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Strategies Hospitality Business Leaders Use to Retain Employees During Organizational Change

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
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MBA, Southern Wesleyan, 2013

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Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

High employee turnover during organizational change can weaken the hospitality sector's operational efficiency, leading to inconsistencies in service delivery and reduced productivity. To mitigate these effects, hospitality business leaders are encouraged to adopt evidence-based retention practices that strengthen employee commitment and sustain organizational success. Grounded in job embeddedness theory, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore strategies hospitality business leaders used to retain employees during organizational change. Six hospitality business leaders from the Southeastern United States region were participants in semistructured interviews. The four themes that emerged through thematic analysis were clear communication, competitive compensation, rapport building, and reward and recognition. A primary recommendation for hospitality business leaders is to cultivate a safe environment during organizational change where clear communication, transparency, and honesty are the epitome of their leadership. The implications for positive social change include potential opportunities for business leaders to become change agents by creating jobs that can enhance the well-being of families and communities.

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Dedication

Life happened and granted me every valid excuse to give up and not complete this doctoral project. However, I was constantly reminded of a passage many have quoted, “The race is not given to the swift nor to the strong but to the one who endures until the end.” It was only by God’s amazing grace that I could endure until the completion of this project. First, this doctoral project is dedicated to God. Thank you, Lord, for your love and for assuring me that you will never leave nor forsake me. Second, this doctoral project is dedicated to my late father, Martin Hughes; words cannot express my longing for you to see me graduate with a doctorate degree. Third, I dedicate this doctoral project to my mother, Rosa M. Harris, who always believed in me. Thank you, mom, for coming to all my graduations, and not really knowing the names of the degrees I have achieved but always told me, “Baby, go for the BIG one.” Finally, I dedicate this doctoral project to my children, Rhys, Shelly, Arthur II, and my grandbaby, Naomi Jennifer Nyanfor, for always telling me, “Mom, you got this.”

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Background of the Problem

Employee retention in the hospitality industry is a problem for some hospitality business leaders during organizational change. Enamala and Reddy (2022) stated that business leaders experience an economic crisis when there is a decrease in employee retention, a reduction in productivity, and a financial setback due to the cost of replacing new employees. According to Utete (2023), the low employee retention rate is a significant obstacle within the hospitality industry. Ghani et al. (2022) also asserted that a poor retention rate can affect competitiveness and turn off the organization's operations and effectiveness. The annual turnover rates for operational workers in some luxury hotels are over 50%, and those for supervisory workers are 40%. According to researchers, replacing an operational employee costs $8,600.00, which is higher than the cost of replacing a managerial employee and accounts for 40% of total operational expenses (Ghani et al., 2022; Scott et al., 2021). Hospitality business leaders must seek successful strategies to retain employees during organizational change, which need to address the employee retention problem adequately.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

During organizational change, a decreased retention rate within the hospitality industry is a significant concern for some business leaders and can pose a tremendous financial problem. According to Morain and Aykens (2023), employees' ability to adapt to organizational change dropped by 43% in 2022, compared to 74% in 2016. Morain and Aykens further stated that 55% of employees' retention, health, team relationships, and

work environment declined because of the change. The authors also noted that to replace a new worker costs an organization one and a half times the earnings of a current job. In addition to losing an employee, the replacement cost also involves losing corporate knowledge and relationships gained while employed (Halim, 2021; Michael & Fotiadis, 2022). The general business problem was that employee retention rates are lowered during organizational change, creating a potential loss in performance and profitability. The specific business problem was that some hospitality business leaders lack strategies to retain employees during organizational change. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore the strategies some hospitality business leaders used to retain employees during organizational change. The targeted population consisted of six business leaders from three South Carolina counties, Richland, Lexington, and Anderson County, who had successfully used strategies to retain employees in the hospitality industry during organizational change. Also, participants who had a minimum of 3 years of experience as a leader in the hospitality industry to ensure thorough knowledge of the industry. Finally, participants who were inclined to dedicate a period of 1 hour. Access to participants was acquired by advertising through Instagram and Facebook. I used semistructured interviews and purposive and snowballing sampling methods. The conceptual framework for this project was the job embeddedness theory developed by Mitchell et al. (2001).

Research Question

What strategies do hospitality business leaders use to retain employees during organizational change?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Researchers should address a study's fundamental assumptions and limitations to demonstrate that the study results are unbiased. Assumptions in research are a system of beliefs considered to be true without verification by the researcher (Almasri & McDonald, 2021). The first assumption for this project was that I assumed, concerning population and sampling, that the individuals selected were representative of the business leaders of the hospitality industry. My second assumption concerning the data collection was that participants provided honest responses, and the data analysis produced valid and reliable information. The third assumption I assumed concerning instrumentality was that I was the primary instrument for this pragmatic qualitative inquiry project. The fourth assumption concerning methodology was that a pragmatic qualitative inquiry project was the most appropriate research design.

Limitations

Research limitations are possible weaknesses that may impact the findings (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The researcher usually has no control over the possible weaknesses of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). This project had three limitations that may influence validity. The first limitation was that the potential constraints of the project may be limited based on the opinion and judgment of leaders rather than actual results. A recommendation for the first limitation and future researchers or leaders was to ensure that the research questions and objectives were clearly defined. The second limitation was that my knowledge and abilities may be limited to the

knowledge of the company leader. A recommendation for the second limitation was for me to educate myself thoroughly on the subject matter to have a smooth transition between questions. The third limitation was that the time restrictions to collect participant's data may be challenging for me to control. A recommendation for the third limitation was to communicate clearly and promptly the time allotted for each participant participating in the research project.

Transition

Section 1 consisted of a short synopsis and overview of the background of the problem, a summary depicting the specific business problem, and the principal purpose of the project. Section 1 also consisted of a statement identifying the potential participants and data sources and articulating the conceptual framework to ensure the research question is in sync with the specific business problem. Finally, included in Section 1 are several facts that are assumed to be accurate but are unverifiable, a definition of limitation, and a list of uncontrollable potential weaknesses. Section 2 includes an evaluation of the literature, which contains a synthesis of seminal and current research that connects the conceptual framework, an overview of employee retention that has impacted many businesses, a brief history of the hospitality industry to explain the concept of the industry, an examination of the challenges companies have with retaining employee during organizational change within the hospitality industry, causes that influence low employee rates, and a plan of action that may be helpful to improve employee retention. Section 3 consists of an overview of research ethics, which comprises a description of the researcher’s role, how the participants was protected, a

discussion on the target population, and the most appropriate research method for the project. Section 3 concludes with a discussion of how I addressed the reliability and validity of the research. Section 4 includes a thorough academic summary of the research findings and recommendations for further research.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A comprehensive compilation of previous and current research in a literature review provides evidence that enables a researcher to address the research question. According to Snyder (2019), a literature review is designed to give readers a clear narrative and understanding of a particular phenomenon. This literature review consists of an extensive analysis and blend of numerous sources to demonstrate what strategies leaders used to retain employees during an organizational change. The organization of this literature review contains eight sections: (a) the conceptual framework, (b) job embeddedness theory, (c) the components of job embeddedness theory, link, fit, and sacrifice, (d) employee retention, (e) the history of the hospitality industry, (f) employee retention in the hospitality during an organizational change, (g) factors influencing low employee retention, and (h) strategies to improve employee retention.

This qualitative pragmatic inquiry aimed to explore the strategies some hospitality business leaders used to retain employees during an organizational change. The plan to identify the literature applicable to this project included a systematic search of peer-reviewed articles and journals in Walden University's library database. This literature review also included databases such as Google Scholar, Business Source Complete, AB/INFORM Global Hospitality and Tourism Complete, Academic Search Complete, Emerald Management Journal, ProQuest, and Sage. This literature review included a blend of seminal and 85% of current peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2024 that connect the conceptual framework (please see Table 1).

Table 1

Literature Review 5 Years Peer-Reviewed Articles Range From 2020 to 2024

Category	5yrs- peer review	Older sources	Total of sources
Books	1	1	2
Peer reviewed articles	172	25	197
Nonpeer review	3	0	3
Total	176	26	202

Conceptual Framework

The premise for this project was the job embeddedness theory. Job embeddedness theory is a leading component that Mitchell et al. (2001) developed to comprehend why individuals stay with their current employer. Holtom and Darabi (2018), Kizad et al. (2015), Jalell and Sarmad (2022), Obeng et al. (2024), and Tian et al. (2016) argued that individuals may embed in several different ways determined by three aspects: (a) the intensity to which individuals values in life is equal to that of the job or community, (b) the intensity to which an individual link to others or activities in the organization, and (c) how satisfied individuals are in what they will forfeit if they left. According to Mitchell et al., three main essential features of job embeddedness theory show various connections an employee may cultivate with other employees within the organization that may impact the decision making process of whether to remain or depart from an organization: (a) fit, how an employee feels if the job or working environment a good fit for them; (b) links, what connections individuals developed with others or groups, and (c) sacrifice, the level of disruption that may happen in an individual's life if

they have to give up the job and leave. According to Mitchell et al., workers typically will only leave their workplace if they are not embedded. Hospitality business leaders must have a crystal-clear comprehension of the fundamental elements that successfully retain employees during organizational change. Therefore, business leaders can determine what factors are insignificant to their success.

Job Embeddedness Theory

The job embeddedness theory was the most suitable conceptual framework that influenced the basis for this project. Researchers have agreed that job embeddedness theory has a significant impact on employee retention (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021; Bambacas & Kulik, 2013; Huning et al., 2020; Holtom et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2001; Obeng et al., 2024; Shah et al., 2020; Sindhu et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2020). Ghosh and Gurunathan (2015) studied hundreds of leaders in several banking companies. The authors aimed to show that employee retention rate may be impacted by the level of commitment employees have to human resource policies. Ghosh and Gurunathan's research results indicated that job embeddedness theory contributes to developing strategies for increasing low retention rates in organizations.

