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Employee Retention Plan for a Maryland Nonprofit Organization

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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MS, University of Johns Hopkins

MSc, University of Cologne

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) face many challenges impacting their program implementation and mission accomplishment. CTL is a NPO operating in Maryland. Like many other NPOs, CTL faces an employee retention problem that affects its ability to complete its social activities and benefit the communities it serves. The practice-focused research question of this study was focused on developing strategies and methods to improve employee retention at CTL. This professional administrative study involved exploring strategies and methods to improve employee retention at CTL using a general qualitative method. Herzberg's two-factor theory was the conceptual framework for the study. Data were collected using semi-structured face-to-face interviews. All participants were recruited from CTL. Colaizzi's seven-step strategy is the thematic data analysis method used for data analysis. It limits researchers from using prior experience or knowledge and instead focuses on analyzing collected data, thus increasing the accuracy of results. Findings include humanistic value perspectives of employees regarding job satisfaction, the value of working environments and well-being of employees who work for the nonprofit sector, and the importance of training as a tool for creating growth opportunities. Recommendations include job embeddedness during the recruitment phase, development of a need-based training curriculum, use of theory Y management style and situational-based management types, and a benefits package with options proposed by employees. Positive social change is possible when NPOs are able to recruit and retain skilled and motivated staff.

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Dedication

I dedicate this accomplishment to my lovely wife, Dr. Fatoumata Niagado, who never stops supporting me. I endured challenging moments, juggling school, professional life, and parenting. She never let me down and was always there whenever I needed her. Thank you for being a wonderful wife.

A special dedication to my wonderful children, Borel and Arielle Kembou, who brought light into my life. I dedicate this work to my mother, Jacqueline Manto, siblings, and late father.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

The business environment in the U.S. is experiencing a rapid change that can affect nonprofit organizations' survival. The challenges encountered in the US business environment include the public and funders' high expectations with diverse constituencies, rapidly evolving technology, the economy, and sustainability challenges (Mesch, 2010). These challenges create competition for resources among nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in the public and private sectors. According to Mesch (2010), human capital represents a critical resource that can improve an organization's ability to face various business challenges. The primary problem that nonprofit organizations face in resource acquisition and management is employee retention (Slatten et al., 2020).

I used this qualitative study to explore strategies and methods to improve employee retention at a NPO. NPOs address societal problems by creating public goods that can improve quality of beneficiary constituencies (Slatten et al., 2020). Improvement of the employee retention rate can help NPOs accomplish their missions, which would lead to positive social change.

This section begins with the background and problem statement, where I address NPOs and discuss the problem of employee retention. Next, I describe the study’s purpose before summarizing how data were collected and analyzed. Finally, I discuss the significance of this research and transition to Section 2.

Organization Background and Problem Statement

CTL is a small nonprofit organization operating in the state of Maryland. The organization promotes talent development in underserved youth populations by providing art education and access to resources that may be challenging to acquire. CTL provides services by partnering with schools and youth community groups as well as organizing after-school programs and summer camps. Diverse school-based programs offered by CTL benefit the youth and communities by keeping them engaged in social activities. However, CTL encountered challenges that may affect program implementation. CTL leadership reported that while hiring new staff may be part of the organization's strategy, retaining trained employees has become problematic as many available resources are now directed toward hiring and training. Like many NPOs in the United States, CTL faces employee retention challenges and economic problems. Slatten et al. (2020) argued that nonprofit organizations find it challenging to reach their goals and accomplish their missions when trained staff members constantly leave. According to Selden and Sowa (2015), NPOs have limited budgets that may reduce their ability to acquire new talent and compete with private and other business sectors with better financial situations. One of the reasons trained employees leave organizations shortly after entering their production phase may be limited competitive benefits. Board of directors members have discussed improving benefits, but the project has not been implemented due to budget limitations. Improving benefits may not necessarily improve turnover rates. According to Hayden and Madsen (2008), employees in NPOs have different value perspectives guiding their decisions to stay. To cope with employee departures from the organization, CTL has implemented an ongoing hiring process, which may affect the organization's operations and increase financial constraints. In this qualitative study, I focused on the retention problem at CTL. Addressing employee retention will help the CTL board and executive directors improve the organization’s service delivery and mission accomplishment. Implementing strategies to improve retention rates can increase qualified staff, which is beneficial for service delivery and program implementation (Ojakaa et al., 2014). According to Slatten et al. (2020), Improving retention rates can result in better relationships between supervisors and employees, increasing employee engagement. With qualified, well-trained, and loyal employees, CTL can implement positive social programs and accomplish its mission.

Purpose and Research Question

This general qualitative study involved exploring strategies to improve employee retention at CTL. Employee retention is critical for NPOs’ mission accomplishment (Slatten et al., 2020). CTL constantly invests its limited resources in new employee training, which is less cost-efficient than retaining trained employees. The practice-focused question that guided this qualitative study was: What are primary strategies to include in plans to improve employee retention at CTL?

Summary of Data Sources and Analysis

This professional administrative study involved exploring strategies and methods to address the employee retention problem at CTL. I used a basic qualitative approach as the methodology. According to Patton (2015), qualitative methods can be used to explore a problem in order to find actionable insights that may not be possible to point out using quantitative methods. The qualitative method is used to address how people perceive, understand, and describe an issue or situation. Burkholder et al. (2016) stated that a qualitative method can generate theories explaining a problem’s occurrence in a specific context. To address the retention problem at CTL, I used a qualitative data collection instrument to collect data from CTL employees, including staff at the leadership level. Employees at CTL represent an adequate and appropriate population that can provide firsthand information and data that can help address the retention problem of their organization; therefore, they were the primary data collection source. The collection instrument was a semi-structured face-to-face interview questionnaire. Face-to-face interviews allow for observing participants' body expressions and acquiring additional nonverbal information (Patton, 2015).

I analyzed data using thematic data analysis. For this basic qualitative study, thematic data analysis was used for generation of themes after data collected from CTL employees had been intensively reviewed, organized, and categorized.

Significance

Like many other NPOs, CTL is experiencing challenges in terms of its mission due to the employee retention problem. According to Curtis and O'Connell (2011), human capital and human capital management should be the primary focus of any organization striving to succeed. With limited resources impacting strategy implementation and business operations of NPOs, retaining trained employees can benefit them (Kim, 2014). Methods and strategies resulting from this study will help the CTL board of directors and leadership improve the organization's retention rate, facilitating accomplishment of its mission and contributing to positive social change.

Summary

NPOs may not always accomplish their goals as planned and may have to change their courses of action several times due to environmental challenges they face. One known problem is employee retention, which adversely affects NPOs' overall business operations (Kim, 2014). Employee retention was a problem faced by CTL. In Section 1, I outlined the rationale for conducting this study and its significance. This study will lead to social change via implementation of the program.

In Section 2, I describe the conceptual framework that guided the study and discuss potential factors, strategies, and methods that can be used to address the retention problem at CTL through a literature review of relevant topics.

Section 2: Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature

CTL faces challenges involving employee retention, which affects the organization's business operations and mission accomplishment. I explored methods and strategies to improve employee retention at CTL and facilitate implementation of organizational programs. In this section, I discuss the conceptual framework, topics related to employee retention improvement in the nonprofit sector, and literature review strategies. The section ends with a summary and transition to Section 3.

Literature Search Strategy

Walden University library databases were the primary search engines to search relevant literature. I used the following databases: EBSCOHost, Thoreau, Google Scholar, Google Engines, and ProQuest. I used the following search terms: *nonprofit organizations*, *retention and nonprofit organizations*, *turnover and nonprofit organizations*, *employee motivation and nonprofit organizations*, *Herzberg's theory*, *organization commitment and Maslow pyramid*, *motivation factors*, and *nonprofit organizations*.

While most articles were peer-reviewed within the last 10 years, I used a few seminal sources published prior to 2014. They were nonpeer-reviewed but from credible sources with information that was relevant to the study, such as National Council of Nonprofits and the Internal Revenue Service websites.

