

4-9-2024

## Strategies to Decrease Separation Rates Among Highly Skilled Manufacturing Employees to Gain a Competitive Advantage

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# Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Rebecca J. Mileham

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Walden University  
2024

Abstract

Strategies to Decrease Separation Rates Among Highly Skilled Manufacturing

Employees to Gain a Competitive Advantage

by

Rebecca J. Mileham

MS, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2016

BS, DeVry University, 2013

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2024

## Abstract

Company leaders have a decreased competitive advantage when losing their highly skilled manufacturing employees due to separation from the company. Grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory, the purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies aeronautical leaders used to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. The participants comprised eight frontline managers in southern California with 2 years or more experience using strategies to decrease separation in their organization. Data were collected through face-to-face semistructured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis, resulting in four themes: pay and promotion; benefits and feedback; treatment from leadership; and performance, schedule, quality, and training. A key recommendation for aeronautical leaders is to be conscious of the tone used with the employees and not leave anything up to misinterpretation. The implications for positive social change include the potential to increase standards of living and employment opportunities. Organizations gaining a competitive advantage may lead to additional jobs and opportunities for residents to increase their contributions inside communities by spending tax revenues and supplementary disposable income in local economies.

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## Dedication

I dedicate my paper to all my family, friends, and coworkers who continued to support, help, and encourage me to stick with my doctoral journey, even when I wanted to quit. These last seven years have been a struggle and not without consequences, but at least the end is near.

## Acknowledgments

I thank my organization's leadership for encouraging me to complete my doctoral journey. Also, I thank Dr. Kate Andrews, my Chair, who has greatly helped and kept me on the right path forward. I could not have completed this without you. Dr. Johnson, I thank you, too, as progress was impossible without your help.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Most companies in every industry are having problems with decreasing separation rates among highly skilled, talented employees because separation correlates with hiring (Lazear & McCue, 2017). Decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees with the necessary skills to build the product faster with a higher sense of quality is beneficial for every company. Leaders in these companies are playing a role in decreasing separation rates among highly skilled, talented employees onsite.

### **Background of the Problem**

Leaders have a more challenging time decreasing separation among employees because there are less critical, highly skilled employees in multiple industries (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019). Most leaders in companies have fought the market to hire and maintain employees in all fields and occupations as critical drivers for performance (Meyers, 2020). With strategies for decreasing separation rates, the competitive fight for talent is achievable (Jain, 2018). Fighting for talent among highly skilled and talented manufacturing employees deserves more research to determine what strategies allow leaders to gain a competitive advantage in the talent market to decrease the separation rate. Manufacturing employers made considerable progress in the subcontractor sector inside the aeronautical industry during the 2010s (Guyon et al., 2019). Guyon et al. described the aeronautical industry is known by most people for generating multiple variations of specific and classified clients, with commercial, private, and military companies interacting with different parties of vendors inside the economic market and

the supply change organization. Each industry needs leaders who use strategies to decrease separation rates among highly skilled and talented manufacturing employees to lessen employee hiring, turnover, and separation.

### **Problem Statement**

Highly skilled employees who are subject matter experts are essential for gaining a competitive advantage in the manufacturing industry (Ganaie & Haque, 2017, p. 6). The manufacturing industry separation rate has increased from 25.6% in 2015 to 31.3% in 2019 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). The general business problem was that company leaders lose their highly skilled manufacturing employees due to separation from the company, which may result in a decrease in competitive advantage. The specific business problem was that some aeronautical leaders lack strategies for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore the strategies aeronautical leaders use for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. The targeted population consisted of eight aeronautical leaders at one manufacturing company in southern California who had successfully developed and implemented strategies for decreasing the separation rate among highly skilled manufacturing employees. The implications for positive social change include a potential benefit to local community residents with increased employment opportunities and standards of living. Organizations gaining a

competitive advantage can lead to the creation of additional jobs, which may lead to opportunities for residents to increase contributions to their community by spending supplementary disposable income and tax revenues in local economies.

### **Nature of the Study**

The three research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2020). Qualitative researchers attempt to understand and explain the underlying experiences, reasons, thoughts, opinions, and motivations of participants related to the phenomenon under study (Braun et al., 2020). I used the qualitative method to explore the underlying experiences, reasons, thoughts, opinions, and motivations of the participants that relate to the phenomenon of strategies aeronautical leaders used to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. Quantitative researchers measure variables and test hypotheses by examining variables' characteristics, relationships, or group differences to address the research question (Rahman, 2017). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because examining variables' characteristics or relationships by testing hypotheses would not have answered the research question. A researcher employs the mixed-method approach by using both qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study (Gegenfurtner et al., 2020). The mixed-method approach would not have been beneficial to the current study because the quantitative aspect would not have helped me to answer the research question.

Three principal qualitative designs are case study, ethnography, and phenomenology (Siedlecki, 2020). Researchers use the case study design when there is a

desire to explore a phenomenon bounded by time and place (Yin, 2018). The case study design applied to the current study because the phenomenon under study was bounded by a time and place. Researchers use the ethnographic research design to collect and explore groups' social systems and cultures (Rietveld & Brouwers, 2017). I did not explore a group's culture, so the ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study. A researcher employs a phenomenological design to understand the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences related to the study purpose (Ataro, 2020). I did not seek to understand the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences; therefore, a phenomenological design was not appropriate. A researcher uses a multiple-case study design to interview participants at two or more organizations and a single-case study design to study only one organization (Yin, 2018). I conducted a single-case study to interview a group of aeronautical leaders at one organization of particular interest. Whereas a multiple-case study focuses on multiple organizations, the use of a single-case study allowed me to focus on a single firm to collect more detailed and in-depth data to address the research question.

### **Research Question**

What strategies do aeronautical leaders use for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies do you use for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage?



2. How has your organization used strategies to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage?
3. How do you measure the effectiveness of strategies for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage?
4. What were the key barriers to implementing the strategies for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage?
5. How did you overcome any barriers to implementing the strategies for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage?
6. What other information would you like to share regarding strategies you use to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees in your organization?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Herzberg et al. (1959) created the motivation-hygiene theory to explain why employees were satisfied or dissatisfied in the workplace. Leaders use the motivation-hygiene theory to understand what motivates their employees to stay in the organization and what provides satisfaction in the workplace (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg (1968) posited six motivating factors lead to satisfaction (i.e., achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth) and seven hygiene factors whose absence results in dissatisfaction (i.e., supportive company policies, supervision,

relationship with supervisor and peers, work conditions, salary, status, and security). I used the motivation-hygiene theory to help me understand the study's findings on how aeronautical leaders develop and implement strategies for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. I also expected Herzberg's theory to facilitate an understanding of why highly skilled aeronautical manufacturing employees in the participating organization either stay with their leaders or leave the organization, which affects the organization's ability to gain a competitive advantage.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Critical employee:* A knowledge expert with in-demand special skills who can complete multiple complex or critical tasks (Ott et al., 2018).

*Highly skilled professional:* A person with a postsecondary education who can assimilate work instructions quicker and better than others (Lo et al., 2019).

*Talented employee:* A person who strives to be better than others inside their organization and engages in complex tasks (Springer & Rytelewska, 2015).

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

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are evidence of something believed to be true by the researcher but lack evidence to substantiate their realism and mitigate risk (Schuetz & Venkatesh, 2020). My first assumption was that the participants would answer the interview questions with honest and truthful responses. Another assumption was that I would obtain

data saturation with eight participants from one company. I also assumed the participants' interview answers would lead to additional open-ended questions.

### **Limitations**

A person can view a limitation as a study's assessment of weakness conditions over which the researcher has no control (McPherson et al., 2019). The first limitation I identified was that the participants' company documents may have contained subjective bias. Another limitation was that the participants may not have represented the aeronautical industry. The third limitation was that the interview participants may have misinterpreted or misrepresented certain concepts and provided misleading comments unintentionally or intentionally. The participants' self-reported responses possibly containing biases due to their interpretation of the study phenomenon, was another limitation. The final limitation identified was that the participants may not have disclosed all the strategies used for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are boundaries for the study the researcher has set (Runfola et al., 2017). The first delimitation was that the participants had experience working with highly skilled manufacturing employees and with employee separation. The second delimitation was that only participants from one aeronautical company were asked to provide information on employee separation rates. The final delimitation was that only participants in Southern California were chosen to participate in the study.

## **Significance of the Study**

### **Value to Business**

This study's findings may be of value to aeronautical industry leaders by providing successful strategies to decrease separation rates among their highly skilled manufacturing employees. Using strategies to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees may enable the production of higher quality aeronautical products, increasing competitive advantage. As competitive advantage increases, profits can increase as a product is built with higher quality and faster manufacturing times. Leaders who implement or adapt the results from this study may achieve decreased manufacturing separation rates and greater competitive advantage, enabling the organization to support more employees, families, and communities.

### **Contribution to Business**

Implementing this study's findings may help leaders in aeronautical companies to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees and keep their companies in business within the United States and other nations. This study's findings may also help leaders in the aeronautical industry improve their strategies of decreasing separation rates among highly skilled employees who are subject matter experts in building aircraft. Gaining a competitive advantage can result in obtaining and maintaining contracts that require unique skill sets to improve aircraft-building processes.

### **Contribution to Social Change**

This study's findings may contribute to positive social change by benefiting the local community and families with increased employment opportunities and higher

salaries. The creation of additional jobs may lead to opportunities for residents to increase their contributions to their community by increasing and sustaining supplementary, disposable income, which can be used in local economies.

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

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies aeronautical leaders use for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. In this section, I critically synthesize the current and historical research and professional academic literature on the aeronautical manufacturing industry, talent management for a competitive advantage, the conceptual framework, employee job satisfaction, and employee turnover. I gathered materials for this literature review from Google Scholar and databases accessible through the Walden University Library. The search terms used include *overview of the aeronautical industry*, *Herzberg's two-factor motivation-hygiene theory*, *satisfaction*, *dissatisfaction*, *talent management theory*, *competitive advantage using the resource-based view of the firm*, *employee job satisfaction using Maslow's needs hierarchy theory*, and *employee turnover using the human capital theory*.

I color coded the references to organize the literature found with publication dates within 5 years of my expected graduation date. This study contains 222 references comprised of 164 peer-reviewed articles, representing 73.8% of the total; two government websites, representing 1.1% of the total; and 10 seminal books, representing 5.3% of the total. The total number of references published within 5 years of my expected chief academic officer approval date is 159, which is 71.6% of the total number. The

literature review contains 125 references, with 97 references published within the past 5 years, representing 77.6% of the total, and 95 references from scholarly, peer-reviewed sources, representing 76% of the total.

Motivation is an important topic within the field of organizational management and is vital for employees to be happy and successful while working and in daily life (Ozsoy, 2019). Even in countries outside of the United States, Herzberg's (1968) theory is used to see how motivation and hygiene factors affect different levels of job satisfaction (Swati & Sukhjeet, 2019). Satisfaction motivators and hygiene factors can cause employees to share knowledge indirectly and directly (Zhang et al., 2020). Pathways or different ways to complete a task vary among employees in all industries; therefore, understanding each employee's motivators and hygiene factors can help leaders increase employee happiness and, thus, decrease the separation of their workers to gain a competitive advantage.

The literature review begins with an overview of the aeronautical industry as well as a discussion of the conceptual framework of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and the published research on Herzberg's satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors to explain how employers may decrease the separation of employees. I also describe contrasting and complementary theories, including talent management theory, competitive advantage for highly skilled employees using the resource-based view of the firm, employee job satisfaction using Maslow's needs hierarchy theory, employee turnover using the human capital theory, and how the theory challenges organizational management.

## **Overview of the Aeronautical Industry**

During the 2000s, the aeronautical industry made substantial, marketable progress and was identified as a sector structured by regulations with intense hierarchical levels of subcontractors (Guyon et al., 2019). The hierarchical levels influence the production chain, and difficulties or differences of obstacles can have an economic dependence. Guyon et al. stated the aeronautical industry is known by most people for generating numbers of specific and restricted clients, including military, private, and commercial clients, with commercial and private aircraft and airlines and interacting with different parties of vendors inside the supply chain organization. The supply chain base is limited in the aeronautical industry because of restrictions certifying aircraft for flight (Vieira & Loures, 2016). Vendors supply parts to all aircraft, competitors, and sub-tier suppliers, limiting the availability for all consumers and negatively impacting the negotiation. Vieira and Loures stated a complex process is used for maintenance, repair, and overhaul, which has a precise and strict requirement for airworthiness because safety is critical.

