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Human Resource Management Practices' Impact on Employee Retention

Regina Gregory
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Regina Gregory

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

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Walden University
2026

Abstract

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by

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MS, Indiana State University, 2014

BS, Indiana State University, 2012

Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2026

Abstract

Some human resource managers (HRMs) in small- to medium-sized manufacturing industries lack effective strategies to retain employees. Organizational leaders are concerned that the lack of effective strategies to retain employees negatively affects organizational sustainability and profitability. Grounded in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project was to explore effective strategies that seven HRMs in small- to medium-sized manufacturing industries used to retain employees for more than 5 years. The participants were seven leaders from various HRM roles within the manufacturing industry who have implemented effective employee retention strategies. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and publicly available documents. Using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, four themes emerged from the data: (a) employee feedback, (b) leadership, (c) organizational culture, and (d) training and development. A key recommendation from the project is for HRMs to develop and implement effective retention strategies to create a work environment that supports employee feedback and positively impacts organizational culture. The implications for positive social change include the potential for HRMs to implement customized training and development programs that promote a more effective and engaged leadership.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my husband, Jerry; my children, Raven and Jihad; and to my best friend, Geraldine Griffin, who always told me I would be a doctor someday.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge all those who supported me on this journey and encouraged me to finish when I did not think I had it in me to do so.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Skilled employees are essential to the manufacturing industry and retaining them has necessitated that organizations develop and implement effective employee retention strategies to support this effort. Organizations have begun to recognize the importance of having practical human resource (HR) strategies in place. Strategic HR practices have the potential to increase employee retention (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009). Therefore, I conducted this project to determine the impact of human resource management (HRM) practices on employee retention.

Background of the Problem

Retaining employees has become a top priority for many organizations seeking to maintain or achieve a competitive advantage in the global market. High turnover can be costly to an organization, including increased recruitment costs, training expenses, and reduced productivity due to the loss of specialized skills and knowledge (Davenport, 2023). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2025), the turnover rate in the manufacturing industry is currently 1.4%, which equates to a loss of 180,000 employees. Organizations may consider creating a work environment that supports retention to meet this challenge. Acharya et al. (2021) investigated the impact of HR practices on employee retention within an organization and found that HR practices such as training and development, compensation and benefits, and organizational culture had a positive impact on employee retention. Team leaders must consider the importance of implementing effective HRM strategies.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

Team leaders who fail to address employee retention challenges may incur increased training and hiring costs, reduced profits, decreased organizational performance, and low employee morale (Skelton et al., 2020). Employee retention in the manufacturing industry is crucial because this sector comprises a substantial portion of the workforce and has a significant impact on the U.S. economy (Skelton et al., 2020). The specific business problem was that some small- to medium-sized manufacturing HR managers lack effective strategies to retain their employees. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore how HR managers in small to medium manufacturing industries retain employees across the United States. The targeted population consisted of seven HR leaders with 8–15 years of experience in manufacturing, who shared beneficial practices they have used to retain employees for over 5 years. To collect data for the study, I conducted semistructured interviews designed to gather participants' experiences and insights into the practical applications of HR strategies in improving employee retention. This method aligned with my objectives for the project in which I sought to explore data relevant to the research topic. This project's conceptual framework was based on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs.

Research Question

What effective strategies do HR managers in small to medium manufacturing industries use to retain employees beyond 5 years?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are preconceptions or beliefs that can limit the researcher's ability to draw a clear conclusion from observations or data collected (Ellis & Spiegler, 2024). I made four assumptions in this project. I assumed the participants were knowledgeable regarding HR strategies that improve employee retention. Another assumption was that the participants were available to be interviewed and provide sufficient data. I also expected the collected data to contain essential information necessary to answer the research question. My assumption was that the HR practices implemented would help other small- to medium-sized manufacturing industries retain employees for more than 5 years.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses in the research that may influence the study's outcome or conclusions (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). A primary limitation of this project was finding enough participants to conduct a valid project. Another limitation was the unintentional bias in the data, which can compromise the authenticity of the results. The final limitation was coordinating dates and times that aligned with participants availability which sometimes delayed the data collection process.

Transition

In Section 1, I provided the foundation of the project, including the background of the problem, the business problem focus, project purpose, research question, assumptions, and limitations. The Background of the Problem section included the topic

and the general business problem addressed in this project. In the Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose section, I described the specific business problem and the research intent. The research question and specific business problem were aligned with the primary purpose of identifying effective HR strategies that HR managers in the manufacturing industry use to retain employees for more than 5 years. The assumptions were preconceptions that I accepted as facts but could not confirm. The limitations were the possible weaknesses in the project that I, as the researcher, may not have been able to control.

In Section 2, I will conduct a review of professional and academic literature, including journals, scholarly academic books, government publications, and peer-reviewed articles, related to the research topic. A synthesized and critical analysis of the conceptual framework, along with an exhaustive literature review, will be provided. Section 3 will include discussions on project ethics, my role as the researcher during the data collection process, the participants' role in the project, and the process for withdrawal from the project. I will also describe the nature of the project, research method and design, and the reasoning behind choosing the methodology and design employed in the project. Population sampling, participants, data organization, collection, and analysis activities, interview questions, and reliability and validity will also be addressed. In Section 4, I will present the research project's findings, business contributions, my recommendations for professional practice, implications for social change, and my suggestions for further research before concluding the project.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Employees are viewed as the most valuable asset of an organization because, without them, the organization could not sustain itself in the global market. Therefore, employee retention has taken top priority with many organizations. HRM and effective HR practices are essential to this goal. HR practices can help attract and retain employees (Cachon-Rodriguez et al., 2022). The purpose of the literature review was to search for information pertinent to the research question: What effective strategies do human resource managers in small to medium manufacturing use to retain employees beyond 5 years? In this project, I employed a qualitative methodology with a pragmatic inquiry design. The research population consisted of HR leaders with 8–15 years of experience in manufacturing who were asked to provide the practices that have been beneficial in retaining employees for over 5 years.

I reviewed academic literature to develop and support the understanding of the specific business problem. I searched for literature in the following databases and search engines: ABI/INFORM Global, ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Directory of Open Access Journals, SAGE Journals, EBSCOHost Online Research Databases, SOCIndex, Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, Wiley Online Library, Science Direct, and ELSEVIER. The keywords and combination of search words used included the following: *strategic, strategies, leadership, employee retention, career development, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational success, human resource management, human resource practices, human resources, HRM*

practices, HR practices, performance, performance management, turnover intention, employee satisfaction, trust, turnover, management, qualitative, and work-life balance.

The literature review for this study included 115 sources of which 82 or 71% were peer reviewed articles published within five years of my anticipated project completion date (see Table 1).

