the employee in their career choice by giving them a chance to offer suggestions. Having respect for employees could improve retention.

Participant S3

S3 mentioned organizations should have an excellent work environment. Employees want to hear feedback whether positive or negative. Praising employees for their hard work helps them to succeed in their roles. S3 discussed how employees feel satisfied when an employer has their back and provides support when allowing them to think out of the box. Employees might gain more satisfaction with their job if more challenging opportunities were offered. Job satisfaction is a key factor for organizational

success. Support employees and encourage them to think outside of the box. Give them a chance to enhance and give credit where credit is due. Employees want to know their work and ideas were making a difference. S3 indicated support is a relationship between employees and managers and can have a significant impact on employee retention. S3 found their employees stayed when there were effective communication skills and dedicated support from managers. Employees have a feeling of comfort when they have a supportive environment.

Participant S4

S4 provided an example of how their employees used a color marker and drew a design on take-out containers. S4 found when employees feel there is growth, they may become more satisfied. The employees may tell their friends or relatives about the nature of the organization leading to perspective employees. Employees who feel appreciated were more likely to be productive, and less likely to leave. Managers should not underestimate employees and the support they can provide.

Participant S5

S5 mentioned employees were satisfied when the manager listens and addresses their concerns. Job satisfaction is not always about pay. S5 stated if employees were satisfied with their job, they were less likely to leave. Without job satisfaction in the workplace, absenteeism may be a symptom of employee turnover. S5 stated if an employee feels valued by the organization, they were willing to stay. S5 also mentioned leadership can have direct impact on the satisfaction of employees.

Participant S4 and S5

S4 and S5 described how employees were satisfied when the employer consistently provides positive feedback. Allowing the employees to think out of the box gives them a chance to be creative. Fostering a work environment where creativity can flourish requires embracing the employees' passion. Employee satisfaction can have a positive impact on employee performance. Managers should add value and let employee voices be heard. Employees were more likely to remain employed at the organization if they felt appreciated, valued, and included in the company. When an employee is doing an excellent job, recognize their hard work. Show appreciation by saying it directly to them or making an organizational announcement.

All participants indicated managers should know their employees, what motivates them, let them know they are valuable to the organization and without them, the organization can fail. Priyanka and Rao (2022) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job and an affective reaction to one's job. Although competitive pay is important for retaining employees, job satisfaction is also important (Priyanka & Rao, 2022). Job satisfaction can enhance employee retention; however, an organization must consider job satisfaction of its workers. Job satisfaction has five dimensions: satisfaction with colleagues, leadership, salary, promotions, and nature of work (Steil et al., 2022). Job satisfaction is significant for employees to remain happy and deliver their best (Sarker & Ashrafi, 2018). Employees who were satisfied tend to be loyal to their organization and stay even in the worst time. Loyalty can lead to job satisfaction if the employee's expectations are met.

The participants' responses helped me to gain an understanding of the strategies fast-food managers used to retain employees. Job satisfaction is a major factor, which can increase work motivation (Hur, 2018). If employees are satisfied at work, they become more motivated and produce a higher work performance (Hur, 2018). Employers need to develop retention policies, which encourage employees to stay by including strategies which address the needs of employees. This qualitative study was explored to fill a gap in literature. The findings of the study extended the knowledge in the field of retention strategies fast-food industry managers use. The findings also align with the research of Herzberg et al. (1959) noting job satisfaction improves employee retention.

Application to Professional Practice

The findings of this study might help fast food managers with hiring responsibilities who have been unsuccessful in implementing strategies to improve employee retention. The findings of the study indicated managers who want to retain their experienced staff should pay close attention to strategic communication, understand the role financial and nonfinancial benefits play, and enhance job satisfaction. These recommended strategies include the key themes identified in this study. These strategies can significantly help fast-food managers if they apply them strategically to retain their experienced employees. Managers may apply these findings to develop an effective retention strategy to retain front-line employees. The results of this study could help business leaders of the fast-food industry with general communication, compensation, and satisfaction planning. From the study, I explored the effects of motivation and job satisfaction. I described how managers could increase employee retention and improve

motivation and satisfaction. The findings of this study may be applicable to business practices in the fast-food industry by providing a foundation for managers regarding effective retention strategies. Existing and new managers could use the findings of this study as a reference to better interact with their employees and reduce the cost to the company of recruiting, hiring, and retraining replacement employees. Fast-food managers could use the findings to develop procedures and create effective employee retention strategies to empower and encourage employees to stay with the organization.