Both military and civil sectors use the market for products to fulfill mission assurance and for cost-effectiveness (Vos et al., 2001). Reducing costs has motivated manufacturers in search of the design and manufacture of superior aircraft with newer technology. Vos stated aircraft design begins component by component, which are assembled sequentially with an impact towards technical and financial success for the aircraft. Vieira and Loures (2016) found that spare parts bought by governments, private businesses, and airlines were pricier than the production parts. Reducing the cost of parts has made the industry more competitive and has led some companies to outsource

maintenance (Vieira and Loures, 2016). Vieira and Loures explained due to the strict airworthiness of parts, the aeronautical industry limits services and parts from companies which leads to a predicament of options when selecting a supplier for a new aircraft and a lack of negotiating leverage. On the commercial side of the industry, there are 230 major airlines, the business side is composed of private aircraft with over 24,000 jets delivered, and the military side comprises government aircraft that are determined by political decisions (Vieira and Loures, 2016).

The personnel working in the aeronautical industry are associated with regulating aircraft safety and reliability for maintenance, airworthiness, and operations (Yadav & Nikraz, 2012). The aeronautical industry is a powerful force in modern global society and requires an emphasis on materials to fulfill applications to complete the work (Kumar & Srinivas, 2019). Due to the complex work tasks, human errors can lead to product failure, so the industry's working environment requires assistance from machines to complete the more difficult tasks.

### **Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory**

Herzberg et al. (1959) formulated the theory of motivation and hygiene to track job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace. Hur (2018) concurred with Herzberg's (1968) argument that dissatisfaction is not the opposite of satisfaction; instead, the opposite of satisfaction is no satisfaction, and the opposite of dissatisfaction is no dissatisfaction. Within this theory, motivator and hygiene factors influence job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Thant & Chang, 2021). As business competition rapidly increases daily, organizations respond to changes to minimize the effect of a collapse in



their industries (Juariyah & Saktian, 2018). Job satisfaction can increase satisfaction and drive work productivity (Juariyah & Saktian, 2018; Singh & Bhattacharjee, 2020). Shaikh et al. (2019) described motivated employees as vital resources to boost productivity and performance in the workplace.

Rai et al. (2021) stated there was no significant relationship between Herzberg's (1959) hygiene factors and age or between age and a motivation factor; contrastingly, when motivation increased, there was a strong significant relationship with hygiene factors. Abraham and Prasetyo (2021) found that motivation and hygiene factors are required to improve an individual's job satisfaction. Artaya et al. (2021) identified and analyzed the influence and role of theories used to explore perceptions of loyalty inside the workplace using Herzberg's (1968) motivation-hygiene theory. Herzberg's theory of motivation-hygiene is applicable to the work environment through the factors of self-actualization and self-esteem. Influence, self-esteem, the role of theories, and self-actualization can improve an employee's work performance using motivation. Leaders who use Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to understand employees' work motivation and job satisfaction can help to improve productivity.

### *Satisfaction as Motivating Factors*

Herzberg's (1968) theory has six motivating factors of satisfaction: the work itself, responsibility, recognition, advancement, growth, and achievement. Singh and Bhattacharjee (2020) stated hygiene and motivation factors could positively affect workplace satisfaction. Holston-Okae and Mushi (2018) agreed motivator factors affect an employee's positive attitude and help to increase self-actualization when needs are satisfied. Employee satisfaction increases with job satisfaction and decreases when employees are unsatisfied, often resulting in poor performance (Shaikh et al., 2019). However, if employees can be satisfied in their job, they are more likely to stay within the company.

**The Work Itself.** The first factor in motivation-hygiene theory is the work itself, seen as the employee's performance and the source of the feelings they felt completing the work (Herzberg et al., 1959). In the theory, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are tied to an employee's emotional response toward their job and contribute to motivation and hygiene factors. Candido et al. (2021) described the knowledge gap between a workers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction supported a sense of perceived environments and productivity. The critical aspects of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are productivity, behavior, design, and technology, which can be used to further understand what leads to motivation in the workplace. Lortie et al. (2021) stated to reduce cost and risk, initiating business methodologies and procedures using Herzberg's theory increases the probability of a positive response within the work environment and from employees. A person using knowledge of a specific market of offerings can introduce ideas of dissatisfaction and

satisfaction responses to employees inside an organization with access and capability of resources.

Thant and Chang (2021) noted employees who work in the described areas would evaluate their environment according to their values. When those values conform, the employee expresses satisfaction with the job. The work itself contributes to job satisfaction inside companies with public employees. Thant and Chang discussed how public employees demonstrate motivation within a public service relating to their work and whether they were satisfied and happy contributing as a whole team. Rai et al. (2021) stated motivated employees would have increased productivity and voluntarily contribute to the company's output as they minimize waste, willingly put efforts into increasing efficiency, and maximize their overall job performance. Siruri and Cheche (2021) found the work itself had an implication for employee task identity and how it factored into responsibility on the job.

**Responsibility.** Responsibility relates to authority in a sequence of events of work received and can work in concurrence with the company's policy and administration (Herzberg et al., 1959). Due to an increasingly competitive business world, management needs to optimize the company's employees through motivation and job satisfaction (Siruri & Cheche, 2021). Therefore, satisfaction in the workplace is crucially important. Zámečník and Kožíšek (2021) argued to increase satisfaction and improve the performance of employees, leaders should maintain a stable working environment inside the organization by using motivating factors. Fluctuation inside organizations is to be avoided by analyzing perspectives that lead to individual performance, loyalty, and a

higher efficacy towards motivated employees.

Providing positive motivating measures within a professional environment is crucial to increasing employee satisfaction, which can lead to a good reputation for the company through quality customer satisfaction service (Rai et al., 2021). The researchers found that nurses in a hospital in India were satisfied with their jobs, and times when the private hospital demonstrated responsibility were shown to have a large impact on the nurses' professional job satisfaction. A job redesigns responsibility as it primarily relates to how an employee meets and exceeds job tasks and connects to satisfaction (Siruri & Cheche, 2021). If managers are given more responsibility without improving conditions of authority and power, then the work will not be completed (Hur, 2018). Responsibility has been argued to tie directly with job characteristics and motivation into the core of Herzberg's theory (Siruri & Cheche, 2021).

**Recognition.** Herzberg's (1959) recognition factor relates to any employee in a company and when they are praised, noticed, blamed, or criticized. Wood et al. (2021) stated that role and organizational conditions either inhibited or promoted satisfaction in the workplace and an employee's well-being. Wood et al. discussed significant satisfaction was found when recognized and well-supported by employee roles and their organizations. Holston-Okae and Mushi (2018) agreed that Herzberg's (1968) theory accounted for employees' relationships with dissatisfaction and satisfaction during workplace performance. Satisfied employees continue to work hard when content and complain less when their needs are addressed through benefits and awards. Acquah et al. (2021) stated that humans have inspiration and spirit, allowing them to meet an

organization's goals and use motivation towards satisfaction. Motivation is critical to all organizations and aspects of life.

Recognition of an employee's work accomplishments by management or others creates job satisfaction (Thant & Chang, 2021). This recognition allows employees to feel satisfied with their jobs, even when they are tired or feel bad performing tasks because others recognize them. Employees had increased satisfaction with their jobs when they got promotions every year. Thant and Chang stated recognition is one most important factors for job satisfaction among public employees in Myanmar.

**Advancement.** Advancement in the workplace appears in the change of status or the employee's position and will increase their responsibility (Herzberg et al., 1959). When leaders recognize factors that affect job motivation, it becomes possible to enhance job satisfaction among employees (Nazari et al., 2020). Job satisfaction can be a primary indicator of loyalty toward the company (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). However, Sobaih and Hasanein (2020) explained satisfaction does not always depend on motivators and can be negative. Sobaih and Hasanein found that Herzberg's (1959) theory may not apply to every industry, organization, or country and that sometimes different factors motivate and satisfy employees in multiple ways, such as pay, time off, and retirement. Among the motivating factors, advancement was rated high by most public managers from very important to somewhat crucial during a survey (Hur, 2018). Advancement also positively correlated to all seven hygiene factors as an opportunity and motivator; however, some advancement opportunities may not be as crucial because the employee has already reached the top position within their career.

**Growth.** Growth inside the company is a possibility that employees face when given the opportunity or rise to a position based on skills or education (Herzberg et al., 1959). Using Herzberg's theory inside an organization helps to demonstrate the relationship between motivating factors and satisfaction levels, leading to a significant return on employee performance (Tichaawa & Idahosa, 2020). Shah et al. (2021) described growth as analyzing a perception and improving upon it to allow for exploring the perception of employee dissatisfaction and satisfaction. Herzberg's theory can help to explore different knowledge, attitudes, and competence reviews for organizations in all industries.

Growth is tied to advancement as it relates to an employee's need for opportunity and is a critical motivator (Hur, 2018). If the need for growth is based on a legal requirement, the employee's growth will not contribute to their needs but the company's effectiveness. Growth is accomplished when an employee desires an opportunity for tasks of strength to complete quality of work among hygiene factors of salary, relationship with peers and coworkers, working conditions, and supervision (Siruri & Cheche, 2021).

**Achievement.** Herzberg's last factor for motivation is an achievement in the form of success or failure for problems and results (Herzberg et al., 1959). Alam (2021) found satisfaction was an attitude reflected in a fulfilled or gratified employee and was not a unitary concept. Ding et al. (2021) examined dissatisfaction and satisfaction by analyzing negative and positive attributes. Satisfaction increased when strategies were developed with valuable leadership perceptions, and those strategies illustrated practical approaches toward employee satisfaction.

Thant and Chang (2021) did not see achievement as a significant factor in motivation but still a contributing factor as it influenced job satisfaction. Achievements were hard to accomplish when not many opportunities were presented (Abraham & Prasetyo, 2021). The desire for achievement involves mastering ideas, objects, and people to increase an employee's self-esteem through talent.

### ***Dissatisfaction as Hygiene Factors***

Herzberg's (1968) theory has seven hygiene factors that categorize dissatisfaction: supervision, supportive company policies, status, salary, security, relationship with supervisor and peers, and work conditions. Likewise, Hur (2018) agreed with Herzberg that interpersonal relationships, salary, and company policies were linked to hygiene factors. Juariyah and Saktian (2018) suggested favorable hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction at work. Conversely, the presence of a dissatisfier decreases dissatisfaction at work.

**Supervision.** Supervision deals with nagging or efficiency factors that give employees feelings on the job (Herzberg et al., 1959). According to Arvan et al. (2019), job dissatisfaction can contradict overqualification with a view of the outcome where someone is or is not qualified to perform the job task. There are times inside organizations when job satisfaction and dissatisfaction go hand in hand. Job dissatisfaction can adversely affect an organization's motivation (Wijaya, 2019). Wood et al. (2021) identified confusion of roles led professionals to dislocation from a stable identity or state of mind as a source of dissatisfaction when the employee misinterpreted instructions given by supervision and the task went to another peer. Dissatisfaction is

considerable when concerning isolation from other peers daily and affects the employee's well-being. Dissatisfaction in the workplace can lead to low engagement and diminished working results (Barashev & Li, 2019). Therefore, all organizations' management should know about job dissatisfaction within their workforce.

**Supportive Company Policies.** A company's supportive policy and administration are a sequence of events involving the leaders' inadequacy or adequacy of management or organization (Herzberg et al., 1959). Sari and Lestari (2021) found satisfaction led to happiness and dissatisfaction was due to negative aspects such as bad treatment or policies. Herzberg's theory allows organizations to improve upon the analysis of data and the intention to satisfy employees.

Good policies are not hard to follow as long as they are coordinated well during meetings and opinions are considered (Abraham & Prasetyo, 2021). Employees can feel appreciated when their voices are heard and professionalism is shown. Policy and administration contribute to job satisfaction through accommodations of their job (Thant & Chang, 2021). Employees were satisfied and happy when supervisors provided flexibility and constructive treatment through policies.

**Status.** Herzberg et al. (1959) suggested status as a sign of change or having more of something that other employees did not. Sousa et al. (2021) assessed primary exposure to dissatisfaction at work as a variable and had a higher chance of a common mental disorder. The relationship between common mental disorders and dissatisfaction is seen among gender, and the effect of psychosocial aspects on personal actions during the occurrence of the problem. Brock et al. (2021) examined dissatisfaction as a factor in



people through self-objectification and interventions from peers or supervision.

