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Effective Strategies Nonprofit Leaders Use to Reduce Employee Turnover Costs

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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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Amy Carroll Kreidemaker

MA, Antioch New England University, 2006

BA, Bridgewater State College, 2003

Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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December 2024

Abstract

Nonprofit agencies face increased financial stress because of employee retention challenges. Nonprofit leaders worry about rising turnover costs, as retaining staff effectively is crucial for stability, reducing financial burdens, and maintaining program continuity. Grounded in Herzberg's two-factor theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore effective strategies nonprofit leaders used to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. The participants comprised six purposefully sampled organization leaders of a central Massachusetts nonprofit who successfully implemented strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and a review of organizational documents, such as training materials, strategic plans, and retention rate data reports. Four themes were identified from the thematic analysis: (a) recognition and acknowledgment, (b) supervision, training, and onboarding, (c) supportive relationships with supervisors and coworkers, and (d) diverse positive workforce culture initiatives. A key recommendation is for nonprofit leaders to recognize and address their employees' needs to foster a supportive environment that enhances employee retention. By prioritizing employee well-being and engagement, leaders can build a thriving, dedicated workforce. The implications for positive social change include the potential to improve nonprofit staff retention, increase long-term business sustainability, and increase quality influence on communities and individuals that nonprofit agencies serve.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to my husband, Patrick, my three amazing children; Alexia, Elicia and Connor, my son in laws, Sean and Kevin, and my dear parents, Bill and Carol Gamache for believing in me, supporting me and giving me the motivation to continue.

Lexie, Elicia, Connor, Sean and Kevin, I want to leave a legacy for you that if you believe in something and work hard you can accomplish anything that you put your mind to. I love you all forever, with my whole heart. You are my motivation.

Pat, this would not be possible without you. Thank you for supporting me and our family while I embarked on this accomplishment. You are an amazing husband, my partner and my best friend.

To my Mom and Dad, thank you for giving me opportunity, love and support. I was blessed with a beautiful life because of your love. I learned that anything is possible because of your belief in me. I am forever grateful God gave me the most loving parents.

Thank you to my friend family for always standing by me, celebrating this accomplishment and supporting our family. I am truly blessed to have you all.

Out of all things I have accomplished, my family is the rock that encourages me to keep pushing and I am proudest of their love. You are all my light on dark days.

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I want to acknowledge and thank Dr. Theresa Neal and Dr. Cheryl Lentz for serving as my committee chair and second committee member. Your support and guidance have been invaluable to me throughout this journey. I am profoundly grateful to you both for helping me achieve this educational goal. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my fellow doctoral peers who have the source of inspiration, motivation and humor as we all embarked on this journey.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Background of the Problem

Employees are the single largest asset to any organization. Nonprofit organizations, in particular, need staff members committed to their mission and vision. Nonprofit organizations offer services that can improve the medical health, mental health, wellness, and education of communities. Quality employee retention is a nonprofit agency's most significant operational challenge (Slatten et al., 2021). In the United States, the nonprofit sector is the third largest workforce, employing 12.3 million individuals (Wang, 2022). The average rate of reported employee turnover in the nonprofit sector ranges from 20% to 57% annually, and some studies claim even higher rates (T. Park & Pierce, 2020). The general business problem is that nonprofit agencies incur increased financial stress due to employee retention challenges.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

The specific business problem was that some nonprofit agency leaders do not have effective strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore effective strategies nonprofit leaders used to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. The participants were comprised of six purposefully sampled organization leaders of a central Massachusetts nonprofit who successfully implemented strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. Data sources for this project consisted of (a) semistructured interviews and (b) organizational documents, such as training materials, strategic plans, and retention rate data reports. Herzberg's two-factor theory was used as the conceptual framework to support this project.

Research Question

What effective strategies do nonprofit leaders use to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are pieces of information thought to be accurate and are expected to happen without any verification (Weisman et al., 2020). My first assumption in this study was that the findings could help nonprofit leaders identify strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. My second assumption of this study was that the findings could create opportunities for leaders to retain quality nonprofit employees. The third assumption was that the participants could share honest answers without bias.

Limitations

Limitations refer to the potential areas of weakness or restriction in a study that is most often out of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The first limitation of this study was that knowledge came from six nonprofit leaders located in central Massachusetts. Therefore, the topic might require future research to identify if the findings can be replicated in other sectors of business. The second limitation was that the project included participants' bias and precise recollection of their experiences to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs.

Transition

Section 1 of this study includes information about the background of the problem, followed by the problem and purpose statements, the research question and finally assumptions and limitations of the project. In Section 2, a detailed synthesis and analysis of professional and academic literature is provided. The literature includes a review of the chosen conceptual framework, a review of the business problem including scholarly evidence, employee retention, strategies and factors linked to employee retention, and data about nonprofit agencies. Section 2 includes a review of the literature within the last 5 years related to effective strategies nonprofit organizations' leaders use to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs.

Section 3 consists of further explanation of the elements of the study. These elements include the project methodology, ethical considerations, nature of the project, populations, sampling, participants, data collection, specific interview questions, and the reliability and validity of the project. Section 4 includes the project's findings, applications of professional practice, implications of social change, and my recommendations for future study and reflections.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore effective strategies nonprofit leaders use to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. The doctoral literature review included an exploration of the intricate realm of retention strategies within the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit organizations play a critical role in addressing societal challenges; it is vital that research aids in comprehending and enhancing mechanisms that foster the retention of essential personnel (Wang, 2022). In this comprehensive review, I delve into the existing scholarly work surrounding nonprofit retention strategies and theory.

The organization of this literature review included fundamental concepts of theory, retention factors, and retention strategies. The Walden University online library, Business Source Complete, Sage Journals, and Walden University's ScholarWorks Dissertations and Thesis library were used to complete the review. The following were keywords used to search for information pertaining to the research topic: *employee retention, nonprofit business, leadership strategies, nonprofit employee motivation, job satisfaction*, and *retention strategies*. In addition, the focus included finding peer-reviewed journals and seminal sources to strengthen the literature review. There were 77 references used to support this project. Of the 77 references, 61 (79%) sources were published within the 5-year range (2020–2024).

Conceptual Framework: Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's two-factor theory provided a robust foundation for comprehending the complexities of employee retention (Herzberg et al., 1959). The principles of this theory, developed by Herzberg, remain applicable in diverse organizational contexts, offering insights into the interplay between hygiene factors and motivators. Herzberg's two-factor theory tests employee job satisfaction produced by two specific factors. The theory includes an outline of the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic factors related to job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Understanding and addressing these factors are vital for nonprofit leaders striving to create a motivating work environment that retains quality staff members, which could positively affect company outcomes and quality of care for the people served.

The two-factor theory granted me the ability to understand successful employee retention strategies. Herzberg's (1959) theory includes motivation and hygiene factors, which influence job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Motivational factors are aspects of a job that increase an employee's satisfaction or connection to their job, whereas hygiene factors are connected to the work environment and influence an individual's motivation (Herzberg et al., 1959). The motivational factors are advancement, the work itself, the possibility of growth, responsibility, recognition, and achievement (Alshmemri et al., 2017). The hygiene factors are interpersonal relationships, salary, policies and administration, supervision, and working conditions (Alshmemri et al., 2017). This theory offered context to explore strategies nonprofit leaders could use to retain employees by exploring the concepts of satisfaction and dissatisfaction related to employees' feelings about their work.

Herzberg’s (1959) theory was applied to this project to understand and address the factors contributing to employee retention. The two-factor theory suggested that certain factors in the workplace cause job satisfaction, and others cause dissatisfaction (Thant & Chang, 2021). Herzberg suggested that the absence of hygiene factors led to dissatisfaction, while the presence of motivational factors contributed to satisfaction. Nonprofit organizations hire approximately 19% of their staff members annually due to the need to fill positions of those who have left their jobs to seek other opportunities (Hur & Bae, 2021). Nonprofit organizations planning to motivate to retain staff effectively must address both hygiene and motivation factors (Slatten et al., 2021). Leaders who use these factors may increase the understanding of why nonprofit employees stay in their jobs.

Employee retention links to job satisfaction concepts that Herzberg et al. (1959) presents in his two-factor theory. Similar to current-day work environments, Herzberg conducted his study at a time when the Great Depression was creating extreme unemployment challenges (Herzberg et al., 1959). Throughout the years since Herzberg's study, the world economic and labor policies and laws shifted, and the cost of living increased, creating the development of labor laws and advisement of fair wages (as cited in Fishback & Seltzer, 2021). Similarly, many nonprofit businesses continue to experience employment shortages in today's business world. The impact of these shortages often increases financial spending and challenges to business because nonprofits rely on passionate, dedicated, and experienced individuals to conduct business (Hur & Bae, 2021). Nonprofit leaders will need to be proactive in addressing the evolving needs of their workforce. Nonprofits can enhance retention efforts by addressing the motivation and hygiene factors faced by those employed in their programs.

Motivator Factors

Motivator factors motivate employees to engage in the workplace culture and increase their job satisfaction, morale, and performance (Zámečník & Kožíšek, 2021). Herzberg et al. (1959) indicated that satisfied employees will remain employed by the same agency. Herzberg identified five factors as vital to an employee's motivation: recognition, achievement, responsibility, advancement, and the work itself. These factors, described in the following paragraphs, can lead employees to have higher levels of job satisfaction. Higher levels of job satisfaction may lead to increased retention and a reduction of financial burden on nonprofit businesses.

Recognition

Employees receive position recognition or acknowledgment for the job-related goals and achievements achieved. Herzberg (1968) indicated that recognition fulfills a person's need for a positive self-image or esteem in the workplace. Employees who receive positive recognition for their efforts in business initiatives are likelier to provide proficient services to consumers and feel appreciated by agency leadership (Whitfill et al., 2020). Employees value recognition on a professional and a personal level.

Achievement

Accomplishing a task or job-related assignment can bring a sense of achievement (Thant & Chang, 2021). This sense of achievement is obtained through the opportunity to excel, complete challenging tasks, and be recognized for reaching goals. Herzberg (1959) indicated that achievement is critical to fostering employee motivation and job satisfaction. These opportunities for professional growth are critical to impacting employee retention.