Fast food managers who understand the factors that influence employee retention could achieve organizational success. Kolar et al. (2016) stated creating a work environment which fosters employee retention could result in an organization operating efficiently and effectively. Implementing an effective employee retention program is important to ensure key and significant employees remain employed in the organization. The participants in this study agreed on the importance of treating employees as individuals and understanding their needs, having open communication, allowing employees to have a voice, show a genuine concern, and compensating employees fairly. Herzberg et al. (1959) indicated motivating factors are extrinsic and hygiene factors are intrinsic. Extrinsic motivators such as salary, relationships, working conditions, rank, and job security account for job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Intrinsic motivators identified by Herzberg et al. (1959) include varied work, increasing opportunities to gain experience within the organization, and implementing achievement and recognition programs. Managers showing genuine concern for their employees' wellbeing may have better success with employee retention. The participants stated communicating with

employees and creating a bond is an effective way to build relationships with employees and increase job satisfaction. Communication gives employees a voice to state concerns and recommend organizational improvements.

Herzberg (1959) suggested increasing job satisfaction is to decrease the elements of dissatisfaction. However, employees will continue to experience dissatisfaction until these elements are eliminated. The job duties are associated with satisfaction while other factors such as pay could be consistent with dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Two factors which influence employee performance and behavior in organizations are job satisfaction and motivation. Employees tend to experience an increase in job satisfaction when they are motivated. Managers must focus on job environment; policies, procedures, supervision, and working conditions to increase employee job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Skilled employees stay longer in organizations when satisfied with their jobs, employer respect, reward, and recognition in any organization. Leaders should use both internal and external factors to the advantage of their employees. Herzberg et al. (1959) stated motivational factors help employees grow personally and within the organization. Herzberg et al. (1959) stated the motivation theory explores factors which drive employees to work towards a particular outcome.

Employers who have an interest in an employee's future is another strategy managers could use to increase retention. Some participants indicated they are willing to transfer employees to other locations to assist the employees with furthering their careers. According to the participants in this study, (a) strategic communication, (b) reward and compensation, and (c) job satisfaction and retention are effective retention strategies that

can improve business practices. All the participants stated managers should establish two-way communication to improve employee retention. When employees are engaged, they tend to become more involved in the organization. Employees feel appreciated and valued when management recognizes their efforts. Managers who successfully implement retention strategies may reduce costs, increase employee job satisfaction, and increase employee loyalty, which serves as a method for retaining employees. Managers having openness in communication positively links with job satisfaction in the workplace (Alfayad, & Arif, 2017). When this occurs, employees feel confident in expressing what is on their minds, share information, and feel their managers want to listen regularly with an open mind to their ideas, recommendations, or reports (Alfayad, & Arif, 2017). Employees sensing their managers were openly communicating with them have more self-confidence and feel safe at work.

For this study, I used Herzberg et al. (1959) two-factor theory to understand retention issues. Herzberg et al. (1959) noted employees need job satisfaction as a motivation to increase retention. The implementation of retention strategies can help the fast-food industry improve their business operations and meet their annual goals. The communication theme provided insight on how similar fast-food leaders approached communication planning. Fast-food managers must take into consideration retention issues within their organization. The themes identified through the interviews could provide business leaders with successful strategies to retain skilled employees. Employees could be successfully motivated when they experience such feelings as achievement, recognition, and responsibility at work, which can be beneficial to an

organization. Coffey et al. (2022), stated managers must constantly communicate with the employees to obtain the best from them. Based on my findings, strategic communication is a factor managers should consider when developing employee retention strategies. Although some fast-food leaders may be limited in providing good compensation, incentives can be offered. Managers must implement effective strategies to recruit and retain the best talent in the market (Hassan, 2022). Managers who have a successful compensation strategy in place were better prepared to attract and retain employees.