Conceptual Framework

According to Dunn et al. (2022), conceptual frameworks are used to explain a specific phenomenon by the relationships between constructs and how they can guide exploration and description of a phenomenon of interest. I aimed to explore methods and strategies to improve employee retention at CTL. Herzberg's two-factor theory was chosen to guide the study. The two-factor theory was first used in 1959 by Herzberg and colleagues after conducting a study to determine factors causing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Galanakis & Peramatzis, 2022). According to Galanakis and Peramatzis (2022), there are two distinct factors influencing employee job satisfaction or dissatisfaction: motivation and hygiene. Because they are embedded in work, motivation factors are called intrinsic factors, whereas hygiene factors are extrinsic because they are external to the job (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Intrinsic Factors

Job responsibilities drive employee attitudes regarding jobs. Intrinsic factors align with employees' values, beliefs, and expectations (Alshmemri et al., 2017). They can positively impact satisfaction without affecting dissatisfaction; therefore, improving them can improve employee performance (Gardner, 1977). Examples of intrinsic factors include job type, opportunities for development, job achievements, and recognition.

Extrinsic Factors

Factors that are external to the job can reduce or prevent dissatisfaction without affecting satisfaction. It may be cost-ineffective for organizations to focus and put effort into improving hygiene factors because they will not increase productivity (Gardner, 1977). Extrinsic factors include salary, regulations and policies, management, and leadership style (see Table 1).

Table 1

Side-by-Side Comparison of Motivation and Hygiene Factors

	Motivation Factors	Hygiene Factors
Absent	The outcome is no satisfaction	The outcome is dissatisfaction
Present	The outcome is satisfaction	The outcome is no dissatisfaction
Herzberg described	Intrinsic in the job	Extrinsic to the job
Important to job satisfaction	Strong	Poor

Note. From “Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory” by M. Alshmemri, L. Shahwan-Akl, and P. Maude, 2017, *Life Science Journal*, *14*(5), pp. 12–16. http://doi.org/:10.7537/marslsj140517.03.

Application of Herberg’s Two-Factor Theory

Hayden and Madsen (2008) showed motivation increases job satisfaction and can be used to increase competitive advantage.

Treuren and Frankish (2014) defined client embeddedness as an intrinsic factor that reflects more employee-organization attachment than employee-job attachment. Employees at nonprofit organizations value intrinsic factors more than extrinsic factors. By increasing attachment to organizations, client embeddedness reduces intention to leave, which improves employee retention.

According to Thant and Chang (2020), factors influencing satisfaction among Myanar government employees include job and interpersonal relationships, whereas work conditions and supervision influence dissatisfaction.

Hammonds (2017) suggested that communications between school leaders and teachers, as well as teachers and parents, could be a positive strategy for reducing teacher turnover and improving retention in elementary schools.

Rationale for Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

I explored methods and strategies to improve the employee retention rate at CTL. Previous quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted using Herzberg's two-factor theory with quantitative and qualitative methods. The theory is used to understand factors that can motivate employees to stay or leave (Galanakis & Peramatzis, 2022). Data were collected in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. This led to insights regarding motivation at CTL and served as the basis for developing strategies and methods to minimize employee time spent thinking about leaving or looking for other opportunities while working at CTL. The theory was used for assessing the possibility of employees looking for internal opportunities at CTL and staying engaged in the organization's operations. Herzberg's two-factor theory was the appropriate choice for this study.

Literature Review

It was in the late 1960s that NPOs started with the involvement of the U.S. government (Muslic, 2017). Introduction of the Tax Reform Act in 1969 with the 501(c)3 provision in the Internal Revenue Code marked the turning point in creating NPOs in the United States of America (Muslic, 2017). Muslic (2017) noted that the 501(c)3 provision provides tax-exempt status to organizations meeting the criteria of providing services or products for social good without seeking profit as the primary purpose. However, providing goods and services for social ends with no focus on making a profit may have been the foundation of challenges NPOs face today. One of those challenges is employee retention, which was the primary focus of this professional administrative study. Financial limitations of the nonprofit sector make it challenging for NPOs to attract and retain qualified staff who tend to consider employment with for-profit organizations with more financial capability or the public sector with more job security (Selden & Sowa, 2015).

Factors that Influence Employee Retention

Work Location

The location where the employee works may play a role in the decision to stay or leave the organization. Ling et al. (2022) showed that working in the office to provide support and functional work had a different impact on retention than working on-site. Employees working on the site tend to stay longer with the organization than employees working in the office. While the study focused on the construction industry to assess the effect of work location on retention, the result could be translated to nonprofit organizations implementing social programs that require fieldwork. The client organization for this professional administrative study performs fieldwork as part of its program implementation activities; therefore, the work location may impact retention at the organization. Ling et al. also noted that compensation had different effects on retention based on the location, with field employees less sensitive to compensation than office-based employees. One explanation of the difference that compensation has on the two employee groups could be that field employees seem to understand that the nature of their work would not differ much from one organization to the other and that the reward tends to be similar in the same industry. In contrast, office-based employees understand that their training would allow them to seek job enrichment with different responsibilities, a working environment, and different industries. The different perceptions of their values and jobs can lead to different approaches to committing to the organization.

Employee Attachment

Employee attachment relates to the employee's commitment by distinguishing the endpoint of the commitment (Treuren & Frankish, 2014). While one can argue that commitment is an intrinsic job factor, understanding the commitment orientation of an employee can facilitate the determination of an adequate retention strategy. Employees who understand the value of their work and the social impact of it tend to be more attached to the organization that offers them the opportunity to perform the job; however, the commitment to the job may not lead to an organization’s attachment if the employee does not have the sense of receiving enough recognition from the organization leadership and that the social representation of the work does not align with that of the employee (Treuren & Frankish, 2014). Treuren and Frankish also found that employees who are committed and attached to the organization tend to think less about leaving than those who are committed to their work without being attached to the organization.

Values and Culture

Values and culture can influence people’s ability to make personal or professional decisions. Understanding how employees define and perceive job satisfaction may help nonprofit leaders design a human capital management technique or strategy to improve their organizations' recruitment and retention. According to Hayden and Madsen (2008), three distinct value perspectives should be considered when evaluating the impact of value on the intention to stay or leave a nonprofit organization. The three value perspectives include the collective, the humanistic, and the individual. An employee with a collective value would find job satisfaction in teamwork and the outcomes thereof, whereas humanistic values provide job satisfaction in making a difference by serving the public. For employees with individual values perspectives, job satisfaction is found in the position and the individual growth potential of the job. As per Hayden and Madsen, these three perspectives are critical for employee management in public and nonprofit sectors.

Demographic Factors

According to Kovic and Hansli (2018), a few demographic factors can influence employees' attitudes toward an organization and the decision to leave or stay. Demographic factors influencing attitudes toward nonprofit organizations include education level, age, religious beliefs, gender, and political orientation. Hayden and Madsen (2008) argued that younger employees with advanced degrees tend to look for new challenges and higher positions frequently and, thus, may not be as reliable for retention as older employees with lower education levels. In a study conducted by Kovic and Hansli (2018), the researchers assessed the differences in attitudes toward nonprofit organizations between millennials, baby boomers, and Generation X. They found that generations have different value perceptions and definitions of job satisfaction. According to Mohsen (2016), Generation X people were born between 1965 and 1979.

They value the work-life balance with less significance to authority. They are reluctant to commit to a job as life outside the work environment influences their decision to stay or leave an organization. On the other hand, Millennials (Generation Y) were born between 1980 and 1999 and are more committed to their work if it allows them to contribute to society positively. They invest more in their education than Generation X and value collaboration at work.

Retention Strategies in Nonprofit Organizations

Management Style

A manager's style can influence the organization's climate, the relationship between managers and employees, and program implementation strategies (O’Leary, 2010). O’Leary noted that McGregor's theories X and Y (1960) could impact managers' attitudes toward employees, thus influencing their relationships. Theory X posits that people are inclined to avoid work and constantly look for reasons to justify their incompetency. Managers following theory X tend to micromanage their staff, which may create an unpleasant working environment (O’Leary, 2010). Theory Y, conversely, stipulates that employees are self-motivated, able, and capable of performing their work with minimum oversight. Therefore, they do not need to be micromanaged and are encouraged to participate in the organization's strategy implementation. O’Leary also mentioned that the methods managers choose to implement and accomplish the organization’s objectives depend on the management style and philosophy of the managers. While theory X style promotes an exclusive working environment, theory Y encourages an inclusive working environment. An inclusive working environment can improve interpersonal relationships within an organization, thus promoting employee retention.

Job Embeddedness

Ma et al. (2018) defined job embeddedness as the forces preventing people from leaving their jobs. Increasing job embeddedness can result in improved employee retention. Job embeddedness comprises three dimensions that need to be considered when using this strategy for retention (Ma et al., 2018).