Responsibility

All professional roles have specific responsibilities that go along with the job description. However, job responsibility relies on the employee to be entrusted to complete meaningful tasks, make decisions, and take accountability for the work that they produce (Widyawati, 2020). Employees feel entrusted and empowered to make decisions and take ownership of their work when they are given more responsibility by leadership (Herzberg, 1968). However, it is essential for leaders to understand balance and that, at times, excess responsibility can be overwhelming and lead to employee burnout. Leaders who understand the balance of workload could potentially increase retention rates of nonprofit employees.

Advancement

Personal growth and development are vital components of employee motivators. Employees are more likely to reach adequate performance levels and remain employed by their company when there are opportunities for advancement (Widyawati, 2020). Some areas of advancement include promotions, skill development, and career planning.

Providing opportunities for advancement gives employees a sense of direction and purpose within the organization. Additionally, advancement opportunities could increase retention and reduce financial costs.

The Work Itself

Many nonprofit employees remain employed by nonprofit agencies because of their deep dedication and commitment to the mission, vision, and impact of their work (Stater & Stater, 2019). Employees dedicated to the work will remain consistent when the work is fulfilling, challenging, and meaningful because they understand their roles' impact on people, services, and communities. However, nonprofit work is often taxing emotionally and physically, causing increased potential for burnout.

Hygiene Factors

Hygiene factors refer to the extrinsic aspects of the work environment (Herzberg et al., 1959). These factors are essential in maintaining employee contentment but are not linked to promoting motivation (Herzberg, 1968). The absence of these factors can lead to job dissatisfaction. There are 10 hygiene factors needed to maintain adequate satisfaction in the workplace: company policy/ work conditions, supervision, relationship with a supervisor/relationship with peers, work conditions, relationships with peers, status/salary, personal life/work-life balance and job security (Alshmemri et al., 2017). These factors, described below, maintain a basic level of commitment among employees. Additional research could add information to employee commitment and offer retention resources for nonprofit leaders.

Company Policy/Work Conditions. Organizational policies govern the behavior and systems of organizations (Maker, 2022). Rules and regulations create order and fairness in business. These policies create a sense of safety among employees because all employees are held to the same standards and procedures. Nonprofit employees who experience consistent policy implementation can feel increased trust in their leaders (Fishback & Seltzer, 2021). Leaders must establish systems to anchor policy in nonprofit work that helps to retain employees.

Similarly to company policy, positive work conditions create a sense of safety among employees. This sense of safety is felt emotionally, physically, and psychologically in the workplace (Chua & Ayoko, 2021). Environmental work rewards or healthy work conditions can potentially improve employees' work experience (Stater & Stater, 2019). Healthy work conditions link to work culture, which is desirable to employees.

Supervision

Effective supervision involves a supervisor providing feedback, guidance, and support to an employee. Quality supervision is a factor that employees often link to retention (Tian et al., 2020). Many employees value supervision because it offers an opportunity to receive additional training and development. Quality supervision can effectively keep employees engaged and retained (Kossivi et al., 2016). Some research indicates a strong connection between supervision and retention; however, further research must be conducted to develop systems to embed consistent procedures of supervision meetings or team supervision.

Relationship With Supervisor/Relationship With Peers. A supportive supervisor who provides guidance and resources and assists in overcoming obstacles can enhance employee performance. The employee's perception of their relationships with their supervisor can create a relationship built on trust and understanding (Chua & Ayoko, 2021). Leaders who foster self-motivation in their employees tend to motivate them to be dedicated and committed to the business they work for and the work's mission. Employees are motivated to stay connected if they feel a sense of responsibility to their leaders (Tian et al., 2020). To develop meaningful relationships with leaders, creating relationships built on trust could increase nonprofit retention numbers.

Similarly, trust is also a central component in building effective, professional relationships with peers in the workplace (Chua & Ayoko, 2021). Some employees spend the majority of their work hours in collaborative environments with other individuals who often rely on each other to complete job tasks. The quality of professional relationships developed in the workplace is linked to higher retention rates (Thant & Chang, 2021). People are less likely to leave a job when they are committed members of a team with whom they feel connected. Additional research is needed to identify strategies that nonprofit leaders can use to ensure employee commitment.

Status/Salary. Employees often expect a certain level of status and salary connected to their roles and responsibilities (Wang, 2022). Challenges can present themselves when employees feel their job title and salary do not accurately reflect their expertise. Status and salary are essential in an employee's motivation to stay or leave their current organization (Stater & Stater, 2019). Wages have increased over time to meet the demands of the cost of living; however, sometimes, they need to provide for individuals and families (Fishback & Seltzer, 2021). Status and salary factors do not directly lead to job satisfaction. However, a lack of status and competitive salary can cause dissatisfaction, justifying the need for additional research such as this study.

Personal Life/Work Life Balance. In the workplace, employees seek a balance between their work responsibilities and how these interact with their personal responsibilities. Many nonprofit workers often feel overwhelmed, overworked, and concerned about their work-life balance (Robichau et al., 2023). Employees worry about the toll that work responsibilities take on their relationships, families, health, and wellness (Whitfill et al., 2020). Balance and flexibility are two aspects that employees seek to establish a healthy personal and professional life. Additional research needed to justify what tools leaders can use to implement flexibility in nonprofit work.

Job Security. Concerns about layoffs, downsizing, and closures increase employee dissatisfaction and fear. Employees must feel a sense of security that their positions are stable. Nonprofit agency leaders often need help receiving enough funding to create a consistent and stable workforce (Robichau et al., 2023). These leaders must strategically plan for job consistency for their employees. Reducing concerns about job security within an organization can decrease the chances of employee dissatisfaction and anxiety (Robichau et al., 2023). Nonprofit leaders struggle with conveying internal business decision-making information to employees; additional research is needed to assist them.

As described, Herzberg’s (1959) two-factor theory addresses motivation factors, which are intrinsic to the job and directly influence job satisfaction and motivation (as cited in Zhang & Liu, 2022), and hygiene factors, which are extrinsic to the job and primarily serve to prevent employee dissatisfaction (Thant & Chang, 2021). Both factors play vital roles in employee motivation, satisfaction, and retention. However, additional research is needed because it is still unclear how leaders can consistently retain employees in the nonprofit setting.

Retention Factors

Retention factors are critical to maintaining a satisfied workforce. Planning and addressing retention factors help organizations keep quality employees who advance nonprofit growth. Leaders prioritizing these retention factors create a supportive and transparent work environment (Chen, 2020). These leaders inspire their workforce to make decisions together and cultivate a team approach (Maker, 2022). Retention factors include communication around the mission and vision, professional development and growth, and effective management and leadership. Challenges with these factors indicate the need for more information regarding retention and retaining quality employees, which aids in business success.

Mission and Vision. The mission and vision of a nonprofit agency is the guide that binds all the employees together to achieve one common goal. Employees with a sense of connection to the organization's cause are likelier to remain committed and engaged (Tian et al., 2020). Nonprofit leaders should provide opportunities for employees to see the meaningful difference they are making through the lens of the mission and vision. Mission and vision are factors connected to retention among nonprofit employees dedicated to giving back in acts of service (Slatten et al., 2021). These employees are dedicated to growing within their agency because they believe in the vision of the agency. Retaining employees dedicated to the mission and vision is vital to a nonprofit business because these employees will help the business grow and serve the community.

Professional Development and Growth. Professional development and growth are critical for the retention of nonprofit employee talent. Professional development can include training, workshops, mentoring, supervision, and promotion (Luthans, 2000). Employees are more likely to engage in business development if they feel the business invests in them (Fan et al., 2022). Similar to mission and vision, professional growth and development empower employees to effectively perform their job responsibilities because they connect to the impact of the work. These employees also feel supported and guided by their leaders because they feel as though their leaders care about their well-being outside of the workplace.

Effective Management and Leadership. Effective leadership plays a critical role in retaining talent in nonprofits. Influential leaders can communicate the mission and vision, provide support and empowerment, value and appreciate employees, and resolve conflict in a place of integrity (Noranee et al., 2022). Agencies with strong leaders are attractive to potential and long-term employees because of their investment in leaders they trust. In addition, leaders who foster the importance of the attention of the employee's voice in business decisions are connected to effective leadership (Patil, 2022). Organizations with influential leaders are positioned to retain employees and ultimately significantly impact those they serve. Nonprofit businesses need tools and systems to develop influential leaders who will communicate effective strategies to retain quality employees, supporting the need for additional research.

Business Problem Literature Review of Scholarship

The focus on employee retention is a natural part of any business. However, employee retention is particularly challenging for nonprofit agencies due to their limited resources, reliance on experience and expertise, and mission-driven work. The nonprofit business sector employs many people yearly, having lower retention rates than for-profit agencies (T. Park & Pierce, 2020). According to the Nonprofit Employment Practices Survey (2021), approximately 19% of new employees were hired to replace those who left nonprofit businesses (Hur & Bae, 2021). Nonprofit agencies often compete for quality employees with agencies that can offer employees incentives they cannot (Wang, 2022). Nonprofit business turnover creates increased financial stress within the agency. In addition to financial stress, nonprofit organizations face challenges with replacing this loss of institutional knowledge, potential decline in services, disruption in operations, and lack of morale and engagement from current employees. Further research is needed to solve these issues that lead to a lack of employee retention.

Lack of employee retention can significantly place financial stress and strain on nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit businesses face various financial challenges when employees leave their organizations. The cost of replacing one employee in a business ranges from one-half to two times the amount of the employee's salary (Wang, 2022). Leaders must better understand the reasoning behind why employees are leaving to make changes to their systems (Costa & Carvalho, 2022). These costs were generated from recruitment and hiring, training, and onboarding new employees. Research remains needed to develop effective systems of retaining employees so that these costs are not incurred.

Recruiting new employees in a nonprofit organization involves advertising, reviewing applications, interviewing, and completing paperwork and documentation. The costs of this can accumulate, and the organizations can need help finding quality replacements for these positions (Slatten et al., 2021). In addition to recruitment costs, there are costs incurred to dedicate personnel to interview and process documentation as part of the onboarding process (West, 2022). The interview process for some positions can be lengthy, and often, second interviews may be required if the position has a specialty. The recruitment and hiring process can be financially taxing and is a lengthy, detailed process. A faulty hiring process can make employees feel doubtful about staying with the business, which may affect retention rates, requiring additional research.