Implications for Social Change

Working toward positive social change can benefit businesses and the communities where they operate. Managers should look internally and ensure a commitment to social responsibility is embedded in their business operations. Managers need to adopt a long-term approach, embedded at all levels of the organization. Implications for positive social change in the study include higher retention of skilled workers, which could reduce unemployment rates and reduce reliance on government services. One result of this study shows increased retention could be achieved through understanding employee's needs and treating them as individuals. Managers can reduce stress and conflicts by creating a better work environment and increase job satisfaction.

The results of the study could contribute to a positive social change to include fast-food managers hiring, training, developing, and retaining employees to reduce unemployment rates. Using improved retention strategies, fast-food managers may retain employees in the organization, which a positive impact can occur from stable employment and contributions to their communities. Another positive social change is

more stable employment with less turnover can enhance self-worth, personal fulfillment, dignity, and prosperity for locally employed citizens. The findings in this study may have a positive effect on future fast-food managers to improve employee retention. The findings could also contribute to social change by educating existing and new managers of strategies, which could be used to retain essential employees. Having improved retention strategies might benefit the community by maintaining employees.

Fast-food managers may be able to implement effective retention strategies, which could increase growth and profitability and strengthen economic development. The findings in this study may have a positive effect on fast-food managers who are seeking a competitive advantage in the fast-food industry. Retained employees typically spend less time looking for new employment and can devote more time to enriching relationships with family and friends. Maintaining qualified employees is a critical source of competitive advantage for every organization. Managers cannot maximize the growth of their organization when employees are not retained (Siddique et al., 2022). Local communities could benefit from employee retention strategies because lower unemployment rates could occur, improve quality of life, and create employment stability. Implementing effective employee retention strategies could reduce employee burnout, increase economic growth, and strengthen economic development.

Recommendations for Action

Managers should offer their employees competitive pay which can result in motivating employees to remain on the job. Managers should focus on giving employees rewards and recognition to ensure they feel valued and appreciated. I recommend

managers should be supportive, competent, and knowledgeable and focus on employees' job satisfaction. Fast food managers who use proven strategies to enhance job satisfaction can also improve employee retention. According to DiPietro et al. (2007), factors which improve retention from the employee's perspective may not have been reviewed by other researchers. Most literature involves retention of employees in the fast-food industry and researchers have focused on an employee's desire to feel valued and respected by their management. A leader forges a connection with their employee when they take the time to discuss the employee's strengths. Satisfied employees are more willing to work toward the organization's mission and contribute to a positive work environment. Managers should understand the factors which motivate their employees. Finding ways to align these motivators is important to an organization. Managers should take into consideration the culture they create. One retention strategy is providing a healthy culture where employees feel trusted and empowered (Darrat et al., 2017). Trust is a crucial factor that is required for an employee to remain on the job.

Managers who use effective internal communication can build trust between employers and employees (Vercic, 2019). When managers communicate with their employees and show value through compensation, training, and development, employee retention can improve. Communication in the workplace ensures employees have the necessary information needed to perform their duties and eliminate inadequacies. I recommend fast-food managers adopt effective communication skills such as paying attention to nonverbal cues, and practicing active listening. Using communication as a key tool can assist managers and employees to improve their interaction for the benefit of

the organization. Frequent communication between managers and employees can ensure that managers are aware of any issues that may arise, and the employees can be kept abreast of business operations. Managers that use effective communication skills can help employees identify solutions to problems in the organization. I also recommend managers be careful of the tone used when communicating. Managers should take time to think through the message that is being conveyed as it can affect the information received by the employee.

Employees may remain in an organization where trust, commitment, and positive attitudes are valued. When a leader provides excellent support to the employee, they are reassured the leader is listening, showing appreciation, favor, and a sense of value. Managers who use retention strategies could help organizations lower turnover costs, build an organizational culture, and build satisfied employees. I offer recommendations for action to new fast-food managers and existing fast-food managers to build personal and supportive relationships with employees. The findings of this study could be used in workshops or seminars to train existing and new managers on retention strategies. These workshops could give managers necessary information to develop action plans to determine how to improve retention. Managers can meet with other managers to learn what other successful managers are doing to retain their employees. Managers should realize they do not know everything because you never stop learning. Managers should encourage employees to think about how they want to progress in their careers and offer opportunities to reach a goal. I suggest managers develop, groom, and retain their

employees through career advancement. Managers should seek ways to improve retention with employees using compensation, incentives, and nonmonetary rewards.