Table 1

Age of Sources Used in the Project

Source age	Number of sources	Percentage of total
< 5 years old	82	71%
> 5 years old	33	29%
Total	115	100%

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this qualitative, pragmatic inquiry was to identify and explore the effective strategies that HR managers in small- to medium-sized manufacturing organizations use to retain employees beyond the 5-year mark. The theory incorporated in the conceptual framework for this project was Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory that identifies five categories, ranking the needs of individuals to keep them motivated (Ihensekein & Joel, 2023). The five categories are physiological needs, safety and security needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs (Ihensekein & Joel, 2023). By applying Maslow's theory, I aimed to understand how HR practices can address these needs to improve long-term employee retention.

Understanding and addressing employees' fundamental needs is crucial for improving satisfaction and retention in today's workforce. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, humans are motivated by five basic needs, and once a lower need is met, the next higher need will emerge and need to be satisfied (Hooper, 2020). In a study that focused on employee retention strategies similar to those of Hooper (2020), Wan (2024) employed Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to determine the importance of needs as viewed by individuals. The author found that by determining and then meeting the needs of the individuals, it had a significant impact on employee satisfaction, therefore improving overall employee retention. Organizational commitment and longevity have become increasingly rare in today's workforce. As a result, many organizations have recognized the importance of implementing strategic and effective HR practices to retain their employees.

The logical connection between the framework presented and the nature of the current project included facilitating, identifying, exploring, and understanding how some small- to medium-sized manufacturing HR managers lack effective strategies to retain employees. Leaders can utilize Maslow's hierarchy of needs to determine which strategies are most effective in improving employee retention. Once those needs are identified, an organization can implement HR strategies that motivate employees and increase job satisfaction (Ghani et al., 2022). Job satisfaction in the workplace is crucial for employees within an organization. Salary, career advancement, job recognition, and job security are factors that have been identified as crucial to an individual's perception

of job satisfaction (Cangemi, 2009), and these can be effectively implemented or managed through effective HR practices.

Meeting employees' physiological needs is vital for fostering job satisfaction and retention in the workplace. Physiological needs, which include shelter, food, water, and air, form the foundation of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory, encompassing the necessities of an individual (Altmurat et al., 2021). In relating these physiological needs to an individual's work needs, management addresses these basic requirements by providing opportunities for rest, a clean and sanitary work environment, and competitive wages that help meet the essential living needs of employees (Altmurat et al., 2021). When a person feels that their basic needs are not met by their employer, it has the potential to lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased employee turnover; however, once the organization fulfills those basic needs, it can create an environment where employees have a more positive attitude, improved motivation, and increased performance (Durmus, 2024). In the long run, prioritizing the fulfillment of an individual's physiological needs lays the foundation for a productive and committed workforce. Maslow posited in the theory that the next level of need is safety and security. Organizations can meet this need by providing general salary increases, job security, safe working conditions, and additional fringe benefits. Much like Ihensekein and Joel (2023), Aleem and Bowra (2020) found that HR practices, including compensation, job security, training and development, and work environment, had a significant impact on increasing employee retention. An organization can have a great supply of economic and technological resources; however, it cannot sustain without its workforce. Furthermore,

Okolie and Memeh (2022) conducted a study focused on the unwritten agreement that defines the expectations between employers and employees, also known as the psychological contract. The psychological contract, encompassing career advancement opportunities, compensation and benefits, job security, and the handling of issues related to policies and processes, can significantly influence an employee's decision to stay or leave an organization.

Addressing employees' social needs is a critical component of effective HRM and employee retention strategies. Social needs, including companionship and friendship, represent the next level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Ihensekein & Joel, 2023). Effective leadership and HR practices can play a crucial role in addressing social needs by meeting employee needs, such as forming compatible work groups, providing quality supervision, and fostering professional friendships within the workplace (Ihensekein & Joel, 2023). Umi Nurjanah and Suherman (2022) conducted a study that focused on employee motivation using Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, much like that of Ihensekein and Joel (2023). Umi Nurjanah and Suherman found that employee motivation increased when social needs, such as friendship and teamwork, were present between employees. Employee retention is a top priority for organizations because employees are the most valuable asset and are essential to sustaining competitiveness in the global market. HRM and the implementation of effective HR practices are crucial to achieving this goal.

The project highlights the critical role of strategic HRM in employee retention. In the same manner that Cachon-Rodriguez et al. (2022) reported that strategic HRM

practices are essential for retaining employees, Thomas and Scroggins (2023) also found this; however, the researchers expanded the scope to explore the role of fit perceptions and the HRM practices behind them. Person-job fit refers to the extent to which an employee's abilities and needs align with the demands and rewards of a job. Fitting the right person to the right job was positively associated with higher employee retention. Similarly, Afzal Khan and Bhagat (2022) determined that HR managers who help create a healthy work environment, provide career growth opportunities, and place employees in jobs according to their skills potentially increase employees' commitment to the organization, thereby increasing employee retention.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-esteem and self-actualization represent the higher levels that drive employee motivation and retention. Self-esteem addresses an individual's need for reward and recognition, which can be achieved through promotions, pay increases, increased responsibility, and recognition from peers and managers (Ihensekein & Joel, 2023). Further research demonstrated that rewards, recognition, promotion opportunities, job security, and effective communication have a significant impact on improving employee retention (Tumwesigye et al., 2020). The final level of need is self-actualization. Self-actualization encompasses growth, achievement, and advancement, which can be achieved in the workplace through organizations that create jobs that challenge their employees, offer opportunities for advancement, and utilize talent to create new opportunities (Ihensekein & Joel, 2023). Together, self-esteem and self-actualization spotlight how organizations can sustain motivation and long-term commitment by considering employees' higher-level needs.

Employee Retention

The research question in this project addressed the business problem of employee retention. Organizations understand the importance of retaining employees and often think that compensation will keep them from leaving; however, what is often overlooked is the psychological needs of the employee. Santhanam and Srinivas (2020) found monetary compensation to be insufficient for retaining employees, but that other factors, including employee engagement, organizational identification, motivation, positive well-being, and job satisfaction, played a crucial role in reducing employee turnover.

Idowu (2020), similarly to Santhanam and Srinivas (2020), discovered that employee retention was positively impacted by offering employees options that allowed them to work a flexible schedule, thereby promoting a balanced work-life balance. The researchers collected data from 227 permanent and contract workers from five manufacturing industries in Agbara, Ogun State, using a flexible working hour questionnaire and an eight-item questionnaire of affective organizational commitment. The researcher also found that offering flexible work hours increased employee job performance and reduced employee stress. At the same time, Panday and Kaur (2022) found a significant relationship between talent management and employee retention as well as that employee engagement was a decisive factor in increasing employee retention. HR leaders will need to encourage organizations to adopt effective tangible HR practices, such as compensation and benefits, as well as training and development, alongside effective intangible HR practices, including employee engagement and prioritizing work-life balance, in order to retain employees.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a vital factor in organizational success because it reflects an employee's willingness to contribute to achieving organizational goals (Madan, 2017). Organizations that actively engage their employees in planning, implementing, and achieving the organization's goals can be perceived as having a higher sense of commitment to the organization, and employees may feel that their contributions make a meaningful difference. Madan (2017) noted that creating an engaged workforce offers several benefits, including improved performance and productivity, increased loyalty to the organization, and reduced turnover.