Fit

Ma et al. (2018) define fit as an employee's natural connection with the organization's culture, values, and mission. This dimension of job embeddedness can be enhanced by implementing judgment tests with different scenarios during the hiring process, involving employees in the organization's strategic planning process, and improving communication.

Links

Ma et al. (2018) refer to links as the connections between an employee and the organization. Employees who have established connections with their colleagues and communities may find it challenging to leave the organization, even when job dissatisfaction exists. Employee referral for hiring or frequent professional and non-professional outings can help improve this dimension of job embeddedness.

Sacrifice

Ma et al. (2018) defines this dimension of job embeddedness as benefits and perceived benefits that employees will have to forgo if they decide to leave the organization. For example, social prestige from the organization's well-established name and the competitive salary can make it difficult for an employee to leave when these are part of their definition of job satisfaction. Flexible work hours, different benefit options, and support for continuous education are strategies that can improve the sacrifice dimension of job embeddedness.

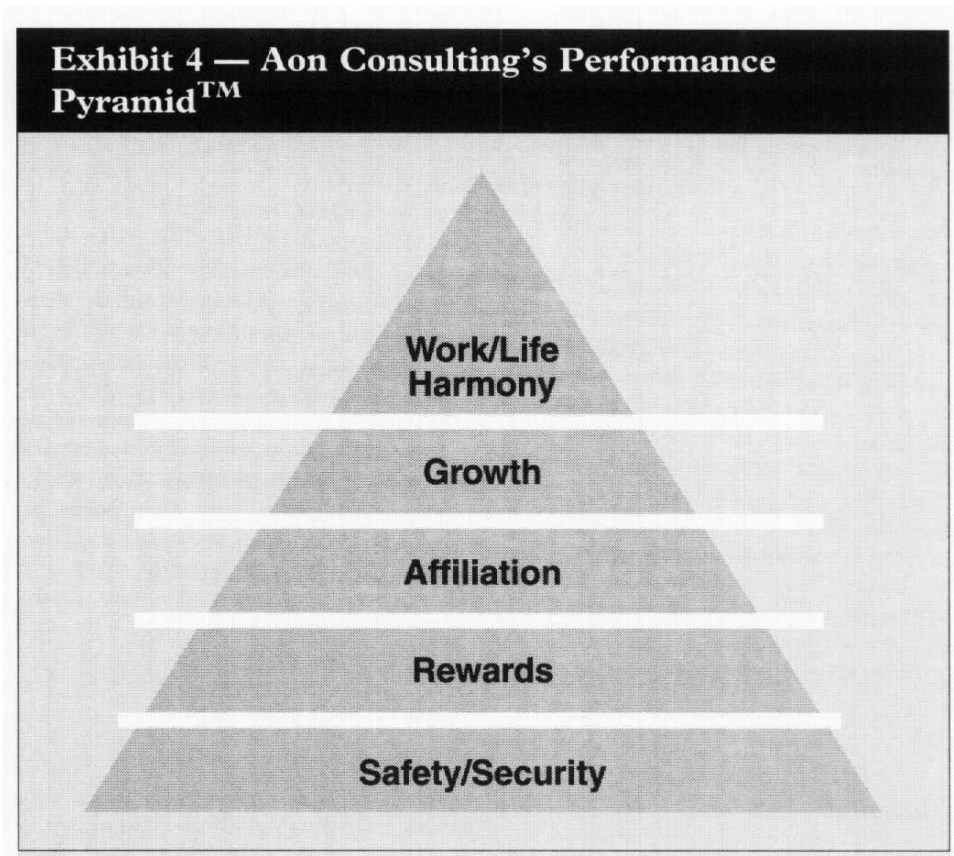
Employees who develop an attachment to the job are more likely to stay than those who do not (Ma et al., 2018). Job embeddedness can help improve employee retention in an organization.

Development and Training

One critical responsibility of Human Resource Management is employee training and development, which is part of an organization's strategic planning and implementation (Miric & Slavkovic, 2023). Employees perceived training as a strategy to acquire the necessary skills for job advancement opportunities (Fletcher et al., 2018). However, training and development for retention should be tailored to meet employee professional and personal needs to be effective. According to Mokoka et al. (2011), designing a training curriculum without considering how it would help employees move up to their next level of needs or professional advancement will have little to no effect on retention. Maslow's pyramid of needs is one tool that can help design an effective training curriculum. The pyramid outlines the social level of needs and can be used for training improvement targets. Stum (2001) published a side-by-side comparison of how the Maslow motivation pyramid can help develop a training curriculum to help employees reach their highest level of satisfaction. The depiction below shows that the self-actualization of the Maslow pyramid of needs, where people have the sense of having achieved an advanced level of societal needs, is comparable to the highest level of professional need, where employees are in a state of harmony between work and life and ready to help others improve. This tool can help managers design training materials to help employees move effectively toward their personal and professional satisfaction.

Figure 1

Modified Maslow Pyramid for Professional Growth



Note. From "Maslow Revisited: Building the Employee Commitment Pyramid" by D. L. Stum, 2001, *Strategy & Leadership*, *29*(4), 2001, pp. 4–9. (http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10878570110400053).

Summary

I explored possible strategies and methods to improve employee retention at CTL. In Section 2, I described the conceptual framework that guided the study. Also, an in-depth literature review was conducted to understand factors influencing employees' decisions to stay or leave jobs and strategies that were previously used to improve retention. In Section 3, I describe the methodology, including data collection and analysis

.

Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

Like many NPOs in the United States, CTL faces employee retention challenges and economic problems. Slatten et al. (2020) argued that NPOs find reaching their goals and accomplishing their missions challenging when trained staff constantly leave. According to Selden and Sowa (2015), NPOs have limited budgets, which may reduce their ability to acquire new talent and compete with private and other business sectors in better financial situations. The limited ability to recruit and retain qualified employees may cause NPOs to provide quality services that lead to positive social change (Kim, 2014). In this qualitative study, I focused on the retention problem at CTL. I explored strategies to improve employee retention at CTL.

I discuss my role before describing the methodology. Data analysis strategies, trustworthiness issues, and ethical considerations are discussed.

Practice-Focused Research Question and Research Design

Research Question

To address the gap in practice at CTL, the following practice-focus question was used: What are primary strategies to include in a plan to improve employee retention at CTL?

CTL is an NPO that experiences limitations in terms of implementing its programs for social good. Part of the challenge was that qualified and trained employees constantly left the organization, which led to significant time spent hiring and training new staff. I recommended strategies and methods that the CTL board of directors and leadership can implement to improve employee retention at the organization. According to Curtis and O’Connell (2011), organizations that intend to accomplish their goals should focus on improving human capital management.

Qualitative Research Tradition

I used a basic qualitative approach as the methodology to answer the practice-focused research question. According to Patton (2015), the qualitative method is appropriate for exploring actionable insights regarding a problem. The method was used to describe how people perceive and understand a problem in a particular context (Burkholder et al., 2016). The general qualitative approach was chosen for thematic analysis. According to Patton (2015), the results of qualitative data analysis may be misleading if the analysis method does not align with the selected approach. The quantitative method was not chosen for this study because it involves examining or measuring relationships between a phenomenon of interest and specific variables. The mixed methods design, which includes qualitative and quantitative components, was also not selected for this study because the practice-focused research question does not necessitate quantitative analysis. I aimed to explore strategies and methods to improve retention at CTL by generating explanations and theories instead of measuring relationships between variables. Therefore, the qualitative method was the appropriate choice.

Roles of the Researcher and Client Organization

According to Creswell (2014), researchers in qualitative studies are data collection instruments. To minimize bias and incorrect result interpretation, researchers should describe possible social factors and the nature of their relationships with participants (Creswell, 2014). I was an observer-participant because of my interaction with participants during face-to-face interviews. I have an education and professional business administration and management background that could influence data interpretation when analyzing collected data. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that researcher beliefs, experiences, and views can impact objectivity during data analysis. Keeping a high level of neutrality and integrity is crucial for the quality of qualitative analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I recorded all interviews via audio and generated journal notes immediately after the completion of interviews to reduce the possibility of losing critical information from observations during interviews. I avoided making gestures during interviews that could potentially influence answers from participants.

CTL provided participants for the study. I had no relationship with participants or the client organization, and no existing power differential could have influenced participants' recruitment. A power differential is a constraint or obligation in a relationship that influences the behavior of at least one partner (Gibson et al., 2014). For example, if I donated to CTL, the donation may be considered a factor constraining CTL in providing participants who may feel obligated to participate. I never donated to the client organization, nor had I generated any of their profits; therefore, participants were free to participate in interviews on behalf of their organization. I worked directly with CTL leadership to gain access to participants whose participation was voluntary. No incentive was offered to recruit participants.