Discovering from a peer self-objectification and enduring an intervention can exhaust a person's self-esteem. Dissatisfaction became apparent with lower levels of self-objectification, leading to a depressive state of mind.

**Salary.** Salary involves all wages and monetary value employees receive from the company (Herzberg et al., 1959). Acquah et al. (2021) agreed with Herzberg (1959) salary was not a primary motivator like recognition and achievement but a motivator and an incentive. Some employees only see their salary as a money source and are not entirely motivated, and have few complaints (Zámečník & Kožíšek, 2021). There were times when employees complained about salary when the job was challenging and motivated, which brought a competitive advantage to the business entity. The lack of adequate compensation can potentially lead to dissatisfaction within the workplace and perhaps lead the employee to leave.

**Security.** Security of the job enforces feelings with the absence or presence of stability in the employee's position (Herzberg et al., 1959). Ntimba et al. (2021) examined how the influence of job dissatisfaction and satisfaction impacted the psychological contract of employees and the fulfillment an employee has regarding their work through their company. Ntimba et al. saw a costly effect some employees experience with dissatisfaction and turnover, as well as the strategies an organization uses to discourage turnover and improve job satisfaction in the workplace. Kageyama and Sato (2021) assessed dissatisfaction as an incentive for psychological behaviors as it impacts factors of the socioeconomic standing of an employee. A socioeconomic factor

can affect multiple satisfaction levels but does not always show results from findings.

Job security is a crucial satisfier for teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic and has proven for public teachers in the Philippines (Abraham & Prasetyo, 2021). The teachers with a secure job were found to feel safe with the working conditions and environment and were motivated and satisfied. Job security also depends on demographic factors and work experience as to whether employees are satisfied or less (Rai et al., 2021). For some employees, experiencing job satisfaction influences their overall performance and recognition of their efforts.

**Relationship With Supervisor and Peers.** An employee's relationship with supervision and peers or interpersonal relations refers to the role in situations involving change or recognition from the company (Herzberg et al., 1959). Arvan et al. (2019), Wang et al. (2020), and Wijaya (2019) agreed negativity could be troublesome at times, but it can lead management to understand how to overcome adverse situations and reduce dissatisfaction in the workplace. Some negative situations could be bad policies and procedures or feedback from peers and supervisors. Vitali et al. (2021) assessed factors contributing to dissatisfaction and satisfaction among workers and how they responded to the infrastructure of the workplace. Psychosocial factors of problems and peer relationships establish an employee's view of internal aspects and influence relationships and teamwork among teammates, such as working together on a project or task and disliking the peer. Guinez-Cabrera et al. (2021) explained dissatisfaction among teachers in management positions who managed challenges for a significant period of time had major dissatisfaction inside their organization. Employees experience dissatisfaction and

satisfaction in the workplace through significant changes in all parts of society, including education and management positions.

Abraham and Prasetyo (2021) described when colleagues and supervisors were good to work with, cooperative, and approachable; employees were satisfied with the coworker relationship. This relationship made accepting leadership decisions and following the rules and expectations easier. The interpersonal relationships with peers and supervision contribute to job dissatisfaction when employees cannot build good standing and feel uncomfortable (Thant & Chang, 2021).

**Work Conditions.** The last factor of Herzberg's (1959) theory is the employee's work conditions, the amount of work given, and the physical conditions of the work performed. A negative role in the workplace may encourage an employee to take action to improve the situation to decrease dissatisfaction (Wang et al., 2020). Employees who are part of a union tend to be less satisfied than nonunion employees (Bessa et al., 2021). Bessa et al. argued behaviors from union members' job dissatisfaction rather than working conditions are the likely cause of overall dissatisfaction.

When employees are happy with their working conditions, they will have fewer complaints and be more motivated to complete tasks (Zámečník & Kožíšek, 2021). These situations give employers and employees an advantageous opportunity to feel they belong. Abraham and Prasetyo (2021) discovered working conditions were a critical dissatisfier during COVID-19, and employees did not feel safe inside some environments. Thant and Chang (2021) found working conditions were the most critical hygiene factor, although it affected job satisfaction during long working hours and was a source of

dissatisfaction. The findings in Myanmar were similar to those of other countries and the working conditions of other countries.

### **Contrasting and Complementary Theories**

Four other theories coexist with decreasing separation among highly skilled manufacturing employees.

### ***Competitive Advantage Using the Resource-Based View***

The Resource-Based View (RBV), expanded upon by Jay Barney, can be used by organizations with bundles of resources and growth variations depending on the resources they control and own (Patnaik et al., 2022). Leaders could use the RBV to look inward and reconfigure and accumulate resources to build business competitiveness in the market. When leaders use RBV, it allows them to focus on the internal weaknesses and strengths of the organization and, in contrast, view external opportunities for threats to competitive advantage (Bhandari et al., 2022). This relationship between an organization's competitive advantage and resources is possible if the resources are of value, inimitable, rare, and non-sustainable. Bhandari et al. stated to be pursued in parallel with other competitors; one must achieve a competitive advantage using a strategic approach.

The growth of a sector in an organization will continue to grow as long as it has a high competitiveness capability (Lubis, 2022). Companies can only survive the intense competition and remain competitive when they continue to innovate. According to Lubis, creating a framework using RBV gives an organization high competitiveness when using management and company resources and capabilities that add value. Resources are

tangible and intangible; a resource can be physical, like a factory, a human employee, financial, or an organization's culture or capability (Hagen et al., 2022). The different types of resources are relevant to all marketing activities of an organization.

Competitive advantage occurs when resource immobility and heterogeneity occur (Madhani, 2010). A company's strategic choices determine its internal resources and capabilities to compete externally in the business environment. A sustained competitive advantage can become a non-duplicatable advantage that will not last forever but can not be easily duplicated by other efforts. Competitive advantage is used against direct competitors to compare products, work processes, or services to improve strategy and for good performance (Elmuti & Kathawala, 1997). Competitive advantage continues to change and grow as processes update and can lose momentum when individuals lose focus.

Achieving competitive advantage success involves people in the workforce using an employee relationship to fundamentally alter how we think through a problem (Pfeffer, 2005). Having the employee relationship rather than replacing them helps expand their scope of activities and outperform the company's rivals. Sustainable competitive advantage is a game-changer for businesses who operate differently than their competitors (Muhammad et al., 2020). The growing advantage boosts the economy with an increasingly competitive and complex environment.

### ***Talent Management Theory***

Companies in multiple industries use research to fight for talented employees to maintain a competitive advantage. The talent management theory is a process to retain

and attract motivated and qualified employees and nurture their skills to improve performance (Kravariti et al., 2022). The main goal is to create a motivated workforce who will remain with the organization long-term. Using the talent management theory, a company will use components to acquire, assess, and develop an employee's progress and skills (Kaliannan et al., 2023). Talent development is a requirement for organizations to master an employee's skills to dominate the workforce.

Ganaie and Haque (2017) explained talented employees' human capital is critical to creating a future-oriented organization to help maintain a competitive advantage. Focusing on employees' capital talent in critical and skilled positions inside the organization are vital to maintaining competitive advantage. According to Jain (2018), analytical tools for exploring research are needed to strategically gain employees through engagement, empowerment, and enrichment from different generations. Analytical tools help human resources personnel face the issue of working with multiple generations within the organization by strategizing issues and solutions. Ott et al. (2018) explained talented employees perform better than others, and the organization should always try to retain such employees. Losing talented employees causes the organization to lose money and competitive advantage.

Different generations of talent come with numerous obstacles for management personnel to hire and retain employees. Kalinina and Valebnikova (2017), Pregnolato et al. (2017), and Serrat (2017) described tendencies companies use to gain a competitive advantage; losing talent due to separation creates high costs for the organization in terms of new recruitment and sustained productivity. While Serrat argued talented individuals

are not a rare statistic, emphasizing the topic needs further scholarly attention. Kalinina and Valebnikova explained how many companies use multiple recruitment methods within the organization, either with existing skills or new educational training. Kalinina and Valebnikova also provided information on how human capital is a desired asset to a company which can boost professional success and career growth. Pregnolato et al. stated rewards, internal or external, are a factor in maintaining talented personnel, which helps boost morale and competitive advantage in the late 2010s diverse workforce. Further, implementing a single retention strategy is impractical (Pregnolato et al., 2017). Retaining talented employees is a pressing topic inside organizations, and maintaining talented personnel separates high-performance companies from others (Serrat, 2017).

The struggle to obtain talented individuals is ongoing, requiring outsourcing and other advances in the workplace. Pingali et al. (2017) described a shortage of talented personnel in the workplace and how some companies outsource lower wages. Roy and Devi (2017) discussed how different tactics play a role in retaining talented individuals; such methods may be exclusive or inclusive. Suseno and Pinnington (2017) further emphasized the importance of obtaining talented personnel in the workforce. Therefore, companies' leaders should have policies to address maintaining talented personnel.

Good talent management is one key to a competitive advantage for some companies. According to Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016), companies should be more creative and effective when recognizing engaged, skilled, and motivated employees. Kravariti and Johnston (2020) claimed while there is much research conducted on the private sector, the public sector remains under-researched. McDonnell

et al. (2017) determined superior talent management could be the key to competitive advantage, indicating more research is required to understand the processes companies use to recruit, motivate, and reward employees for retention. Having employees with a critical skill set and maintaining them can create a profitable business.

Talented individuals can generate profitable asset strategies for the organization. According to Barik and Kochar (2017), Rostam (2019), and Walford-Wright and Scott-Jackson (2018), management sees employees as assets or capital which help with the achievement of goals and business outcomes. Employee engagement creates a competitive edge, leading to successful companies (Barik & Kochar, 2017). Rostam defined employee talent management as an ability to create and use talent or skills to achieve company objectives. Walford-Wright and Scott-Jackson claimed opportunities are seen with technological advancement by having talented individuals among business strategies.

Talent management is an essential component of any business or corporation. Johennesse and Chou (2017), Mohammed (2016), and O'Connor and Crowley-Henry (2019) agreed talent management was an essential business process for employee retainment and engagement. Johennesse and Chou discussed how talent management processes contribute to effective employee retention. Mohammed found talent management attracts, develops, and retains vital talent while improving employee engagement and performance. O'Connor and Crowley-Henry discussed how talent management and employee engagement are intertwined in corporate talent pools.



Talent management practices vary from company to company. Despite the differences, human talent has reacted the same way throughout history. Harsch and Festing (2020), Meyers et al. (2020), and Son et al. (2020) agreed talent management is an increasingly popular and diverse field of interest. Harsch and Festing found talent management could help shape talent as a crucial human resource according to specific company needs for a competitive advantage. Meyers et al. concurred talent management could also be “talent philosophies” organizations could use with perceptions and context. Talent philosophies organizations are defined as a fundamental assumption and belief about a talent’s instrumentality, value, and nature of decision maker in which a senior HR manager defines talent. Creating different context and perception of situations or philosophies could introduce new views on talent management. Son et al. (2020) discussed how talent management is a growing field and positively associated with an organization’s performance, but that there are also negatives to each situation. The negatives include talented individuals leaving, increased internal costs to train new personnel, and decreased performance.

### ***Employee Job Satisfaction Using Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy Theory***

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory uses a person’s security and safety, physical needs, self-esteem, love and belonging, and self-actualization, to understand psychological, physical, technological, and social learning that impact the willingness to learn (Vithayaporn et al., 2022). The different levels of Maslow’s theory allow an individual to feel accomplished. Maslow created his theory in 1954, dividing a person’s needs into five levels from low to high and representing a pyramid, signifying how a

person starts at the bottom to move up with the help of motivation (Liu et al., 2022).

Within each level, there are needs to be fulfilled by the individual, and without fulfillment, the person cannot progress without motivation to reach the next step.

Financial elements or factors inside the organization can be considered top-ranked components with job satisfaction. Even though financial factors may not be a key element, they impact leadership significantly due to a lack of funds (Ali & Anwar, 2021). A safe and encouraging environment can make employees feel satisfied with their job. Most employees dream of working in a safe work environment and may feel comfortable allowing productivity and continuity of the work (Shafie et al., 2021).

Haralayya (2021) described employee job satisfaction as an aspect all business associations accept and whether or not the employee likes or dislikes their job. Employees' gratification about their jobs is the top of job satisfaction that shapes their overall performance. According to Demircioglu (2021), the interest in analyzing organizational innovation and job satisfaction is increasing. Job satisfaction relating to innovation shows implications among common practice and academics contributing to multiple fields of study. Gross et al. (2021) explained a crucial asset for a service organization is reputation because the actual quality of service was hard to assess in a tangible aspect. Therefore, employee recommendations to others and future clients are crucial to one's reputation and future work.