Madan (2017) found that employee engagement had a positive effect on employee retention, and Sergio and Rylova (2018) confirmed that employee engagement and employee empowerment can have a positive impact on an employee's decision to stay with an organization. The researchers found that employee engagement inspires and motivates employees, while employee empowerment gives them the freedom to make their own decisions. Sergio and Rylova conducted a qualitative descriptive study focusing on the Volkswagen organization, reporting that employee engagement and empowerment have a positive relationship with employee retention and can be crucial in enhancing employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Leadership style can also significantly impact employee engagement. Moore and Hanson (2022) conducted a case study using data collected from multiple surveys and small group interviews to investigate the relationship between leader effectiveness and employee engagement. The researchers found that effective leadership improved

employee engagement and created a work environment where employees felt respected and empowered in the decision-making process. Santhanam and Srinivas (2020) examined the impact of employee engagement on job burnout and turnover, collecting data from 1,197 blue-collar workers from three manufacturing industries in India. The researchers stated that employees who were disengaged were at a higher risk of burnout and were more likely to leave the organization. In short, employee engagement is an HR practice that can benefit both employee retention and job satisfaction.

HRM

The global market has changed the way organizations view employee retention. Once upon a time, it was a key factor in organizational sustainability; however, organizations have now come to realize that retaining employees is essential to staying competitive in the market and enhancing their overall sustainability (Syafri & Rasyid, 2025). In the same way that the view on employee retention has changed, so has the perspective regarding HRM practices. HRM has changed from a transactional perspective to a strategic perspective. Organizations now align with their HR partners to develop and implement strategic HRM practices that will increase employee retention and improve the organization's sustainability.

When most people think about HR, they typically consider only the hiring and firing aspects. However, HR is now viewed as a strategic approach to help organizations retain employees, enhance performance, and maintain market sustainability. According to Sergio and Rylova (2018), employee engagement and employee empowerment are key to improving employee retention. While Sergio and Rylova reported that employee

engagement and empowerment were the keys to employee retention, Amushila and Bussin (2021) found that a strong relationship exists between talent management and employee retention. Talent management is an HR practice that plays a vital role in managing employees within the organization and leads to increased performance. Training and development of new employees, compensation, recognition, and rewards are important factors. Sepahvand and Khodashahri (2021) suggested that HRM practices have the potential to motivate employees by offering job security, job satisfaction, and continuity, thereby preventing them from leaving. In short, HRM plays a pivotal strategic role in helping organizations increase performance, job satisfaction, and employee retention.

HRM Practices

An employee's decision to stay or leave an organization can be influenced by various factors. As a result, many organizations are beginning to recognize the significant impact that effective HR practices can have on enhancing employee retention. Aleem and Bowra (2020) noted that organizations that develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan to attract, develop, and retain employees tend to exhibit increased long-term sustainability. In a study focused on HR practices and their impact on employee retention, Kalyanamitra et al. (2020) found that HR practices, such as training, benefits and compensation, and performance appraisals, led to increased employee job satisfaction, which had a direct effect on the employee's decision to stay with the organization.

Acharya et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study to examine the HR practices that promote employee retention. The authors collected data from 256 managers and employees of Jindal Steel and Power Limited: 205 were male and 51 were female, 49 were below the age of 30, 159 ranged in age from 31–40 years old, and 48 were 41 years and older. The researchers stated that HR practices, including training and development, compensation, rewards and recognition, benefits, selecting the right person for the position, and organizational culture, had a positive impact on employee retention.

Likewise, Tumwesigye et al. (2020) also found that rewards and recognition, promotion, job security, and effective communication have a significant impact on reducing turnover intent among employees. Ghani et al. (2022) conducted a study that provided new insights into the impact that HR practices can have on reducing turnover. They found that HR practices can help create positive work environments, support effective communication, promote effective recruitment and selection, all of which lead to increased job satisfaction among employees and decreased turnover rates. On the other hand, Phillip and Arrowsmith (2021) reported that while HR practices are important to employee retention, if they are not managed and implemented properly (e.g., inconsistent training, poor people management, and a lack of performance management), it can have an adverse effect on employee retention. It is not enough for organizations to have HR practices; they must ensure that these practices are used in a manner that creates a positive impact for both employees and the organization.

Career Development

Career development is a crucial HR strategy because it involves the process of making long-term decisions regarding the training, development, and advancement of an organization's workforce. Organizations that implement strategic HR practices focusing on career development that align with the personal needs of their employees, including a need for fulfillment and a sense of achievement, can potentially increase job satisfaction and employee retention. Bharti (2022) investigated the impact of strategic HR policies and practices on employee retention. Bharti and Atieno (2019) noted that comprehensive career development programs can help organizations close skill gaps and enable their employees to advance in their careers.

In a similar vein, Bharti (2022) examined the impact of strategic HR practices on employee retention, noting that career development has a positive effect on employee retention. Tetteh and Asumeng (2022) conducted a study on the relationship between succession planning and career development, focusing on their impact on employee retention. The researchers used a cross-sectional design to collect data from 188 employees from four corporate organizations in Ghana. According to Tetteh and Asumeng, career development offers several alternatives, such as enhancing current employee skills, developing abilities, and planning for future roles within the organization. Career development was found to have a direct relationship to the employee's job satisfaction, and employees often feel more valued when they are allowed to develop their careers.

The effectiveness of career development as a strategic HR practice in retaining employees will also depend on the demographics of the organization's workforce.

Mahadi et al. (2020) conducted a study to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing employee retention, finding that career advancement opportunities ranked higher among employees aged 30–49 years old, but lower among employees aged 50 years and older, who felt that trust in senior leadership was more important. Career development and job security have been found to have a positive relationship, which improves employee loyalty to an organization (Aliff et al., 2017; Mahadi et al., 2020).

Compensation and Benefits

HR are now being utilized as a key asset by many organizations that aim to retain key talent and attract new talent to the organization (Kalyanamitra et al., 2020).

According to Andrews and Mohammed (2020), increased employee turnover is a key factor in creating higher operational costs, such as recruitment, training, advertising, and increased workloads resulting from additional overtime for current employees to replace those who have left the organization. Compensation and benefits can be utilized as a strategic HR practice to increase employee loyalty, motivation, and retention within an organization. Organizations that use compensation and benefits as a strategy for employee retention must ensure that the compensation and benefits being offered to employees are competitive; otherwise, it may not be successful in retaining the employee and may increase their intent to leave.