Research Methodology

All participants were selected from the client organization that served as the primary recruitment source. All participants were employees of CTL and were fluent in English. I used a non-probabilistic purposive sampling strategy to focus on participants who met the requirements. In addition to the purposive sampling strategy, sampling homogeneity was considered. Sampling homogeneity reduces variations in participant selection criteria, increasing study accuracy (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument was semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This type of interview is used for in-depth exploration of people’s perceptions and views regarding a question of interest (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Semi-structured open-ended questions capture information for desired areas of interest so participants can express their views openly with no restrictions (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

Interview questions were designed to focus on the problem at CTL, helping establish the collection instrument's internal validity. External validity was assessed by evaluating previous retention strategies using Herzberg’s two-factor theory.

The conceptual framework guided data collection, and questions were defined to capture information separately. Herzberg’s theory has two dimensions: motivation and hygiene factors. The first part of the interview included the following interview questions:

1. Please describe your perception and definition of job satisfaction.

2. Please describe your view of public service and your decision to work in the nonprofit sector.
3. How would you assess the role of training in a nonprofit organization?
4. How would you describe why people change their job or organization? (Possible follow-up on topics like management style, lack of training, and growth opportunities, if mentioned by the participants)

The second part of the interview was focused on hygiene factors as follows:

1. How would you describe job dissatisfaction?
2. Please can you describe some examples of factors that can reduce dissatisfaction.
3. What are some reasons why people refer other people to work with an organization that they have left?
4. How do you see and describe the role of benefit in people's decision to stay at their job position?
5. Please name a few benefits that seem valuable.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment and Sample Size

I interacted with one of the executive members of CTL, who helped distribute the consent form and facilitated access to the organization's employees willing to participate in the study. The saturation point defines the number of participants when additional participants provide no additional information. The saturation point is the primary determinant of qualitative study sample size (Saunders et al., 2017). However, the saturation point for this study could not be reached due to the low participation of employees. Given the homogeneity and convenience of the selection source, an estimate of five participants was expected to reach the saturation point. According to Mason (2010), 5–25 participants can be enough for data saturation in a qualitative study with phenomenological or other approaches.

Data Collection Procedure

The practice research question was addressed using the conceptual framework. The interview questions were designed to focus on each of the two dimensions of the conceptual framework. Participants were recruited using email invitations. I received the employees' contact from the person of contact designed for this study by the organization’s president and the leadership. Appendix B shows the email content approved by IRB. I collected data at a frequency, time, and place convenient to the participants. The interview session was audiotaped and lasted 23 to 38 minutes. Journal notes were generated immediately after each interview and used with the audiotape during the data analysis. The face-to-face interview was virtually at the participant's convenience. I created an enjoyable social environment to facilitate the participant's trust and increase the accuracy of the answers. Opdenakker (2006) noted that a relaxed environment can improve participant interview engagement.

Data Analysis Plan

Colaizzi’s seven-step strategy (1978) is a thematic data analysis approach used to analyze the data collected for this study (Colaizzi, 1978). Thematic analysis is used for systematic qualitative data analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Colaizzi’s seven-step strategy is a data analysis framework that limits the researcher from using prior experience or knowledge and instead focuses on analyzing the data, increasing the results' accuracy (Morrow et al., 2015). The seven steps of this analysis method include 1) data content familiarization, where the researcher reads the collected information many times; 2) significant information identification; and 3) meaning formulation, where the bracketing applies. Bracketing is a strategy where all prior knowledge and experience of the topic are put aside, and the meaning is formed solely from the context of the data being analyzed to reduce researcher bias (Nowell et al., 2017). 4) in step 4, clustered statements are generated. 5) from the clustered statements, categories are created. 6) the categories created in step 5 are used to generate themes that reflect the answers provided by the participants and their association with the research question. 7) The final step involves validating the results and reviewing the process for possible bias. Coding techniques were used during this analysis strategy to generate categories and themes. Coding is a data review process where similarities and differences in data are grouped to be ultimately arranged into categories that will evolve into themes reflecting the fundamental description of the topic of interest (Saldaña, 2016). Word Deduce 1.3 was planned to arrange and organize data during coding. Deduce is a software that uses deduction strategies to explain the meaning and the relationship between sentences input by a researcher. While Bergin (2011) noted that manual coding is appropriate for small-scale data, qualitative data analysis software is more appropriate for large-scale data. Deduce is a modern software designed with programs that can be used for any qualitative data, regardless of the size. The analyzed data were shared with the doctoral chair and the committee member for review.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The credibility of a qualitative study comes from the accuracy of its findings, which in turn depends on the reliability of the data source (Creswell, 2014). This study used a purposive sampling method from the same source, the client organization, thus increasing the reliability of the data source—also, the data analysis method aligned with the nature of the study. According to Patton (2015), the results of a qualitative study can have increased credibility when the collected data are analyzed using the appropriate method. The participants can review the themes or categories obtained from their interview response analysis if they wish to do so. This strategy, called member check, can be used by qualitative researchers to increase the credibility of their findings (Creswell, 2014). The chair and the committee member reviewed the results and findings to identify discrepancies.

Transferability

Transferability defines the possibility of replicating the study findings outside the study setting (Shenton, 2004). The method chosen to address this study's practice question aligned with the study design, and a detailed description was provided. A detailed description of the study design and methodology can provide the necessary information to replicate a study design (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Dependability indicates the reliability of the data collection instruments and analysis method (Shenton, 2004). The generation of consistent results from data collected at different times with the same instrument reflects the dependability of a qualitative study (Burkholder et al., 2016). The data collection instrument for this study was a semi-structured interview questionnaire used for a convenient sample. The data can be collected at any time at the same organization with the expectation of little to no variation in the results, thus maintaining the dependability of trustworthiness.

Confirmability

The quality assurance that protects the collected data from researcher bias during the analysis and ensures that findings reflect the accuracy of the participants' understanding or perception of the topic of interest defines conformability (Shenton, 2004). The bracketing strategy embedded in the data analysis method helped reduce the researcher's bias. Creswell (2014) noted that researchers can improve the quality of their findings by citing potential bias. The role of the researcher has been discussed, and all potential biases, including the power differential, were mentioned. The design alignment of this study helped maintain the confirmability of the trustworthiness.

Ethical Procedures

No contact was made with the participants at the client organization before the official approval from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained. Any contact with the participants before the IRB approval was considered a violation of Walden University's ethical behavior and may have been subject to disciplinary actions according to the University's policies. The client organization agreement was provided to the IRB to show that the organization authorized participant access. The participants received and were asked to sign a consent form to demonstrate their voluntary willingness to participate in the study. The IRB-approved consent form is attached as Appendix B. Participants were advised of their right to cancel or stop the interview during the process without providing any explanation or risking retaliation from their organization's leadership. No document reviewed and approved by IRB was changed after IRB approval. Participants were also advised about confidentiality when sharing the recommendations with the organization's leadership. Data were collected anonymously without the use of any personally identifiable information. I completed the training for Human Subjects in research recommended by the University and provided the certificate of completion. Collected data are stored in a saved and secured location for at least five years, after which the data can be safely disposed of. Access to data is limited to the doctoral committee and IRB until disposition at the end of the five years.

Summary

The qualitative method was selected to address the practice-focused question and client organization problem. In-depth qualitative interviews were used to collect data from participants. This analysis method has an embedded bracketing strategy that helps reduce potential researcher bias, thus increasing the study’s trustworthiness. This chapter included a discussion of ethical considerations. Results and recommendations for improving employee retention at CTL are discussed in Section 4.

Section 4: Results and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies that can be used to improve employee retention at CTL. According to Slatten et al. (2020), NPOs can increase their chance of accomplishing their mission by improving employee retention rates. CTL has an ongoing hiring process, which may reduce or limit the management team’s ability to focus on program implementation, instead investing much time in new employee training and onboarding process. Organizations with low employee retention rates may be less cost-efficient than those with high or consistent employee retention rates (Kim, 2014).