Stazyk et al. (2021) described the importance of public companies' workforce diversity, which has accrued during the last two decades. The results from the authors' study clarified company goals had a positive effect on employees' job satisfaction was

associated with clear goals and various management policies. The new normal of working from home explored the impact and nature of employee job satisfaction and behavior that allowed for emotional wellness to a great extent (Sinha et al., 2022). Sinha et al. (2022) stated their results show an increased employee work responsibility, enhanced work association, and a need for interaction for exchanging information were highly related to working from home. Tasman et al. (2021) researched how the work environment had a significant and positive effect on job satisfaction. Tasman et al. described job promotion and employee performance could provide a better work environment to increase job satisfaction.

Aziz et al. (2021) described the results of their study had a positive correlation between employee commitment and job satisfaction. Aziz et al. stated employees could be organizationally committed if satisfied. Amri et al. (2021) found their study enforced religiosity positively affected service quality, which enforced employee job satisfaction. According to Bhardwaj et al. (2021), there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee opportunities. The authors' study found factors of motivation that lead to employees having a greater level of job satisfaction and the benefits accompanying it. Ramlawati et al. (2021) determined an outside influence could cause stress common to job satisfaction and any created effects. Ramlawati et al. verified external influences had a great significance on job satisfaction, but stress had no significance on job satisfaction.

Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska (2021) explained working remotely could affect job satisfaction and social interactions, effectively changing one's mental health.

The authors' study found job satisfaction positively related to an employee's trust and relations with others. Wikhamn et al. (2021) described a positive relationship between an employee's work role and strategic participation, forming job satisfaction underneath exploration. The authors felt their results supported the positive connotations of participation, the worker's role, and job satisfaction. Ninaus et al. (2021) assessed job satisfaction could reduce the high burnout factor among employees, which resource management needed to focus on more. The authors' study was applied before and during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and showed both a positive and negative impact on job satisfaction and the burnout factor.

Cheung et al. (2022) assessed a satisfied employee is essential for a healthy and sustainable workforce. The analysis of environmental factors for satisfaction overlooks the influence of personal aspects but explores how and why employee satisfaction happens and what it could mean to them. Adamopoulos et al. (2022) studied the relationships common to job satisfaction and burnout to understand the psychosocial and ergonomic risks. Job satisfaction is associated with high emotional exhaustion and ergonomic and psychosocial risks. Still, it contributes to developing a framework to increase an employee's happiness on the job significantly. Chavadi et al. (2022) described job satisfaction as influenced by personal growth among millennials and is demonstrated in turnover intentions. Millennials have become ready to switch jobs depending on skills and requirements for job satisfaction and careers.

### ***Employee Turnover Using Human Capital Theory***

The human capital theory focuses on using training and education to produce, accumulate, and diffuse to enhance productivity and lead to higher wages (Chanis & Tsamadias, 2022). As human capital theory enhances behavioral, cognitive, and manual capabilities through training and education, poor relations with a person's employees can lead them to feel undervalued and unmotivated therefore leading to poor retention and turnover or separation. Therefore, Chanis and Tsamadias (2022) explained the human capital theory maintains education is productive and has an economic value. Human capital explains one-third of the variation for labor earnings in most and a half of other countries and a high economic return with foundational skills (Deming, 2022). Furthermore, Deming (2022) assessed the highly skilled functions of teamwork and problem-solving were increasingly valuable, and the technology of producing such skills was not understood efficiently enough.

Involuntary or voluntary employee turnover has increased in every industry and remains one of the most troublesome issues companies face (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Stamolampros et al. (2019) described cultural values and general leadership as better predictors of employee satisfaction, but career progression was crucial for employee turnover. If an engaged employee did not progress in their career, they would leave. Furthermore, a negative impact can occur with job satisfaction with employee turnover but positively impact on job performance (Lin & Huang, 2020). Experiencing a negative impact could encourage the employee to perform better with the next opportunity.

Therefore, some employers are working towards retaining their employees through job satisfaction and positive impacts.

Employee turnover is still high and a daily issue for organizations (Jarupathirun & De Gennaro, 2018). Employee turnover can decrease a company's profits and production and a community's tax collections (Skelton et al., 2020). Furthermore, the increasing level of turnover extends to multiple countries, and job satisfaction significantly affects employee turnover (Ekhsan, 2019). The intention of turnover is ambiguous and can reflect employees' attitudes toward their organization (Ngo-Henha, 2018). Work engagement and job satisfaction are two parts of job crafting and intended turnover, where each plays a part in employee intentions (Zhang & Li, 2020).

Cai et al. (2020) described employee turnover as critical for organizations and could have accurate, timely predictions when viewing employees' actions. The authors' study focused on the impact factors for employee turnover and how they affected real-world issues to improve performance prediction of turnover among employees. The accurate predictions could be towards the cause of employee turnover, what could prevent it, and which improvements work best for the problem. Rasheed et al. (2020) discovered turnover intentions related to employee hospitality and career adaptability in their study. Oruh et al. (2020) found in their research employment relationships would lead to intentions of turnover and depth of turnover intention. Their study provided insight into the intention of turnover and a leader's organizational relationship.

Maurer and Qureshi (2021) stated organizations were aiming to increase women inside their workforce and the issues of completing the task of hiring them. The authors

mentioned how the increase of women in the workforce positively affected hiring, leading to decreased turnover. Oh and Chhinzer (2021) stated transformational leadership and turnover intentions had a negative relationship, but turnover intentions and turnover behavior had a positive relationship. The authors found employee turnover and leadership areas required more research to support triggering turnover intentions and the behavior of turnover inside the organization. Chen (2020) described lower employee turnover as connected to job satisfaction, an organization's commitment, factors of leadership, and the employee's working conditions. The author's results offered an influence of leadership factors and how they affected employee turnover.

Amah and Oyetuunde (2020) stated employee turnover is an abysmal problem because the workplace creates issues with leadership behaviors. The authors found servant leadership behaviors could decrease employee turnover and allow the employee to have career growth and voice any concerns for issues that arise. Masood et al. (2020) showed a positive relationship between transformational and transactional styles in a company's organizational behavior. Haider et al. (2020) examined why and how a company's perceptions of politics influence intentions of turnover and the relationship to decreasing job anxiety. The authors found mechanisms in which the perception of a company's politics affected employees' intentions for turnover, which could lead the employee to have anxiety and choose to leave. Scott et al. (2020) found some studies showed the cost of turnover due to burnout in the United States was \$4.3 billion each year, leading to decreased financial advantage for companies. Employee retention is

established throughout the literature and has a financial advantage for hiring and recruitment.

Seih et al. (2020) assessed intentions for turnover had several limitations in terms of self-defense, management, and social desirability, which would result in reduced behavior accuracy. The authors demonstrated in their study employee intention for turnover significantly affected current research on organizational behavior. Harris et al. (2020) explained fair treatment from companies or supervisors for an employee's attitude and behavior required more research. The authors found intention employee turnover stemmed from a focus on perceptions of behavior in workgroups. Lee et al. (2021) understood research related to attitudes and turnover for companies and the consequences of contracting instead of direct hiring over a period of years. The results of the authors' study revealed an increase in employee turnover among companies that contract rather than direct hire employees and the influence on an employee's job satisfaction.

Kumar (2022) stated the human resource department was responsible for retaining and securing necessary talent for development and productivity. Brown et al. (2022) described current and prospective employees were affected by a dual role of an organizational reputation and the public perceptions of the employer along with affiliations with other partner companies. A good reputation results in boosted self-esteem, whereas a negative reputation leads to employees' disassociation, attitude, and self-esteem.

Thompson et al. (2022) found turnover is associated with low satisfaction levels and an adverse outcome of errors and failures. Predicting intentions to leave an



organization would be crucial to reducing turnover, but early identification could lead to mitigating factors of specific interventions that impact employees. Abugre and Acquah (2022) examined the relationship between employee cynicism, employee turnover, and coworker relationships inside an organization. A coworker relationship that was negatively associated led to further employee cynicism, and if it was a more positive association, then employee intention for turnover decreased. Khan and Shahzadi (2022) stated vibrancy and diversity provide employment opportunities inside government institutions and the private sector.

Kaufmann et al. (2022) found employee turnover is a significant concern for a public organization, and ways to keep employees from leaving were required. An effective organizational rule defined by a valid means-end relationship allows employees to have lower turnover intention. Ngqeza and Dhanpat (2022) described citizenship behavior could influence an employee's intention to leave and could lower that intention by using conscientiousness and civic virtue. Courtesy actions and altruism differ from conscientiousness and civic virtue in the ways important to a resource management department and require more standardized tests for turnover prediction. Maertz Jr. et al. (2022) examined reasons for turnover, whether dysfunctional versus functional employees that leave. High performers prefer development or advancement opportunities, which leads to job satisfaction. In contrast, low performers prefer different job tasks because of stress or self-doubt, leading to why an employee chooses to stay or leave, which leads to employee turnover or separation.

### **Transition**

In Section 1, I described the study's background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, research and interview questions, conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations and delimitations, the significance of the study, and the literature review. Section 2 will contain an in-depth discussion of the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and technique, data organization technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity. In Section 3, I will explain the presentation of the findings, application to the practice, implications for social change, recommendations for actions and further research, reflections, and the conclusion.

## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore the strategies aeronautical leaders use for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. The targeted population consisted of eight aeronautical leaders at one manufacturing company in southern California who had successfully developed and implemented strategies for decreasing the separation rate among highly skilled manufacturing employees. The implications for positive social change include potentially benefiting community residents with increased employment opportunities and standards of living. Companies gaining a competitive advantage can lead to the creation of additional jobs, which may lead to opportunities for residents to increase their contributions to their community by spending supplementary disposable income and tax revenues in local economies.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is the main instrument for the data collection process in the study (Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). I was the primary instrument for this study and carried out the data collection and data analysis processes. According to Altamony et al. (2017), a researcher must remain respectful and ethical in a research study and carry ethical respect toward the participants involved in the study while following the interview protocol. I remained open and objective during interviews so that the participants answered the open-ended questions honestly during the data collection process.

I understood the separation of highly skilled and talented manufacturing employees from their companies because I once was a highly skilled and talented manufacturing employee. I am no longer in a manufacturing position but in engineering. I am familiar with manufacturing leaders and the research area because I work alongside them to support manufacturing needs, but I did not know or have any relationship with the participants in this study. Despite my 15 years of experience in the aeronautical industry, I remained actively objective to minimize my biases during the interviews and not anticipate the answers given by the participants.

The researcher's job is to mitigate bias while collecting and analyzing the data (Postholm, 2019). I mitigated bias by not looking at data personally, using my 15 years of experience, and recognizing the views inside the aeronautical industry. The researcher must remain as transparent and ethical as possible in the interviews so the participants can see or feel no misleading or deception (Altamony et al., 2017). I remained objective, did not convey emotions during the interviews, and was ethical so my participants felt comfortable.

The *Belmont Report* was created in 1979 to summarize ethical research principles and guidelines and explain how adherence to them protects human subjects in research studies (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Researchers should protect their participants by adhering to the three research principles and guidelines outlined in the *Belmont Report*: persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The first principle of respect for persons

refers to individuals being treated with respect and being entitled to protection. The second principle is beneficence, which refers to researchers having an obligation to not harm participants, increase possible benefits to participation in a study, and decrease any possible harms to participating. The third principle is justice, defined as treating everyone (i.e., the participants) equally when it comes to their needs, effort, and contributions. As the researcher, I adhered to the three principles and guidelines of the *Belmont Report* by ensuring respect was given to all study participants by listening and not anticipating their answers before given, providing beneficence through my manners and actions to prevent harm during the interviews by maintaining objective behavior and regulating my facial expressions and tone of voice, and using justice so that all participants were treated equally during and after the interviews. Effectively interviewing participants is critical to the research process and preserves the welfare of the interviewee (Navarro et al., 2019).

According to Yin (2018), a researcher who follows an interview protocol can focus more on the research topic while participants have an opportunity to explain their perceptions of the study's phenomenon. Using an interview protocol during the data collection process allowed me to follow the process order, not diverge, proceed systematically, and give the participants time to detail their responses. I gained the interviewees' trust and cooperation by creating a comfortable environment for them to share their experiences and where they did not feel judged for their opinions by having a calming persona and being straightforward about the process. The interview protocol (see Appendix) helped me remain consistent and ask the same, pre-established, open-ended questions of all participants to answer the research question. I only referred to the

participants by code (i.e., P1, P2, etc.) to protect their identities in the stored data, my reports, and throughout the study.