Nonmonetary compensation, including employee discounts, coupons, work-life balance initiatives, and rewards and recognition, is also included (Andrews &

Mohammed, 2020). Much like Andrews and Mohammed (2020), Naveed et al. (2021) found that nonmonetary compensation and benefits, such as casual dress codes, on-site childcare, gym memberships, and prizes, were key in increasing employee retention in the hotel industry in Pakistan. Leadership in organizations has started thinking outside the box when it comes to the benefits they offer their employees. While benefits, such as medical and dental coverage are still important, non-financial benefits, including opportunities for career advancement, recognition of individual achievements, an improved organizational culture, paid leave, and extended vacation benefits, have proven to be essential in increasing employee retention, motivation, and performance.

Ramlah et al. (2021) analyzed the role of compensation and job stress on turnover intentions, finding that when compensation is low, it can reduce employee job satisfaction, which in turn can lead to increased turnover intentions. The researchers used a saturation sampling method to collect data from 106 employees who had worked more than a year. Ramlah et al. determined that compensation could come in many forms, such as money or direct or indirect goods that are received by the employees of the organization in exchange for their contributions to the organization in the form of performance, knowledge, skills and experience, and can be potential factors that can influence an individual's decision to stay or leave an organization.

Knowledge Management

Employees who have been with an organization for 5 years or longer have a wealth of knowledge that is vital to an organization's operational success. Organizations have come to realize over the years that it is not just about retaining employees, but also

about retaining the knowledge they have gained from their years of experience. While organizations need to retain information systematically, which is referred to as explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge, which is knowledge that is acquired throughout an individual's lifetime from experience, is another reason why knowledge management is a strategic HR practice that is essential to employee retention and organizational success (Garcia & Coltre, 2017).

Garcia and Coltre (2017) conducted a study using a qualitative and quantitative approach, incorporating a lifting procedure, to investigate which knowledge management factors, tactics, or explicit approaches were crucial in employee retention. The researchers collected data via questionnaires from June to August 2014 from 224 employees in the furniture industry in Francisco Beltrao. The 224 employees consisted of 11 managers, 44 responsible for the area, and 169 operational employees. Organizations that focus on creating a work environment that supports policies and creates a solid foundation for their employees experience a higher rate of retention due to increased job satisfaction among their employees, which can decrease their intent to leave an organization (Garcia & Coltre, 2017).

Similarly, Papa et al. (2020) examined the impact of knowledge management on organizational performance and employee retention. The researchers determined that knowledgeable employees should be considered a key intangible resource for maintaining a competitive advantage in the industry because they are driven by their commitment to the organization and innovative culture.

Another factor to consider in the use of knowledge management as a strategic HR management practice is the attraction of new talent to an organization. According to Rettie and McLarney (2024), small- to medium-sized enterprises must be viewed by potential candidates as an organization that provides appropriate and competitive pay, offers opportunities for career growth and development, is socially responsible, and fosters a positive work environment. However, out of all those factors, the researchers found that competitive pay was the most important in attracting key employees with new and innovative knowledge to the organization. These studies continue to support the importance of employing strategic HR practices not only in retaining employees but also in attracting new ones.

Organizational Commitment

Several factors can influence an individual's commitment to an organization, including work stress, work-life balance, compensation and benefits, and the work environment. It is crucial for an organization to have effective HR strategies that foster a positive work environment, enabling its employees to thrive and grow (Marlapa & Endri, 2024). Pertiwi and Supartha (2021) conducted a study to determine the effect of compensation and organizational commitment on job satisfaction and employee retention. The researchers collected data from 45 respondents at PT.BPR Gianyar Parthasedana in Bali, Indonesia, by providing a questionnaire and using a saturated sample technique. The researchers reported that having effective HR strategies in place has a significant positive effect on increasing employee organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee retention. Organizational commitment is a factor that should be considered in employee

retention strategies because it reflects an individual's sense of loyalty to the company and their attitude towards the work they perform. Individuals who feel a strong sense of belongingness and commitment to an organization tend to perform better and remain with the company.

Performance Management

Performance management can be viewed in very different ways by organizations, depending on the mindset and culture of management. Some organizations view performance appraisals as an effective way to manage and develop their talent, while others consider them a waste of time and not a value-added approach. Lawler et al. (2012) conducted a study indicating that performance management can be an effective HR strategy when it is based on the organization's goals and business strategies. Performance appraisals can be a crucial tool for employee retention. Lawler et al. collected data from 102 large corporations using a survey that asked about the effectiveness of their performance management practices and systems in conjunction with their HR practices. The researchers found that performance management systems are most effective when applied correctly. Performance management systems, when used in conjunction with salary increases and bonuses, can be highly effective as a retention strategy. They can also be utilized to design and implement training and development programs for employees. Employees who receive continual feedback throughout their career are more engaged and motivated to meet organizational goals and advance in their careers, therefore remaining with the organization. On the other hand, Murphy (2019) conducted a study to highlight the flaws in performance management systems and argue

against their use as an HR strategy. Murphy suggested that there were four barriers to performance evaluations: the distribution of performance, the continual failure to develop reliable and valid methods, managers not providing sufficient feedback, and the subjective biases inherent in the performance evaluations that organizations may implement.

Performance management can be an effective HR strategy if used properly; however, leaders who use this tool should be trained on the importance of continuous engagement and feedback throughout the process to maximize results for both the organization and the employee. In a study conducted by Awan et al. (2020), an effective performance management system can help ensure that performance evaluations stay on track between employees and team leaders because it requires employees to actively engage and participate throughout the entire process.

Talent Management

The number of employees seeking to work for a company until retirement has decreased, making employee retention a challenge for many organizations. HR professionals are developing and implementing strategies that align with the organization's goal of increasing retention. Talent management is a key strategy used to attract and retain top talent. Muzanenhamo and Rankhumise (2023) conducted a study to identify employee retention strategies in state-owned enterprises and found that talent management strategies, including employee wellness, increased leave days, training and development, and permanent positions, had a positive impact on increasing employee job

satisfaction and retention, ultimately helping the organization achieve a competitive advantage in the market.

Similarly, a study conducted by Kumar (2021) focused on the impact of talent management strategies on employee retention. The researcher found that employee retention was higher in organizations that provided development and career growth opportunities as well as attractive compensation plans. It is not just the job of HR to get the people into the organization but also to develop and maintain their skills, knowledge, and experience in order to meet organizational needs (Kumar, 2021). Noranee et al. (2021) found that training did not have an impact on employee retention, unlike the studies by Muzanenhamo and Rankhumise (2023) and Kumar. However, the authors did state that leadership support and compensation had a positive impact on employee retention. The next few years will continue to challenge organizations and HR leaders to strategize and devise new ways to retain skilled workers and maintain a competitive edge.

Transition

In Section 2 of the project, I established the structure of the literature review, beginning with the details of how the review was conducted and then discussing the problem statement, purpose, and nature of the project. In the Conceptual Framework section, I presented the fundamental theory that supports the study, highlighting the significance of HR strategies' impact on employee retention within organizations. In Section 2, I also provided a comprehensive explanation of the study, highlighting its importance in improving employee retention with effective HR strategies by thoroughly examining professional and academic literature. A summary of ideas that support and

oppose the effectiveness of HR strategies on employee retention were included in the section. I also highlighted the connection to prior research, showcasing how the topics of HR strategies effectiveness on employee retention have broadened upon and contradicted earlier studies, which focused primarily on the use of HR strategies in manufacturing industries.