Onboarding new employees requires investment in training the mission and vision of the nonprofit agency and formal informative training sessions that are required for a new employee to do their jobs. Formal training, on-the-job shadowing, and mentoring consume dedicated resources, including trainers' time and materials (Alqattan et al., 2019). Nonprofit organizations are often responsible for delivering high-level specialized services that impact individuals and communities and require employees to be adequately trained. Some training programs require certification and credentialing; additional costs are associated with these credentials (Saberi et al., 2023). Training costs can vary depending on the specific needs and resources of the agency; however, there are many typical costs associated with training new employees to replace employees who have left the organization. Effective training will increase the retention of employees.

Nonprofit organizations rely on expertise and experience in their employee team. When employees leave, especially those in vital roles, they take the institutional knowledge about the organization's operations and relationships. This loss of knowledge can be detrimental to the nonprofit organization's focus and cause the business to suffer in multiple areas (West, 2022). Often, organizations learn from past experiences, successes, and failures, and the present employees hold this knowledge. The skills to navigate these situations can be lost when the employee decides to leave the organization (Saberi et al., 2023). In addition, many individual employees who are part of the nonprofit sector require professional licensure, which can increase the challenge to search for new employees. Nonprofits must do everything they can to retain employees who have essential knowledge that impacts the organization. Further research remains needed to highlight how to retain employees with professional experience.

The loss of quality employees can cause a potential decline in services. When employees in critical roles leave nonprofit agencies, it causes service gaps and potential delays in operations (Tian et al., 2020). Many local, state, and federal government organizations rely on nonprofit organizations to deliver services to aid various communities (Jones et al., 2023). Turnover with these agencies can cause individuals and communities to be without essential resources needed for survival. When nonprofits start to experience turnover, costs incur, which creates an inability for businesses to take on new tasks and community projects (T. Park & Pierce, 2020). Overall, nonprofit turnover leads to delays and inefficiencies in service delivery, affecting individuals' lives and communities' health and wellness. New research might offer solutions to retaining nonprofit employees with challenging workloads.

Morale and employee engagement are tools that nonprofit leadership uses to retain employees. Low retention rates can cause lower morale among the employees who remain employed. The departure of quality employees can create additional work responsibility, increase stress, and increase pressure. The increased stress can cause an unhealthy work environment, negatively influencing employees' perception of their work (Chen, 2020). Chaotic work culture and ongoing workforce shortage can cause existing employees to seek alternative employment (Y. Park & You, 2023). The increased stress in the workplace can impact employee motivation and productivity and lead to a decline in service delivery. Reduction of personal stress could lead to someone willing to stay employed.

Retention Strategies Literature Review

Retention strategies refer to the strategies or initiatives leaders implement to retain quality employees within their organization (Patil, 2022). These strategies originate within retention factors and are developed into actionable strategies. Herzberg (1959) created his two-factor theory around factors influencing job satisfaction and increased retention. Nonprofit businesses face unique challenges when planning retention strategies compared to for-profit businesses (Stater & Stater, 2019). Addressing retention strategies in the nonprofit business environment can make employees feel valued, engaged, and committed to the organization's mission. In addition, retention strategies reduce the costs of hiring, training, and onboarding new employees due to turnover. Herzberg's two-factor theory can be used to explore strategies or initiatives nonprofits use to retain employees. Leaders use three strategies to retain nonprofit employees: training and development, building relationships, and highlighting the impact of the work.

Training and Development

All successful businesses have a training and development plan that employees should experience while working for that agency. Organizational training is essential for agencies to achieve their mission and deliver quality services to individuals and communities (To & Leung, 2024). In addition, training and development are essential for building staff capacity and fulfilling the agency's goals (Kossivi et al., 2016). Nonprofits often face budgetary constraints and limited resources; therefore, investing in training and development can lead to increased performance and impact. Some training examples might be onboarding and new hire orientation, skill-building workshops, professional development opportunities, supervision, and mentoring which leads to retaining employees.

Onboarding is a vital step in the new hire process to retain employees. Often, new hire orientations are the first opportunity for an employee to learn about the agency, its systems, and its people. If the onboarding process is inclusive, thorough, and welcoming, employees are more likely to feel instantly part of the agency's mission and vision (Maker, 2022). Investing in the onboarding process is a commitment to the organization's future (Alqattan et al., 2019). Fostering employee engagement and dedication ensures a positive future for nonprofit organizations to lead from a mission-focused place. Employee engagement leads to the retention of quality employees.

Ongoing skill-building workshops are additional training opportunities that offer advancement to retained employees. These workshops can be offered in a planned, proactive, ongoing manner that creates a team atmosphere and empowers the employees to learn more (To & Leung, 2024). Employees often feel valued when given opportunities to advance their knowledge because they perceive that the agencies value them enough to invest in ongoing development (Maker, 2022). Additionally, these workshops can promote a sense of teamwork and increase communication skills (Whitfill et al., 2020). Employees are then empowered to use these ongoing workshops to advance their mission-based work however, not all are empowered. Research remains needed to understand how these workshops can be used to retain empowered employees.

Professional development opportunities are an investment that the employer makes to develop and support their employees who stay employed. Many agencies offer employees opportunities to create professional development plans that outline opportunities that the employee would like to learn. These plans often link to mission-based work but mainly focus on the employees' interest (Chua & Ayoko, 2021). Personal investment in employees is essential to create a culture that conveys that business is important and that the employee is essential (Widyawati, 2020). Employees can improve their skills and then use these new skills to advance their agency. However, some employees improve skills and leave their nonprofit agencies for other opportunities. Nonprofit leaders need knowledge that will help to increase retention.

Through professional development opportunities, employees who decide to stay can seek additional knowledge and skills. Employees can gain access to educational advancement and potential certification and develop additional skills that can be used to widen the scope of services that nonprofits can offer (Hur & Bae, 2021). Leaders and agencies who offer additional guidance and educational opportunities have excellent retention rates (Maker, 2022). Some nonprofit agencies have outstanding retention programs that invest in their employees by offering the additional benefits of education, skills development, and support. These benefits can increase retention of employees because they feel that the company is investing in them.

Effective supervision is another strategy used to retain nonprofit employees. Supervision is a planning meeting to connect with a leader about the work, advancement, challenges, and future planning (To & Leung, 2024). These meetings are vital for employees to understand the agency's vision and how their roles are tied to the mission (Hur & Bae, 2021). Supervision also gives each employee time to discuss any challenges in their roles. This opportunity to discuss challenges and brainstorm solutions can keep employees from being overwhelmed and burnt out (Maker, 2022). Effective supervision is vital to ensuring nonprofit employees have the support they need to be effective in their roles. Additional research may explain how to implement supervision to increase retention.

Professional mentoring is another strategy used to retain quality employees. Mentoring is an exchange between a leader or mentor and an employee that gives the employee career support, psychosocial support, and an opportunity to have a role model

(Zong & Tsaur, 2023). The experiences can motivate the employee by showing their mentor or leader's path within the agency. The employee can also use the mentor to talk through and process challenges that occur in the workplace (Zong & Tsaur, 2023). Mentoring is invaluable for nurturing talent, fostering positive organizational culture, and driving success in nonprofit organizations. Mentoring is something that not all nonprofit businesses use as a strategy to retain employees. More knowledge remains needed about implementing these strategies to retain quality employees.

Positive Work Culture and Employee Voice

Nonprofit agencies with positive work culture have employees deeply committed to their mission and values. Employees who work at nonprofit agencies are motivated by a shared sense of purpose and are passionate about making a difference in their communities and addressing social and environmental issues. A positive work culture is vital for the productivity of the difficult work that nonprofit employees do. Employees seek open communication, sense of community, and collaboration to want to remain in their positions. Work environments healthy for employees create a feeling of psychological safety, which reduces turnover (Chua & Ayoko, 2021). A positive work culture empowers employees to thrive and work for the common good of the organization (Chen, 2020). Many aspects make up a healthy work culture. These aspects include relationships with supervisors and coworkers, a healthy work-life balance, and a general feeling of appreciation and recognition.

Positive employee connection and their relationship with their supervisor can be why some employees stay employed with nonprofit organizations. Employees who are heard, valued, and empowered by their supervisors are more likely to participate actively in mission-driven work (Tian et al., 2020). Leaders who inspire their employees to collaborate in the pursuit of the vision of the company create a team atmosphere (Fan et al., 2022). This team atmosphere creates an open line of communication where employees and leaders share decision-making to reach the collective goal. Further research is needed to understand the connection between employees and their increased intention to stay employed because their voice and ideas have influence and purpose. Additional research might assist in identifying communication strategies that could retain employees.

Nonprofit employees often participate in challenging work that can affect their personal wellbeing. A positive relationship with a supervisor can give employees the support and guidance they need to continue doing life-changing work (Maker, 2022). Leaders who invest time in supporting, guiding, and inspiring their employees develop influential and vital connections to nonprofit work (Chen, 2020). Leaders must develop these connections through regular supervision, interactions, team-building activities, and investment in the employees who work for them. More information is needed to implement successful strategies to retain employees by these connections.

Relationships with coworkers are also an essential aspect of employee retention. Nonprofit agencies commit themselves to servicing people and communities at all hours of the day. At times, nonprofit employees may spend more time with their coworkers than they would with their families. Creating a workplace and fostering connections within the employee team is vital for longevity (Chua & Ayoko, 2021). Teams who work together well have an investment in each other and the agency they work for (Chen, 2020). Leaders prioritizing collaboration, communication, and support among staff members create a culture where employees are connected and motivated to stay.

Coworkers in nonprofit organizations contribute to a supportive and collaborative work environment essential for satisfaction and retention. Positive coworker relationships build a strong organizational culture and provide social support. Supportive coworkers can provide emotional and psychological support that reduces burnout and job stress (Chua & Ayoko, 2021). These relationships create a team atmosphere where coworkers are considered essential employees and people with personal needs (Tian et al., 2020). Effective teamwork and positive coworker relationships create a cohesive and healthy work environment. Some nonprofit businesses are not able to retain employees with environment alone, more research in needed to increase employee retention.

Prioritizing work-life balance is essential for retaining nonprofit employees. Nonprofit employees often face high stress and emotional exhaustion due to the nature of the work, which includes managing difficult social issues, operating with limited resources, and having high workloads. Job stress in nonprofit employees can often damage employee's personal lives (Y. Park & You, 2023). Current nonprofit employees continue to weigh their personal wellbeing and health and the importance of their work (Robichau et al., 2023). Ensuring a healthy work-life balance helps to prevent burnout, making it more likely that employees will stay with the organization. Despite this knowledge, burnout remains an ongoing problem in the nonprofit sector (Robichau et al., 2023). Leaders must acquire knowledge about this to implement strategies to retain employees.