In the hospitality industry, embedded employees may increase employee retention rates, which, in turn, may improve performance and profitability. The job embeddedness theory is a construct that many scholars are thus far developing (Afsar & Badir, 2016; Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021; Fan et al., 2023; Obeng et al., 2024). Scholars have embraced the idea that employee retention can be determined and improved by the degree to which employees are embedded in the place of employment and surroundings (Holtom et al.,

2006; Lee et al., 2004; Treuren & Fein, 2021; Zang et al., 2012). According to Mitchell et al. (2001), embedded workers in the workplace will generally stay in the organization, unlike non-embedded workers. Similarly, scholars have attested that embedded workers may shun leaving their workplace even if there is dissatisfaction with the work environment or relationships (Martdianty et al., 2020; Mashi et al., 2022; Thome & Greenwood, 2020; Treurea & Fein, 2021; Yu et al., 2020). Business leaders within the hospitality industry may find the knowledge of improving employee retention helpful.

Aspects that may provoke workers to stay with an establishment rather than leave have been the leader's primary concern for decades. Clinton et al. (2012), Holtom et al. (2020), and Peltokorpi and Allen (2024) asserted that job embeddedness theory has numerous influences over an employee's life that lead to them remaining in their jobs. Holtom et al. asserted that individuals with more job duties and relationships have many influences and, therefore, are more embedded in their place of employment. On the other hand, Peltokorpi and Allen argued that some employees may experience low job embeddedness if they do not have relationships on the job or primary job duties or functions. Nevertheless, the workers will not quit because they feel stuck on the job. To get a concept of the job embeddedness theory, business leaders must comprehend the factors that trigger employees to leave or stay with their place of employment.

Job embeddedness may potentially have a significant impact as it relates to increasing employee retention rates. According to DeConinck and Deconinck (2021) and Artiningsih et al. (2023), there is a strong connection linking job embeddedness and staff retention rates. Steindórsdóttir et al. (2021) investigated the job embeddedness theory to

gain a deeper understanding and to explain employee retention and the assumption that it has a vital impact on voluntary turnover. The authors evaluated the main fundamental factors that impact job embeddedness and the correlations between the employees' perception of their working environment and the satisfaction component of them deciding to remain or depart from a company. Steindórsdóttir et al. distributed 430 surveys to staff members in several establishments. The results from the project signify that the central structure encircling individuals in the workplace may become a compelling inspiration for retaining workers within most places of employment. Business leaders may find this project beneficial in contributing to grasping a comprehensive analysis of the job embeddedness theory to develop strategies to retain their employees.

Job embeddedness may lead in organizations regarding staff members' comfort as they attempt to relay their thoughts or ideas. Akgunduz et al. (2023) and Liu et al. (2021) attested that job embeddedness is vital to individuals expressing themselves on the job concerning work-related views or issues. Tan et al. (2019) asserted that embedded employees use their voices to speak out concerning problems in their company or community, even if they feel it may or may not have an impact. The project aimed to evaluate whether embedded workers express their point of view regarding workplace issues and their perception of fairness in the matter. According to Tan et al., data from questionnaires sent out to business leaders. The authors also used a hierarchical liner model to analyze the data. The results from the research indicate that embedded employees usually are more assertive when sharing their opinions of an organization when they perceive fair treatment. This project is essential because it may give business

leaders an extensive analysis of the impact of job embeddedness and methods on how to increase employee retention.

Job embeddedness has an impact on employee retention. According to Yoon et al. (2022) and Sindu et al. (2023), there is a connection between job embeddedness and employee retention. Watson (2018) stated that job embeddedness may significantly influence employee retention, especially among teachers in the United States. The author argued that teachers' turnover costs are estimated from $10,000 to $18,300 per teacher. Watson also argued that the National Commission on Teaching and Americas' Future district turnover cost was $7.2 billion in 2007 and $2.2 billion in 2014. The author sought to explore the effect job embeddedness had on employee retention. The author used data from three school districts and over 143 faculty members who had not been on the job for 5 years in Central California. The results indicated a compelling connection between job embeddedness and novice teacher retention. The author suggested that the research limitations revealed a low return rate, which may result from surveying the younger generation. Another limitation the authors displayed is that the specific forces that link an individual to a job may sometimes be challenging to predict.

Job embeddedness theory refers to the influences within a place of employment that inspire employees to remain on the job versus leaving. Researchers have agreed that job embeddedness theory has an impact on an individual's choice of whether to leave or stay with an organization (Holtom et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020). According to Artiningsih et al. (2023), Mitchell et al. (2001), Peltokorp and Allen (2024), and Obeng et al. (2024), job embeddedness theory has three components that display the

level of influences workers may establish in their place of employment fit, links, and sacrifice. When the components of job embeddedness work excellently together, workers may feel comfortable in the workplace and decide not to quit their jobs. This information is essential for business leaders to implement methods to retain their employees and seize the moment to grasp job embeddedness.

The Components of Job Embeddedness Theory

Link

According to Mitchell et al.'s (2001) job embeddedness theory, *link* is the leading element. Mitchell et al. defined link as several associations a worker has developed within their place of employment and associations they have formed outside of the company (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). Shah et al. (2020) and Huning et al. (2020) asserted that links can also be connections inside or outside a community that may impact an individual's decision to exit or remain with an organization. When employees form strong bonds within the organization, the relationship binds them to communities, groups, and each other, influencing their job decisions.

An individual is the greatest embedded in a company by the level of significance and intensity of the links. When someone is inspired or committed to their job and has formed relationships, it can tremendously impact a worker's decision to quit or remain on the job (Teng et al., 2021). Fuchs (2022) asserted that links can be individuals within the company, such as supervisors or teammates, and individuals outside the company, such as family or social relationships. Alola et al. (2019) argued that individuals with a solid association with their leaders are apt to be the greatest embedded and committed to the

company. Ramaite et al. (2022) also attested that hospitality workers with a strong bond with their families, neighborhoods and friends are the greatest embedded and their job performance and productivity increase. However, according to Akgunduz et al. (2023), when trust no longer exists, employees are apt to become less devoted; therefore, the decision to quit or remain on the job becomes more apparent. Dirican (2023) alluded that forming strong relations and building solid trust is crucial for leaders to generate firm links amongst supervisors and their workers. Leaders have an excellent chance to learn everything there is to know concerning job embeddedness theory to implement strategies that will retain their employees.

Business leaders in a company may want to promote network building to enhance the number of links an employee may develop. For example, social cohesiveness is an excellent way to increase links with employees. Most organizations usually have employee gatherings or picnics (Achmadi et al., 2023). Likewise, Fuchs (2022) stated that links can be enhanced within a firm if employees are friends with other workers, have a great rapport with the supervisors, or have active community relationships. Steindórsdóttir et al. (2021) alluded that the stronger the links workers have, the more they become obligated to remain with the company. For example, through network building, workers become more embedded because of the relationship formed on the job, which in turn causes them to reconsider leaving and remain on the job. Once business leaders identify the influences that link workers to an organization, developing strategies to retain them may come easy.

Fit

According to Mitchell et al. (2001)'s job embeddedness theory, *fit* is the second element. The fit component is a notion that a worker gets to describe their compatibility or contentment while on the job. When workers feel that their values, goals, or skills fit within their place of employment, they will become more attached to the company and be reluctant to leave (Steindórsdóttir et al., 2021). In a survey of 362 hotel workers, Salem et al. (2023) found that individuals who agreed with the company's mission statement were a good fit and exhibited the necessary skills to carry out their job duties. The authors stated that the survey indicated these individuals will probably remain with the company.

Other scholars also asserted that the *fit* component of job embeddedness has an incredible impact on how a person perceives that they are compatible with the company's values, goals, and surroundings *(*Faisal, 2022; Ratnawati et al., 2020; Saleem et al., 2021; Steindórsdóttir et al., 2021). When there is a compatibility between work and the company, according to Steindórsdóttir et al. (2021), this is a great fit, causing the individual to become committed and remain on the job. For example, a worker who does not feel that they belong with an organization or whose values no longer agree with those of the company will eventually leave (Faisal, 2022). Meanwhile, an employee who prefers hot climates may stay on a job in a tropical location (Salem et al., 2023). Leaders can benefit from this information by proactively seeking strategies to retain their workers.

Leaders may want to check out employees during the hiring process to detect if they are a good match or a misfit if they become employed. Williamson et al. (2021) asserted that there is a possibility that once an employer hires a worker, they may become

a misfit if they perceive that their values do not agree with that of the company. Williamson et al. also stated that a misfit may be the uneasiness a person feels when they perceive that they are incompatible with their organization's mission statement. However, if a worker becomes a misfit, leaders may find it difficult to retain employees, especially during an organizational change (Faisal, 2022; Fuchs, 2022; Mitchell et al., 2001; Tanova & Holtom, 2008). By knowing how an employee becomes a misfit, leaders can probably choose workers during recruitment (Faisal, 2022). This awareness may help leaders implement appropriate strategies to retain their workers.

Sacrifice

According to Mitchell's et al. (2001) job embeddedness theory, *sacrifice is* the third element. Scholars described the element of sacrifice as the job benefits a worker will have to give up if they decide to leave an establishment (Achmadi et al., 2023; Arici et al., 2023; Mitchell et al., 2001). Mitchell et al. asserted that an employee would forfeit company benefits if they decide to leave the company. However, other scholars stated that an example of sacrifice could be a worker losing a high-salary job, a coworker losing friendships they developed over the years, or a child losing their playground friends who were in a good district (Ampofo & Karetepe, 2021; Mallol et al., 2001). Job embeddedness increases if the anticipated cost an employee will sacrifice when they leave outweighs the anticipated cost of staying. The higher the individual's anticipated cost of quitting a job, the lower the likelihood of them leaving (Salem et al., 2023). Leaders also need to find ways to improve retention within the organization by ensuring that the sacrifice of a person leaving is higher than their staying.