In Section 3, I will discuss the importance of this project and the research project methodology, which includes an examination of project ethics. In discussing the project ethics, I will detail my role as the researcher in the data collection process and how I adhered to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. The nature of the project will be explained, and I will describe and justify the methodology and design, the population sampling, participants, data collection activities, interview questions, data organization, and analysis techniques, and the reliability and validity of the study.

In Section 4, I will present the project's findings. The findings will be discussed related to the identified themes. I will also provide a detailed overview of the applicability of the findings, including business contributions and professional practices, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research, before concluding the project.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

In Section 2, I identified the key components necessary to support the project. In Section 3, I discuss my role as the researcher, including the interview questions, project population, sampling methods, participants, data collection process and organization, data analysis techniques, and the nature of the project. I conducted interviews with participants via Zoom, employing a semistructured interview method to collect data. Publicly available data were reviewed, along with the results of the literature review and responses from the project participants. The interviews with seven HR managers were sufficient to demonstrate the positive impact of implementing effective HRM strategies within organizations on retaining employees for more than 5 years.

Project Ethics

In the research framework, I assumed the role of the primary instrument for ensuring the ethical conduct of the project. The collection and analysis of data were also roles that I took on during this project. However, my role also included other responsibilities, such as ensuring participant confidentiality, objectivity, and presenting the findings. Ethical research focuses on the researcher's intent and actions as well as their values, which are crucial for identifying potential ethical conflicts in the data analysis process (Dragga & Voss, 2020).

As a researcher, I maintained a professional and scholarly interest in the impact of effective HR strategies on employee retention. I possess personal and professional experience and knowledge as an HR manager; therefore, my understanding of the challenges of employee retention and the use of effective HR strategies to impact

employee retention served as a solid foundation for setting the requirements for the participants, forming the interview questions, and ensuring that the data collected were essential to achieving a valid and reliable study.

In line with ethical principles and the Walden University IRB's guidance, my role as a researcher required strict adherence to the ethical standards set forth by the board throughout the research process. The risks to humans participating in the study have to be minimal, and the IRB is in place to ensure that additional safeguards are implemented to protect the rights and welfare of the participants (Gordon, 2020). Additionally, my ethical principles aligned with the three fundamental ethical principles outlined in the *Belmont Report*, which are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (see Nagai et al., 2022). According to Siddiqui and Sharp (2021), the *Belmont Report* serves as the regulatory framework for the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects. Therefore, I adhered to these principles, ensuring strict compliance with ethical standards throughout the research.

Guidelines are essential to ensuring ethical research, and among these guidelines is the informed consent process. The informed consent process required providing potential research participants with detailed information about the project's benefits, risks, inconveniences, and their rights to privacy (Choudhary et al., 2021). I ensured that each participant received a letter of invitation in accordance with the IRB guidelines, which explained the research project in which they were participating. I sent a copy of the informed consent form via email to confirm that I had obtained consent prior to conducting any interviews. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were

informed of their right to withdraw from the project at any time, either verbally or in writing via email. According to Lynch (2019), the participants' right to withdraw from a research study without penalty is widely recognized globally. Additionally, I did not provide incentives for project participants.

My personal experience and knowledge, as well as that of the participants, were essential to the project. One area that had the most potential for bias during the research process was the collection and analysis of data. Data that the researcher collects can be analyzed according to their own interpretation, as absolute facts, or anywhere in between (McSweeney, 2021). According to McSweeney (2021), confirmation bias is when researchers interpret, judge, highlight, perceive, seek, remember, or construct evidence to favor their pre-established beliefs or claims. The perception of confirmation bias was an area that I had to be aware of while conducting my interviews because participants may hold their own beliefs and opinions that could introduce bias to the data I am collecting. A way to help limit some of the bias when interviewing the participants is to establish a rapport and get to know them better, ask indirect questions about the past or the behaviors of others, ask for examples to support their stories, ask follow-up questions, and probe for more information (Bergen & Labonte, 2020). I used member checking to validate the accuracy and authenticity of the data and minimize subjectivity (see Kakar et al., 2023). Therefore, participants had the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of their contributions.

The anonymity of participants and the protection of collected data are essential roles of the researcher (Mirza et al., 2023). I analyzed all the data collected to ensure that

the participants' identities and the organization's anonymity were maintained. I did not use any personal information for purposes not related to the research project or that could potentially identify individuals in the project. I assigned each participant an alphanumeric code, ranging from P1 to P7. The secure storage of the data collected was also essential to ensure that the rights and confidentiality of the participants were protected. I will securely store all the collected data in a locked file cabinet for a period of 5 years. After that, all documents or hard copies will be shredded, and any files on my computer will be deleted. Ultimately, my role as a researcher encompassed numerous facets throughout the research journey that were crucial to ensuring that ethical principles were upheld, biases were minimized, participants' knowledge and experiences were accurately represented, and I had a clear understanding of the qualitative research process. The Walden University IRB approval number is # 03-27-25-1172882.

Nature of the Project

I used qualitative pragmatic inquiry to address the research question in this project. The pragmatic inquiry approach was appropriate for this project because the qualitative methodology focuses on understanding how individuals navigate their day-to-day lives and can also help researchers advance their understanding of a theory (see Lester, 2023). Qualitative methodology is designed to focus on the lived experiences of individuals. According to Reid et al. (2005), participants can be experts on their own lived experiences and offer researchers a deeper understanding of the topic by sharing their thoughts, commitments, and feelings through their experiences. Therefore, I chose to use the qualitative methodology.

According to Kumatongo and Muzata (2021), qualitative researchers employ various types of designs, such as phenomenology, ethnography, and pragmatic inquiry. Phenomenology is used to describe the lived experiences of participants in the project, and ethnography enables the researcher to immerse themselves in the lives of the people being studied. According to Kumatongo and Muzata, pragmatism is also a design that can be used in qualitative research studies. A pragmatic inquiry served as the design for this project. In the pragmatic inquiry design, people's ideas and beliefs are viewed as tools for solving problems and participants are involved as active rather than passive in the experience being researched (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). I selected the qualitative pragmatic design to provide a deeper and more representative view of the impact that HR managers in small- to medium-sized manufacturing companies can have on employee retention and the strategies employed.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

It was essential that the participants I chose met the criteria necessary to provide insight into the strategies HR managers use to improve employee retention. According to Casteel and Birdier (2021), researchers must take an interactive approach and examine the boundaries that should be used to ensure the target population is exclusive enough to provide sufficient data for the study. I established guidelines by searching for seven participants from the HR profession who are currently working in the manufacturing industry; have been continuously employed by a specific organization for 5 years or more; and possess knowledge, education, and experience in developing or implementing successful HR strategies that have contributed to improved employee retention. I gained

access to participants by building rapport and establishing their trust, ensuring confidentiality, and clearly explaining the purpose and benefits of the research project.