### **Participants**

Steils and Hanine (2019) indicated that choosing participants is challenging in a diverse industry because people are chosen based on their experience level. This study's targeted population consisted of leaders of a single aeronautical company in southern California with more than 2 years of experience and used successful strategies to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees. In addition, I chose the participants from all shifts and manufacturing areas within the study site. Data saturation is the point when a researcher no longer finds new themes for coding and receives repetitive answers from participants (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I interviewed eight participants with 2 years or more experience from the study site organization until I no longer found new themes for the coding.

I used my professional organizational networking to gain access to the participants of the study site. I requested an appointment with the human resource department to ask for their permission to interview leaders from different shifts through an email address gained through networking and my working relationships. Before getting a list of potential participants from the human resources department at the study site, I emailed them a site agreement letter to explain the inclusion criteria for the participants, the informed consent process, and why participants should partake in the study. After receiving approval from the human resources department, I met with the department's director and had them sign the site agreement letter permitting me to

interview the leaders reporting to them and receive any internal company documents related to decreased employee separation. The study site's human resources department provided me with contact information for potential participants. I sent these individuals emails requesting the participation of those who were qualified and interested. The emails also included an informed consent form. I asked the potential participants to review the consent form if they were interested in participating in the study and sign the form with the response of "I consent" if they wanted to take part in the study.

After an individual agreed to participate in the study, I set up an interview time in a physical conference room suitable for both of us. Because I recruited from all shifts and manufacturing areas, the first eight leaders who responded were accepted as participants. Having the interviews onsite allowed for a better working relationship with the interviewees by using an area where they are all comfortable. Once in the conference room with the participant, I discussed the interview process, reiterating that it was voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time. I also explained how the interviews and member checking would be conducted. Interviews can be video or audio recorded, although sometimes the researcher should take written notes (Busetto et al., 2020). I audio-recorded the interviews using a digital iPhone recorder app.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

A research method applies to different studies, and they are categorized as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods (Chu & Ke, 2017). A researcher uses the qualitative method to understand a more complex reality and delve deeper into the

meaning of actions in the current context (Queirós et al., 2017). To answer the research question in this study, I used the qualitative method because I sought to understand the deeper meaning of the actions of aeronautical leaders who are decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage.

Researchers see the qualitative method as valuable because it provides a process to gain answers to questions concerning the *how*, *what*, or *why* of company leadership implementing certain practices and making organizational decisions (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). Using the qualitative method allows a researcher to study the meaning of participants' lives in their real-world roles, represent the views and perspectives of participants, account for real-world conditions, contribute insights regarding concepts for social behavior, and acknowledge the relevance of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2016). I faced multiple challenges in the current study, such as being transparent, being methodic to bring forth completeness for my effort, and adhering to the evidence found.

The quantitative method is used to measure variables and outcomes by developing and testing hypotheses for differences to address the research question (Rahman, 2017). The quantitative method provides insight into materialized dialogues and reality, using statistical data measurements to test hypotheses (Savela, 2018). Casebeer and Verhoef (1997) stated that researchers use the quantitative method to demonstrate normal circumstances under controlled conditions while drawing conclusions through testing hypotheses and variables. The quantitative method would not have answered the research question in the current study because it required in-depth knowledge of the strategies used to answer how and what questions and because I was not measuring variables.



When used by researchers, the quantitative method follows a realist perspective, with little to no attention given to the pragmatist gray area (Yin, 2016). I did not use variables; therefore, the quantitative method was unsuitable for answering the research question.

The mixed-method approach includes both qualitative and quantitative methods to combine the methods' benefits within the same study (Shekhar et al., 2019). Researchers often use the mixed-method approach because combining systematic reviews provides the potential to address complex phenomena and interventions (Hong et al., 2018). Taguchi (2018) posited that combining qualitative and quantitative data within one study may show patterns of change through time and reveal contextual and individual factors that influence the patterns seen. However, despite the advantages that mixed methods give, the approach was not appropriate for the current study because of the inclusion of the quantitative method.

### **Research Design**

I considered ethnographic, phenomenological, and case study designs for the current study. Researchers conduct ethnographic studies for concerns of an entire cultural group in a natural setting that expands on the group's cultural contradictions, complexities, and possibilities of institutional practices over a prolonged period (McGranahan, 2018). A researcher considers the ethnographic design to honor the daily lived complexities of the participants and observe their behaviors to reveal institutional practices to benefit communities of a cultural group (McGranahan, 2018; Ninomiya et al., 2020) and provide details on the aspect of culture to answer the research question (O'Regan et al., 2019). The use of the ethnographic design would not have answered the

research question in the current study because the study was not focused on a cultural group of institutional practices or the behavior of a group.

A researcher uses the phenomenological design to explore the participants' lived experience of the phenomenon (Gangamma, 2018). Larkin et al. (2019) opined that researchers who use phenomenological design within applied research are searching to explore shared perspectives of a single phenomenon of interest. Chan et al. (2020) explained that in a phenomenological study, lived experiences describe the pre-reflective and immediate consciousness of participants' experiences of an event, which are then reflected upon and understood by the participants. This focus would not have answered the research question in the current study, so I did not employ a phenomenological design.

I chose the single-case study design because I intended to answer my research question through a phenomenon using in-depth exploration, knowledge, and implementation of the design chosen for a specific experience within a time frame. The case study design enables a researcher to undertake an intricately detailed and intensive analysis of a phenomenon or situation inside a specific experience and requires multiple sources of evidence (Rashid et al., 2019). A multiple-case study design did not apply to the current study because I only focused on one organization. A researcher achieves data saturation when repeated information is obtained through participant interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I ensured data saturation by answering the research question through meeting the research objectives, applying multiple sources of evidence, carrying out the data collection process using the case study design instead of the ethnographic and

phenomenological designs, and through gathering repetitive information from participant interviews. After the interviews, I continued coding until no new codes or themes were found.

### **Population and Sampling**

The sample size is the number of participants from a given population who meet a researcher's study purpose characteristic requirement for data saturation (Riley et al., 2019). I explored the strategies of a sample population of eight leaders in the aeronautical industry from more than one shift and manufacturing area inside one company who had successfully decreased separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. A researcher should choose their sample size by identifying a minimum number of participants sufficient for the study's research question (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). Hamilton and Finley (2019) used eight participants during their case study; conversely, Mullen et al. (2022) used 15 participants in their study to understand the phenomenon. Based on the sample sizes of these researchers, I used a sample size of eight. Having eight participants who were frontline supervisors from multiple shifts and manufacturing areas allowed me to gather a more in-depth variety of answers that addressed the research question. The face-to-face interviews were held in a conference room on the work site, following company and on-site requirements.

Sampling is both complex and critical to any part of a research study (Luciani et al., 2019). The sampling method I used was purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is when a researcher locates a sample of the population who meet the study criteria and provides detailed information with relevant sources for data collection towards the

phenomenon of interest (Luciani et al., 2019). Data saturation occurs when only the same information continues to be gathered from participants and when the researcher finds no new codes of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I used purposeful sampling to obtain a sample of participants for interviews to obtain information-rich detailed answers from the participants for data collection and to achieve redundant information. However, suppose data saturation is not reachable. In that case, I will return to human resources, ask for more potential candidates, and send out a second invitation for participation for more leaders using successful strategies to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. I interviewed eight participants as needed to reach data saturation. I provided the eligibility criteria to the selected company in southern California and requested a list of prospective participants for the study from the director. The company director provided a list of potential participants, and initial communications with the participants began. I emailed the individual participants, provided a general overview of the study, requested their availability to schedule the interview, and provided the prospective participant with the informed consent form. I explained to the participants how data saturation is achievable in data analysis.

### **Ethical Research**

Confidentiality is required during research to protect participants (Surmiak, 2018). I protected participants through confidentiality by giving them a code name ranging from P1-P8. I did not reveal the name of the organization where the participants work. If there are confidentiality issues, harm to participants may occur and trust between

the researcher and the participants be betrayed (Turcotte-Tremblay & Sween-Cadieux, 2018). Therefore, I maintained confidentiality with the participants. I did not divulge personal identifying information in any manner through communicating verbally or in writing. I protected participants using the three ethical principles of *The Belmont Report*. The collected digital data from the informed consents, interviews, and any internal company documents relating to decreased separation will be stored on a USB drive and kept in a locked cabinet in my house for 5 years, then removed from the USB. I will do this by destroying the data on the USB by deleting the information and reformatting the USB. I will be the only person who has access to the locked cabinet. All hard copies will be included in the locked cabinet, shredded, and then burned after 5 years of the study's completion.

Researchers exhibit ethical conduct and require participants to be aware their participation is voluntary, and they must provide each participant with informed consent to the study (Josephson & Smale, 2020). I had honest, ethical conduct with the participants and informed them of their voluntary consent during the study. Participants need to know that informed consent is a shared process of information between the researcher and participants and the researcher provides them with an understanding of the communicative process, asking for their permission to conduct the research with their input before proceeding with the interview (Dreisinger & Zapolsky, 2018). The informed consent form explained the process to my participants, the voluntary nature of participating in the study, and how their identity is protected. Before conversing with the

participants chosen for the study, I obtained permission from Walden's IRB and retrieved an official approval number for the data collection process: 07-13-23-0728902.

A participant should agree knowingly to participate in the study after explaining the research process (Arifin, 2018). I fully informed participants through email about the data collection process and their voluntary participation. The researcher should explain the withdrawal process to the participant, notifying them that withdrawal can happen anytime, even after signing the informed consent (Arifin, 2018). I informed participants about the withdrawal procedure in the informed consent before the interview began. Also, I informed the participants about the withdrawal process and that they could withdraw anytime. If any participants withdraw from the study, their data collection will not be used. Participants can inform me of their withdrawal during the interview, in an email, or over the phone. Incentives may be used to create a motivating factor to participate in a study, usually a monetary motivator (Hock et al., 2019). I did not use any incentives in the study other than participants knowing they may have benefitted the aeronautical industry to lessen separation rates.

Researchers should develop and apply strategies to show respect and confidentiality toward their participants' sensitive results (Turcotte-Tremblay & Sween-Cadieux, 2018). I created and applied strategies toward respecting the participants and their confidentiality. I used the Microsoft Excel process to code participants' answers corresponding to the P1-P8 I gave them to store their data to ensure their confidentiality.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The researcher is the main data collection instrument (Smith et al., 2020).

Therefore, I was the study's primary instrument to interpret the interview data. The interview protocol in the Appendix was used during the semistructured interviews. Using the interview protocol can assist the researcher in following a structure during interviews to enhance the overall quality of data (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). A researcher uses semistructured interviews to explore the phenomenon with additional time to follow related topics as the interview progresses (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). I used the interview protocol to guide the semistructured interviews to enhance the study's data quality by reminding me to ask all interview questions that answer the research question.

Additionally, the data quality will be enhanced by reminding me of the opportunity to ask clarifying questions to expand on the answers given. A reflective journal assists a student's lifelong learning skills as an effective writing tool (Alt et al., 2021). I used reflective journal notes to record my train of thought throughout the data collection process.

I used member checking after the interview while analyzing data to ensure the interpretation of the answers was accurate, which helped to ensure the study's validity. A researcher uses member checking to maintain validity within their study (Candela, 2019) by allowing the participants to explain if the answers to the interview questions were interpreted accurately (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I conducted member checking by providing the participants with a summary of my interpreted data analysis of the interview questions to validate them correctly, as noted in my journal notes. I gave the

participants 10 calendar days to respond to the request for comments on the summary.

After 10 days, I analyzed any comments received. The comments that amplify or change the findings will be discussed in Section 3 under the Validity section. Therefore, I helped ensure the reliability and validity of my data collection through member checking after the interviews and analysis of the data, as well as multiple sources of evidence through interviews and all internal company documents for decreased employee separation. The director provided me with internal company documents related to decreased separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage for methodological triangulation.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The first two disadvantages to semistructured interviews are they can be challenging to participants and intimidating to the participants; therefore, the participants feel frightened and unenthusiastic about participating (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

The third disadvantage to semistructured interviews is the researcher cannot collect data in open, free conversation from being guided into specific areas (Busetto et al., 2020).