A positive work-life balance promotes better mental and physical health. In addition, people feel more productive, engaged, and committed to their work when they feel healthy. Challenges of navigating work and life are important issues that many nonprofit employees label as some of their top concerns (Riforgiate & Kramer, 2021). Employees are concerned about being productive in the workplace and being present for their family and friends (Robichau et al., 2023). Some leaders develop a positive work-life culture by offering remote days, planned vacations, and flexible hours to accommodate a healthy culture. These strategies show employees they are valued as members of the organization and as people outside of work. Additional research remains needed to understand what strategies leader can implement to retain employees.

Recognition and appreciation are vital for nonprofit employee retention because they enhance morale, loyalty, performance, and job satisfaction. Feeling valued and appreciated by the organization's leaders creates a positive work culture that supports employees (Whitfill et al., 2020). Regular recognition and appreciation can boost employee morale and motivation. When employees feel their hard work and contributions are noticed and valued, they are likelier to remain engaged and committed to their roles. However, employees who do not feel valued will likely leave their company (Maker, 2022). Further research could help leaders understand what strategies to use to develop systems to address these concerns.

Employee recognition can be a powerful motivator and encourage employees to improve their performance. If employees are aware that their efforts will be recognized, they are more likely to be driven to reach beyond their roles to help with organizational goals (Luthans, 2000). This reorganization can foster a sense of attachment and dedication to the nonprofit's mission and goals, which can increase employee retention.

Mission-based work is also essential to retaining employees in nonprofit organizations. Mission-based work provides employees with a sense of purpose and personal fulfillment, and it can align with their values. Nonprofit employees have an intrinsic motivation to help others, and this comes from the belief that through their work, they are making a difference in the world around them (Hur & Bae, 2021). Working in a nonprofit setting allows these employees to align their careers with their personal goals and beliefs. Nonprofit agencies that employ these people communicate their mission and inspire people to join their service-focused goals (Fan et al., 2022). The direct impact of nonprofit work on social and community needs is rewarding employees committed to making a difference. However, services-focused work can increase burnout; therefore, further research may aid in developing strategies to improve retention.

Mission-driven work promotes a sense of belonging to a community dedicated to working for a cause. This shared commitment to the mission fosters a supportive work culture. Leaders who promote a caring culture dedicated to the mission engage employees to feel part of the overall objectives (West, 2022). Communicating the mission inspires people to join initiatives (Fan et al., 2022). Employees are likelier to stay with an organization where they feel their work is making a significant difference and contributing to social change. Additional research may help business leaders anchor their agency's mission and vision to increase retention.

Transition

In Section 2, provided were a detailed synthesis and analysis of professional and academic literature. The literature included a review of the chosen conceptual framework, a review of the business problem, including scholarly evidence, and a review of employee retention, strategies, and factors that are linked to employee retention and nonprofit agencies. In Section 3, explanations will include the elements of the project. These elements include the project methodology, ethical considerations, maturity of the project, populations, sampling, participants, data collection, specific interview questions, and the reliability and validity of the project.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Project Ethics

A project researcher has the ethical obligation to complete a study that protects the dignity of the participants and the business. Ethical standards and practices are required for most scholarly studies that involve human affairs (Yin, 2018). Researchers have the responsibility to obtain and report data while keeping the participants' identities confidential (Yin, 2018). I served as the primary data collection instrument and used semistructured interviews and member checking strategies to collect data. These two strategies are common data collection methods for qualitative research (Cleland et al., 2021). IRB approval was obtained through Walden University for this study. The IRB number assigned is approval # 08-15-24-1165977. I have worked in the nonprofit business sector for 20 years and have prior knowledge about this research topic.

As the researcher, I was responsible for ensuring the quality of the study by using Walden University's criteria and the *Belmont Report* protocols for ethical guidelines. The three principles that researchers must follow outlined in the *Belmont Report* are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Respect for the people involved in a research study involves treating people as independent participants who are entitled to protection (Anabo et al., 2019). I included assurances that all participants would be respected and protected by obtaining informed consent that provided comprehensive information about the research project and respecting the privacy and confidentiality of the participants by following safeguards to protect their personal information.

Beneficence involves doing no harm to the participants involved and also maximizing the benefits that could revive and reduce possible harm (Anabo et al., 2019). Assurances included beneficence, followed by prioritizing the participant's well-being throughout the research process. The participants were monitored for any adverse effects of discomfort, and support was provided as needed. Justice was addressed in this study by ensuring equality and fairness. I never unjustly exploited vulnerable populations or excluded certain groups from research opportunities. Striving for equitable representation and participation of diverse populations was instrumental in this research project.

Participants must be given the right to make a fully informed decision about their participation in a study (Lillie & Ayling, 2021). This project started with obtaining informed consent from the potential participants. Informed consent is when participants agree to share data over a single or multiple interactions with the researcher (VandeVusse et al., 2022). I contacted the organization and obtained a signed site agreement and after obtaining the signed site agreement, individuals who meet the eligibility criteria were invited through email to participate in this research project. The email contained an embedded consent form. This form included the description and purpose of the study as well as the steps involved in the research project process.

To accept participation in the study, the participants replayed to the email with “I consent”. No participants received monetary or in-kind incentives in exchange for participating in this study. The participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences to them or the business that they represent. If the participants did choose to withdraw from the project, they were to contact me via email or phone. To protect the rights of the participants and safeguard their identities, each interviewee's name was replaced with a pseudonym. All data obtained from the participants was maintained securely on a password-protected thumb drive. All data collected will be destroyed after 5 years following the study by shredding all documents, erasing all data, and physically destroying the thumb drive.

Nature of the Project

The qualitative method met the needs of this research project. Qualitative studies explore human behavior and look in depth at human processes (Howard-Grenville et al., 2021). This approach is appropriate for this study because of allowing further inquiry into the effective strategies that nonprofit business leaders use to retain staff that cannot easily be put into numbers as quantitative studies suggest. The case study design was selected for this study because the approach entails purposely selecting cases representing the business organizations in the non-profit human services industry (see Rashid et al., 2019). Qualitative case studies require researchers to identify, explore, and observe lived experiences (Yin, 2018). These reports of lived experiences supported the study in finding strategies that lead to effective employee retention.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

In this single case study, the eligibility criteria for potential participants were nonprofit business leaders who use effective strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs and nonprofit business leaders who worked in an agency in central Massachusetts. The study included a purposeful sample of six participants who met the criteria established to meet data saturation requirements.

Selecting the right participants was vital to answering the research question. Knechel (2019) indicated that finding the right participants for research is essential for each phase of the research process. To gain access to the right participants, I established eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria for participants of this study were (a) either an administrative staff or leader at the assigned agency, (b) must have at least 5 years working in the nonprofit business field, and (c) must have implemented effective strategies to retain staff.

After proposal approval and the Walden University's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval (IRB approval # 08-15-24-1165977) to collect data, I worked with the leaders of the agency, who provided at least six initial participants that fit the criteria for my study. Additional participants could have been added if data saturation was not met. Building a professional relationship with the participants is necessary to gather vital data (Thurairajah, 2019). To build a relationship, explanations included the purpose of the project and answered any questions they had pertaining to the project. Building a trustworthy working relationship with the participants by providing open and honest communication was part of the study process. In addition, strategies were used such as active listening, establishing rapport, and being flexible and adaptable to their specific needs.

For this project, purposeful sampling was used to ensure that the participants were aligned with the project's purpose. I ensured that the participants were all part of certain criteria set for the study. Researchers can improve the reliability of their projects by selecting a sampling strategy that obtains vital data (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Purposeful sampling is a strategy for gathering data that improves the trustworthiness of the data and the results (Campbell et al., 2020). Criterion sampling was used to identify participants based on specific parameters. Purposeful sampling allowed the selection of participants with relative knowledge and experiences related to the research question. Purposeful selection included six leaders in a nonprofit business who implemented strategies to retain staff and reduced subsequent financial costs. Selection of these participants included using the invitation that outlines this criterion. I did not include participants who did not meet the eligibility criteria because they had not had the opportunity to see the results of their retention strategies. The number of participants and sample size are vital to qualitative research. The sample size is influenced by the topic, population, and participants' experiences (Staller, 2021). Six participants were selected because their experiences connected to the research question. The sample size was based on the ability to achieve data saturation.

Data saturation indicated that I collected enough data so that no new data would be achieved by interviewing more. Qualitative studies aim to understand human behavior and require a thorough collection of data (Howard-Grenville et al., 2021). Reaching saturation is the process of collecting data until no new ideas, themes or comments are identified (Schnitzler et al., 2022). Interviews included speaking with the organizational leaders and a review of training materials, data retention statistics, and employee reviews until no new data emerged from the process. I used MAXQDA to confirm the coding in the research study.

Data saturation by member checking was used to review the participant interviews and continued in the interviews until no new data emerges, as suggested by Fusch and Ness (2015). The member-checking process consisted of conducting the initial interview, interpreting what the participant shared, and sharing the interpretations with the participant in a summary of the interview responses for validation. The participants were able to validate, change, or clarify the information in the summaries provided during the member-checking process. This process continued until no new data were shared. If data saturation had not been achieved after the sixth participant, interviews would have continued until no new information emerged. The member-checking process led to a maximum benefit for reliability and validity and a strategy for data saturation.

Data Collection Activities

I collected the data that were used to inform the research project's purpose. As the researcher, I was this project's primary data collection instrument and developed interviewing skills that created comfortable connections for the participants. The two data collection techniques used in the study were interviews and a review of organizational documentation, including training materials, retention rate data reports, online discussions, and strategic plans. Using two data collection techniques enabled data saturation.

Interviews of participants included using semistructured interviews and reviewing and analyzing data to identify common themes. Semistructured interviews allowed me a unique opportunity to collect rich data by adopting a conversational style (see Buys et al., 2022). The data for this study were collected using semistructured interviews, a review of interview transcripts, member checking, and the review of research notes. I kept notes to capture observable behaviors and gestures. The participants answered seven open-ended questions and were able to share their thoughts on strategies to retain staff at their organization.