Separately from the gain of income with employment, an individual may lose other incentives such as their family insurance which would motivate them to stay with the organization. Individuals may also lose a dedicated support system from supervisors who value their employees and who clearly communicate the company objectives (Yu et al., 2020). An individual's impact of sacrifice varies depending on the influencers, such as years employed, job security, location, relationships, pension plans, or stock in the company (Mitchell et al., 2001). An employee contemplating leaving an organization but not wanting to sacrifice valued benefits and relationships would be less likely to leave that organization (Yu et al., 2020). When link and fit are excellent together, and sacrifice is at its peak, employees will decide not to leave the organization (Holtom et al., 2020; Mashi et al., 2021; Mitchel & Lee, 2001). Leaders who want to increase the retention rate within the organization may consider increasing the perceived value of organizational benefits.

Employee Retention

Employee retention is very costly for many organizations. Scholars have researched and revealed that losing employees is more expensive than retaining them (Chang et al., 2020; Rasheed et al., 2020). Sthapit and Shrestha (2019) stated that having high-performing employees in an organization is essential because it costs an employer extra money to replace current employees with new ones. Afsar et al. (2018) argued that replacing an employee is very high and estimated that replacing an employee costs 50-60% of a worker's earnings annually in the hospitality industry. The authors' research explored the intermediate influence of job embeddedness on high-performing employees'

practices, their trust in their supervisors, and employee retention within the hospitality industry. The results indicate an association between the effect of job-embeddedness high performing employees and the supervisors' trustworthiness, resulting in reduced employee turnover. The results also suggest an essential role in improving employee turnover when supervisors utilize motivation, rewards, incentives, and other benefits. The authors recommended that further research is needed to enhance the generalizability of the research. The results from the research can be beneficial in understanding various strategies business leaders can use to improve retention during an organization.

Retaining employees is a severe problem in the hospitality Industry. According to Kurdi and Alshurideh (2020), employee retention is a company's capability to keep desirable workers to meet the company's objective. Chawla and Singla (2021) asserted that employee retention is very challenging. The author’s study indicated that the biggest challenge is retaining competent employees because the hospitality industry grows in a highly competitive environment. Chawla and Singla's (2021) research aimed to determine the various factors influencing employee retention strategies and explore specific retention strategies used by leaders to increase retention in the hospitality industry. Chawla and Singla also used confirmatory factor analysis method to evaluate the replies of individuals employed in different rated hotels in the Capital Region of India. The research results indicate seven strategies, organizational culture and values, monetary rewards and incentives, learning and career growth, organization initiation, leadership, work-life balance, and exit barriers that may significantly impact employee retention. Chawla and Singla recommended that hotel business leaders focus diligently on why

employees leave and retain competent employees by developing and implementing successful retention strategies. The results from this research are significant in understanding and identifying various strategies business leaders use to improve employee retention.

The History of the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry has been around for many years. The concept of the hospitality industry dates back to the 1900s (Hepple et al., 1990; Reuland et al., 1985; Shamir, 1978). Traveling during those days was so dangerous that an individual without a place to lodge could expose themselves to death or even robbery. As a result of not feeling safe, many travelers implemented a code of hospitality safety to prevent the guests from being robbed or harmed physically. At the same time, no physical harm would also come to the host (King, 1995). Understanding the history of the hospitality industry is very important as business leaders can use the information to make good selections during the recruitment process and thus develop strategies to retain those employees.

The hospitality industry is the fastest-growing industry that employs workers for all day or half a day annually and seasonally. Quinn and Buzzetto-Hollwood (2019) stated that the hospitality industry had a high job opening rate of 4.9%. The authors predicted that by 2024, the industry will add about 16.5 million jobs. However, according to Dogru et al. (2024), although the hospitality industry faced many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the industry is still growing, with an annual growth rate of 51.1% from 2021-2022. The hospitality industry is a labor-intensive industry comprised

of various companies whose frontline workers are essential to the success of the businesses and whose primary activities are people-focused (Fry et al., 2020). The industry employs thousands of individuals and is considered a billion-dollar industry (Kim & Spears, 2022). The hospitality industry's continued growth depends upon the success of the recruitment process and retaining employees who are a good fit for the industry (Ghani et al., 2022). Business leaders could benefit from this research by learning recruitment techniques, which may improve employee retention.

Employee Retention in the Hospitality Industry During Organizational Change

Many organizations need help retaining employees during organizational change, especially in the hospitality industry. Organizational change is an organization's alteration from an existing state to a state of restructuring, mergers, and innovation (Ramos Maçães & Román-Portas, 2022). According to Kristiana et al. (2021), a merger refers to two companies combining their operational activities to form one organization. Suryaningrum et al. (2023) stated that acquisitions refer to a process that allows the acquiring organization to take over the stake in the acquired organization's capital stock.

Kristiana et al. (2021) suggested that business leaders depend on development methods such as mergers and acquisitions to achieve growth and a more significant competitive advantage in a constantly changing environment. However, Naz et al. (2021) alluded that the challenge of retaining employees during the merger and acquisition process may occur. Employee retention is a company's power to depend on dependable workers. In their research, Kristian et al. (2021) aimed to determine the efficiency of start-up acquisition as a strategy and the correlation between psychological ownership,

demonstrating commitment when employees feel a sense of responsibility for the organizational goals, employee retention, and human resource retention during the integration phase. The findings indicate a relationship between psychological ownership and employee retention, accomplished by direct and indirect results of employee commitment and involvement. The results are vital in exploring business leaders' strategies in the hospitality industry to retain employees during organizational change.

Leaders play a vital role in retaining employees during organizational change. Afsar et al. (2018) stated that when employees trust their supervisors during uncertainties, their performance and work practices are high. Wiatr (2022) also agreed that employees may function well and embrace organizational change successfully when they have faith in their leaders and their leaders provide clear communication. Asfar et al. aimed to explore the intermediate influence of job embeddedness on excellent-performing employees. The authors also researched supervisors' practices, employees' trust in their supervisors, and the retention of employees within the hospitality industry. The results indicate an association between the mediating effect of job-embeddedness on high-performance practices and the supervisors' trust, increasing employee retention. The results also suggest supervisors are essential in improving employee retention by utilizing motivation, rewards, incentives, and other benefits. Afsar et al. recommended that further research be needed to increase the generalizability of the study. The results of this research may be beneficial to understanding various strategies business leaders use to improve retention during organizational change.

Retaining employees in the hospitality industry is a significant concern for many leaders, especially during organizational change. According to Han (2020), the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that 2020, there would be a loss of one-third of employees in the United States. Han further stated that that rate is much higher in the hospitality industry than in any other industry, with an annual rate of 60% to 120%. Musaigwa (2023) asserted that business survival is dependent upon leaders. According to Musaigwa, leaders' role in increasing employee retention during organizational change is critical, for it determines the growth or demise of an organization. At the same time, Bartik et al. (2020) suggested that business leaders must seek help to keep their businesses open for operation or retain their employees during uncertainty or organizational change. Bartik et al. researched to explore and provide insight into the impact COVID-19 had on approximately 5,800 small businesses in the United States. The authors found that 54% of companies closed in the Mid-Atlantic region and reduced employment by 47%. Also, on average, 39% of those businesses reported reduced work, and 43% closed temporarily. The results indicate that business leaders must incorporate well-designed strategies and policies to sustain businesses during uncertainty. Bartik et al. alluded that further research was needed if the crisis lasted pass 2020. This information is vital because it will aid in-depth awareness of business leaders' strategies to improve retention during organizational change.

Some business leaders need help to retain employees during organizational change. Scholars alluded to the fact that some leaders had challenges with low employee retention due to assorted issues, such as unforeseen organizational change (Magno &

Cassia, 2022; Xuechen et al., 2022). Elsafty and Ragheb (2021) also agreed that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the healthcare industry was a significant challenge for leaders in retaining employees. However, Ahlqvist et al. (2023) stated that leaders' challenge in retaining employees was mainly due to bad communication with employees during organizational change. Ghani et al. (2022) stated that some reasons for leaders' challenges to retain employees were low salary compensation and lack of employee training. Elsafty and Ragheb evaluated the role of human resource management (HRM) related to retention amongst healthcare providers during uncertainty. The authors used a quantitative approach.

Human resource management plays a significant role in retaining employees during organizational change. The dependent variable of Elsafty and Ragheb's (2021) research was the retention of the healthcare providers, and the independent variables were the rewards, incentives, and intrinsic motivation. The authors involved several hospitals and 120 healthcare providers in achieving the findings. The results indicate that HRM has a vital role in sustaining employee retention. The results from Elsafty and Ragheb's research also show that when HRM uses rewards, incentives, intrinsic motivation, good communication skills with the workers, and other benefits, it has a tremendous impact on improving employee retention. This project is significant because it provides knowledge and new insight into HRM's process and how business leaders can use rewards, incentives, and other motivating factors to improve employee retention.

Factors Influencing Low Employee Retention

Many factors influence low employee retention. Xuecheng et al. (2020) and Rakhra (2018) argued that an employee's working environment is one factor that influences low employee retention in the hospitality industry. Xuecheng et al. defined work environment as the rate at which an employee feels that the workplace is safe. Kurdi and Alshurideh (2020) defined employee retention as a company's ability to hold on to essential workers to meet their business objectives. According to Xuecheng et al., how an employee perceives their working environment is critical for determining whether the employee stays with the company. Zhenjing (2022) also stated that when an employee perceives their working environment to be positive, it will improve the employee commitment, therefore causing the employee to remain on the job.