Choosing the right sampling method is crucial to the research process because it can significantly impact the strength of the sample and the transferability of the research results. Convenience sampling offers several benefits, including being cost-effective and less time-consuming; however, one disadvantage of convenience sampling is the increased potential for sample bias (Golzar et al., 2022). According to Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024), purposive sampling helps ensure that the researcher gathers a high-quality sample without bias, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and reliability of the findings. I chose to use purposive sampling to help me achieve the project objective. In this project, I aimed to understand the effects of HR strategies on employee retention in small- to medium-sized manufacturing industries. I used purposive sampling to recruit participants, starting with professional connections I had established as an HR professional as well as connections made through LinkedIn, Facebook, and social organizations. According to Casteel and Birdier (2021), purposive sampling enables the researcher to intentionally select participants based on the characteristics and qualities necessary to gather rich data for the project. I employed the purposive sampling approach to ensure that the selected participants were qualified to provide valuable insights into the impact of HR strategies on employee retention. By leveraging established connections, I expanded the participant pool to ensure the necessary knowledge, experience, and expertise among participants, thereby maximizing the relevance and comprehensiveness

of the data collected. Therefore, the purposive sampling method aligned with the qualitative nature of the project, ensuring that I gathered relevant data.

Data Collection Activities

I actively collected data through semistructured interviews with HR managers in the small- to medium-sized manufacturing industry who had developed and implemented effective strategies to retain employees. Semistructured interviews are the most effective in providing a platform for participants and the interviewer to build rapport and share knowledge and experiences on a specific topic (Kallio et al., 2016). Therefore, I designed a list of interview questions that explored the participants' background, interests, and knowledge of the specific research topic. A minimum of seven participants was crucial for thorough data collection and to support a complete analysis of HR strategies and employee retention in the small to medium manufacturing industry. I also reviewed any related documentation obtained from publicly available sources that supported the HR strategies implemented to improve employee retention. All interviews were conducted remotely and recorded to ensure transcription accuracy. I informed participants of my role in recording the interviews and taking notes and that the data collected would be retained for a period of 5 years. To further enhance the reliability of the data collection process, I conducted member checking with each participant. Member checking involves providing each participant with a summary of their responses to the interview questions to confirm accuracy and interpretation of the data. I sent interview summaries to all seven participants and then asked them to review the summaries to ensure that I had accurately

interpreted their responses. Out of the seven participants, only four responded back, stating that “yes, everything is correct.”

Interview Questions

1. What specific retention strategies have you implemented, and how successful were they?
2. What, if any, challenges have you experienced with employee retention?
3. What types of training and development programs have you found to be the most effective in retaining employees?
4. What role do you feel HR have in employee retention at your organization?
5. What HR strategies were implemented that showcase recognition programs, and were they successful in retaining employees?
6. How have you supported employee retention?
7. What benefits have you found to be effective in improving retention?
8. What additional information would you like to share about effective HR strategies for improving employee retention?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

Effective data organization was essential to the research, ensuring that the collected data were valuable. Data organization was achieved by reflective journals, coding, cataloging, and labeling systems, which allowed me to identify data relevant to the research topic (see Ningi, 2022). I printed and organized all data in a file labeled by participant code names P1–P7 and kept it in a secure, locked file cabinet.

I used the six phases of Braun and Clarke for analysis. In this section, I outline the techniques used to keep track of data, including research logs, interview transcription notes, cataloging of relevant participant documents, and labeling systems. Additionally, I emphasize the importance of securely storing raw data for a period of 5 years. The use of these organizational and analytical strategies further supported the reliability and validity of the project's findings.

Step 1: Familiarize Yourself With the Data

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis entails immersing yourself in the data by reading and rereading textual data. Therefore, following this step, I utilized research logs as a systematic method for recording and tracking data collection and analysis. I reviewed my interview transcripts and notes to determine the data relevant to the research topic and help identify themes and patterns. Reviewing the data also helps the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the data and critically analyze and ask questions regarding the participants' experience (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Additionally, continuous reading and reflection on the interview notes help highlight areas in the research that warrant further exploration (Ningi, 2022). This crucial step in the process ensures that the following phases of the thematic analysis are grounded in a thorough understanding.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), this step entails systematic data analysis through coding, which are the building blocks that will help the researcher identify and label the data relevant to the research question. I developed a coding strategy by

familiarizing myself with the data. I reviewed the interview transcripts and referred to any interview notes to recall any thoughts or highlights that can provide a deeper meaning of the data. NVivo was used to code and organize the data based on established patterns. Limna (2023) explained that NVivo has become a valuable asset in qualitative research due to its ability to organize and analyze large amounts of qualitative data.

Step 3: Generating Initial Themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), this step entails identifying themes in the data that capture information relevant to the research question and represent a patterned response or meaning in the data. I used my interview logs, transcripts, and notes to identify any key themes, observations, or insights from the participants. The codes were analyzed to create categories, which in turn resulted in themes and subthemes.

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), this step entails a repetitive process in which the developing themes are reviewed in relation to the coded data and the data set as a whole. Following this step, I critically examined the identified themes and coded data to ensure that they aligned with the research question. I then recategorized, realigned, or removed any codes or themes that were not relevant to the research.

Step 5: Defining and Naming the Themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), this step involves the in-depth analytic work required for thematic analysis, which enables the crucial shaping of the analysis into fine-grained detail. Following this step, I analyzed the data and extracted specific

data, quotes, or themes that supported the research's analytical structure and helped provide meaning and understanding for the reader.

Step 6: Writing the Report

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), this step entails providing a compelling story based on the analysis. In this final step, the researcher analyzes the interview data using thematic analysis to address the research question (Byrne, 2021). Thematic analysis is data driven, and the researcher can take a deductive approach where the process takes the researcher from the top to the bottom of a theory and allows them to organize and identify relevant data and focus on the research question or take an inductive approach where they read through the data and allow themes and codes to emerge (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). Following this step, I employed an inductive approach, analyzing the data, generating codes, and identifying themes to write a relevant and scholarly report that answered the research question.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability and validity played a crucial role in selecting my participants, ensuring that the information I collected was unbiased and could be replicated by another researcher. According to Rose and Johnson (2020), reliability refers to the validity and accuracy of the research. Researchers use dependability to indicate whether the stability of the values measured with the instrument can be obtained again under the same circumstances and using the same measuring instrument (Surucu & Maslakci, 2020). Dependability is related to reliability and refers to the endurance and consistency of the

research results (S. K. Ahmed, 2024). I enhanced the dependability of this qualitative study by conducting member checks. Member checking is the process by which the researcher reads the data back to the participant to ensure that the recorded data accurately reflects the participants' views (Ningi, 2022). Furthermore, the dependability of the research topic can be enhanced by a reflexive journal. A reflexive journal enables researchers to record their thoughts, biases, and reflections, thereby promoting transparency and reducing subjectivity (S. K. Ahmed, 2024). I employed member checking and reflexive journaling to enhance the reliability of data collection and analysis, thereby increasing the overall transparency of my work.