The first advantage is a researcher can collect data by conducting semistructured interviews in a one-on-one capacity (Kyza et al., 2019). The second advantage of semistructured interviews is using open-ended questions with the help of an interview protocol allowing the researcher to include sub-questions (Busetto et al., 2020). The third advantage of semistructured interviews is I can standardize the initial open-ended questions asked using the interview protocol. The interviews are interactive, allowing for



follow-up questions where needed to understand the meaning of the participant's previous answers.

The interview protocol gives the researcher a process to follow and topics to glance at during the interview (Yin, 2018). The interview protocol (see Appendix) for this study provides guidelines on introducing the researcher, information on informed consent and my study's purpose, and includes the six interview questions, and prompts to ask clarifying questions. Following the interview protocol, I gave a closing statement after the questions had been answered. A researcher ensures validity in their study by using member checking (Candela, 2019). After the interviews, I analyzed the data and used member checking with the participants' answers by going back to them with a summary and verifying their answers given.

### **Data Organization Technique**

The researcher should keep track of all data and information papers to collect them in one safe area and store them in a secure area (Sokolova & Savchenko, 2018). I chose that digital data to be stored on a USB drive and kept in a locked cabinet in my house for 5 years after publication; then the USB data will be deleted and reformatted. Any hard copies will be added to the locked cabinet and shredded and burned at the end of 5 years after publication. The journal will be located for 5 years in a locked cabinet, in my house, and then be shredded and burned after published. By participant code in the order of the interviews, I kept notes in a reflective journal to track my understanding of the answers provided and catalog my thoughts. I kept track of everything in a journal that tracks what is on the USB and other notes made during and after the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of coding concepts, locating patterns found in data, and connecting such patterns into themes (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). Interviews are used to transcribe verbiage with behavior annotations relevant to the analysis (Busetto et al., 2020). I transcribed all the interview data in audio to digital format using Microsoft Word software. Researchers using thematic analysis can analyze and identify patterns within data from a study to compile codes and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2023). After transcribing the audio data to digital format, using thematic analysis, I focused on developing the key themes found and interpreted from the interviews, internal company documents for decreased employee separation, data found in the literature and conceptual framework, and the reflective journal notes. The themes were developed by creating and understanding the codes, concepts, and patterns.

The specific steps in developing the themes from all the data undergoing thematic analysis are detailed below. Thematic analysis is where codes are created and grouped into themes and subthemes (Browne et al., 2018). I developed initial codes in Microsoft Excel to record the likeness of the information in the data. A researcher uses mind mapping to arrange codes through ideas or concepts within a diagram (Burgess-Allen & Owen-Smith, 2010). I then used mind mapping to organize those initial codes. Conceptualization of codes against a framework allows a deeper understanding of the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2023). In continuing to use mind mapping, I added information found in the literature and the conceptual framework of Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to the organization of the initial codes to collate patterns of

information. Through mind mapping, I continued to understand the codes' organization and patterns and merge them into themes and subthemes. The arrangement of the patterns enables me to see the themes and subthemes associated with all the data used in the study. The compiled codes and themes allow the researcher to compare likeness or saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

As I am more familiar with Microsoft Excel, I chose to input the answers to the interview questions and notes from the reflective journal into Microsoft Excel and track the themes. I familiarized myself with the data, created the codes, compared the codes together, grouped codes into themes, and reviewed or revised critical themes from the data collected. Data saturation is closely related to thematic analysis and is depicted when the researcher collates repeated information through participant interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I accomplished data saturation when similar data was found when the codes were collated and grouped.

### **Reliability and Validity**

#### **Reliability**

Reliability refers to the accuracy of how a research method applies and implements the concern of the chosen qualitative method and how the method was applied to the study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Rose and Johnson (2020) found reliability and dependability work synonymously in numerous ways to support trustworthiness and methodological processes. Researchers use member checking and methodological triangulation to address the study's dependability. Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability process for the research findings by applying procedures documented and

critiqued during the research process for someone else to follow (Scharp & Sanders, 2018). I ensured dependability within the study by applying my research procedures so that future researchers could rely on the information given as I reached data saturation. I used member checking of my interpretation of the data by presenting it to my participants to verify what was said and used methodological triangulation with company documents. I used reflective journal notes to record my thoughts during the data collection. Qualitative research acquires trustworthiness through credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

### **Validity**

Validity is about the integrity of the context and the appropriate research process to represent data interpretation of findings from the participants' experiences and results (FitzPatrick, 2019). Credibility, transferability, and confirmability are critical for trustworthiness while determining research (Kyngäs et al., 2019).

Credibility is the internal validity rooted in truth from participants' experiences and asks the researcher to develop an articulated confidence level in findings for the phenomenon (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). I found credibility in the participants' experiences as I interpreted the data of the findings. As truth derives from a participant's thoughts on an event, it does not lead to a universal truth but from an in-depth understanding of that person's world interpretation (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). I established credibility within the research study using methodological triangulation and member checking. Methodological triangulation uses multiple methods within a research study to help mitigate biases arising from a single method, requiring more than one data collection, such as observations and

interviews (Noble & Heale, 2019). Methodological triangulation is helpful in data analysis of a research design because it involves multiple data collection methods inside a design (Denzin, 1970). The researcher interprets data and uses triangulation to show how using two or more data collections helps the overall collaboration of the study (Mays & Pope, 2020).

Confirmability addresses the objectivity of neutrality with an interpretation of data by using participants' experiences and excluding any of the researcher's biases (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I obtained confirmability of the study by enhancing the neutrality of my study by interpreting data from participants' experiences with the assistance of reflective journal notes, excluding any of my biases. Methodological triangulation encourages a more profound qualitative research process by applying multiple approaches like in-depth interviews and using multiple data sources (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Using methodological triangulation will assist me with confirmability after the semistructured interviews. I used member checking to confirm and verify the participants' answers by comparing their answers with each other and using methodological triangulation to interpret the data from the collection of documents and the reflective journal notes as multiple data sources.

Transferability is the extent of a study's generalized data to the extent of findings from the study's phenomenon that could apply to other settings or contexts (Williams et al., 2020). Transferability also refers to applicability through thick descriptions of the research process and participants' answers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I detailed and provided an accurate, thick description of the research process through my reflective

journal notes to allow other readers to assess data through descriptions of the research process.

Data saturation is when the researcher receives repeated information through participant interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I achieved data saturation when similar data was repeated from participants. Researchers try to organize data saturation during interviews to provide guidance to determine how many interviews are required (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I continued to have interviews until I achieved data saturation. I requested documentation from the participants' director about decreased employee separation.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, I described the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity. In Section 3, I will discuss the presentation of findings, application of professional practice, implications of social change, my recommendations for action and further research, and my reflections before ending the study with a conclusion.

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

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies aeronautical leaders used to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. The data were collected from eight leaders, identified as P1–P8, from one aeronautical company in southern California. I conducted semistructured interviews that lasted up to 30 minutes, and each participant answered six open-ended questions. Additional study data came from the review of internal company documents to achieve data triangulation. I used Microsoft Word to transcribe audio recordings of the interviews and Microsoft Excel to map the data to find codes to translate into themes. Once no new themes were discovered, I knew I had achieved data saturation. Member checking was used to ensure I had interpreted the participants' answers correctly. I then conducted a thematic analysis to identify themes, concluding that the strategies aeronautical leaders use to decrease the separation rate were good pay, benefits, fair treatment from leadership, and performance with quality of work and training, which factor into Herzberg et al.'s (1959) motivation-hygiene theory.

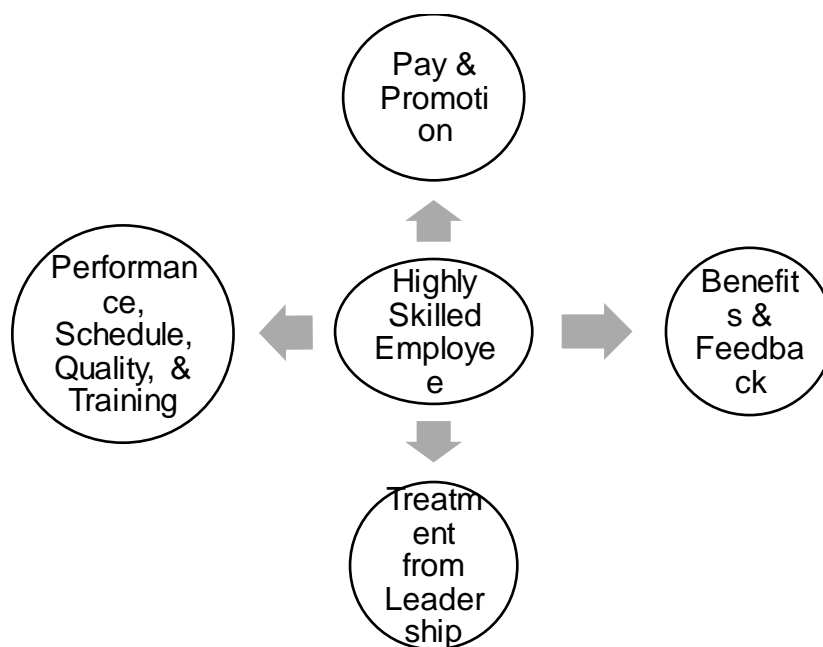
#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question was: What strategies do aeronautical leaders use for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage? Four themes emerged from data analysis. The first theme was connected to an employee's pay, whether it was a promotion, an increase in pay from performance, or compensation through achievement. The second theme was connected to

benefits the employee received for being highly skilled, whether it was feedback for work performed or inclusion. The third theme was connected to how the employee was treated by leadership, including receiving fair treatment from supervisors and peers and a happy work environment. The fourth theme was connected to an employee's overall performance, their quality of work, and the training they received. All themes coexist to create a highly skilled employee (see Figure 1) because one theme cannot be used without the others. Table 1 indicates how all participants responded to the interview questions in relation to the themes. Table 2 displays a comparison of the factors and themes.

**Figure 1**

*Highly Skilled*





**Table 1***Themes Found Through Participants' Answers*

	Interview	Interview	Interview	Interview	Interview	Interview
	Question #1	Question #2	Question #3	Question #4	Question #5	Question #6
P1	1, 4	1, 3	4	4	2, 3	None
P2	1, 2, 3	1, 3	2, 3, 4	3, 4	2, 3, 4	3
P3	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 4	2, 3, 4	3	2, 4	None
P4	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 3, 4	3, 4	3	2, 3, 4	4
P5	1, 4	1, 2	2, 3, 4	3, 4	2, 3, 4	3, 4
P6	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4	3, 4	3, 4	2, 3, 4	3, 4
P7	1, 2	2, 4	3, 4	2, 4	3, 4	3, 4
P8	1, 2	1, 2, 4	2, 3, 4	2	2	None

**Table 2***Comparison Between Factors and Themes*

Herzberg's Factors	Pay and promotion	Benefits and feedback	Treatment from leadership	Performance, schedule, quality, and training
Hygiene				
Supportive company policies		X		X
Relationships		X	X	
Work conditions		X	X	X
Status	X			X
Salary	X			
Security			X	
Supervision		X	X	X
Motivation				
Achievement	X			X
Recognition	X	X	X	X
The work itself	X			X
Responsibility	X	X	X	X
Advancement	X			X
Growth	X	X		X

**Theme 1: Pay and Promotion**

Using a pay-for-performance strategy allows an organization to monitor an employee's motivation and accountability as well as to promote with available resources (Asadi-Aliabadi et al., 2022). The pay-for-performance strategy also makes employees feel appreciated for their work and rewarded for their time (Şahiner et al., 2022). Based on the participants' responses, pay was the number one reason employees left their organization and went elsewhere. Pay is driven by competitiveness among peers in the workplace and effectively decreases gaps in social comparison information (Bear et al., 2023). Competitive pay within the industry can improve one's organization and increase competitive advantage. All eight participants specified pay and promotion as essential reasons employees leave or stay.

All participants agreed that pay and promotion were the highest drivers on whether the employee continued to work for them. P1, P5, and P6 suggested allowing employees to lead themselves and others, creating a cohesive, winning team for success. P2, P3, P4, P7, and P8 described that confidence and performance led to higher pay for the employee and a satisfied worker. The participants' answers to the first and second interview questions aligned with pay and promotion.

P1 reported that as a company, they have strategized to offer Level 4 technician spots with a higher pay band than ever to keep the experienced employees. P2 stated, "I recognize their achievements and milestones." P3 reported that they keep employees engaged, feel they make a difference, and pay them for what they are worth. P4 stated, "We utilize competitive compensation, PTO (paid time off), and job promotions," depending on the skill set.