Employee retention is influenced by many elements. Xuecheng et al. researched and examined the influence that training development, work environment, and job satisfaction have on employee retention. The authors collected data from 287 employees from China by using a convenience sampling approach. The results indicated that the work environment significantly influences employee retention. The findings showed that if employees feel that the working environment is exceptional, it will increase their trust in their leaders. The research findings are significant in helping leaders understand potential influencing factors that will lead to low retention within the hospitality industry.

Elements that influence employee retention are a topic that leaders often challenge. According to Michael and Fotiadis (2022), the turnover rate throughout the hospitality industry, especially during an organizational change, ranges from 30% to

73%. However, Zientara et al. (2022) asserted that one reason employees are leaving their employment is because they feel strong emotions such as anxiety and anger during an organization. Michael and Fotiadis stated that employees have many reasons for leaving their jobs in the hospitality industry, such as poor leadership, low salaries, poor benefits, poor working conditions, and personal reasons. The authors stated that these factors cause a tremendous drop in employee retention. Michael and Fotiadis's research aimed to explore employee turnover within the Gulf Cooperation Council. The authors used a qualitative methodology to explore reasons for high turnover and methods to improve employee retention rates. The authors concluded that low salaries, poor benefits, and poor working conditions significantly affected employees leaving. The researchers also stated that poor leadership played a significant role as well. The authors recommended that leaders implement strategies to promote a good working environment and offer incentives and better benefits to compensate for the poor salary. Michael and Fotiadis also suggested that human resources provide talent and development training programs to help leaders grow and become equipped with strategies to improve employee retention. The results and recommendations are essential and may serve as tools to further support hospitality business leaders in cultivating strategies to enhance employee retention.

Low worker retention rate is a complex topic that has impacted many organizations. According to Bhardwaj and Singh (2023), worker retention is a continuous determination to provide an atmosphere that inspires individuals to remain on their jobs through policies and practices addressing their unique needs. Rijal (2022) conducted research to identify elements that impact employee retention in the hotel industry. The

author used exploratory research to understand various influencing components of employee retention gained through policies, reports, and organizational practices. The findings indicate that leadership quality is one factor that significantly influences a worker's decision to leave or stay with an organization.

Maintaining experienced workers is a significant obstacle for business leaders, especially within the hospitality industry. According to Heimerl et al. (2020), the employee retention rate is low, and the cost associated with hiring additional employees is very high compared to other industries. Heimerl et al. asserted that leadership is essential in increasing employee retention. The authors researched to get a more inclusive understanding of the elements that impact how employees feel about their jobs. Heimer et al. (2020) used an online questionnaire to survey 345 employees on the phases of job satisfaction. The results indicate that the most crucial factor for employees regarding job satisfaction is whether supervisors provide opportunities for personal development. The authors recommended that supervisors implement a participation or delegation leadership style. The authors also suggested that human resources offer supervisors more training opportunities that may increase employee job satisfaction, therefore improving the organization’s retention rates.

Strategies to Improve Employee Retention

Companies have many challenges in developing strategies to enhance employee retention. Ming et al. (2021) argued that strengthening leaders' leadership styles is one strategy to enhance worker retention. Ming et al. defined a leader as someone who can influence employees to accomplish the goals and performances of the organization.

Bwalya (2023) stated that a leadership style is a mixture of a leader's personality, demeanor, and conduct that can guide a company. However, Wahyudi et al. (2023) alluded that one strategy to enhance employee retention is not the leadership style but for leaders to get more involved in employees' personal and professional growth. Ming et al. provided a comprehensive investigation to determine the effects of various leadership styles, directive, servant, participative, and laissez-faire leadership, on employee retention among workers in the hotel industry.

The results indicated that directive and servant leadership styles significantly impact employee retention in the hospitality industry. The authors recommended that business leaders invest in directive and servant leadership training to increase the performance of employees. Whereas Hauer et al. (2021) alluded to the fact that if leaders want to increase employee retention, they may need to communicate a clear vision and purpose for employees to follow. Ming's et al. (2021) findings are essential for they provide insight into the strategies leaders can use and the effect of leadership styles on employee retention.

Improving employee retention is a topic of discussion among leaders. According to Halim et al. (2020), industries that encounter retention challenges should implement and identify strategies that will motivate their employees and thus improve the retention rate within the organization. Babatunde and Onoja (2023) agreed that organizations must implement employee retention strategies such as flexible working hours or pleasant working surroundings. Halim et al. mentioned that one way to improve employee retention is to create strategies to enhance communication to understand employees

better. The authors also noted that inadequate employee communication leads to low employee retention. Halim et al.'s research narrowed to elements that impact workers' retention and the link between independent factors and employee retention. The authors argued that employees in the hospitality industry tend to stay with an organization longer if they are content with their jobs and the institutional conditions of the organization. The research was conducted in India using five companies and one hundred leaders and employees. The results indicated that income, communication, employee training, and the recruitment process enhance employee commitment and job satisfaction and increase employee retention. The results are helpful for leaders, especially in the hospitality industry, to improve their employee retention strategies.

Leaders must improve employee retention strategies to retain employees during an organizational change. Khan (2020) and Moore and Hanson (2022) agreed that leaders need to rethink their practices by constantly developing strategies to improve employee retention during an organizational change. Hassan (2022) suggested a definition for employee retention as an approach a leader uses to inspire employees to remain with the company for as long as possible. Hassan also suggested another definition for employee retention: individuals who stay with a firm because of a great company culture that gives rewards and perks that meet their needs and desires.

Hassan (2001) researched 250 employees in a retail industry in the capital city of Maldives. The author used a random probability sampling approach to investigate the effects of HRM methods on employee retention as it relates to rewards and compensations. The results from the research indicate that reward and compensation

customs positively influence employee retention. The author made a recommendation for leaders to improve employee retention, which is for leaders to make every effort to make sure that rewards and compensations are fair amongst all employees. Other recommendations Hassan made were to make sure that the compensation package is better than the one already in existence, establish innovative ways to retain and motivate employees and establish excellent benefits as a means to retain employees. Leaders must implement a consistent performance appraisal and follow-up method to improve employee retention. This research is essential for business leaders because it enhances their knowledge of HRM practices and allows them to focus on techniques to improve employee retention.

Transition

Section 2 of the project includes the professional and academic literature review, which contains a synthesis of seminal and current research that connects the conceptual framework, employee retention, the history of the hospitality industry, employee retention in the hospitality industry during organizational change, factors influencing low employee retention, and strategies to improve employee retention. Section 3 includes the introduction to the research project methodology, an overview of the project ethics, nature of the project, the population, sampling, and participants, the data collection activities, interview questions, data organization and analysis technique, and the reliability and validity. Section 4 includes an overview of the project and the presentation of the findings.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Project Ethics

I was the primary instrument for this qualitative project to collect, analyze, summarize, and present data. According to Yin (2018), the researcher's role consists of collecting, organizing, and interpreting data without displaying biases in the findings. Johnson et al. (2020) agreed that researchers must collect, organize, analyze, and address biases appropriately to prevent affecting the quality of the findings. A researcher must also engage the participant to collect the data; therefore, relationship building is significant and is one of the primary roles of a researcher. According to Hagues (2021), researchers should represent participants well by engaging and developing a relationship with them to institute trust and assurance that their information will be confidential. I understand the importance of developing strategies and engaging with employees.

Researchers are responsible for remaining ethical and protecting participants through the research. According to Nagai et al. (2022), the essential elements and the foundation for remaining ethical and protecting human subjects are the three principles of respect, beneficence, and justice of *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, 1979). Josephson and Smale (2020) stated that researchers must protect participants from all harm when involving them in a research study. I adhered to The Belmont Report principles to guarantee I remained ethical and protect participants from harm.

Informed consent is essential to ensure researchers adhere to all ethical guidelines. Xu et al. (2020) argued that informed consent is the foundation of research ethics. Kang

and Hwang (2021) also stated that participants must have informed consent before the research project begins. I obtained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before contacting potential participants to participate in a research project. The IRB approval number for this project is 11-21-24-1052184. After gaining approval from IRB, social media such as Facebook and Instagram were used to obtain access to participants (see Appendix B). Feyz et al. (2020) alluded that researchers who use social media outlets for recruitment purposes has a way of making the process more efficient. Reuter (2020) further suggested that social networks provide a new entrance for joining remote groups in a specific location. I wrote a statement via email to introduce myself and shared the research purpose, the participation standards, and the confidentiality safeguard in detail (see Appendix B). I acquired consent via email. I confirmed the consent when the participants replied with a statement, "I consent via email."

Every participant involved knew and understood their rights to drop out of the research project whenever desired. Fernandez (2020) stated the importance of participants knowing their right to withdraw from the research anytime they desire and will not get a penalty if they choose to do so. Gartel et al. (2020) further argued that the written language of the consent form and withdrawal procedures should be plain and understandable, and no effort should prevent waiving the participants' legal rights. A statement was inserted on the consent form that the participants possess the right to pullout from the project at any time they choose with no penalties. I incorporated another statement on the consent form that anyone desiring to pull out from the research project

can do so via email or phone or verbally share their desire to withdraw. I destroyed all information participants shared during their time with the project.

Some researchers use financial incentives to recruit participants to participate in a research study. Financial incentives have the potential to produce undue influence on participation in the research (Bickman et al., 2021). Abdelazeem et al. (2020) asserted that financial incentives are ethically appropriate, and the researcher can use them to express thanks for the participant's time. However, Roa and Biller-Andorno (2022) agreed with Bickman et al. (2021) that financial incentives can result in undue inducement and jeopardize the research outcome. The participants in this project were volunteers, and the researcher did not offer any incentives.