Validity

Validity refers to the accuracy of the analysis and the appropriateness of the measures used to collect the data (Saunders et al., 2019). Validity also focuses on whether the measuring instrument accurately measures the behavior or quality that needs to be measured and how well the instrument functions (Surucu & Maslakci, 2020). Credibility in qualitative research refers to the trustworthiness and transferability of the findings (Ningi, 2022). Additionally, Lim (2024) noted that credibility is based on the authenticity of the data and the researcher's interpretation, ensuring that the study's conclusions accurately represent the participants' experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, Lim (2024) recommended member checking to enhance credibility. Therefore, I ensured that participants were part of the review process to support member checking.

The transferability of the data collected is essential to validity. Transferability refers to the applicability of the research findings to alternate contexts and situations (S.K. Ahmed, 2024). Transferability provides readers with descriptive details that enable them to understand how the findings might apply to other situations or groups. It does not imply that the findings can be applied universally but rather offers valuable comprehension in relevant situations (Lim, 2024). As the researcher, I provided detailed information to enable future researchers to determine whether the information can be applied to their own situations or those of others (see Johnson et al., 2020). I provided descriptions throughout the research process that allowed the reader to determine the context and applicability of the data.

I ensured that the results were confirmable to enhance the validity of this project. Confirmability is ensuring that the findings remain unaffected by the biases or perceptions of the researchers (S. K. Ahmed, 2024). Member checking increases confirmability (Lim, 2024). Audit trails and reflexive journaling also increase confirmability (Kasirye, 2021). Therefore, I increased confirmability by conducting follow-up member checks and transcript reviews with the participants to ensure that I was accurately representing the interviews. Confirmability was also ensured by detailing each step of the research process and maintaining the records for at least 5 years after the project is published.

Data saturation is achieved when a researcher has collected all the necessary data, and no new relevant information can be gathered from the study subjects and additional themes cease to emerge (Mwita, 2022). Semistructured interviews allow the researcher to

prepare a list of questions to ask participants, with the option to ask follow-up questions and gain more clarification on the topic of study (Mwita, 2022). I employed a semistructured interview protocol and asked follow-up questions to ensure data saturation was achieved. According to Rahimi and Khatooni (2024), data saturation requires systematic analysis, coding, and identification of themes. I followed a systematic process to ensure data were collected, analyzed, and reviewed to achieve data saturation.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project was to identify and explore the effective strategies that HR managers in small- to medium-sized manufacturing organizations use to retain employees. In Section 3, the framework for the project phase was outlined, focusing on key points that will guide the process. Furthermore, the section laid the foundation for the ethical standards of the research. The role of the researcher was defined, and the population, sampling, participants, validity, and reliability were discussed, supported by scholarly resources. I also explained the data collection, organization, and analysis techniques used to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected. Secure storage of the raw data will protect the rights and confidentiality of the participants. In Section 4, I will present the data analysis process and study findings.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

Presentation of the Findings

Some HR managers in manufacturing organizations lack the necessary strategies to improve employee retention. The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project was to identify and explore the effective strategies that HR managers in small- to medium-sized manufacturing organizations use to retain employees beyond 5 years. The research question was: What effective strategies do HR managers in small to medium manufacturing industries use to retain employees beyond 5 years?

The project included semistructured interviews with seven HR managers from manufacturing organizations that had successfully implemented employee retention strategies. Each interview consisted of 10 open-ended questions created to extract detailed insights into their experiences. The interview timeframe allowed participants sufficient time to answer the questions and provide any additional information relevant to the project.

I used member checking to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected for the project. Arslan (2025) noted that member checking enables the validation of findings and the interpretation of data through participants' feedback. I verified that each participant met the project's criteria and had implemented strategies to improve employee retention. While semistructured interviews were used, reflexive journaling was also employed to enhance data reliability.

I guaranteed confidentiality to the participants. I used the alphanumeric characters P1 through P7 to replace the project participants' names. Once the collected data were

summarized, member checking was completed by emailing interview summaries to the participants for verification and clarification of the information they provided during the interview process. Participants were allowed to confirm the interpretation of the data they provided or to add clarifying information. The purpose of completing the member checking was to ensure that the data interpretations were accurate and that no information was omitted or overlooked during the interview. The use of qualitative coding and member checking generated four major themes in the project: (a) employee feedback, (b) leadership, (c) organizational culture, and (d) training and development. The semistructured interviews were analyzed using the six steps of Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis: (a) familiarization, (b) generating codes, (c) generating themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) writing the report.

I began by recording and transcribing the data collected from the semistructured interviews using software. I then read and re-read transcripts and listened to the audio recordings to familiarize myself with the data. Next, initial codes were generated using software, allowing patterns to emerge directly from the participants responses. As coding progressed, I compared codes across interviews, broke down similar codes, and noted variances before organizing them into preliminary themes. I reviewed the themes and searched for any themes that stood out. Then, the themes were defined and named. I began the final step of analysis and compiled detailed examples that related back to the research question and provided a foundation for the literature. In the following analysis subsections, I incorporate recent research compiled from the proposal phase and provide a revised overview of effective HR strategies.

Theme 1: Employee Feedback

Employee feedback emerged as a significant theme in the interviews regarding the strategies used by HR managers and team leaders to focus on improving employee retention. The project's research question provided a foundation for analyzing the various strategies that HR managers employed to enhance employee retention and retain employees for more than 5 years. Employee feedback is a vital step in enhancing employee retention (A. Ahmed et al., 2025; Prasetyo & Triastutik, 2024).

In the findings, I discovered that each participant believed that improving employee retention was achieved by team leaders providing consistent feedback to employees. P2 stated, "Keeping a pulse on the culture, taking employee feedback seriously, developing action plans from that feedback, and sharing that information with the employees is imperative." Utilizing this strategy aligns with Fitri's (2024) findings that emphasized that listening to employee feedback and taking action on it showcases an organization's commitment to employee satisfaction and retention. P5 emphasized the importance of feedback, stating, "Seeing and touching employees from across the region on a regular basis allowed me to receive direct feedback, not only for myself and the training but for how they were feeling about the organization as a whole." These strategies help HR managers and team leaders collect important feedback, ensuring employees feel heard, valued, and that their needs are taken seriously.

Over the years, HR managers and team leaders have fallen short in leveraging employee feedback to improve employee retention. Feedback is a benefit that helps organizations to retain their employees for years to come (M. A. Khan et al., 2024).

Leaders who use employee feedback can create opportunities to discuss both employees' needs and the organization's goals. Employees who perceive that the company values them and addresses their needs are less likely to leave the organization and seek employment elsewhere.