Theme 1 aligns with Herzberg's dissatisfaction factor of salary/pay, which relates to an employee's physiological needs and includes both a variable and fixed form of payment (Bhatt et al., 2022). Employees consider their pay high on the list of what is necessary to be able to provide for themselves and their families. An employee's pay can also align with status within the workplace. Employees who drive to improve their status take charge of what needs to be accomplished during the workday and become more noticeable and promoted (Xu et al., 2023). When promoted, employees achieve more when noticed and will feel appreciated for their hard work.

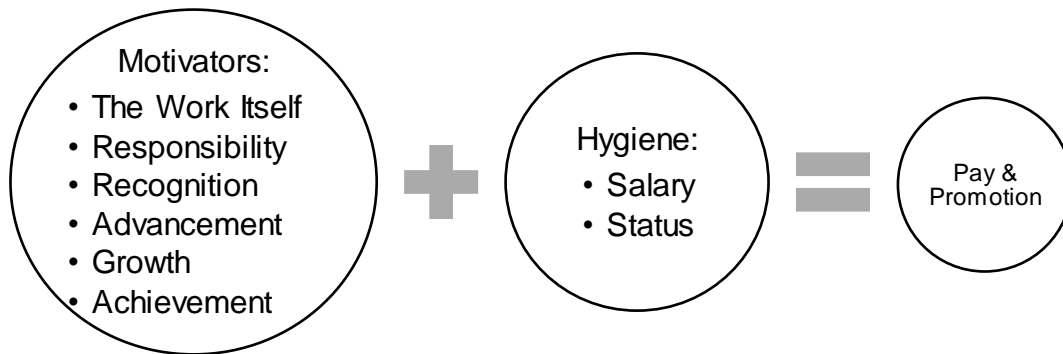
P7 stated,

We adopted a pay-for-performance strategy to allow us to compensate out highly skilled employees at a greater rate than lower-skilled employees. Additionally, these employees are given more complex statements of work that are challenging and support an increased sense of accomplishment. Our highly skilled employees are often identified as our next leaders and are put on developmental plans to help achieve those next steps.

P8 agreed with P7, saying,

Recognition, in today's time, means every person wants to feel appreciated for their work. An employer's gratitude can significantly impact. So, I make sure to thank our direct reports who go the extra mile and explain how their hard work helps the organization.

Theme 1 also connects to Herzberg's motivation factors: the work itself, responsibility, recognition, advancement, growth, and achievement (see Figure 2). Pay or promotion aligns with how employees complete their tasks on time and with quality. The work itself refers to whether the task is challenging and whether it maintains employee interest (Bhatt et al., 2022). According to Bhatt et al. (2022), recognition comes in the form of acknowledgment or praise from leaders, and growth is when promotion opportunities occur. Advancement is described as a positive and upward position or status the employee gains and responsibility factors towards freedom of decisions and gaining the satisfaction of the promotion (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). Peramatzis and Galanakis (2022) stated achievement was complete when the employee successfully finished a difficult task.

**Figure 2***Theme 1 Relation***Theme 2: Benefits and Feedback**

The benefits of being highly skilled can come in different forms, such as opinions of support, inclusion among peers, longevity in the workplace, independence of job duties and decisions, a personal connection with leadership and peers, and constructive feedback (Chugh et al., 2022). Providing feedback can be challenging for leaders if it is not effective (Chugh et al., 2022). Beneficial feedback is critical to an individual's success because the individual takes from that experience and either moves forward or backward because of it. Employees' decisions to stay or leave the organization may depend on benefits and feedback received.

All participants reported that feedback to the employee supported the employee's decision to stay and provided benefits to continue the foundation of employment. P3 and

P6 elaborated that inclusion assisted the employee to continue working at the company and encouraged them to try harder. P2 and P8 concluded recognition also assisted in employees staying at the company, and P3 agreed it adds longevity to the workforce.

P8 reported that one way to measure effectiveness is through the employee experience survey provided to the employees yearly because the survey allows for the implementation of new training and recognition programs to allow for the provision of feedback to the employee. P6 recommended,

Communicate often. Hold the team and individuals accountable. Weed the garden often, as weeds grow in your team, and they only damage a team's growth.

Dealing with issues on time is a big must, and letting bad behavior demotivate the productive ones as the team suffers. Lead by example.

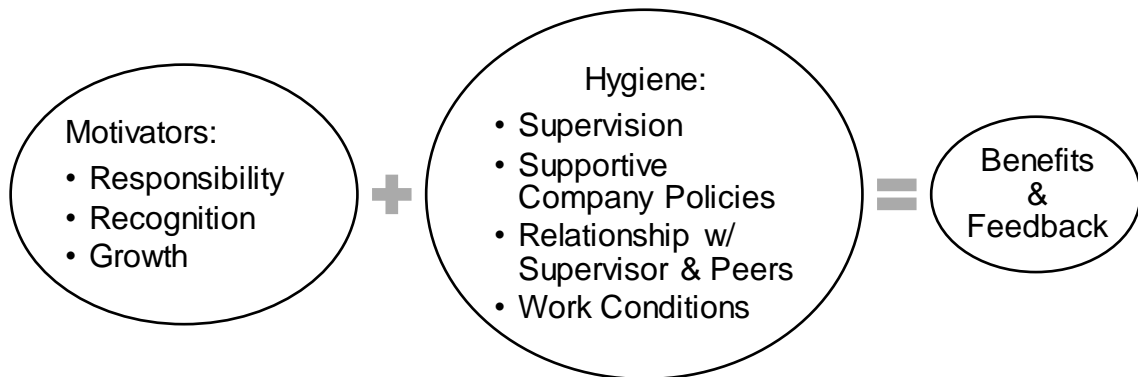
Theme 2 relates to Herzberg's hygiene factors of supervision, supportive company policies, relationship with supervisor and peers, and work conditions. Supervision is when leaders maintain an environment where employees feel gratified (Ihensekien & Joel, 2023). Supportive company policies are an organization's procedures for formally approaching a situation (Bhatt et al., 2022). The relationship with supervisors and peers is the foundation of time spent with coworkers in the work environment (Bhatt et al., 2022). A good relationship goes a long way, whereas a bad relationship can leave deep scars and a hostile work environment. Bhatt et al. (2022) described the work conditions as the environment in which the employee works and should feel safe and comfortable working.

P1 agreed with P8 that the organization should complete a companywide survey to collect attrition data for employee levels, which shows why retaining highly skilled employees is critical. P2 stated, “Employees can use the suggestion box to verbalize any issues they are experiencing, and this allows the leaders to measure an employee’s happiness.”

P3 agreed with P6 in that communication with all employees so as not to single out one group and let employees see that everyone makes a difference. P5 stated,

I use continuous development to understand the areas that can be refined for highly skilled employees. Another focus area is workplace enjoyment, as an employee will look elsewhere if unhappy or frustrated. Making the workplace enjoyable and rewarding helps to retain, to a point.

Theme 2 also supports Herzberg’s motivation factors of growth, recognition, and responsibility (see Figure 3). An employee’s growth implies increased development opportunities concerning recognition and responsibility because recognition makes employees feel appreciated for their efforts on the job, and responsibility comes with new tasks (Bhatt et al., 2022). As an employee becomes more highly skilled in their tasks, growth is achieved in their increased knowledge on the job. A highly skilled employee benefits from all these hygiene and motivational factors inside the work environment and can increase the organization’s competitive advantage.

**Figure 3***Theme 2 Relation***Theme 3: Treatment From Leadership**

How leadership treats employees goes a long way and can also be why the employee leaves or stays with the organization. When employees are unhappy, they tend to look elsewhere for employment where they will be happy. The data collected for this study emphasized how leadership treats employees and was the participants' second reason for employee separation from the organization. Training leaders to use effective leadership advances knowledge and possibilities (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Proper treatment of others can propel employees to feel comfortable and never leave.

P4, P5, P7, and P8 summarized having daily or monthly one-on-one meetings with an employee allows for the fair treatment of employees by leadership and helps employees to grow within their roles. Treatment from leadership is another deciding factor on whether an employee stays or goes or if they are happy. P2, P3, and P4



described conveying a sense of purpose to the employee and communicating the need and support to complete the daily work tasks.

P5 reported that ensuring respect and protecting the employee allows an understanding of their needs and assisting them. P6 agreed with P5 in that staying in touch with the team helps to ensure a balance is effective and working and adjust the needs in the future when necessary. P8 stated,

I give confidence to my employees by giving them a sense of purpose on completing their statement of work and recognizing all the good they do, by utilizing their skills and making sure I follow through with any request they have.

Theme 3 ties into Herzberg's hygiene factors, supervision, relationship with supervisors and peers, security, and work conditions. Ihensekien and Joel (2023) described supervision as allowing employees to feel gratification in their work environment. The relationship with supervisors and peers allows for stress to occur and an environment to coexist, and job security allows an employee to feel secure and stable (Bhatt et al., 2022). The way leadership treats employees should be professional. According to Bhatt et al. (2022), an employee's work conditions are the ergonomic aspect of the environment and the safety of completing the tasks.

P2 reported that they provide incentives to maintain employees and times when human resources can match offers to keep employees from leaving the company. P3 agreed with P2 about giving employees self-worth and making them feel part of the bigger picture. P4 stated, "I think by understanding the needs and goals of an employee and then proactively working to meet those goals with them, and communicating

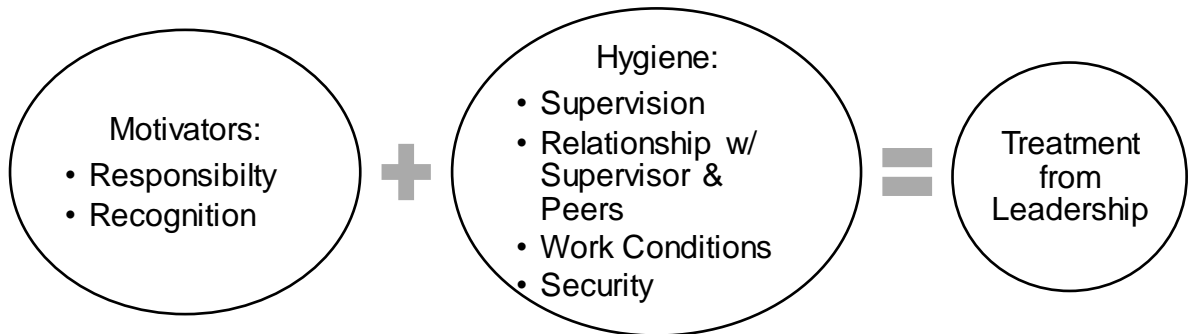
effectively has proven to be successful and rewarding for both the employee and the organization.”

P6 agreed with P5 in similarly stating,

During sit-downs with the employee, paying attention to what they say, to ask good questions, allows them to share what they believe works and does not work.

Keeping an open door policy is critical to finding out how the team feels and fixing issues early.

Theme 3 additionally links with Herzberg’s motivation factors, responsibility, and recognition (see Figure 4). Peramatzis and Galanakis (2022) applied responsibility to give the job authority and provide freedom to make decisions. Bhatt et al. (2022) stated recognition was to praise an employee and acknowledge the quality of work and contribution. Motivation is a powerful tool an organization can use to provide recognition and responsibility to employees.

**Figure 4***Theme 3 Relation***Theme 4: Performance, Schedule, Quality, and Training**

Employee performance indicates quality and a work process significantly impacting the organization (Andreas, 2022). Leaders use schedules to manage a project to completion (Malone, 2023). Quality of work is to complete a task at the highest of standards without mistakes (Karo et al., 2022). Employee training is an investment to become a highly skilled person who can innovate in the workplace (Demirkan et al., 2022). Employee performance, quality, and training relates to an organization's schedule.

P1, P3, P4, P5, and P7 stated they use metrics to help determine schedule and performance. P2, P6, and P8 confirmed the quality of work and training went into metric data to form an all-around foundation for the statement of work performed. All

participants had summarized training as the backbone, and good quality of work and performance led to a concise schedule to be completed on time.

P8 reported that training and development were opportunities for employees to update their skills and, therefore, not inclined to leave. P4 reported that the organization looks to create specialized job classifications, like subject matter experts (SMEs), to retain highly skilled manufacturing employees.

P7 stated,

Highly skilled manufacturing employees are becoming harder to find. So, to help combat this deficiency, it is important to have a strategy that prepares those junior employees to fill your current and future needs. Without a pipeline in place, the variability of attrition will have a greater impact on your organization, decreasing your competitive advantage.