Researchers have an ethical responsibility to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. Friesen et al. (2020) stated that to ensure confidentiality, researchers must maintain ethical conduct, such as honesty and integrity, and guaranteeing participants' privacy is at the core of the research study. Surmiak (2020) attested that confidentiality serves as the basis of research ethics and that privacy places potential participants in harm's way and forfeits the trust needed to collect essential data. To protect participants' privacy and to reaffirm confidentiality, I assigned letter codes to their names, such as P1, P2, and P3, to ensure every participant was anonymous.

I applied all ethical rules and regulations and displayed academic research integrity through fairness and truth to this research project. I maintained all ethical standards by transferring all data collected to an encrypted USB device protected by a password that only I know. I safeguarded participants' privacy by storing the encrypted

USB device and all the participants' information, including raw data or hard copies of notes, in a sealed fireproof cabinet at my residence for 5 years.

Nature of the Project

To address the research questions, I selected a qualitative method. Sakyi et al. (2020) and Strijker et al. (2020) suggested three research methods to use in a research study: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. I selected the qualitative method to use open-ended questions to acquire an extensive analysis of the strategies hospitality business leaders use to retain employees during organizational change. Qualitative researchers often use open-ended questions to investigate what is transpiring or has transpired (Bussetto et al., 2020; Ziang et al., 2020). On the contrary, quantitative researchers often use closed-ended questions to test hypotheses (Edwards, 2020; Zypur & Pierides, 2020). The quantitative method was inappropriate for my project because I did not test hypotheses. The mixed method uses qualitative and quantitative methodologies research (Ghiara, 2020; Ngulube & Ngulube, 2022). The mixed method was inappropriate for my project because I did not include quantitative components. Therefore, the qualitative method was the most applicable method for my research project because I explored the strategies that hospitality business leaders used to improve employee retention.

I considered four qualitative research designs to explore strategies to retain employees. The research designs considered were the following: (a) case study, (b) mini ethnography, (c) narrative, and (d) pragmatic inquiry. A case study is defined as a practical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within an entity or organization (Takahashi & Araujo, 2020). A case study can be single or multiple (Priya,

2021). A single case study is when the researcher wants to study only one thing (Reddy, 2020). Researchers use multiple case studies to study more than one case (Ćwiklicki & Pilch, 2021; Pathiranage et al., 2020).

A case study was inappropriate for this project because I did not investigate a contemporary phenomenon within an entity or organization. A mini-ethnography involves exploring the cultural phenomenon of a specified group or groups of individuals and their behaviors (Bayeck, 2023). A mini-ethnography design did not apply to my research, for I did not explore the cultural phenomenon of a specific group or groups of individuals and their behaviors. A narrative design is a qualitative research methodology that gathers stories of people's lives to understand what is happening in a phenomenon (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). A narrative design was inappropriate for my project because participants' personal life stories will not address the research question. Researchers mostly use a pragmatic research design to investigate a rich and thorough view of human experiences in a real-world situation using innovative techniques to address the research questions (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Therefore, a pragmatic research design was most appropriate for my project to investigate a rich and thorough view of human experiences within a real-world situation using innovative techniques to gain a deeper understanding of hospitality business leaders' strategies to retain employees.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

The participants for this project were business leaders in the hospitality industry who had successfully implemented strategies to retain employees during organizational change, such as restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, and attrition. I chose

participants according to the following criteria: (a) hospitality business leaders who had successfully retained employees during organizational change and were willing to participate in individual interviews, (b) participants who were willing to devote one hour of their time, (c) participants who lived in South Carolina counties of Richland, Lexington, and Anderson, and who enforced strategies to retain employees successfully in the hospitality industry during organizational change, and (d) participants who had a minimum of 3 years of leadership experience to ensure knowledge of the hospitality industry. According to Knott et al. (2022) and Yin (2018), researchers must select knowledgeable participants to answer the research question. I selected knowledgeable and qualified participants to answer the research question.

I obtained approval from Walden University's IRB before contacting potential participants to participate in a research project. After I received approval from IRB, I gained access to participants by advertising through Instagram and Facebook (see Appendix B). Feyz et al. (2020) suggested that researchers using social networks to recruit participants has a way of making the process more efficient. Reuter (2020) further suggested that social networks provide a new entrance for joining remote groups in a specific location. I wrote a statement via email to make my acquaintance and to share the objective of the research, the standards for participants to take part, and the confidentiality measures in detail (see Appendix B). Kang and Hwang (2021) stated that researchers give participants informed consent before the research project begins. Xu et al. (2020) also argued that informed consent is the foundation of research ethics. I

obtained consent via email. I confirmed the consent when the potential participant stated, "I consent," via email.

Trust is vital when forming a working connection with participants. Foláyan and Haire (2023) alluded that researchers should build rapport and develop a trusting relationship with potential participants for a successful data collection process. To establish a working connection with the potential participants, I communicated via email interactions, telephone conversations, and the distribution of the informed consent form. I clarified the objective of the research and the interview procedure to make certain that the interviews were in a calm and peaceful environment. To engage in conversations, I answered the questions the participants had.

Qualitative researchers must determine a sample size for the research study and execute a technique for the recruitment process of that population. According to Mocănașu (2020), there are no universal rules for researchers to determine the maximum or minimum number of interviews to use. However, Bekele and Ago (2022) suggested that the best way to determine the sample size is by the richness of the information and the in-depth understanding to answer the research question. Sarfo et al. (2021) argued that the acceptable sample size in a qualitative study is between 6 and 10 participants. I accepted Sarfo et al.'s suggestion for this research and used six business leaders in the hospitality industry who had successfully implemented strategies to retain employees during organizational change.

Qualitative researchers may use several techniques for the research recruitment process. Gill (2020) suggested that researchers can use multiple sampling approaches in

the research study to answer the research question. I used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit six business leaders in the hospitality industry who had successfully implemented strategies to retain employees during organizational change. According to Campbell et al. (2020), researchers use purposive sampling to choose participants who can give helpful information and provide the expertise needed to increase the depth of understanding regarding the research question. I used the purposive method to select participants with the following distinguishing features: (a) hospitality business leaders who had successfully implemented strategies to retain employees during organizational change, (b) participants who were willing to devote 1 hour of their time, (c) participants who lived in South Carolina counties of Richland, Lexington, and Anderson, and who had successfully used strategies to retain employees in the hospitality industry during organizational change, and (d) participants who had at least 3 years of leadership experience to ensure knowledge of the hospitality industry.

The second sampling technique was snowballing sampling. Snowballing sampling is a referral strategy used by researchers who have difficulty recruiting specific participants (Berndt, 2020). Researchers who use snowball sampling seek recommendations from existing participants to ask others they know in their network to participate (Staller, 2021). I also used snowball sampling to ensure sufficient participants to answer the research question.

Achieving data saturation is vital for the validity of a research study. The validity of a research study will be easier to verify if data saturation is reached (Daher, 2023). According to Guest et al. (2020), data saturation happens when no new information is

collected, and the data begins to repeat. Islam and Aldaihani (2022) also argued that the researcher would achieve data saturation in a qualitative research study when there is nothing new from the data collected. I continued to collect data until there were no new data to collect.

Data Collection Activities

For this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project, I was the primary instrument. According to Lanks et al. (2021) and Morse (2020), to achieve the goal of thorough research, most researchers often function as the main instrument to collect valid and reliable data. Data collection was an essential component of a research project; therefore, researchers must ask open-ended interview questions to receive detailed answers to the research questions (Robert, 2020; Tiong & Sim, 2020). I used semistructured interviews and asked open-ended questions for hospitality business leaders to increase awareness of the strategies used to retain employees during organizational change.

Researchers may use various credible sources of evidence to collect data during the data collection process (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). According to Naz et al. (2022) and Ruslin et al. (2022), researchers often use semistructured interviews in qualitative research because of the flexibility that strengthens a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee (Naz et al., 2022). I used semistructured interviews, to ask hospitality business leaders open-ended questions to attain a greater comprehensive analysis of the strategies used to retain employees during organizational change.

In this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to gather qualitative interview data and to ensure I answered the research

question. According to Jiménez and Orozco (2021), an interview protocol is a list of prompts that gives participants the opportunity to discuss topics related to the research questions. Braaton et al. (2020) argued that a well-written and thorough interview protocol is a vital collection tool within a qualitative study. The interview protocol for this project included nine open-ended and follow-up questions to allow the participants an excellent, thorough sharing experience.

Qualitative researchers have a vital role in establishing the validity and reliability of all data collected. McKim (2023) and Nha (2021) asserted that member checking is a common technique to confirm validity and reliability. Motulsky (2021) defined member checking as inquiring about participant feedback to verify the data's accuracy. Slettebø (2021) argued that member checking is essential in a study, allowing the participants to provide feedback during or after a research study on interpreting the collected data. I implemented member checking by emailing all participants the interview summary to confirm accuracy. This project included nine interview questions (see Appendix C). Also, I used member checking to enhance the validity and reliability of the data collected.

Interview Questions

1. What are the top three strategies you use to retain employees during organizational change?
2. What has been the outcomes from implementing the three strategies in retaining employees during organizational change?
3. What were your strategies to communicate to hospitality business leaders to retain employees during organizational change?