A reliable interview protocol was used to gather valid participant data (see Appendix). The semistructured interview protocol included the initial interview, the interview questions, and then the last component was member checking. After all participants went through the informed consent process and agree, the interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face. In the semistructured interviews, I used open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are an interview strategy researchers used to measure and analyze the attitudes and thoughts of the participants (Baburajan et al., 2024). Participants answered seven predetermined interview questions with some probing follow-up questions. I transcribed and synthesized the responses within 24–48 hours after the interviews. The interviews were captured using a voice memo application on my Apple iPhone 14. The interview protocol was used as a guide (see Appendix). After conducting the interviews, they were transcribed and manually interpreted to analyze the data and create general themes, as suggested by Berli (2021). This process allowed me the ability to analyze the effective strategies used for retaining employees mentioned in interviews. MAXQDA was used to confirm the analysis of the coding and themes.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the data, face-to-face interviews were conducted, and member checking was used. Member checking was conducted after the interviews were completed and all data had been gathered. Member checking included reviewing and interpreting transcripts and then writing a question followed by a succinct synthesis of the interview response. The synthesis was given to each participant, and the participant was asked if it represented the response they intended. I ensured data saturation was reached by continuing the member-checking process until no new information emerged.

Interview Questions

1. What effective strategies do nonprofit leaders use to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?
2. How do nonprofit leaders measure the success of the strategies used to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?
3. What have been the most successful strategies that nonprofit leaders have used to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?
4. How have your business's financial costs been affected by the employee retention strategies nonprofit leaders have used?
5. What were the key challenges to implementing your strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?
6. How did you overcome key challenges to implementing strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?
7. What additional information can you share about strategies nonprofit leaders have used to retain employees and reduce subsequent financial costs?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

The data extracted from interviews offered answers to the research question. Before engaging in data analysis, I organized the data obtained from the participants and documents. Yin's (2018) 5-step process was used to guide this analysis. All electronic data generated from this project is kept on my computer, which is password-protected to ensure access only to me. In addition, documents, electronic communications, and interview material are kept in their own files in password-protected folders. Participants were assigned an identifier that protects their identity, such as P1 for participant 1, P2 for participant 2, P3 for participant 3, P4 for participant 4, P5 for participant 5, and P6 for participant 6, etc. To ensure reporting accuracy, I listened to all interviews multiple times before taking notes and transcribing the interviews.

Manual data analysis was conducted to extract data from the interview transcriptions. Summarized interview responses were shared with the participants to allow for member checking. I contacted each participant, asked them to review the responses, and asked if they agreed or if they had additional information to add to ensure the data collected was valid and reliable and no new information emerged.

After member checking, I secured the physical records as soon as the interviews were conducted in a fire-safe container, which will be kept for 5 years to protect the participant's rights and privacy. After 5 years, all data, notes, interviews, and documents will be destroyed, shredded, or deleted.

The purpose of analyzing data in this project was to identify strategies that nonprofit leaders used to retain staff and reduce financial costs. I used methodological triangulation, member checking, and Yin’s (2018) five steps of the data analysis process of pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic model, and cross-case synthesis analysis. The first step in Yin’s process includes compiling data. Compiling data includes organizing the data into a format that allows the data to be used to solve the business problem. Compiling data organizes research in an order that is easily understood by others (Yin, 2018). The data were compiled from the semistructured interview responses and secondary data to include review of organizational documentation, including training materials, retention rate data reports, online discussions, and strategic plans. My approach complied data and included manual coding and triangulation. Methodological triangulation is the identification of a theme produced from multiple sources (Mattimoe et al., 2021). Methodological triangulation was used to reassure the readers that the study was valid and reliable and provided quality themes, as suggested by Ellis (2021). The readers need to trust that the study was valid and reliable, and that triangulation explored different themes and connected information in each interview. The strategies that were used to reach methodological triangulation included semistructured interviews and the review of organizational documentation, including training materials, retention rate data reports, online discussions, strategic plans and my notes on each participant interview.

The second step, disassembling data, took place by separating the data into categories or themes and developing possible answers to the research question (see Ellis, 2021). Disassembling data broke down the components and ensured that the data were frequently present throughout the study. I approached disassembling data through the manual coding process. Manual coding was a process that allowed information shared in the interviews to become usable data. Manual coding allowed the researcher to guide the research and maintain a closeness with the interview data (Mattimoe et al., 2021). Coupled with the manual coding, extensive literature reviews were conducted, and reflective notes were taken to form a synthesis of information.

The third step involved reassembling the data explored. Reassembling data included looking for comparisons and patterns within the data. The thematic analysis process involved analyzing, synthesizing, and then interpreting the data that appeared when researching the same subject (Ülger et al., 2020). This step involved analyzing the data through the lens of Herzberg’s (1959) theory to uncover insights, explanations, and interpretations relevant to the research questions and objectives. Key themes and concepts emerged from the interview transcripts and were identified, and these data were organized into categories.

The fourth step was to interpret the meaning of the data by concluding that the study is complete and credible (Yin, 2018). The data were reassembled through coding so I could interpret the thematic patterns. Through this process, conclusions were drawn based on the analysis of the data, discussing implications, and making connections to existing literature or theory as supported by Yin (2018). Interpretation involved synthesizing the findings to generate a narrative or explain the business problem.

The last step was to conduct a data synthesis and conclude what future research was needed. Key emerging themes were used to correlate each of the responses with relevant findings from the literature. The key themes with the literature and conceptual framework were integrated for a comprehensive analysis. The data analysis was concluded by presenting meaningful interpretations of the data. The conclusion of the analysis presented some answers to the business problem.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

A research study is considered reliable if it produces consistent results when repeated. Reliability refers to how dependable the knowledge that the study generates is (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Reliability is an essential process completed by the researcher to create a study of integrity. Reliability is crucial in establishing credibility and rigor in the research project. Dependability was established in this study by using member checking to check data, allow the interviewer to correct mistakes, and review transcripts (González-Prieto et al., 2023). Member checking is a tool that involves the participants reviewing the interview data and ensuring that the knowledge is accurate before the study is published (Yin, 2018). Member checking was completed by assessing the consistency of my interpretations across different participants. By comparing feedback from multiple participants, I identified commonalities, discrepancies, or variations in the interpretations and ensured that they were consistent and represented the overall data set. Dependability was established using methodological triangulation and member checking to ensure consistency and stability in the study's findings over time. Member checking solicited the feedback of the participants to confirm or challenge my conclusions (see Coleman, 2021). Triangulation compared and contrasted results to identify patterns and inconsistencies.

Validity

Validity in this study referred to the extent to which the researcher accurately measures and tests the answers to the research questions. Validity referred to the credibility or overall correctness of the information shared (Coleman, 2021). Validity was essential in developing accurate and meaningful conclusions from the research findings. Multiple data collection methods can increase the validity of a research study (Yin, 2018). Data triangulation is a process that can determine dependability by using multiple data sources to corroborate findings (Janis, 2022). In this study, member checking, methodological data triangulation using semistructured interviews and public data, such as employee reviews on Glassdoor and Indeed, and organizational documents, such as training materials, strategic plans, and retention rate data reports were methods used to achieve a valid study.

Credibility

Credibility is foundational to qualitative research, ensuring that the study is methodologically sound, the findings are valid, and the interpretations faithfully represent the participant’s experience. Credibility refers to the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research findings (Moser & Korstjens, 2023). The research conducted executed practices that led to a credible project. The member-checking process involved capturing the participant’s responses as they intended. In addition, triangulation was conducted to ensure the interview responses and the secondary data were validated to ensure accuracy. As the researcher, I used manual coding to test the validity of the interview notes. Manuel coding was a method of organizing data by assigning labels or codes (Saunders et al., 2019). Creditability is essential for establishing the trustworthiness and validity of the research findings.

The member checking follow-up interview helped me to reach data saturation through obtaining in depth information. The process included reviewing and interpreting the interview transcripts, providing a printed copy of the synthesis to the participant, and asking the participant if the synthesis represents their answer or if there is future clarification. This process continued to repeat until no new data emerged from the process.

Member checking after the interview process aided in the data analysis process by obtaining in depth information from participants. The participants then confirmed or disputed the information shared from interview notes. Once the data had been verified through the member-checking process, the data were analyzed.

Transferability

Transferability is vital for qualitative researchers aiming to make meaningful contributions beyond their immediate study. Transferability was achieved when the findings of the research can be applied to other contexts, settings, or populations (Coleman, 2021). Followed was a strict step-by-step process to ensure that the knowledge obtained in this project was transferable. The specifics of the project, such as the location of the study, participant criteria, and the time frame of data collection and data analysis so that others can determine the transferability of the data, were explained within the study. I conducted and recorded interviews, generated thematic data, reached data saturation, and completed the five-step analysis developed by Yin (2018). In addition, a rich description of the participants, engaged stakeholders, and ensured the information critical to the project was preserved was presented to enhance transferability.

Confirmability

Confirmability in a qualitative research study ensures that the knowledge represented in the study has come from the participants. Reliable qualitative studies ensure that the study is not influenced by the researcher's bias, preferences, or preconceptions (Coleman, 2021). Within this study, member checking, verification for the participants, and methodological triangulation were used to ensure that confirmability was achieved. Minimizing researcher bias, promoting transparency, and reflecting on the themes are all strategies that were used in this study to contribute to trustworthiness. I ensured confirmability by describing the steps of the research process to participants in detail to aid in the reduction of bias.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is vital to the validity of a qualitative research study. Data saturation refers to a point in research when the researcher has gathered enough data to fully explore the research topic and no new information emerges; I ensured data saturation by continuing to interview participants and review documents until no additional information or themes emerged. The study included interviews with six participants, and no new information continued to emerge. If new information had continued to emerge throughout the interviews, I would have interviewed additional participants. In addition, member checking allowed the participants to add to or dispute the data. If participants had additions to the data, I would have continued to collect these additions until no new information was discovered.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to identify and explore strategies nonprofit leaders use to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. In Section 3, presented were project ethics, the nature of the project, information about population, sampling and participants, data collection, the project interview questions, data analysis, and reliability and validity. In Section 4, discussion will include the findings of the project. I will highlight areas for future research and the conclusion of this research study project.