The findings in this study showed employees feel valued when their leader supports them, communicates with them, recognizes them and cares personally about them. The findings can be useful for managers to enhance their retention strategies. Managers must find creative and unique ways to develop and implement retention strategies, which may require implementing multiple qualitative strategies at the same time. The recommendations for action can reinforce the need to develop and implement changes, which are beneficial for all stakeholders. The current research could be beneficial for the fast-food managers to better understand the problems affecting employee retention and help shape and implement future strategic plans. The recommendations made in this study may result in higher employee retention rates and positive social change in fast-food local communities.

I plan to have this study published in the ProQuest/UMI dissertations database for current and future researchers to acquire. I will seek opportunities to present the research findings to other fast-food stakeholders. As a current HR professional, I will network with other HR Professionals for opportunities to enhance training and development relatable to employee retention strategies. I also plan to publish my study in human resources management journals to share potential strategies to improve retention in other fast-food restaurants. The information from the study may provide ideas that may help meet the business needs of fast-food restaurants. The study may also encourage leaders to identify areas that need retention improvement in the fast-food industry.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study might be repeated using different sectors and populations to understand the impact of various retention strategies. The purpose of this research was to explore the strategies for employee retention in the U.S. fast-food industry. In this study, I looked at why employees stayed at their current job and why they might leave, but my review did not analyze why employees left. I focused this study on five fast-food managers' retention strategies in the fast-food industry in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, which may not reflect the views of all fast-food managers. Future researchers can interview employees to gain their perspective on the effectiveness of retention strategies in their organizations. My recommendation for future research is to replicate this study further using a qualitative multiple case study approach in other regional U.S. locations. This replication may or may not produce the same result; however, the findings may broaden the perspectives of this topic over multiple U.S. locations. Another recommendation is to review employee gaps in job satisfaction based on age gaps. The information collected for this study is enough to analyze and code into themes. I recommend using a different data collection method for future studies. I suggest anonymous surveys because in person interviews, I relied on the participants feeling comfortable enough to be truthful and honest.

I recommend a qualitative study for future research to determine the relationship of this study's findings for improving employee retention. Future results might enable managers to focus on the importance of strategies to retain employees. Future researchers may consider researching the effectiveness of the following strategies found in this study:

providing a caring and clean work environment, offering employees fair pay, rewards, and recognition to retain employees. Future researchers may offer a deeper understanding of the motivational role of employee voice, which generates an environment which supports ideas, opinions and suggestions which reflect the feeling of satisfaction for employees.

This article was not free from limitations. These limitations provide opportunities for future research. One of the main limitations was data received from participants assumed that participants gave accurate responses was based only on their knowledge and experience in improving employee retention. There was a need to ensure validity across multiple fast-food industries in other locations. This study was limited in terms of location as well as type of restaurant. I relied on the information from the five participants selected to provide successful employee retention strategies fast-food managers may consider. The next limitation to this study was the availability or willingness for individuals to participate in a face-to-face interview. Another limitation was the participants voluntarily completed the questionnaire, and I had no formal information on the participants. Several managers at fast-food restaurants refused to participate in the study. It is possible those who refused to participate were less motivated, less satisfied with their job and might have biased the results. Despite the findings, fast-food restaurants could be limited in the amount of flexibility they have to resolve retention gaps. Managers should review the gaps and determine what changes need to be made to increase the retention of quality employees.

Reflections

The Doctor of Business Administration Program was extremely challenging, however, reaching the final stages of the study was most rewarding. I faced challenges with balancing work, family, and grandparent guardian due to deployment of daughter, health scares, and school throughout the program. Another challenge was finding participants for the study. Several managers were afraid to respond when I approached them to ask if they wanted to participate. I often felt discouraged, frustrated, disappointed, and overwhelmed as time progressed. The support received from my chair, mentor, and support group helped me focus. I have learned how to review scholarly information online and correctly citing references. I noticed my critical thinking skills and critical thinking skills improved. As a Human Resources Specialist, I had preconceived notions of what effective strategies should be used to improve employee retention. The findings of this study were from the perspective of the participants regarding retention strategies.