4. How do you measure the effectiveness of the strategies to retain employees during organizational change?
5. What are the key challenges implementing retention strategies during organizational change?
6. How did you address the key challenges implementing strategies to retain employees during organizational change?
7. What opportunities did you encounter in implementing strategies to retain employees during organizational change?
8. What feedback have you gotten from other hospitality business leaders regarding strategies to retain employees during organizational change?
9. What further information would you like to add regarding strategies you use to retain employees during organizational change?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

Researchers commonly use data organization to categorize and manage the data collected during a research study. Lester et al. (2020) stated that researchers use various software to organize qualitative data. Dedoose, ATLAS.ti, MAXQDA, and NVivo are qualitative researchers' primary software tools for analyzing, organizing, and visualizing qualitative data (Busetto et al., 2020). Dhakal (2022) understood the critical importance of software programs in organizing qualitative data, asserting that researchers use them to ensure the credibility of research findings. I utilized the Dedoose software in my project. ATLAS.ti is a helpful software that allows researchers to see the data on a larger scale with more details (Adelowotan, 2021). MAXQDA software is an excellent tool for

researchers conducting a mixed methods analysis (Guetterman & James, 2023). Researchers use NVivo software to take advantage of various options that are available to sort, label, and organize the data that has been coded (Dhakal, 2022).

Dedoose is also a software that researchers utilize to systematize and support data analysis and coding (Huynh, 2021). To organize and support data analysis and coding, I used Dedoose. Researchers use numerous data analysis methods and techniques for research studies. However, researchers conducting a qualitative study complete a qualitative data analysis, transferring data into significant information to reach an analytical conclusion (Lester et al., 2020). The data analysis for this qualitative pragmatic study included Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis (TA) approach for examining and translating the replies of the interviews to recognize patterns of data theme. The authors also asserted that researchers utilize the TA approach to recognize patterns with the collected data associated with participants' behaviors to comprehend what they feel and think or do.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps TA that I used were as follows:

1. In Step 1, I immersed myself in the data to get familiar with the content.
2. I developed codes by highlighting phases and sentences to determine patterns in Step 2. I used Dedoose qualitative data analysis software to transfer the transcribed data.
3. Step 3 consisted of reviewing my collected data to identify patterns to generate themes.

4. I reviewed the themes in Step 4 to ensure they were a correct data description.
5. In Step 5, I defined and named the themes to determine what each represented.
6. In Step 6, I generated the report to provide adequate evidence of the themes within the data to describe how often they emerged and what they mean. After I completed the thematic analysis, I presented the findings by describing the themes and explained how I answered the research question.

I used the following tools to organize and track the data: (a) Microsoft Excel, (b) Microsoft Word, and (c) a reflective journal. According to Taylor et al. (2020), using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet will suffice to organize and track research data. I used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to organize and trail participants' Zoom-recorded interviews. I also kept a research log in Microsoft Excel to keep a trail of all conversations with participants. I used Microsoft Word to utilize the transcribe feature and saved each transcribed semistructured interview individually to safeguard privacy. I used a reflective journal to trail and record all notes, including other observations. For coding, I used Dedoose to import each Microsoft Windows file. After coding, I labeled and categorized the data, searching for outstanding themes.

Researchers have the responsibility of ensuring that all data are organized and stored in a safe place. Poor data organization can lead to a potentially harmful research study (Kanza & Knight, 2022). According to Briney et al. (2020), researchers should have a security plan to ensure the data are appropriately stored, discarded, or destroyed.

The security plan I put in place was to save all files, including Zoom interviews, and transported data from Dedoose. I transferred all the data from my personal computer to a USB device safeguarded by a password that only I know. I stored raw data, hard copies of notes, and USB devices in a sealed fireproof cabinet at my place of resident for 5 years.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability is essential to researchers in ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. According to Chetwynd (2022), the research study is reliable when researchers can use the same methods under the same circumstances and produce the same research results. I used member checking by emailing all participants to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation. Stenfors et al. (2020) stated that researchers may use member checking to verify whether the data gathered an accurate account of participants' responses and provide opportunities for the participants' input and elaboration. I used reflexivity to alleviate bias. I used a reflective journal to document my memory. Reflexivity is described by Olmos-Vega et al. (2023) as the ability for researchers to do a self-assessment of any partiality, practices, or worldviews during the data collection. Motulsky (2021) asserted that the researcher's reflexivity strengthens member checking by alleviating prejudice or bias. I permitted the participants to verify the accuracy of their interviews via email. The participants had 2 weeks to review the summary and return it to me through email with any corrections or additions to the summary.

Dependability

Qualitative researchers must establish the dependability of interpretations in a research study. Scholars have stated that dependability is the consistency of the findings to the point that if others review the data, they will have similar interpretations (Nassaji, 2020). Stahl and King (2020) asserted that researchers might achieve dependability by submitting thorough documentation of each study process to allow others to replicate the process and arrive at similar research findings. According to Carcary (2020), researchers should use an audit trail to address the research study process and how the researcher reached the study's conclusion. Carcary further stated that an audit trail helps provide a transparent description of the process during the research study. I used an audit trail to maintain thorough research process documentation.

Validity

Qualitative researchers have a responsibility to establish the validity of a research study. Coleman (2021) stated that the validity of a research study refers to the study's credibility and the accuracy of the findings from the viewpoint of the researcher or participant. Rose and Johnson (2020) asserted that member checking is appropriate for enhancing the validity of a study and attesting to the results' trustworthiness. I used member checking by allowing the participants to verify that I recorded their statements accurately.

Credibility

Establishing credibility is a vital element of qualitative research. Credibility refers to the confidence a researcher has that the study's findings are accurate and reported in a

trustworthy manner (Holters, 2022). Johnson et al. (2020) also agreed that the integrity of a study is rooted in the researcher's honesty and transparency and whether the findings represent an accurate interpretation of the collected data. Furthermore, many scholars have discussed that member checking is a great strategy to enhance credibility in a research study (Rose & Johnson, 2020; Stah & King, 2020). For this qualitative pragmatic inquiry research, I used the member-checking strategy by allowing participants to verify via email that my interpretation of their interview statements is accurate.

Confirmability

Establishing confirmability is the final criterion in addressing whether a qualitative study is trustworthy. Confirmability refers to an audit trail from the researcher demonstrating how the findings were established and free from bias and how another researcher can follow the results back to the original data sources (Nguyen et al., 2021; Nyirenda et al., 2020). Researchers must provide readers with a step-by-step process of the results and state that all the responses are those of the participants and not the researcher (Nguyen, 2021; Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). I used an audit trail to document a thorough process of the findings and member checking to ensure the data collected were accurate and free from bias.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is a pivotal component as it relates to the validity of a research study. Scholars have defined data saturation as the place in the data collection when no new themes or codes are found (Alam, 2020; Chitac, 2022; Guest et al., 2020; Mwita, 2022). Reaching data saturation is essential for the legitimacy of the research findings

(Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Johnson et al. (2020) and Fofana et al. (2020) asserted that if researchers do not reach data saturation, the study's legitimacy comes into question. To increase the validity of this project, I proceeded to collect data until no new data appeared.

Transition and Summary

Section 3 was the project methodology Section. Section 3 included the project ethics, a discussion on the instrument I used, my role, and the three principles of the Belmont Report. Section 3 also included the nature of the project, the project's method, the target population's identification, sampling size, sampling approach, and the number of participants. Section 3 included an overview of the data collection activities, submitted the interview questions, explained the data organization and analysis technique, and explained how I established the reliability and validity of the project. Section 4 includes an overview of the project and the final presentation of the findings.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

Presentation of the Findings

This qualitative pragmatic inquiry aimed to explore the strategies hospitality business leaders use to retain employees during organizational change. The overarching research question used for this research project was as follows: What strategies do hospitality business leaders use to retain employees during organizational change? I conducted semistructured interviews on Zoom. I collected data from six South Carolina hospitality business leaders with a minimum of 3 years of supervisory background. I used an interview protocol to maintain consistency with participants. I assigned codes P1-P6 to each participant. I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase analysis to ensure that I analyzed and identified themes and patterns effectively. I used member checking by emailing all participants the interview summary individually to ensure accuracy. I used Dedoose software for data organization and analysis. Four themes were identified from the data collected from the six hospitality business leaders: (a) clear communication, which derived subthemes of transparency and honesty; (b) competitive compensation; (c) rapport building; and (d) reward and recognition, with subthemes of performance-based reward and employee of the month award.

Theme 1: Clear Communication

Business leaders who implement clear communication during organizational change enhance employees' work experience, which generates higher retention rates. Clear communication was one of the leading themes that emerged from the data analysis. The six interviewees collectively expressed the importance of clear communication to

retain employees during organizational change. The literature review confirmed that clear communication helps leaders gain faith and build trust with employees, thus improving employee retention (Wiatr, 2022). Krishnan et al. (2023) asserted that organizations can easily retain their staff if the communication is clear, consistent, and honest. Sharma et al. (2025) attested that clear communication inspires employees to work effectively and increases the likelihood of them remaining with an organization. P1 stated, "The very first strategy I implemented that helped me retain my employees when my company was going through a major change was to gather my folks together and clearly communicate exactly what was going on with the company." P2 shared,

> Organizational change is inevitable in most organizations; my organization underwent a very significant change that scared all of us. However, what I decided to do during my company's organizational change that helped me to retain employees was to clearly communicate with them what was happening, what changes were going to take place, and how we would pull through it. My employees thanked me for providing clear communication in times of uncertainty.

Clear communication plays a significant role in employee retention during organizational change. According to P3, "Providing clear communication helped my organization retain key prominent employees." P3 further stated, "I had weekly meetings with employees to alleviate any misunderstanding and to provide an open dialogue to answer their questions." P4 articulated the importance of providing clear communication during organizational change. As stated by P4,

> My organization went through a merger with another organization and many of my employees wanted to leave. One of the ways I was able to retain my employees was through clear communication. I explained to them what was going to happen with the merger and allowed them to take as much time as needed to share their concerns and fears. I did this so there were no misunderstandings and that the employees understood that I care about their well-being. Cultivating a constant pattern of providing clear communication enhances employee retention.