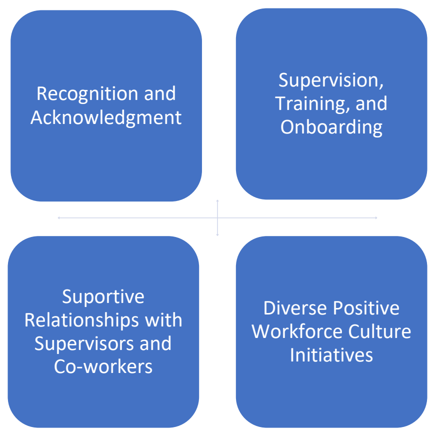
Section 4 Findings and Conclusions

Presentation of Findings

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore effective strategies nonprofit leaders used to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. The research question for this study was “What effective strategies do nonprofit leaders use to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?” Data were collected from six purposefully sampled participants using semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. Additionally, organizational documents, such as training materials, strategic plans, and retention rate data reports were used to triangulate the data shared in participant interviews. Through the thematic analysis process using MAXQDA software, four major themes emerged: (a) recognition and acknowledgment; (b) supervision, training, and onboarding; (c) supportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers; (d) and diverse positive workforce culture initiatives, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Four Emergent Themes



Theme 1: Recognition and Acknowledgment

Recognition and acknowledgment emerged as one of the central themes in this project. Due to financial resource restraints, nonprofit leaders found meaningful ways to recognize staff without relying solely on financial incentives. Two ideas that emerged were acknowledgment through advancement and growth opportunities and creative advocacy for additional employee funds. The study's participants referenced the important of recognizing and promoting people in the agency who are working hard for the agency's mission and vision. The participants also acknowledged acts such as staff gathering to publicly acknowledge staff contributions and using social media channels to recognize staff had been part of their strategies. The words recognition and acknowledgment were mentioned in all six participant interviews.

The participants stressed the importance of recognizing staff for the amazing things they do each day to help their agency succeed. P1 explained that their organization thrives most of awarding employees when they succeed. P4 also commented that recognition can help employees feel valued and seen for he the efforts they are putting into the workplace and the people served. The main goal is to have the employees feel appreciated individually for their own personal contributions. The participants labeled that this recognition and acknowledgment could be in the form of peer to peer or supervisor to supervisee. This information is aligned with research literature that indicates the feeling of appreciation is essential to employee success (e.g., Whitfill et al., 2020). Participants shared specific ideas that they used to show recognition to their employees. My research explored which types of appreciation are most effective in retaining employees, filling a gap in practical applications.

The participants shared that recognition and acknowledgment is shared in staff meetings, on social media and also using awards and certificates. These messages of acknowledgment are awarded for years of service, various achievements within the organization, successful completion of initiatives or exemplifying mission-driven values. Positive praise and feedback are strategies used frequently to show employees true appreciation for their efforts. This information was also supported by the agency’s strategic plan which indicated a goal of intentionally planning wellness offerings through incentives, celebrate staff retention/anniversaries, positive praise and annual celebrations for staff. These specific strategies fill gaps in research by offering specific ways to offer appreciation that leads to retention.

Advancement and growth opportunities were a subtheme that emerged in connection to recognition and acknowledgment. P3 shared that the agency focused on internal hires and encouraging professional advancement and growth. According to participants, these growth opportunities are critical for retaining staff and fostering employee development when compensation is lower than in other business sectors. The agency has offered employees assistance with obtaining advanced educational degrees, learning new skills, and developing their own talents to advance within the agency. P3 shared that the agency also opens up different branches of the business to employees to learn about different aspects of the agency's work. This has opened up opportunities for employees to learn new skills and apply for positions they might not have been aware of. This information was supported by the agency's strategic plan which outlined their goals of thoughtfully preparing for the incoming funds associated with the employee retention tax credit and the priority one funding from their funders. The themes of advancement and growth were seen throughout the participant's interviews.

Creative advocacy for additional funds for employees was discussed in many interviews with participants. P5 mentioned that the administration at this nonprofit did immense advocacy work and connected with state representatives to add their thoughts to the new budget so that their employees would have livable wages to support themselves and their families. This advocacy played a pivotal role in ensuring the employees' voices were heard during the state budget process. The discussion of livable wages is communicated in many forums so that the administration can improve the financial security of the workforce, promote the well-being of their families and retain their employment. These findings lead to actionable strategies for organizations, providing a clear link between effective appreciation practices and improved retention rates and sills gaps of knowledge in research. These efforts demonstrate a strong commitment to not only the mission of the agency but also to supporting staff in a small financial way.

Grants were another creative strategy that emerged from the interviews. Grants provide this agency an opportunity to secure additional financial resources, enabling nonprofits to better support staff (see Woolley, 2024). For example, specific grants aimed at improving wages, benefits, and professional development were all strategies used to help retain the workforce. In addition to these grants, the agency also applied for grants to increase their services, which offered advancement for some of the employees who were actively looking for professional development opportunities. These strategies were also triangulated by the agency's strategic plan, which indicated an ongoing goal to obtain external funding, such as grants to support employee retention.

Understanding how recognition and acknowledgment influence employee motivation and morale equips leaders with best practices for enhancing staff engagement, ultimately leading to more effective retention strategies. Personalized appreciations, recognition and acknowledgments are all strategies noted in existing literature (Rubens, 2024). The findings from this study provide advanced actionable insights that can significantly strengthen the effectiveness and impact of nonprofit organizations. By emphasizing the necessity for leaders to recognize and appreciate their team's contributions, these findings extend existing knowledge on the topic.

Additionally, the agency turnover rate data collected supports these themes, demonstrating a direct correlation between the implementation of recognition and acknowledgment initiatives by leaders and an increase in employee retention. This reinforces the importance of cultivating a culture of recognition within nonprofit settings, showcasing its potential to enhance overall organizational performance.

Connection to Conceptual Framework

Recognition shows employees that their efforts are noticed and appreciated. Recognition is a key motivator in Herzberg's (1968) two-factor theory because it satisfies employees' intrinsic needs for acknowledgment and respect. Employees feel a sense to value for their contributions when they are recognized and this can enhance their engagement and purpose (Herzberg, 1968). Positive recognition of employees can increase the quality of services delivered (Whitfill et al., 2020). This acknowledgment from peers and supervisors is meaningful on a professional and person level.

Connection to Existing Literature

Fostering effective recognition can help nonprofits retain employees. Retaining employees in nonprofit businesses is essential for the quality of treatment and services they provide (Jones et al., 2023). Fostering a culture of recognition can help organizations to reduce turnover rates and retain valuable employees by saving time and money. Public acknowledgment, supervisor and peer recognition, celebrating milestones and awarding individual with achievement awards are all ways to show recognition and acknowledge individual employees (Rubens, 2024). All of these factors lead to retaining valuable employees.

Achievement allows employees to feel as though they have successfully completed a task, learned a new skill, or reached professional growth. Achieving goals can often lead to promotions, additional responsibilities, and professional growth (Thant

& Chang, 2021). Employees who experience professional growth are more likely to stay engaged and seek further development with their organization (Rubens, 2024). Throughout the participant interviews professional growth was a strategy used to reduce turnover for these reasons.

By demonstrating a clear connection between recognition and acknowledgment and reduced turnover, my findings provide evidence that investing in employee appreciation is not just beneficial for individual career paths, but also crucial for organizational stability and employee retention. My findings can guide the development of organizational policies and practices that prioritize recognizing employees, offering a framework for nonprofits to create programming which highlights employee acknowledgment.

Theme 2: Supervision, Training, and Onboarding

Efforts made by administration to foster an environment of strong supervision, further training, and effective onboarding emerged as the second theme. The study participants highlighted the need for a collaborative supervision, training, and onboarding structure and system within the organization that leads to retention of employees. An organization's commitment to the employee’s ability to attach to their work is an essential concept of employee engagement and retention (Wang, 2022). Creating systems of effective supervision, training and onboarding strengthen employee engagement.

Effective supervision involves a process of a supervisor guiding and supporting employees to enhance their performance and development while also fostering the work environment. Effective employee supervision has a positive and significant effect on work performance and employee commitment (Andri & Mandataris, 2023). P4 noted: "Quality supervision with a trained supervisor who recognize somebody's skills and gives them positive, targeted praise is essential in retention. Supervisors that are well trained in how to provide supervision give people a sense of belonging." P5 discussed the importance of having committed from administration to support supervision. P5 also added:

> We have had supervisions where members of upper administration will supervise staff and sit with employees once a month, check in with them, see how everything's going and invests in employees in a personal way that leads to than staying with the agency because they are well trained and cared for.

Effective supervision not only enhances productivity but also contributes to employee retention (Andri & Mandataris, 2023). Supervision meetings also give leaders a chance to embody and promote the organization's values, it strengthens employees' connection to the company, reinforcing the employee's decision to remain part of the team. The agency's strategic plans also support these statements in outlining the importance of supporting employees and offering opportunities to learn and develop. The agency has documented goals that aim to enhance opportunities for growth and advancement.

Training and professional development opportunities are also an essential retentions strategy for this agency. Employers can yield a higher productivity and increased retention from visible and credible training opportunities (Dietz & Zwick, 2022). Employee training is vital for individual and organizational success, driving productivity, engagement, and innovation while reducing turnover and compliance risks.

Training equips employees the skills necessary to complete their jobs but also communicates investment into the employee as an individual (Valeriia, 2024). Participant 3 and Participant 4 both reported that the agency added many different trainings as opportunities for employees to advance their knowledge and add to the services they could offer. Participant 6 added that the agency invested money into developing training so that people of different nationalities could learn job skills to deliver quality services to the people that they serve. In addition to the participant's thoughts, the agency's training plan also supports this dedication to quality training. The training plan outlines the agency’s plan through training that spans the entire length of an employee’s employment. Training and development can enhance employee’s knowledge but also positive outlook toward the organizational investment in employees (Tien Thanh & Thu Ha, 2024). Training fosters a culture of learning, encouraging employees to think creatively and come up with innovative solutions to challenges.

Onboarding is an essential process of integrating new employees into the organization and supplying them with the tools, resources, and information they need to succeed in their roles. These learned skills and resources will enhance employee knowledge and increase feelings of competency (Tien Thanh & Thu Ha, 2024). The role and process of onboarding is essential in the retention of employees within an organization (Valeriia, 2024). The agency’s strategic plan outlines the goal of offering detailed, thoughtful onboarding to help employees connect to the mission and vision of the organization. Onboarding can also facilitate connections with colleagues to help new employees build relationships and feel part of the team.