The practice-focused question that guided this general qualitative study was: What are the primary strategies to include in a plan to improve employee retention at CTL? After conducting the study, leadership and management teams were provided with a formal document outlining a plan to improve employee retention at CTL. This section includes discussions of data collection procedures before discussing data analysis. Findings, deliverables, and recommendations follow, preceding a discussion about evidence of trustworthiness. The section ends with a summary after addressing the strengths and limitations of the study.

Data Collection

The population of interest in this study was CTL employees. CTL is a small NPO. I interviewed a total of three employees, of which one was full-time, and the other two were part-time. participants who volunteered to be interviewed were all females from a pool of less than ten possible employees who could be interviewed. P1 (participant 1) was a member of the leadership team and board of directors, and P2 and P3 were regular staff with no supervisory or leadership responsibilities. Participants' ages were not collected during interviews as this information was irrelevant to the study. However, situational management based on generation or age group could benefit CTL regarding employee satisfaction.

Data were collected via face-to-face interviews using Microsoft Teams. Interviews were scheduled at participants’ convenience, mainly in the early morning when they arrived at their office and before they started to work—the average time for interviews ranged from 23 to 38 minutes. There were no issues with recordings, and no participant skipped any questions. All participants confirmed reading the consent forms and were willing to be interviewed before they started. The first interview was completed on March 29, 2024. The second was conducted on April 4, 2024, and the third was conducted on May 4, 2024.

Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder for conferences from SONY (model ICD-UX560) and my cell phone, which is protected with a passcode. I also took notes during interviews using block notes. I added more notes after each interview to capture participants’ body language and gestures during interviews. Recorded data were transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word for analysis.

Data Analysis

Herzberg’s two-factor theory was the conceptual framework for the study. I designed interview questions using the theory to address motivation and hygiene factors. Part 1 of interviews focused on motivation factors during questions 1 through 4. Part 2 of interviews focused on hygiene factors during questions 5 through 9. I organized data into two groups to capture similarities and differences. Deduce was initially planned to extract meaning from data. However, due to the minimal size of data, a manual coding process was performed. I then read answers for each question multiple times and extracted significant statements. Extracted significant statements were used to generate codes. Generated codes were then used to formulate categories (see Table 2).

Table 2

Sample Category for Motivation Factor

Statement for Question 1	Formulated Meaning	Category
"Job satisfaction prevents burnout."	The participant is satisfied with a job when they are not overloaded.	
"Having a supervisor who understands your mental capacity."	The participant is satisfied when the supervisor understands the participant's limits and assigns tasks accordingly.	Wellbeing
"It could be how connected people are at that place, how safe they feel at that place."	The participant is satisfied with a job when the working environment is favorable.	

I used the same process to generate categories for remaining motivation and hygiene factors. Categories were grouped to generate themes (see Table 3).

Table 3

Emerging Themes

Herzberg Theory Factor	Categories	Emerging Themes
Motivation	Well-being Social Good	Humanistic value perspective
	Knowledge and skills Work environment	Support system
Hygiene	Low esteem from others Lack of leadership Respect Unequitable compensation Trust of others	Undervalued employee effort
	Working environment Generation based needs Well-being benefits	Organization culture and structure

Discussion of the Results for Motivation Factors

The motivation factors part of the Herzberg theory was assessed with questions 1–4.

The initial question 1 was asked to capture the participants' perceptions of job satisfaction. The participants' responses formed the basis for how the remaining responses to the questions for this part could be interpreted. The perception of job satisfaction can help identify discrepancies in participants' answers. P1 said, "something that aligns with your passion or purpose." P2 said, "job satisfaction prevents burnout.", "having a supervisor who understands your mental capacity" (P2), "could be how connected people are at that place" (P3) "how safe they feel at that place" (P3). The participants' answers here reflected how participants perceived job satisfaction with well-being value.

Question 2 was asked to understand the values perspective of the participants as related to public service. People's perspective on job satisfaction may influence their decision to work or stay in the public or private sector (Hayden & Madsen, 2008). A sample of the participant's responses include “Public service is work that focuses on the large community, something that affects almost us all” (P1), “public service is for human beings, and less about monetary gain and anything else.” (P1), “I fell attracted to work in NPO, like to go to underserved community because it means so much to me.” (P2), “People working to make a difference almost at lowest level.” (P3). For this question, the answers indicate that participants value serving others and supporting underserved populations, which defines a humanistic value related to job satisfaction as defined by Hayden and Madsen.

Question 3 was asked to assess the role of training as a motivational factor in non-profit organizations. Some answers include “you are always refreshed and renewed over the skills that you are supposed to have, provides new ways of doing things” (P1), “assessing if they are getting the knowledge” (P2), “expose to a different type of avenues.” (P2), “It is very important to be able to perform your job well.” (P3). The participants see training as a tool to improve access to job opportunities and growth in non-profit organizations.

Question 4 (Possible follow-up on topics like management style, lack of training, and growth opportunities, if mentioned by the participants) was asked to reassess and probe the participant's answers to question 2, where the value perspective was captured. Any discrepancies between the participants’ perception of job satisfaction and their intrinsic motivations were expected to be captured with this question. For example, participants with a humanistic value perspective would not necessarily change their jobs because their “personal” gain is not met but because they are unsatisfied with the organization's mission. Some answers include “not feel valued for the work that they are doing” (P2), “lack of resources” (P2), and “Bad and poor leadership creates a toxic environment, causing a lot of mental stress.” (P3), “The second reason is pay.” (P3”). Monetary compensation was mentioned by P3 to underscore the value of the job that people do and how feeling underpaid can align with being undervalued.

Discussion of the Results for Hygiene Factors

Question 5 about the description of job dissatisfaction was intended to assess the participant's understanding of job dissatisfaction and serve as a probe for question 1, which asked about job satisfaction. Examples of answers include “It is doing work that does not bring you joy, that is stressful” (P1), “You can be dissatisfied with a job that is in your passion and purpose if your team or your leadership make you feel undervalued, or unappreciated” (P1), “If you are underpaid and overwork” (P1), “Not feeling supported, not receiving helpful feedback, no growth opportunity, burnout due to bad culture” (P2), “And of course pay.” (P2), “The level to which you feel unfavorably at your job. Not enough training, benefit or lack thereof, pay, leadership, not respected” (P3). While the answers to this question reflect the value perspective and the perception of job satisfaction captured in questions # 2 and #1 respectively, all participants have mentioned inequitable compensation as one reason for dissatisfaction even if it did not seem to have a high weight in their response.

Question 6. Even though this question was part of the hygiene factor section, I intended to capture examples of factors that would reduce and improve job satisfaction. Examples of answers here include “supportive leadership professional and personal” (P1), “Feeling heard, pay of course. Being paid well” (P1), “Shut down for idea, not being heard” (P2), “professional development” (P2), “Leadership is held accountable for their action” (P3), “Trust to talk to the leadership” (P3). The answers provided by the participants reflect the value of the working environment as a critical factor that can help reduce job dissatisfaction.

Question 7 was asked to capture satisfying motivation and hygiene factors that participants may not have mentioned in previous questions. P1 said, “good leadership, related skills, scheduling that works well.” P2 said, “leaving for personal reasons” (P1), “I may have left for personal reasons” (, “the social impact of the organization work, growth opportunity” (P2), “Personal reason for leaving” (P3). The answers to this question reflect the participants’ views of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Question 8 was asked to understand how much intrinsic or extrinsic factors influence people's decision to stay at their jobs. The participants' answers to this question would help develop a retention strategy for the client organization, emphasizing the factors perceived as critical for retention at the client organization. Some answers include “Consistency and stability, the joy that may come with doing your work.” (P1), “It also depends on your age. I am in my 30s, and we prefer peace over pay. If the salary compromises our peace, we will turn it down even if it is a high salary.” (P1), “of course money” (P1), “the norms of the organization” (P2), “Benefit is important a lot, age factor make people stay for the benefit if their spouse does have any" (P3). Participants mentioned the importance of the benefits in deciding to stay at the job while emphasizing the well-being element of doing the job.

Question 9 was intended to probe questions 6–8 and capture potential ambiguities in participants 'answers. Some answers include "Fulfill your purpose, your passion, your skill, the love for the job that makes you work for free or without a proper compensation" (P1), "Flexible schedule to take care of family and personal needs, and the compensation." (P1), "Feeling that you are making an impact, meeting your purpose" (P2), "respect" (P2), "Good health insurance coverage paid by employer, daycare" (P3). The answers provided by all participants were consistent with the previous ones.