P5 shared the following:

> It is all about communicating. Communication is one of the tools I use often especially during any major organizational change. Employees want leaders to provide clear communication especially when a change is going to take place. During a time of organizational change within my organization, I was able to retain my employees because of consistent communication and sharing valid information concerning the organization. Furthermore, I begin to simply share with them the status of the organization and the strategies I will use for sharing the workload. Employees are more likely to remain with an organization if the leaders are open and clear about what changes are being made and the impact those changes would have on the employees as well as the organization.

P6 verbalized, “Being able to articulate clearly with my employees played a major role in retaining them during organizational change.” According to P6, “Any change within an organization is already scary for employees, however, once you calm their fears by

communicating what, when, and how the change would take place, reduces stress which leads to a positive work environment." Two subthemes from the data related to clear communication: (a) transparency and (b) honesty.

Transparency

Transparency in communication is highly recognizable as a vital role in retaining employees during organizational change. Most of the participants expressed that, along with clear communication, being transparent was a key component in retaining employees during organizational change. According to Stranzel et al. (2021), employee retention improves when leaders are transparent and provide releasable information to their employees, positive or negative, during organizational change. P1 and P3 shared that being transparent in communication with their employees improved their attendance. According to P1, "When I am transparent with my employees, they feel included in the change process, therefore the change is more acceptable, and the employees are willing to remain with the organization." P3 said, "Providing transparent communication during organizational change helped me to retain my employees by creating a safe environment to maneuver through emotional anxiety due to concerns of their employment status and the organization."

P4 discussed that being open and transparent motivated their employees to stick it out during the tough times. Whereas P5 discussed, "Transparency was always a part of my leadership style; therefore, my employees stayed with the organization during organizational change." P6 shared that being transparent with the employees during organizational change not only improves attendance but improves trust with the

employees as well. P6 also said, “It is very important to be transparent with your employees because most of the time the employees already know more information than you because they got it from other people.”

Honesty

Honesty in communication is vital in improving employee retention. Rikantasari (2024) stated that honesty when communicating with employees reinforces employee loyalty and significantly improves employee retention. The participants discussed that being honest when communicating helped build loyalty and improve employee retention. P2 and P5 shared that honesty during organizational change was a contributing factor as it relates to retaining employees. According to P2, “Being honest with my employees, especially during a major organizational change, enhanced the retention rate, which in turn, created a positive working environment.” P5 shared, “I am known to give my employees honest information when the company is going through any major organizational change. This honesty has helped me maintain a group of positive and loyal individuals.” P1, P2, and P6 shared that being honest about the company’s status helped them keep their employees during organizational change. P1 said, “It is essential to tell your employees the truth when any kind of organizational change is happening or is going to happen because not only are the employees impacted, but their families as well.” P2 stated, “Along with communicating with my employees, being honest helped me retain my employees.”

According to P2, “I was honest with my employees and shared with them in detail how the change was going to take place.” P6 said, “I have learned that the way to retain

your employees during organizational change is to be honest with them." P6 shared the following:

> My company is a big, and although I would rather my employees come to me for any information concerning the company's status, they have usually gotten it through someone else in another department. Being honest from the start helped me retain my employees during organizational change because it allowed me to build trust and a stronger relationship with them.

All the participants further stated that employees want to know the truth during a crisis or uncertainty, and honesty promotes employee loyalty, therefore improving employee retention.

Theme2: Competitive Compensation

Competitive compensation was a significant theme that emerged from the collected data. All six participants agreed that one strategy vital to retaining employees during organizational change is to provide competitive compensation, such as salary increases, or employee benefits equal to or better than those of other organizations in the same industry. The literature review confirmed that competitive compensation is a motivating factor that plays a crucial role in retaining employees (Ampofo & Karetepe, 2021). Sorn et al. (2023) suggested that leaders can improve employee retention by implementing a perfect competitive compensation package. Fitri (2024) also agreed that leaders should develop a well-designed compensation package that is fair and attractive enough to make it difficult for employees to leave an organization. The participants stated that implementing a competitive compensation package helps employees feel valued and

that leadership awards their skills appropriately. According to P1, “Implementing a competitive compensation package was a positive move in retaining my employees during organizational change.” P2 and P3 shared that they successfully retained employees when they increased their salaries. P2 further stated, “Providing a good competitive compensation package helped my organization attract potential employees and also helped to retain key employees.”

P4 shared,

> My organization went through a merger with another organization, and my employees were not sure of the company’s; therefore, many wanted to leave. Among other strategies to retain them, I also gave them all an increase in their salaries. The salary increase was done through a competitive compensation package, which motivated the employees to remain with the organization.

P5 and P6 shared the importance of providing competitive benefits. P5 said, “One strategy that also helped me to retain my employees during organizational change was to provide them with a benefit package they could not refuse.” P5 further stated,

> A good benefit package is particularly important for working individuals with children. Employees are more apt to remain with an organization if the pay is good. When my company was going through an organizational change, another strategy I used to retain my employees was a competitive compensation package that included an increase in their salary. The salary increases relieved the employees and eased the anxiety and stress they were experiencing due to concerns of their family’s financial stability. The salary increases also improved

> morale and productivity, impacting the employees' decision to stay with the organization.

According to P6,

> A competitive compensation package was very influential in retaining my employees during organizational change. When an organization goes through a major change, it does not always impact the company alone, but it also affects the employees and their families. During my company's organizational change, it was essential for me to show my employees that I care about their well-being by providing a good competitive compensation package.

Theme 3: Rapport Building

The third theme that emerged from the data was rapport building. Most participants expressed that building a rapport with their employees helped build trust and a healthy environment. The literature review confirmed that building workplace relationships created a bond that linked employees, motivating them to remain with the organization (Fuchs, 2022). Hague (2023) suggested that building a long-lasting relationship with employees improves employees' overall working experience, which improves employees' retention. P1 shared the following:

> Another strategy I used during organizational change was rapport building, which increased employee retention significantly. Rapport building helped me to develop a strong relationship with my employees creating a warm and positive working environment, influencing their decision to remain with the organization.

Rapport building in the workplace is very essential in retaining employees during organizational change. According to P2, a rapport-building strategy helped to promote team building and employee trust. P2 also shared,

> Rapport building with my employees was a good strategy to retain them during organizational change. It gave my employees a sense of trust that encouraged team building and strengthened the communication with each other. Rapport building also allowed open feedback and created a safe space to discuss concerns, the impact the changes would have on the organization, and how the changes would affect their employment. The employees began to feel that they mattered, which contributed to an increase in their attendance that ultimately influenced their decision to remain with the organization despite of all the changes that were going on.

P3 and P4 shared that when they implemented rapport building, they immediately witnessed a positive shift in attendance, morale, and job performance. P3 said,

> Rapport building strategy helped me tremendously in retaining my employees during organizational change. Rapport building allowed me to engage more with my employees. After developing a relationship with them, I noticed an immediate positive reaction. My employees' attendance improved significantly, therefore improving job satisfaction and the organization's overall morale.

P4 said, "Rapport building is a great strategy to use during organizational change. When I began to build that bond with my employees, there was a rapid positive turnaround in their attendance."

Theme 4: Rewards and Recognition

The fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis was reward and recognition. The literature review confirmed that rewards and recognition significantly impact employee retention (Chawla & Singla, 2021). All six participants expressed how reward and recognition were a great strategy that reinforces employee job satisfaction, creates a positive work environment, and provides an incentive to remain with the organization. According to Kgarimetsa and Naidoo (2024), a rewards and recognition program makes employees feel appreciated and valued, making them less likely to leave the organization. Mei et al. (2025) also argued that rewards and recognition programs increase employees' satisfaction, encouraging them to remain with the organization longer. P1 and P2 emphasized that reward and recognition programs were highly effective in retaining their employees during organizational change. P3 stated,

> Another strategy that I used to retain my employees during organizational change was to implement reward and recognition programs. My employees shared that the reward and recognition programs made them feel appreciated. I also noticed that they were happy to come to work, boosting job satisfaction and improving job performance.

According to P4, "Reward and recognition programs are essential for retaining employees during organizational change because they give employees a sense of belonging, improving the overall working environment." P5 and P6 shared that reward and recognition programs are imperative during organizational change because they promote job satisfaction, which leads to employees remaining with the organization.

Two subthemes derived from the data related to rewards and recognition: (a) performance-based awards and (b) employee of the month awards.

Performance-Based Awards

The participants shared that, as it relates to rewards and recognition, they give their employees incentives when their performance exceeds expectations. Performance-based awards are incentives, such as cash bonuses or promotions, that organizations give employees who exceed their performance goals (Mathur & Gupta, 2025). All six participants expressed that performance-based awards contributed to retaining employees during organizational change. P1, P2, P4, and P5 shared that for their performance-based awards, they give their employees salary increases. P1 said the following statement:

> When my organization was going through an organizational change, another strategy that helped me to retain employees was to give performance-based awards. Individually, each employee expressed to me their excitement. They were excited because a salary increase was attached to the award. The employee felt valued and appreciated, which extraordinarily improved attendance.

P2 expressed, “Giving salary increases for performance-based awards boosted morale and created a positive work environment, which led to retaining key talented employees.” P4 stated, “A salary increase for a performance-based award was beneficial in retaining employees during organizational change. When employees are compensated for their hard work, they are more prone to remain with the organization.” P5 voiced, “My performance-based awards are always a salary increase that has helped me to retain my employees especially during organizational change.” However, P3 and P6 expressed that

their performance-based awards are cash bonuses for their employees. P3 mentioned that employees are much happier when they receive a cash bonus, which increase productivity. Meanwhile, P6 said, “The cash bonuses motivated the employees to come to work more, which improved the employee retention rate tremendously.”