The concept of detailed onboarding procedures and systems was mentioned in five out of the six interviews with participants. P4 reported that the agency had spent 2 years focusing on recruitment and onboarding because their data indicated that people who were trained well were successful and stayed in their jobs longer. This information was also supported by the turnover rate data that showed in December of 2023 the turnover rate for the agency was 21.77% and in August of 2024 the average turnover rate for the agency was 6.93%. A well-structured onboarding experience helps new hires feel welcomed and valued right from the start. Positive initial experiences can foster loyalty and commitment to the organization.

My findings about supervision, training, and onboarding as strategies to reduce turnover can significantly extend knowledge in the nonprofit field. The findings have demonstrated how effective supervision, comprehensive training, and thorough onboarding contribute to employee retention. Additionally, the findings provide a holistic perspective on workforce management in nonprofits. This approach emphasizes the importance of integrating these elements into a cohesive strategy. The study also highlights how effective supervision, training and onboarding can mitigate turnover challenges that lead to subsequent costs. The participant interview data shows the importance of these ideas which is supported by decrease in employee turnover as evidenced by the turnover rate data, after implementing these strategies. The evidence shared in this study about the impact of supervision, training, and onboarding on turnover rates enhances existing knowledge.

Connection to Conceptual Framework

Supervision, training, and onboarding are all identified retention strategies that were communicated through participant interviews. Herzberg's (1968) two factor theory identifies factors that lead to job satisfactions or motivators. By aligning supervision, training and onboarding with agency values organizations can create a more motivating work environment which leads to retention. Through the lens of Herzberg's theory, strategies related to these areas have the power to improve employee engagement, lower turnover rates and create a positive work environment.

Effective supervision can enhance job satisfactions by providing recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for personal growth. Supervision supports the overall success of the employee (Andri & Mandataris, 2023). Poor supervision can make employees feel micromanaged, unsupported and overwhelmed in the workplace. Herzberg (1968) indicated that these factors are linked to employee dissatisfaction. Ensuring that supervisory practices are positive and constructive helps maintain hygiene factors that Herzberg described. Herzberg labeled motivators such as training as a factor that can lead to retention. Lack of training could be a hygiene factor that leads to dissatisfaction and disengagement. Providing quality training can mitigate these issues.

Connection to Existing Literature

Supervision, training, and onboarding are all themes that were shared in participant interviews. Studies have shown that organizations that invest in training and development see higher employee satisfaction and lower turnover (Rijal & Sesario, 2024). Similar to evidence presented in the literature review, the findings of this study also support importance of understanding and implementing strategies to address supervision, training, and onboarding in reducing turnover within nonprofit organizations.

Effective supervision involves leaders who inspire and support their teams. These ideas are aligned with existing studies that emphasize the role of supportive leadership in reducing turnover (Rijal & Sesario, 2024). The findings in this study highlighted that regular feedback and open communication from supervisors are crucial for employee engagement. Additionally, the findings also reinforced this by showing how effective supervision creates a culture of trust and openness, leading to better retention. Within the agency's strategic development plan consistent and quality supervision was a highlight that the agency has implemented. The strategic plan supports the participants interview data.

Within the existing literature, employee supervision lacks comprehensive exploration (Tian et al., 2020). The findings of this study include aspects like the impact of supervision on employee performance, the role of supervision in work environments, or the psychological effects of supervisory practices that extend knowledge. These ideas fill gaps of knowledge left by current research.

Training serves as a motivator by fostering skill development and career advancement. When employees receive training that helps them grow and advance, it can enhance their job satisfaction and commitment to the organization (Kmecova & Gavura, 2024). Studies have shown that organizations that invest in training and development see higher employee satisfaction and lower turnover. Research also indicates that employees who receive adequate training feel more competent and confident in their roles, which enhances job satisfaction (Kmecova & Gavura, 2024). This aligns with my findings that training contributes to reducing turnover.

There is current research that details the importance of training and onboarding and its effect on retention; however, the agency documents and participant's interviews give context to the research. While some research covers various training ideas, there is a lack of understanding of how these trainings affect different employee demographics. The findings of this study explored which strategies lead to better outcomes in diverse teams, filling a crucial knowledge gap.

Theme 3: Supportive Relationships with Supervisors and Coworkers

Supportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers emerged as one of the central themes of this project. Supportive relationships with supervisors and coworkers play a crucial role in employee retention. When supervisors are approachable and supportive, employees feel safe to express their concerns and ideas. This trust reduces anxiety and fosters a sense of security, making employees more likely to stay (Guo et al., 2020). This theme illustrates that fostering positive relationships in the workplace creates an environment where employees feel valued, supported, and connected. This ultimately leads to increased job satisfaction and retention, benefiting both employees and the organization.

The theme of supportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers was mentioned in five out of the six interviews. P4 reported that when people report liking their supervisor and feeling supportive by them, employees will stay within the agency.

This participant went on to explain that when a supervisor genuinely appreciates their employees and listen to concerns employees are more likely to feel their input is important. Additionally, when employees feel connected they also feel valued and are more likely to manage challenging work situations that can come from engaging in nonprofit work (Maker, 2022). This knowledge was triangulated by the company's strategic plan which indicates that the leaders will focus on implementing staff development initiatives, including supervisor competence by establishing relationships with staff members. Positive relationships contribute to a culture of well-being, where employees feel cared for, leading to increased loyalty and retention.

Relationships with coworkers was also sharing in four of the six interviews. Working together with people who have common objectives strengthens bonds and motivates employees to stay committed to the organization. P5 shared that the organization tries foster a sense of community where employees are encouraged to help each other to be successful both in and out of the workplace. Strong coworker relationships facilitate collaboration and assistance, creating a network of support that enhances job satisfaction (Aslan & Uyar, 2021). A supportive atmosphere with coworkers contributes to overall job satisfaction, making employees less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere. While the relationship between supervisors and employees is crucial, fostering co-worker relationships is equally important for a healthy work environment. These findings of this project emphasize the need to explore the dynamics of coworker relationships, and knowledge that strong peer connections can enhance job satisfaction, collaboration, overall workplace culture and retention.

Nonprofit agencies operate with limited resources, which makes the collaboration of teamwork essential. Strong relationships with coworkers' foster collaboration and enable team members to share and learn skills from one another (Aslan & Uyar, 2021). In addition, these positive relationships also serve as emotional support since coworkers have shared understanding of the stressors and successes of nonprofit work. In three participants interviews it was mentioned that coworkers support one another and this support leads to mitigation of job burnout. Additionally, this information was triangulated by the agency's strategic plan which outlined goals of creating wellness initiative opportunity that that employees can get to know each other and learn to work as a team. Coworker support is essential in enhancing team worker and employee wellbeing and leads to employee retention.

My research highlights the importance of interpersonal relationships in the workplace, underscoring that a supportive environment significantly contributes to employee satisfaction and retention. This information emerged from the data that was shared by the participants and also corroborated with the agency's strategic plan. This adds to existing literature by focusing on the relational aspects of organizational culture. Additionally, my findings reinforce the idea that engagement is not solely driven by organizational policies but also by the quality of workplace relationships.

Connection to Conceptual Framework

Supportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers are linked to Herzberg's two-factor theory in many ways. Herzberg described hygiene factors as essential elements of work culture that prevent dissatisfaction and motivate employees (Herzberg, 1968). Supportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers help to create a positive work environment. If employees feel values and respected it leads to a more stable work environment which people are more likely to stay at (Aslan & Uyar, 2021). Positive relationships can influence how employees perceive organizational policies and operations. If they feel supported by their supervisors, they are more likely to view policies favorably and aligned themselves with the mission and vision of the organization.

Supportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers also leads to higher levels of job satisfactions and motivation. Herzberg noted that motivators actively enhance an employee's sense of fulfillment and engagement in their work (Thant & Chang, 2021). A strong connection with supervisors and co-workers can lead to professional growth and engagement opportunities. These opportunities enhance an employee’s sense of purpose and alignment with the company mission. By fostering this job motivation within these relationships, nonprofits create a more satisfying work environment where people want to remain for their professional careers.

Connection to Existing Literature

The participant interviews highlight the crucial need for nonprofit leaders to develop and support professional relationships among supervisors and coworkers. Five participants mentioned the value of developing relationships with supervisors and also co-workers. According to existing literature, how an employee feels at work is become more important to organizations who are committed to retaining quality employees (Almer et al., 2023). The participants and organizational documents also confirmed that if an employee feels understood and supported they are more likely to remain with their organization. Additionally, the support of a genuine supervisor can be a tool in managing employees service delivery and enhancing the quality of the work they do (Abrokwah et al., 2023). The study findings are supported by existing literature that label relationships building as a retention strategy.

Coworker relationships are also a strategy that emerged in the participant interviews. Nonprofits often rely on teamwork to achieve their missions. Strong relationships foster open communication and collaboration, which can lead to more effective programs and initiatives. Additionally, existing literature communicates that when employees feel connected to their colleagues, they are more likely to stay committed to the organization, reducing turnover and fostering continuity in programs (Livnat & Almog-Bar, 2023). The participants of the study also shared that their connections with their colleagues make them also feel committed to the organization and more likely to stay.

Theme 4: Diverse, Positive Workforce Culture Initiatives

Creating a diverse and positive workforce culture in non-profits is essential for enhancing employee retention. Initiatives that promoted a diverse and positive workplace was the fourth theme that emerged from participant interviews. The agency has taken part in numerous effort to foster a diverse, inclusive and positive environment that enhances the work environment. Enhancing the diversity of the workplace can have inclusive effects of the agency as a whole (Wadhwa & Aggarwal, 2023). Increased awareness in the workplace creates empathy and understanding among employees that fosters a more inclusive environment.

Emerging from the participant interviews were ideas and initiatives that the agency had developed to increase diversity and retention. Mentioned in all six of the participant’s interviews was an agency focus on creating opportunities for diverse staff members and retaining them. About 2 years ago, the agency began working with state leaders to employ foreign-born employees who have added diversity, culture, knowledge, and strength to the organization. This information was also part of the agency’s strategic plan and training plan which indicates that the agency has goals to continue their diversity efforts and significantly improve their supplier diversity program to incorporate more business relationships and employment with black and women-owned businesses. The organization has been able to retain all of these employees within these initiatives who were hired by creating sense of community and appreciation for diversity, enhancing morale and retention.

A positive work culture was established by two different initiatives; work life balance recognition, and employee support strategies. Recognizing work life balance challenges helps employees balance personal and professional responsibilities, leading to increased satisfaction and loyalty (Buga, 2024). P5 mentioned that the agency often completes survey that encourages employees to share their thoughts about their own personal needs. The agency then does their best to come up with creative ideas to support employees both in and out of the workplace. Recognizing and promoting work-life balance in non-profits is vital for employee well-being and retention.