I incorporated probe questions into the interviews to capture potential participant answers discrepancies. All participants' answers were consistent. However, participants repeatedly mentioned the importance of equitable compensation while emphasizing that money was not the primary benefit influencing their decision to work in the nonprofit sector.

Findings

Data analysis and result interpretation led to three key findings from this study: Participants value the working environment and the well-being of employees working for the nonprofit sector. While monetary compensation was mentioned as a factor for staying at the job, it did not represent the same value or importance as well-being throughout the data collection.

Training is perceived as a critical element that can help participants fulfill their purpose with the job, as it can provide the necessary skills and knowledge to stay current with the tasks.

The third key finding was the humanistic value perspective of the employee regarding job satisfaction. According to Hayden and Madsen (2008), understanding the value perspective of employees in the nonprofit sector may help improve the retention rate.

The findings were used to develop a plan to improve the client organization's employee retention by aligning the employees' humanistic values with the organization's mission and values.

Deliverables and Recommendations

From the results and findings of the study, a few recommendations can be made for improving employee retention at the client organization, CTL. Retention should start with the recruitment process. Recruiting the right person for the proper position may increase the employee's job attachment. Strategies to consider for this recommendation include job embeddedness (see section 2) with its three elements: fit, links, and sacrifice, using the humanistic value perspective as the basis for designing the scenario that would serve as interview questions. The client organization should align its core values and mission with the humanistic value perspective of job satisfaction to select candidates that best fit its culture.

A second recommendation and strategy would be development and training. The employees at CTL value their work, its outcomes, and its impact on the communities they serve. Also, they emphasized the importance of the joy and well-being the job should bring to keep them engaged and motivated; thus, designing a training curriculum that targets the professional needs of employees may provide an opportunity for growth and increased engagement. One tool that helps tailor a training curriculum based on needs is the modified Maslow pyramid discussed in section 2.

A third recommendation would be the management style. Communication, leadership, well-being, accountability, and the working environment influenced employee decisions about staying at their job position. These represent opportunities for the management and leadership team to improve intrinsic employee satisfaction, such as choosing a leadership style that aligns with the organization's values and that of the employees. Theory Y is a management style recommended to the leadership and management team at CTL. With theory Y, managers will empower employees to be free to do their jobs, increasing trust and the manager-staff relationship. A situational leadership style with a generational management type based on age should also be considered. Employees will take on more responsibilities and be more accountable and innovative.

The fourth recommendation concerns benefits. CTL employees value benefits that improve their well-being and that of their families. Personal joy from the job, flexible schedule, and family well-being appeared more often than monetary compensation in employee responses. CLT leadership can increase retention by offering a benefits plan comprising many options based on employees' needs. However, the benefits offered will have an effective impact if the options are proposed by the employees and selected by the leadership based on the organization's capability. The leadership can collect employee benefits options using a survey and then select the adequate ones to include in the benefits package.

The recommendations were made by adapting the study's results and findings to the retention strategies captured in the literature review in section 2. While the literature review addresses retention strategies in nonprofit organizations, the study's results were used to make recommendations that specifically address retention strategies at CTL.

The results and findings of this qualitative study showed that the retention problem in the nonprofit sector requires the consideration of many factors, including leadership style, the value perspective of the employee, and the employee's desired benefits. Employees often choose the benefit from the options offered by the organization. Future research focusing on the alignment of management style and employee value would help better understand the employee working environment, thus improving their ability to remain in their position. Another recommendation would be a qualitative study focusing on the perceived effect of high salaries on the willingness to stay at a job. Participants in the study insisted on well-being as a critical factor to staying at a job in the nonprofit sector but often ended by saying that a good salary would also be appreciated, which led to the question of what a “good salary” and how that “good salary” will affect the retention of people with humanistic job value perspective.

Potential Implications for Positive Social Change

According to Azmat and Rentschler (2017), positive social change may refer to any activity or action intended to improve individual or environmental conditions. The results and findings of this study can help implement positive social change at the organizational and community levels. CTL provides social services that benefit the children of underserved communities by helping them develop their leadership abilities via art-oriented after-school programs. These children have access to tools and art materials that would not have been available to them without CTL's help. These programs offered by CTL keep children off the street and improve their social interaction within their community. Thus, improved employee retention will increase CTL's ability to accomplish its mission. There can also be a positive social change implication at the organizational level, where management can adopt and implement a situational leadership style to improve the manager-employee relationship and increase trust. Trust can increase employees' attachment to their jobs and reduce their thinking about leaving (Treuren & Frankish, 2014).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The credibility of this qualitative study was implemented by recruiting participants from the same source, CTL. According to Creswell (2014), data collected from participants from the same source increases the reliability of the findings, thus improving the study's credibility. Another method used to implement the study's credibility was the choice of an adequate data analysis method. The analysis method for this study has an embedded bracketing step that limited my ability to use biased interpretations from previous experience. Aligning the research method with the correct analysis method helps with credibility improvement (Patton, 2015).

Transferability

Transferability reflects replicating a study's results and findings in a different setting (Shenton, 2004). The step-by-step methodology for data collection and analysis provided in section 3 was used to complete the study, thus providing the necessary information to replicate the study in a different context or setting. However, the number of participants recruited for this study was not enough to reach the data saturation point, thus leaving a possibility that the detailed description of the methodology used to complete this study may yield a different result or findings if the data saturation is reached. In addition, the study was explicitly designed to address the practical problem at the client organization. Therefore, a nonprofit organization with a different culture may also provide different results or findings when using the same methodology.

Dependability

The reliability of the data collection instruments and analysis method indicates its dependability (Shenton, 2004). The interview questions for this study were designed to collect data from participants working at the same organization in the nonprofit sector. Using the same instrument to collect data at different times in the same organization will provide a minimal variation of the data, thus supporting the dependability implementation during the study.

Confirmability

To ensure the confirmability of the trustworthiness, I refrain from using my education and professional background during data analysis to avoid possible biased interpretations. The bracketing step of the data analysis also helped limit my inference about the data's accuracy. I presented PowerPoint slides to the client organization, where all participants were invited to discuss and confirm the data's accuracy. Confirmability ensures the accuracy of the data (Shenton, 2004).

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Strengths

The design and alignment increased the study's credibility, with participants working in non-profit organizations. The study focused on a practical problem for a specific client organization, thus increasing the data's homogeneity and the results' validity.

Limitations

There were not enough participants to reach the data saturation point. However, this limitation was also due to the small size of the organization's staff. I was provided an email contact list of less than seven staff members to contact for potential participation. Another limitation is that the study was specific to an organization. Therefore, the results and findings may be challenging to replicate in a different organization with a different culture and mission. A third limitation was the lack of age consideration during the data collection. Having data organized by age group would have helped with the understanding of a generational management style for retention purposes. This limitation can be addressed by adding a question collecting data about the age group of the participants. The low staff participation in the study was unanticipated, given how engaged the leadership was during the planning phase. This low participation has impacted the saturation point that could not be reached before the data analysis was completed.

Summary

I used Herzberg's two-factor theory to design nine qualitative interview questions to explore strategies to improve employee retention at CTL. Data were collected from three participants, one full-time and two part-time employees at CTL, and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step strategy. In this section, I discussed study results and findings and used them to recommend strategies to improve employee retention rates at CTL. The section included implications for positive social change, as well as strengths and limitations of the study, before ending with the summary. In Section 5, I provide a dissemination plan and conclusion to the study.

Section 5: Dissemination Plan and Conclusion

This professional administrative study focused on a practical problem at CTL. The problem was identified as a gap in the organization's operation implementation involving human capital management. CTL adopted an ongoing hiring strategy to address the need for new employees. New employees must be trained; it takes time to be productive. The gap between the new employee integration phase and the beginning of the productivity phase can be costly for organizations and even more so for NPOs with limited financial resources (Kim, 2014). CTL was interested in developing strategies and methods to help reduce employee turnover while increasing employee loyalty and retention. According to Curtis and O'Connell (2011), the retention rate is the primary evaluation metric of human capital management for organizations to be successful. Working with CTL leadership, I designed this study to explore strategies that could improve the organization's retention rate, increase productivity, and facilitate successful program implementation. Strategies were provided to the organization's leadership following the dissemination plan.

Dissemination Plan

An informal presentation of findings was conducted with CTL leadership and staff before a document outlining strategies for improving employee retention based on results and findings was submitted to leadership. I intend to remain in contact with CTL for about three months from the document's submission date. CTL can accomplish its mission by retaining qualified, experienced employees and implementing recommended strategies. Therefore, positive social change will result from social services provided by the organization.