Employee of the Month Award

The Employee of the Month award is another subtheme of rewards and recognition that emerged from the data as significantly influencing employee retention. Employee of the Month is a monthly recognition award to recognition to an employee who has exhibited exceptional performance (Mwasi & Muli, 2024). According to Mwasi and Muli (2024), leaders implement awards and recognition programs to motivate and retain employees, especially during organizational change. All six participants shared that the Employee of the Month award is a reward that is very instrumental in motivating and retaining their employees. P1 said, “The Employee of the Month award helped me to retain employees during organizational change for it made them feel serviceable and motivated them to produce excellent work.” P2 and P3 shared that the Employee of the Month award is another strategy that is instrumental in retaining their employees during organizational change, for it motivated the other employees to strive for exceptional work, which also led to a positive working environment. P5 said, “I like giving the Employee of the Month award because it helps employees feel invested and connected to the organization’s goals, which motivates them to remain with the organization despite of the organizational changes.” P4 and P6 shared that they witnessed a tremendous shift in attendance of their employees after implementing the Employee of the Month award.

Connection of the Findings to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this project was the job embeddedness theory. Mitchell et al. (2001) developed the job embeddedness theory to comprehend why individuals stay with their current employer. Mitchell et al. argued that three main components of job embeddedness theory show various connections employees develop with other employees or organizations that may impact the decision process whether to remain or exit a company: (a) link, (b) fit, and (c) sacrifice. I used the job embeddedness theory to understand hospitality business leaders' strategies to retain employees during organizational change. Using the theory permitted me to explore the strategies used by the leaders to answer the research question and to achieve the purpose of the project. The findings indicated that all six participants implemented strategies grounded on the job embeddedness theory to retain employee during organizational change.

The connection of the findings to the conceptual framework derived from four primary themes that emerged from the data and align with the three components of job embeddedness theory: (a) clear communication, (b) competitive compensation, (c) rapport building, and (d) rewards and recognition. The findings indicated that hospitality business leaders retain their employees during organization change by having a clear communication dialogue that is grounded on transparency and honesty. The findings align with the link component of job embeddedness theory. The findings indicated that employees who trust their supervisor through organizational change form a strong connection and are apt to be the greatest embedded and committed to the company. The findings also indicated that hospitality business leaders retain their employees by

providing competitive compensation that is equal to or better than other organizations in the same industry. The findings align with the sacrifice component of job embeddedness theory, which point out that employees may be reluctant to leave an organization (see Achmadi et al., 2023). Finally, the findings indicated that hospitality business leaders retain their employees during organization change through rapport building and awards and recognition. The findings align with the link component of job embeddedness which indicated that when employees form strong bonds within the organization, the relationship binds them to each other therefore influencing their job decisions (see Teng et al., 2021). Lastly, the findings align with the fit components of job embeddedness theory which point out that when employees are awarded for their contribution, they feel valued and appreciated, making it difficult for them to leave (see Faisal, 2022). The results of findings are consistent with the literature on job embeddedness theory.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

For this project, participants presented successful strategies for retaining employees. Based on the findings, the participants identified four strategies to retain employees during organizational change: (a) clear communication, (b) competitive compensation, (c) rapport building, and (d) rewards and recognition. According to Babatunde and Onoja (2023), when leaders design highly effective and highly competitive strategies, employees will have no reason to leave the organization. The authors further stated that successful strategies not only improve employee retention but also help sustain the organization's health and growth. The project's findings can assist leaders as a guide, especially within the hospitality industry, in identifying successful

strategies to retain employees during organizational change. Leaders implementing effective strategies to retain employees during organizational change could increase the profitability and sustainability of their organizations. Implementing the strategies can also enhance employee relationships through employee engagement and satisfaction. Additionally, the findings can be very beneficial for business leaders to comprehend the effectiveness of providing clear communication, lasting rapport that builds trust, competitive compensation, and rewarding and recognizing employees, which will retain employees during organizational change.

Implications for Social Change

In this project, I explored hospitality business leaders' strategies to retain employees during organizational change. The implications for social change include the potential for benefits and improvements for communities. Business leaders who retain their employees during organizational change may become change ambassadors for positive social change by producing jobs that will strengthen the welfare of families and the community. Positive social change may develop from retaining high-quality employees to improving job satisfaction and customer services in the hospitality community. The findings from this project may provide financial security, such as yearly taxes that could be collected to improve community projects for families. The findings may also provide volunteer programs that may improve self-esteem and enhance relationships with family, friends, and communities. The insight gained from this project may improve local communities and economic circumstances by retaining employees, which, in return, stabilizes unemployment.

Recommendations for Further Research

I conducted a qualitative pragmatic inquiry to explore hospitality business leaders' strategies to retain employees during organizational change. Based on the results, I recommend further research to explore the strategies used by hospitality business leaders to retain employees during organizational change. The findings of this project were limited to the points of view of leaders instead of actual results. According to King (2024), sometimes opinions from participants instead of actual results may result in social desirability bias, which may influence the project's validity. The author described social desirability bias as respondents who may exaggerate their success to make themselves look better. Schroder et al. (2025) asserted that face-to-face interviews are a more suitable selection tool for reducing social desirability. I recommend further research using face-to-face interviews instead of audio interviews to reduce social desirability.

The findings of this project were limited to my knowledge of the industry and that of the company leaders. According to Kamalakannan (2024), researchers must possess the needed professional knowledge in the research area and effective communication skills to identify any gaps that leaders need to address. Although very educated on the subject matter, my industry knowledge was still limited to leaders with years of knowledge and experience. Therefore, I recommend that future researchers have the necessary knowledge in the research area to expand the scope of the project.

Conclusion

Identifying strategies to retain employees during organizational change is essential for business leaders. In this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, six business leaders

from the hospitality industry shared the strategies they used to retain their employees. The findings indicated that hospitality business leaders used four major strategies to retain their employees during organizational change: (a) clear communication, (b) competitive compensation, (c) rapport building, and (d) rewards and recognition. Mitchell et al.'s (2001) job embeddedness theory and the literature in this research reinforced the four themes that emerged from the data to address the research question. When hospitality business leaders provide employees with clear communication, establish competitive compensation, build lasting relationships, and give out rewards and recognition, employees become more embedded to the job; therefore, a decision to stay with the organization becomes easy. Hospitality business leaders who implement successful strategies to retain their employees can help their organizations and other business leaders improve the profitability and sustainability of those organizations.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Research question:

What strategies do some hospitality business leaders use to retain employees during organizational change?

Timeframe:	I have done:
Before the Interview	1. I searched for potential participants to participate by way of: • Social media (Facebook and Instagram) • Snowball sampling 2. I verified the consent forms when the participants sent a reply through email stating, "I consent". 3. I sent an email invite (Appendix B) to all the participants who replied, “I consent” through email. 4. I sent an email to each participant individually verifying their desired interview time and sent a reminder email a day before the interview. 5. I gave the participant an individual code such as P1 and P2.
The Beginning of the Interview	1. I began the interview by introducing myself, welcoming the participants, and reiterating the purpose of the study.

	2. I thanked each participant for their time and for consenting to participate. 3. I restated the following. • The interview was on a voluntarily basis. • Each participant had the option to withdraw any time they chose to do so. • The entire interview was no longer than 1 hour (we did not need to take a break). • When the recording has started. • They may ask questions at any time. • For verification purposes, I emailed each participant a summary of the interview.
While the Interview is in Process	1. I began the recording for the interview 2. I documented my notes in my field journal. 3. I asked the participant interview questions that were included on Appendix C.
The Ending of the Interview	1. At the end of the interview, I clarified member checking. 2. I restated the member checking process:

	• Within 5 business days, I sent an email of the summary of the interview to each participant. • I asked that each participant to verify the truthfulness of my translation of the interview. • I reiterated that participants may contact me if there were any concerns, or they could reach me through Walden University which is also notated on the consent forms.
After the Completion of the Interview	1. After I completed all interviews, I saved the Zoom recording. 2. I name the file. 3. I transcribed the data from the digital recordings. 4. I translated each participants' comments and combined from my field journal then provided my interpretation. 5. I sent each participant an email to verify my interpretation of their responses. 6. There were no changes needed to be made for any discrepancies. 7. I transferred all data to the Dedoose software. 8. I stored the data in a safe and secure location. 9. I began the preparation for the final analysis.

After the Completions of the Study	1. I sent each participant via email a summary of the results.

Appendix B: Invitation Template for Email, Social Media, and Flyer Formats

There is a new study about exploring strategies hospitality business leaders use to retain employees during organizational change that could help business leaders better understand various strategies that may improve employee retention. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences in successfully retaining employees through organizational change.

About the study:

- One 60-minute Zoom interview that will be audio recorded (no videorecording)
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- Business leaders
- Live in South Carolina counties of Richland, Lexington, or Anderson
- Have successfully used strategies to retain employees in the hospitality industry during organizational change
- Have a minimum of 3 years of supervisory background to guarantee proper awareness of the hospitality industry

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Jennifer Harris Nyanfor, a DBA student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during XXX 2025. Please reach out to XXX@waldenu.edu to let the researcher know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. What are the top three strategies hospitality business leaders use to retain employees during organizational change?
2. What has been the outcomes from implementing the three strategies in retaining employees during organizational change?
3. What were your strategies to communicate to hospitality business leaders to retain employees during organizational change?
4. How do you measure the effectiveness of the strategies to retain employees during organizational change?
5. What are the key challenges implementing retention strategies during organizational change?
6. How did you address the key challenges implementing strategies to retain employees during organizational change?
7. What opportunities did you encounter in implementing strategies to retain employees during organizational change?
8. What feedback have you gotten from hospitality business leaders regarding strategies to retain employees during organizational change?
9. What further information would you like to add regarding strategies you use to retain employees during organizational change?