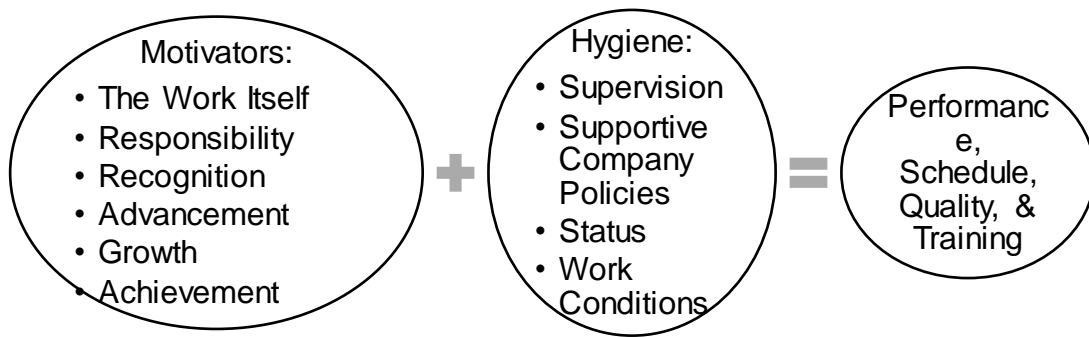
Theme 4 aligns with Herzberg's hygiene factors, supervision, supportive company policies, status, and work conditions. Ihensekien and Joel (2023) stated leaders who supervise where employees feel gratification in a well-maintained environment. Supportive company policies allow employees to flex issues that disrupt daily tasks, and work conditions should not cause disruptions (Bhatt et al., 2022). An employee who has status in the workplace takes charge in proactive behavior while contributing to organizational success (Xu et al., 2023).

P6 reported that one-on-one conversations on personal growth and gaining a personal relationship, not just work-related, can instill trust and build a strong team. P5 agreed with P6 that being transparent and empathic earns respect for the employees and

creates a loyalty bond. This may offset the chase for money and instill longer tenure among employees to stay with the organization.

P4 stated, “I have offered specialized skill training that allows the employee to grow and become a more valuable asset to the organization.” P1 reported that they allow highly skilled employees to have a say in what or how to accomplish their statements of work. P5 reported that making the work area and team a positive and efficient workspace allows highly skilled employees to keep working without interference.

Theme 4 is associated with Herzberg’s motivation factors, the work itself, responsibility, recognition, advancement, growth, and achievement (see Figure 5). The work itself is challenging or exciting to the employee (Bhatt et al., 2022). Employees should find interest in their work to help them stay and continue good quality of work. According to Peramatzis and Galanakis (2022), responsibility is to gain the independence to make choices during daily tasks. A highly skilled employee can make choices independently while completing daily tasks. Recognition from leadership to an employee for completing a complicated task is high praise, and advancement is an upward status position (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). Growth increases new skills to become more knowledgeable and highly skilled; achievement is when a job-related problem is solved, and the results of one’s work are seen (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022).

**Figure 5***Theme 4 Relation*

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The applications towards professional practice bring a comprehensive investigation of how and why the findings are significant to decreasing separation among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. Improved business strategies can create a higher competitive advantage with advantageous performance and innovation, strengthen capability, and mediate the relationship between competitive advantages and business strategies (Farida & Setiawan, 2022). The eight participants emphasized the need to increase the pay for highly skilled employees, offer longevity, provide consistent treatment, and create an environment where quality, performance, training, and schedule operate smoothly. The themes identified in this study can provide organizations with professional practice inside the aeronautical industry and improved strategies to gain a competitive advantage. The research findings may impact

aeronautical leaders' understanding of which strategies work best to gain a competitive advantage while decreasing separation among the highly skilled workforce.

Positive feedback can lead to increased pay or promotion because of completed tasks and goals set by leadership. Implementing enhanced appraisal feedback to employees may result in improved employee performance (Abdikheir et al., 2023). When leaders give beneficial feedback to employees, their motivation increases, and becoming highly skilled benefits them in the long term. Long-term benefits gain competitive advantages for the organization and the employee. Increased pay is a leading factor in why employees stay or leave.

According to findings from Hajiali et al. (2022), an employee's job satisfaction significantly negatively impacts work motivation. Employees feel satisfaction with their work when adequately motivated and given supportive feedback from leadership. If an employee is not treated well by leadership, they begin to look for work elsewhere because no one wants to continue working where appreciation is not given for their efforts.

An employee's performance is a method of their well-being and preservation with the organization's indicator of achievement of goals, which is a vital concern (Andreas, 2022). Employees are the foundation of an organization and need training to perform daily tasks to achieve quality, schedule, and high performance. If one part of the equation falters, then the whole task fails. A task lacks quality without proper training, and the schedule and performance are lost.

The findings from the study provide aeronautical leaders insight into how pay, feedback, treatment, and overall performance may lead to decreased employee separation. Leaders who can increase an employee's pay or promotion may lead the employee to stay where they are. Beneficial feedback and benefits may encourage employees to stay where they are and not leave. Treating employees with respect is required from all leaders in an industry. Improving performance, schedule, quality, and training may improve aeronautical leaders' chances of decreasing employee separation.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The aeronautical industry plays a critical role in the economic welfare of communities as it can provide employment opportunities and stability. Community members may experience positive social change through living standards and contributions via spending disposable income and tax revenues. Increased competitive advantage may allow for additional jobs that benefit all those involved. Employee separation impacts the labor market and businesses in a critical way that requires a leader to understand the choice behind the reason (Lazzari et al., 2022). If aeronautical leaders understand the choice behind why employees leave, it may prevent the community residents from losing contributions and spending income or tax revenues in the local economy.

This qualitative single-case study focused on aeronautical leaders who implemented strategies to decrease separation among highly skilled employees to gain a competitive advantage. To obtain a competitive advantage, aeronautical leaders should create additional jobs, open opportunities for residents to increase their tax revenues, and



contribute to local economies inside their community by spending supplementary disposable income. Increased monies may lead to an improved community of success.

### **Recommendations for Action**

This study's findings may help aeronautical leaders adopt new strategies to decrease separation among their highly skilled employees and, in doing so, gain a competitive advantage. By implementing the strategies used by the participants, other leaders in aeronautical companies or other industries may decrease the separation of employees, improve their competitive advantage, and decrease the financial burdens of training to increase sustainability, productivity, schedule, and quality. I have four recommendations for actions that could improve aeronautical leaders' strategies to decrease separation: (a) pay and promotion; (b) benefits and feedback; (c) treatment from leadership; and (d) performance, schedule, quality, and training.

#### **Improved Pay**

Pay for performance may allow employees to increase their pay through work performance, quality of work, and teamwork to achieve organizational performance (Wood et al., 2023). Leaders may pay employees so they feel fully compensated for their work. When they feel they are paid satisfactorily, they are happier and enjoy going to work to perform their duties. Improved pay also may help the employee to obtain essentials family members or themselves need. Improved pay may increase competitiveness among peers when coworkers are genuine inside an impartial environment (Brookins et al., 2016). When leaders create an impartial competitive

environment, coworkers may improve themselves and their work to increase their overall value.

### **Benefits of Highly Skilled and Feedback for Improvement**

Leaders trained to use contextual behaviors to support employees in feedback on their daily work as it adds reinforcing appraisal (Young & Steelman, 2014). When there is open communication between the supervisor and the employee, then there is a comfortable area for feedback. Daily feedback can let employees know when improvement is required and motivate them to try harder. Some feedback for improvement can induce stress to obtain achievement or pressure to complete a task on time (Hon et al., 2013). Constructive feedback from leaders can make employees feel happy and work towards a goal with minimal stress.

### **Treatment From all Levels of Company Leadership**

Treatment from leaders can lead to different types of psychological feelings, resulting in employees feeling excluded, included, or empowered, which leads employees to know which social identity group they belong to (Shore & Chung, 2022). Leaders need to understand and utilize people skills to treat employees equally and with constructive feedback rather than condescending them to make them feel low. When leaders use condescending skills towards employees, the employee is less likely to perform well. Good communication and treatment provide a better work environment and quality of work for everyone.

### **Employee Performance, Schedule, Quality, and Training**

Employees' motivation drives their performance, affecting objectives, goals, and the organization's schedule, with the employee's quality and training (Shahzadi et al., 2014). The schedule is vital to every organization; therefore, quality and training must be high for each employee. Performance, schedule, quality, and training all work together to complete a task on time. Leaders should take the time to verify all employees have the proper training to perform with quality to meet schedule.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies aeronautical leaders use to decrease the separation rate among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. This study had five limitations: The first limitation is the participants' company internal retention documents may have contained subjective bias. The second limitation is the participants may not represent the aeronautical industry. The third limitation is the interview participants may misinterpret or misrepresent concepts within the questions and provide misleading comments unintentionally or intentionally. The fourth limitation is the participant's self-report responses could have biases due to their interpretation of the study phenomenon. The fifth limitation is the participants may not have disclosed all strategies used to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. These limitations could help future researchers design future research to compensate for these limitations by exploring new strategies for decreasing separation inside the aeronautical industry and other industries. Each industry can adapt

to new and improved strategies to increase pay, behavior, and overall quality of life inside the workplace.

### **Reflections**

When I started college in the summer of 2006, I originally wanted to be a psychiatrist, but I went in a different direction. I spent 3 years at the community college and got two associate degrees and certificates. From 2011 to 2013, I completed my bachelor's degree and, at the graduation ceremony, decided I would go for my master's degree. In 2014, I chose to go for this doctorate when I first started my master's degree. In March 2017, I started this doctorate journey, which has been extended, complex, and with consequences along the way. Had I known the consequences this doctorate was to bring, I would not have put myself through it.

Luckily, I had the support of my Chair, Dr. Kate Andrews, and that made a difference and continued to push me forward. Dr. Kate has worked wonders and motivated me to see this through. Things were even better when Dr. Boyd Johnson joined the team, and progress was on the horizon. The key to a completed journey is great committee members, which Dr. Andrews and Dr. Johnson are.

I minimized my personal biases by not anticipating my participants' answers, and everyone was comfortable with the topic discussed. I have been working in the aeronautical industry for 15 years. I have always been interested in what makes an employee stay or leave this industry. I was inquisitive about this topic and wanted to know leaders' multiple strategies. I appreciate all the participants who agreed to participate in the study. Knowing the successful strategies for decreasing separation

among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage is beneficial in the aeronautical industry. My improved understanding of strategies for decreased separation will continue to help me face challenges in future leadership opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

Determining aeronautical leaders' strategies to decrease the separation rate among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage was an interesting topic as it affects everyone. The findings concluded that pay was the top reason for decreasing separation. When leaders of an organization use pay for performance, it gives employees a chance to receive higher pay based on their work performance and tasks, incentivizing them to be motivated and held accountable (Asadi-Aliabadi, et al., 2022). The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies aeronautical leaders in southern California use to decrease separation among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage. My argument used Herzberg's (1959) motivation-hygiene theory to understand why employees stay or leave their organization. Aeronautical leaders confided in me the successful strategies they used in decreasing separation. The findings from my study show there is an opportunity to improve strategies towards an employee's pay; benefits; treatment from leadership; and performance, schedule, quality, and training.

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### Appendix: The Interview Protocol

Circle one: P1 P2 P3 P4 P5 P6 P7 P8

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **WHAT TO DO & SAY DURING THE INTERVIEW**

Hello and welcome. Thank you for participating in my study and taking time out of your day. I want you to know you and the company you work for will be kept confidential. This interview will be recorded for quality assurance, data transcription for data analysis, and member checking. I will use your answers to explore how aeronautical leaders decrease the separation rate among their manufacturing employees.

Do you have any questions before we start?

[Answer any questions they ask]

1. What strategies do you use for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage? [ask clarifying questions as needed]
2. How has your organization used strategies to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage? [ask clarifying questions as needed]
3. How do you measure the effectiveness of strategies for decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage? [ask clarifying questions as needed]
4. What were the key barriers to implementing the decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage? [ask clarifying questions as needed]
5. How did you overcome any barriers to implementing the decreasing separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees to gain a competitive advantage? [ask clarifying questions as needed]
6. What other information would you like to share regarding strategies that you use to decrease separation rates among highly skilled manufacturing employees in your organization? [ask clarifying questions as needed]

[After the interview is complete, say this] Thank you again for your time and patience. In the coming weeks, I will analyze the data from this interview and would like to send you a summary of the interview results through email. If you are willing, I would like you to review it and verify I included the primary meaning of the information you provided.

Do you have any questions before we leave? [Answer any questions they ask]

Thank you again.