Implementation Plan

CTL leadership will implement recommended strategies according to the organization’s policies, regulations, business strategy, and resource availability. For example, benefits options proposed by employees to be included in benefits packages offered by CTL can only be approved by leadership if resource availability supports them. While study findings and results have served as the basis for recommendations for CTL, implementation may encounter challenges due to the organization’s financial constraints.

Summary

NPOs provide social services to different population groups and types, but they struggle to accomplish their missions due to financial limitations. CTL is a small NPO providing social services to underserved children. The organization has an ongoing hiring process due to staff constantly leaving the organization. The situation is costly and may impact the accomplishment of the mission. This qualitative study was designed to explore strategies that can help improve employee retention at CTL and facilitate the organization’s implementation of positive social change via its program activities and mission accomplishment. The small staff size of the organization reflects the low number of participants in the study. A formal document outlining strategies for improving employee retention at CTL was submitted to the organization’s leadership.

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Appendix A: Partner Organization Agreement

The doctoral student, Frant Kembou, is approved to collect interview data from employees at our organization. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES I understand that, as per the student doctoral program requirements, the student will publish a scholarly report of this study in ProQuest as a doctoral capstone (withholding the names of the organization and interviewees), as per the following ethical standards: a. In all reports (including drafts shared with peers and faculty members), the student is required to maintain confidentiality by removing names and key pieces of evidence/data that might disclose an organization's/individual's identity or inappropriately divulge proprietary details. If the organization itself wishes to publicize the findings of this project, that is the organization's judgment call. b. The student will be responsible for complying with the organization's policies and requirements regarding data collection (including the need for the partner organization's internal ethics/regulatory approval, if applicable). c. Via an Interview Consent Form, the student will describe to interviewees how the data will be used in the doctoral project and how all interviewees' privacy will be protected. d. The doctoral student will not use these data for any purpose other than the doctoral study outlined in this agreement. The purpose of this Qualitative study is to explore the methods and strategies that can improve employee retention at CTL and develop a retention plan for the organization's executive director and board of directors. At the end of the study, a formal document outlining the methods and strategies that can improve employee retention at CTL will be delivered to the executive director and board of directors. I confirm that I am authorized to approve research activities in this setting.

Signature ____ Partner

Organization Leader's Name and Title

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Email

Subject Line

Invitation to a research study interview for CTL

Email Message

A study exploring strategies to improve employee retention at CTL to facilitate the organization's mission accomplishment has been designed. For this study, you are invited to describe your viewpoint on human capital management in the nonprofit sector.

About the Study

- One 45–60-minute face-to-face interview, in person or virtual will be audio recorded (no videorecording).
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details identifying you.

Volunteers Must Meet These Requirements

- Employee at CTL, regardless of their working schedule
- Fluent in English

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Frant Kembou, a DPA student at Walden University. Interviews will take place at a location and time convenient to you. Please email the researcher to let them know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.

Sincerely,

Frant Kembou

Appendix C: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring strategies and methods to keep employees motivated and engaged in the activities at CTL that would help with retention and promote the organization's mission accomplishment. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study seeks 5-10 volunteers who are:

- Employee at CTL, regardless of their working schedule and length of employment
- Fluent in English

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Frant Kembou, who is a Doctoral Student at Walden University.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore strategies and methods to improve employee retention.

Procedures

This study will involve you completing the following steps:

- Participate in a face-to-face interview that may last 45–60 minutes.
- Decide to complete the interview or to stop at any time.
- Answer a few questions using your own words and viewpoint.

Here are some sample questions:

- Please describe your perception and definition of job satisfaction.
- How would you assess the role of training in a nonprofit organization?
- How would you describe job dissatisfaction?

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So, everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not. No one at CTL will treat you differently based on whether you volunteer or not.

If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. Please note that not all volunteers will be contacted to take part.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

Being in this study could involve some risk of minor discomforts encountered in daily life, such as sharing sensitive information. With the protections in place, this study would pose minimal risk to your well-being.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. Its aim is to benefit society through CTL's positive contribution to social change. Once the analysis is complete, the researcher will send the final report to CTL leadership to share the overall results.

Payment

There is no payment associated with participation in this study. Participants will be acknowledged at the end of the study for their contribution without any personally identifiable information mentioned in the report.

Privacy

The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be kept Confidential within the limits of the law. The researcher is only allowed to share your identity or contact information with Walden University supervisors, who are also required to protect your privacy. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers, so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by using password-required software. The audiotape will be securely stored, and no access will be granted without IRB authorization. Data will be kept for a period of at least five years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions

You can ask the researcher questions by email. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 02-16-24-0607706.

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words: "I consent."

Printed Name of Participant ________________________

Date of consent ________________________

Participant's Signature ________________________

Researcher's Signature ________________________

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Opening Statement

Thank you for coming. My name is Frant Kembou; I will conduct this interview with you. But before we start, I would like to remind you of the Voluntary Nature of the Interview: This interview is voluntary. You can decide to quit at any time without any justification; it is your right if you wish to do so. If, for any reason, you feel uncomfortable during the interview and wish to stop, please just let me know, and we will stop. I would like to confirm that you consent to participate in this study and that you have a copy of the consent form for your records. Do you have any questions about the consent form? Do you have any other questions for me before we proceed?

Interview Questions

The first part of the interview will focus on the motivation factors as follows:

1- Please describe your perception and definition of job satisfaction.

2- Please describe your view of public service and your decision to work in the nonprofit sector.

3- How would you assess the role of training in a nonprofit organization?

4- How would you describe why people change their job or organization? (Possible follow-up on topics like management style, lack of training and growth opportunities, if mentioned by the participants)

The second part of the interview will focus on the hygiene factors as follows:

1- How would you describe job dissatisfaction?

2- Please describe some examples of factors that can reduce dissatisfaction.

3- What are some reasons why people refer others to work with an organization they have left?

4- How do you see and describe the role of benefit in people's decision to stay at their job position?

5- Please name a few benefits that seem valuable.

Closing Statement

Thank you very much for your participation. We have reached the final point of the interview would you like to add anything before we end? Would that be OK to contact you if I should have any clarification or to provide you with the development of the study to have your feedback? Please, do not hesitate to contact me anytime if you should have any questions. Thank you and have a nice rest of the day.

Appendix E: Memorandum to the Client Organization

Memorandum

To: CTL

From: Frant Kembou, Doctor of Public Administration candidate, Walden University

Date:

Subject: Study Summary and Recommendations

Executive Summary

This memorandum aims to summarize the findings and provide recommendations for the professional administrative study that addressed a practical problem at a nonprofit organization operating in Maryland. Nonprofit organizations face many challenges impacting their program implementation and mission accomplishment. CTL is a nonprofit organization operating in Maryland. Like many other nonprofit organizations, CTL faces an employee retention problem that affects its ability to complete its social activities and benefit the communities it serves. The Practice-focused research question of this professional administrative study aimed to explore strategies and methods to improve employee retention at CTL using a general qualitative method. Herzberg's two-factor theory was the conceptual framework used to guide the study. Data was collected using a semi-structured face-to-face interview. Three participants were recruited from CTL via email, and a consent form was signed. Colaizzi's seven-step strategy (1978) is a thematic data analysis approach that served as the data analysis method. It is a data analysis framework that limits the researcher from using prior experience or knowledge and instead focuses on analyzing the collected data, thus increasing the results' accuracy.

The study's findings include the humanistic value perspective of the employee regarding job satisfaction, the value of the working environment and the well-being of employees working for the nonprofit sector, and the importance of training as a tool for creating growth opportunities. Recommendations include job embeddedness during the recruitment phase, the development of a need-based training curriculum, the use of theory Y management style and situational-based management type, and a benefits package with options chosen by the employees.

Organization Background and Problem Statement

CTL is a nonprofit organization operating in the state of Maryland. The organization promotes talent development in underserved youth populations by providing art education and access to resources that may be challenging to acquire. CTL provides the services by partnering with schools and other youth community groups and organizing after-school programs and summer camps. The diverse school-based programs offered by CTL benefit the youth and communities by keeping them engaged in social activities. However, CTL encounters a few challenges that may affect the program's implementation and mission accomplishment. The CTL leadership reported that while hiring new staff on an ongoing basis may be part of the organization's strategy, retaining trained employees has become a problem as many of the available resources are now directed toward hiring and training. Slatten et al. (2020) argued that nonprofit organizations find it challenging to reach their goals and accomplish their mission when trained staff constantly leave when they enter the productive stage of their integration phase. According to Selden and Sowa (2015), NPOs have limited budgets that may reduce their ability to acquire new talent and compete with private and other business sectors with better financial situations. The limited ability to recruit and retain qualified employees may cause NPOs, like CTL, to provide a quality service that would not reflect the intended positive social change of the organization (Kim, 2014).