Additional employee support strategies are also part of this agencies strategic and employee retention plan. The employee support strategies are a comprehensive plan designed to enhance the well-being, engagement and productivity of the organization. P3 and P5 talked about the agencies dedication to making sure the employees are successful outside the workplace within their families. The agency has a weekly meeting about benefits, WhatsApp communication with leadership and an employee community liaison who helps employees navigate caring for their families, finding homes and helping with success in their own personal lives. In addition, wellness activities such as cook outs, participation in cultural festivals, and employees outing are a regular part of their planning for increasing employee connection and retention. Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that the well-being of employees is essential to retention. These specific strategies offer leaders ideas for areas of future development.

The participants shared that an effective employee support strategy is crucial for fostering a positive workplace culture, improving job satisfaction, and enhancing retention. By addressing the needs of employees—physically, mentally, and professionally—the agency created an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute to the organization's success. They also feel cared for and that their own personal needs are important to the people leading the agency.

My findings can show how a positive culture impacts employee engagement and productivity. This connection can inform organizations about the broader implications of fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Additionally, the findings established a link between workforce culture and turnover rates, my research provides actionable insights for nonprofits looking to improve retention. This can lead to the development of tailored initiatives aimed at enhancing workplace culture.

Connection to Conceptual Framework

Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory is grounded in the idea that motivated employees are more likely to be satisfied with their work. Satisfied employees feel taken care of, valued and appreciated. The concepts of diversity and inclusion motivate employees by creating an environment where diverse perspectives are recognized and appreciated. The hygiene factors that are included in the two-factor theory describe how inclusive relationships foster a sense of belonging.

Positive workforce culture initiatives can be directly linked to Herzberg's two-factor theory, which differentiates between hygiene factors and motivators that influence employee satisfaction. Work-life balance is an essential component of employee satisfaction and can be effectively analyzed through the lens of Herzberg's two-factor theory (Thant & Chang, 2021). When an agency recognizes the importance of a healthy work life balance it enhances the employee’s dedication to the agency. The employee has a better chance of enhancing their commitment to the agency mission because they feel their own well-being and life outside of work is valued.

A focus on work-life balance not only prevents dissatisfaction but also fosters motivation and engagement, contributing to a more satisfied and productive workforce. Creating a healthy culture that increases motivators is aligned with Herzberg's theory on employee engagement (Herzberg, 1968). Valuing employee voice and experience are all initiatives that emerged as main themes that linked to retention in this project.

Connection to Existing Literature

Recent research shows that inclusive cultures increase employee engagement and reduce turnover. Diverse inclusive work cultures increase employee engagement and reduce turnover (Buga, 2024). My study's findings contribute to and extend existing knowledge on the importance of diverse and positive workforce culture initiatives in the nonprofit sector. The nonprofit sector faces unique challenges regarding diversity and inclusion. Studies highlight the importance of addressing these challenges to improve organizational effectiveness.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

The findings of this qualitative single case study suggested crucial strategies that nonprofit leaders implemented to retain employees. The retention strategies in this project can help provide new insights to nonprofit leaders on ways to develop and implement effective strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs. Based on the projects findings, nonprofit leaders can learn strategies that lead to increasing retention rates. Nonprofit leaders who implement these strategies may contribute to their agencies success by enhancing high levels of employee engagement and participation. Nonprofit organizations can create a more supportive and engaging work environment that enhances employee retention (Hur & Bae, 2021). It is important for agency leaders to understand that recognition and acknowledgment, supervision, training and onboarding, supportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers, and diverse positive workforce culture initiatives are all areas that can increase nonprofit retention.

Recognition and acknowledgment boost employee morale, leading to increased motivation and job satisfaction. Employees that feel valued are more likely to be engaged and committed to the nonprofit organization. Supervision, training and onboarding equips employees with the necessary skills to perform their job effectively and obtain support while carrying out job tasks. These strategies demonstrate that the organization is investing in employee growth which can lead to higher retention rates. Supportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers can build trust through supportive interactions and enhance teamwork, making it easier for the agency to collectively reach their goals. Additionally, supportive relationships promote open communication and allow team members to share ideas, feedback and express themselves freely. This leads to better collaboration and problem-solving. Finally, diverse positive workforce culture initiatives foster a culture of appreciation for diversity and this appreciation brings a variety of perspective and ideas. Employees feel valued for the diverse perspectives they bring to the organization.

Implications for Social Change

The project findings contribute to proactive social change by offering nonprofit business leaders strategies to establish within their agency to retain employees. The results of this study include examples of valuable strategies that nonprofit agencies can use to increase employee retention. Retaining employees will positively contribute to the general service provided by nonprofit agencies (Andrews & Mohammed, 2020). The result of this study could positively affect positive social change by providing increased information that will allow agencies to positively affect the communities that they serve.

Recognition and acknowledgment can play a pivotal role in driving positive social change. Recognizing nonprofit employees for their contributions can empower them, enhancing their self-esteem and motivating them to continue advocating for change. Acknowledgment of their efforts encourages others to get involved, fostering a culture of participation and activism and positively effects the committees the nonprofit organization serves (Rubens, 2024). This study supports the idea that by fostering a culture of recognition and acknowledgment, nonprofit organizations and communities can empower individuals, strengthen networks, and promote inclusivity, all of which are essential for driving positive social change.

Supervision, training and onboarding empowers employees to learn the skills needed to contribute to meaningful social change. Effective supervision can nurture future leaders who are committed to social change. Comprehensive onboarding can emphasize the organization's commitment to social responsibility, encouraging new hires to engage in community-focused activities from the start (Andri & Mandataris, 2023). Additionally, this study highlights that collaborative training programs can enhance teamwork, leading to collective efforts in addressing social issues and developing innovative solutions.

Understanding retention factors helps nonprofits maintain a stable workforce. This stability ensures continuity in programs and services, enhancing overall organizational effectiveness. Additionally, this study revealed four themes that keep employees engaged and satisfied. By implementing the findings, organizations can foster a positive work environment, boosting morale and job satisfaction. High retention rates mean that experienced staff members stay longer, preserving institutional knowledge.

A committed workforce is more likely to engage deeply with the mission of the nonprofit, leading to greater impact in the community. The participants in the study shared that they feel employees that are valued are more motivated to contribute positively to their organization's goals. Ultimately, understanding and improving retention can contribute to the long-term sustainability of nonprofits. A loyal and engaged workforce helps organizations navigate challenges, adapt to changes, and maintain their mission over time (Stater & Stater, 2019). These positive implications, show the importance of retention studies in nonprofits, highlighting their potential to create meaningful change both within the organization and in the communities they serve.

Recommendations of Further Research

This research project and the findings were limited to information obtained from leaders in a small nonprofit business located in central Massachusetts. The participants shared their own experiences which could have included personal biases or assumptions that could have influenced data interpretation and analysis. Employee retention and satisfaction were defined various ways which could have altered the outcomes of the themes that emerged. The results of the study merit further exploration of strategies that other nonprofit and additionally for profit agencies can implement. Additionally, to address this limitation further research should clearly define variables and constructs to minimize ambiguity. This practice will help ensure that all researchers interpret and measure them consistently.

Future research on nonprofit retention can focus on several key areas to enhance understanding and improve strategies. The results of this study outline the demand for leaders of nonprofit agencies to understand the needs of their employees. By exploring the needs of employees, researchers can contribute valuable insights that help nonprofits enhance employee retention strategies and ultimately achieve their missions more effectively. I would recommend that future research be expanded to include additional nonprofit agencies and also for profit organizations. Additionally, I would recommend conducting longitudinal studies to track employee retention behavior over time. This could help identify trends and factors that contribute to sustained retention over a longer period of time.

Conclusion

Employees are the single most important resource to nonprofit agencies. Retained staff are more likely to have a deep understanding of the organization's mission, values, and processes, enabling them to carry out the mission effectively. Long-term employees develop valuable expertise and institutional knowledge that enhance operational effectiveness. Organizations that have frequent employee turnover can incur increased financial stress due to these employee retention challenges.

Nonprofit leaders can benefit from learning and implementing employee retentions strategies. Retaining skilled employees can ensure that the services delivered fulfil the organizations mission and vision. By learning and implementing effective retention strategies, nonprofit leaders not only enhance their organization’s operational stability but also create a more motivated and engaged workforce.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Date: Location:

Researcher: Participant:

Interview Format

-Meet and greet participants at the location and time we agreed on and express my appreciation and thanks for participating in this researcher project.

-Introduce myself and my role.

-Discuss the consent form and the purpose of the study.

-Ask the participants if there are any questions, and answer all questions fully.

-Collect the consent form.

-Write the participant's code on the consent form to protect confidentiality.

-Inform the participant that the interview is voluntary and inform them that they can withdraw at any time during the process.

-Ask each participant for their consent to audio record the interview. I they consent, ask them to verbally agree by saying “I agree” to the audio record the interview and proceed to conduct audio recording with the noted devices. If participants do not consent to audio recording the meeting will be ended. The participants will be thanked for their time.

Interview Questions:

1. What effective strategies do nonprofit leaders use to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?

2. How do nonprofit leaders measure the success of the strategies used to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?

3. What have been the most successful strategies that nonprofit leaders have used to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?

4. How has your business's financial costs been effected by the employee retention strategies nonprofit leaders have used?

5.What were the key challenges to implementing your strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?

6.How did you overcome key challenges to implementing strategies to retain staff and reduce subsequent financial costs?

7.What additional information can you share about strategies nonprofit leaders have used to retain employees and reduce subsequent financial costs?

Follow Up Member Checking Interview:

After the interview process, you will receive a PDF document via email. Enclosed in this email will contain a summary of the interpretations of your statements. The document will show your answers and also the researchers interpretation of your statements and a column for you to indicate if you agree or disagree with the accuracy of the responses and interpretations. This is a vital step in the research process and it used to ensure validity and reliability in the projects findings. For the purposes of confidentiality and protection of your privacy, you will only see the information that pertains to you as a participant. When you have completed your review of this document, please email the completed document to me at amy.kreidemaker@waldenu.edu, and you will receive an email receipt. If sections are incomplete, I will return the documents with notes alerting you to what areas still require your completion.