For this study, I read many studies and articles on management, leadership style, employee engagement, and employee retention, which was represented in my literature review. Managers play an essential role in the success of their employees. My interviews with the participants provided insight into what successful managers do to retain critical employees. From my findings, managers should communicate effectively with their employees, making employees feel valued while ensuring employees stay with the organization. When employees feel valued, they are more likely to identify problems as a chance for advancement rather than obstacles.

Conclusion

This qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies for employee retention in the U.S. fast-food industry. The literature in my review and the participant interviews confirmed managers who use effective retention strategies can help to retain employees. The study findings revealed fast-food managers should play a role in building a working environment of trust and fairness for employee retention. Fast-food managers should foster an open and transparent communication in the work environment, and a competitive compensation and benefits package. Encouraging open communication between colleagues, subordinates, and their managers might enhance employee retention.

Managers are the first point of contact and are responsible for ensuring their employees understand the vision and goals of the organization. Managers who are poorly trained using retention strategies can lead to retention failure. This study revealed strategies some fast-food leaders use to enhance retention of experienced employees. Employees should be regarded as essential to the organization's success. Employees should be given the opportunity to voice ideas to help the employees and organization grow. My findings revealed a unique trifurcated strategy that fast-food restaurant managers can use to successfully augment employee retention.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

Invitation to participate in the research project titled: Strategies for Employee Retention in the U.S. Fast-Food Industry

Dear

I am a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) student and researcher at Walden University. You are invited to participate in a research study regarding strategies for employee retention in the U. S. Fast-Food Industry. The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study is to explore strategies for employee retention in the U.S. Fast-Food Industry. I will conduct a 1 hour face-to-face interview. As the researcher, I am inviting managers who have experience with successful retention strategies to participate in the study. To participate in the study, you must be a manager of a U.S. Fast-Food Industry; work in the Washington, DC metropolitan area and have successfully implemented employee retention strategies. If you answered “yes” to the eligibility criteria questions, then you are eligible to participate in the study.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you are free to accept or decline the invitation. If you decide to participate in the study, you can change your mind later. Your identity will be kept confidential. There is no compensation for participating in the study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to the research and findings. The findings of the study may have the potential for positive social change to include an environment which will encourage employee retention, improved economic and social conditions, and reduced unemployment.

Veronica Mason

Doctor of Business Administration Candidate- Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Topic: Strategies for Employee Retention in the U.S. Fast-Food Industry

Date:

Time:

Location:

Interviewee:

Consent form signed

Introducing the Interview

Thank you for taking time to meet with me and participate in this interview for my doctoral study project. Thank you for signing the Informed Consent form. During the interview, please feel free to ask me any questions or to clarify any questions being asked. The approximate length of the interview will be 1 hour and will include nine primary questions.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study is to explore strategies for employee retention in the U.S. Fast-Food Industry. The targeted population will consist of five managers in the U.S. Fast-Food Industry in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, who have been successful in employee retention. The findings of the study may have the potential for positive social change to include an environment which will encourage employee retention, improved economic and social conditions, and reduced unemployment. The implications for social change include a higher retention of skilled workers who could reduce unemployment rates and reliance on government services. I remind you that your identity and responses will remain confidential and that you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time.

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to retain skilled employees?
2. How do you evaluate success of your strategies to retain skilled employees?
3. What strategies do you use to enhance employees' job satisfaction?
4. What strategies do you use to motivate employees?
5. What key barriers, if any, did you experience when implementing strategies to retain skilled employees?

6. In what ways does the fast-food organizational culture influence employee retention?
7. How do leaders' styles and characteristics influence employee retention?
8. What leadership skills and knowledge do fast-food leaders need to succeed to retain skilled employees?
9. What else would you like to add regarding strategies that you used to retain skilled employees?

Wrap Up Interview

This concludes the interview. Thank you again for your participation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at e-mail veronica.mason@waldenu.edu.

Schedule Follow-Up

I will contact you for a follow-up interview. At this time, I will provide you with a summary of the interview for your review, to ensure I understand your responses appropriately and accurately. The follow-up conversation will also allow you to share any additional thoughts you may have regarding the interview.