Summary of Data Collection and Analysis

A semi-structured face-to-face interview was the data collection instrument using purposive sampling. Three participants participated in the interviews that took place virtually on Microsoft Teams, following the participants' availability. Herzberg's two-factor theory was used as the conceptual framework to guide the study. I designed the interview questions around the theory to address its two components: motivation and hygiene factors. Part 1 of the interview focused on the motivation factor with questions 1 through 4. Part 2 of the interview focused on the hygiene factors with questions 5 through 9. I organized the collected data into two groups to capture the similarities and differences from each answer provided by the participants for each question. Colaizzi's seven-step strategy (1978) is the thematic data analysis approach used to analyze the data collected for this study. Thematic analysis is used for systematic qualitative data analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Colaizzi's seven-step strategy is a data analysis framework that limits the researcher from using prior experience or knowledge and instead focuses on analyzing the data, increasing the results' accuracy (Morrow et al., 2015).

Results and Findings Summary

Colaizzi's seven-step strategy (1978) analysis method led to the generation of categories of codes. The categories were then used to generate emerging themes, including humanistic value perspective, support system, undervalued employee effort, and Organization culture and structure.

Recommendations

The recommendations were made by adapting the study's results and findings to the retention strategies captured in the literature review. While the literature review addresses retention strategies in nonprofit organizations, the study's results were used to make recommendations that specifically address retention strategies at CTL.

From the results and findings of the study, a few recommendations can be made for improving employee retention at CTL. Retention should start with the recruitment process. Recruiting the right person for the proper position may increase the employee's job attachment. Strategies to consider for this recommendation include job embeddedness using the humanistic value perspective as the basis for designing the scenario that would serve as interview questions. Ma et al. (2018) defined job embeddedness as the forces preventing people from leaving their jobs. Increasing job embeddedness can result in improved employee retention. Job embeddedness comprises three dimensions that need to be considered when using this strategy for retention (Ma et al., 2018):

The Fit

Ma et al. (2018) define fit as an employee's natural connection with the organization's culture, values, and mission. This dimension of job embeddedness can be enhanced by implementing judgment tests with different scenarios during the hiring process, involving employees in the organization's strategic planning process, and improving communication.

Links

Ma et al. (2018) refer to links as the connections between an employee and the organization. Employees who have established connections with their colleagues and communities may find it challenging to leave the organization, even when job dissatisfaction exists. Employee referral for hiring or frequent professional and non-professional outings can help improve this dimension of job embeddedness.

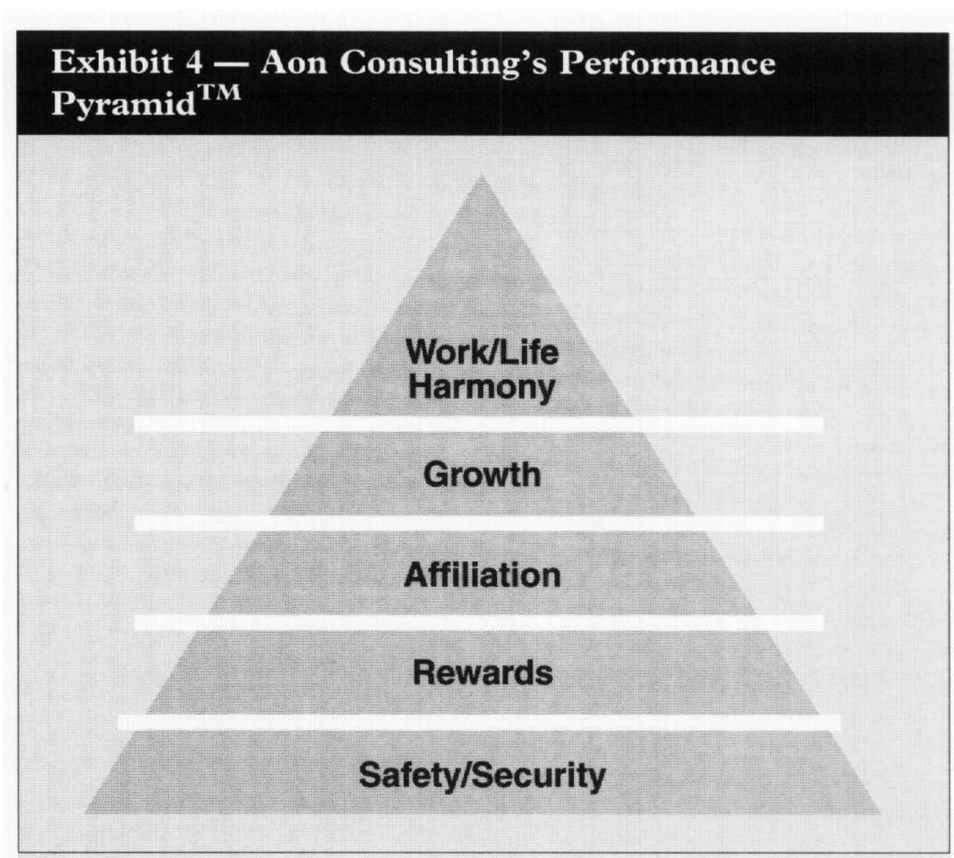
Sacrifice

Ma et al. (2018) define this dimension of job embeddedness as benefits and perceived benefits that employees will have to forgo if they decide to leave the organization. For example, social prestige from CTL's reputation can make it difficult for an employee to leave when these are part of their definition of job satisfaction. Flexible work hours, different benefit options, and support for continuous education are strategies that can improve the sacrifice dimension of job embeddedness. Employees who develop an attachment to the job are more likely to stay than those who do not (Ma et al., 2018). Job embeddedness can help improve employee retention in an organization. The CTL should align its core values and mission with the humanistic value perspective of job satisfaction to select candidates that best fit its culture.

A second recommendation and strategy would be development and training. The employees at CTL value their work, its outcomes, and its impact on the communities they serve. Also, they emphasized the importance of the joy and well-being the job should bring to keep them engaged and motivated; thus, designing a training curriculum that targets the professional needs of employees may provide an opportunity for growth and increased engagement. The modified Maslow pyramid is one tool that helps tailor a training curriculum based on needs. The depiction below shows that the self-actualization of the Maslow pyramid of needs, where people have the sense of having achieved an advanced level of societal needs, is comparable to the highest level of professional need, where employees are in a state of harmony between work and life and ready to help others improve.

Figure E2

Modified Maslow Pyramid for Professional Growth



From “Maslow Revisited: Building the Employee Commitment Pyramid” by D. L. Stum, 2001, *Strategy & Leadership*, *29*(4), 2001, pp. 4–9. (http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10878570110400053)

A third recommendation would be the management style. Communication, leadership, well-being, accountability, and the working environment influenced employee decisions about staying at their job position. These represent opportunities for the management and leadership team to improve intrinsic employee satisfaction, such as choosing a leadership style that aligns with the organization's values and that of the employees. Theory Y is a management style recommended to the leadership and management team at CTL. With theory Y, managers will empower employees to be free to do their jobs, increasing trust and the manager-staff relationship. A situational leadership style with a generational management type based on age should also be considered. Employees will take on more responsibilities and be more accountable and innovative.

The fourth recommendation concerns benefits. CTL employees value benefits that improve their well-being and that of their families. Personal joy from the job, flexible schedule, and family well-being appeared more often than monetary compensation in employee responses. CLT leadership can increase retention by offering a benefits plan comprising many options based on employees' needs. However, the benefits offered will have an effective impact if the options are proposed by the employees and selected by the leadership based on the organization's capability. The leadership can collect employee benefits options using a survey and then select the adequate ones to include in the benefits package.

Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations provide social services to different population groups and types and struggle to accomplish their mission due to financial limitations. CTL is a non-profit organization providing social services to underserved children. Due to staff constantly leaving, the organization has an ongoing hiring process. This situation is costly and may impact the accomplishment of the mission. This qualitative study provided strategies that can help improve employee retention at CTL and facilitate the organization's implementation of positive social change via its program activities and mission accomplishment.