All the participants felt that consistent employee feedback was vital to improved employee retention. Employee feedback aligns with the literature review's findings on performance management, underscoring its importance as a retention strategy. Lawler et al. (2012) highlighted that performance management systems are most effective when they include continual feedback. Continual and meaningful feedback provides employees with a clear understanding of expectations, performance, and career development opportunities. Employees who receive supportive employee feedback are more likely to feel valued and connected to the organization. This correlation supports the view that employee feedback is a vital strategy through which HR managers and leaders can positively influence employee retention and organizational commitment.

Theme 1 aligns with the hierarchy of needs theory, in which Maslow (1943) posited that esteem is a universal human desire to be accepted and valued by others. Esteem can be broken down into two levels: esteem for oneself and the need for respect from others (McLeod, 2025). Employee feedback is classified under both esteem levels in this theory. Prasetyo and Triastutik (2024) stated that current research indicates that employees who receive regular feedback have higher job satisfaction and greater commitment to the company. Maslow's hierarchy of needs highlights the importance of esteem, which helps fulfill the basic needs of employees seeking respect and recognition.

Employee engagement is directly influenced by the initial theme of employee feedback and further reinforces the connection to Maslow's hierarchy of needs framework. Employee engagement strategies align closely with the HR strategies conceptual framework, highlighting the importance of implementing them to improve employee retention. Through employee engagement, employees experience decreased stress levels, improved employee morale, and increased organizational commitment (Rauf & Hassan, 2025). HR managers and team leaders who actively work to create high levels of employee engagement within the organization enable employees to express themselves, feel motivated, and be inspired to achieve organizational goals. Employee engagement refers to an employee's willingness to actively participate in their job, experience job satisfaction, and invest in the workplace (Alam et al., 2024). P6 noted, "I think another positive that has aided in improvement in retention is employee engagement. That comes in several aspects...employee recognition of milestones, work anniversaries, birthdays, and accomplishments." This approach aligns with Loo et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of employee engagement within an organization and its impact on reducing workplace stress, fostering a positive organizational culture, and enhancing job satisfaction among employees. P3 emphasized the importance of HR managers and leaders maintaining a connection with their workforce, stating, "I work at multiple locations, and when you get out there on the floor and speak to people...you can measure the mood of the employees by interaction." The more involved HR managers and team leaders are with their employees, the less likely they are to leave the organization.

The literature review showed that employee engagement can play an essential role in employee retention strategies. Employee engagement is a vital factor in organizational success because it reflects an employee's willingness to contribute to achieving organizational goals and further supports the idea that an engaged workforce positively impacts performance, productivity, and employee retention (Madan, 2017). Leaders who actively engage their employees in planning, implementing, and achieving organizational goals foster a stronger sense of organizational commitment and encourage employees to consider their contributions as meaningful. Continual employee engagement fosters a deeper sense of purpose and, therefore, increases job satisfaction and the likelihood that employees will remain with the organization long term.

Theme 1, employee feedback, plays a key role in promoting the subtheme of employee engagement and aligns closely with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Leaders who provide clear and consistent feedback have employees who experience greater recognition and support, factors which are directly related to Maslow's self-esteem and self-actualization needs. Ngozi and Edwinah (2022) stated that engaged employees experience positive emotions, such as joy and enthusiasm, which leads to enhanced competence, a higher sense of organizational commitment, and improved employee retention. Essentially, effective employee feedback not only enhances employee engagement but also creates a positive work environment that fulfills multiple levels of employee needs, thereby contributing to sustained motivation and organizational commitment.

Theme 2: Leadership

Leadership plays a key role in employee retention and closely aligns with and supports all levels of the Maslow's hierarchy of needs conceptual framework. While employee feedback and engagement directly influence retention, effective leadership is also essential. Leadership style and management have the potential to influence employee retention (Al-Harthy et al., 2024). P5 stated,

Each year the organization would roll out an engagement survey...there would be questions about leadership's communication, whether they felt their opinions were valued...and if an area did not do well, leadership would have to come up with a plan to address the items.

Leadership styles have become increasingly important factors in retaining employees and improving organizational loyalty (I. Nurjanah & Octafian, 2025). Team leaders can exhibit various characteristics, behaviors, and qualities indicative of different leadership styles, such as transformational, servant, and transactional. Servant leaders prioritize the needs of their employees by actively listening to them, involving them in decision-making, and offering development opportunities, which is crucial for enhancing employee retention (Yarbrough et al., 2024). Umachi and de Guzman (2025) found that transformational leaders can recognize the importance of retaining top talent and strive to meet workforce needs by implementing policies that enhance employee retention. Lastly, I. Nurjanah and Octafian (2025) concluded that transformational and servant leadership styles had a significantly positive impact on employee retention and engagement,

whereas transactional leadership styles had a less significant impact on engagement because this style is more geared toward task completion and performance. P3 stated,

If you are looking for more from the managers, I think they need to be in some form of leadership training...They know all the reports and how to push the buttons, but when it comes to dealing with employees on the floor, I think some type of leadership training is important.

Leaders who are flexible in their leadership styles can foster employee engagement, create a positive work environment, and increase job satisfaction and loyalty.

Effective leadership styles play a significant role in influencing employee engagement and, in the long run, employee retention. The literature review supports the basis that effective leadership styles play a key role in fostering a positive work environment that encourages employee engagement and improves organizational commitment. Moore and Hanson (2022) found that effective leadership positively influenced employee engagement and fostered a work environment in which employees felt respected and empowered in the decision-making process. Leadership styles that support employee empowerment and engagement play a significant role in improving employee retention.

Theme 2 aligns with hierarchy of needs theory in which Maslow (1943) posited that the need for belongingness (i.e., social needs) is integral to an individual achieving a higher level of satisfaction. Gomez (2023) stated that individuals have a need to form relationships with others, thereby achieving a sense of interaction, affection, and association. Leaders who exhibit leadership styles that foster employee engagement

ultimately reinforce employees' need for belonging, thereby supporting Maslow's claim that social needs are vital to achieving a higher level of satisfaction.

Theme 3: Organizational Culture

An organization's values, behavior, and culture can significantly influence an employee's decision to stay or leave. Organizational culture encompasses multiple layers of the hierarchy of needs conceptual framework, including safety, psychological needs, and self-actualization. Hendriati et al. (2024) concluded that organizations with a positive organizational culture experienced improved employee retention and enhanced employee engagement. Additionally, Hendriati et al. found that organizational culture has an indirect positive effect, increasing job satisfaction and employee loyalty. P1 mentioned "As an HR manager, what I pose to my people is to truly make an impact in the environment and in the culture that you work in...that you have buy-in from leaders to address those behaviors that are not positive." P1 further explained "engagement surveys help ask the questions...that can help determine the current culture of the organization." P2 stated "everyone always thinks it's money...no, if you have a great culture, you have communication, training, and you're hiring the right people for the job all of that will help decrease your turnover and you will retain your employees." The findings regarding the positive impact of a supportive organizational culture on employee retention were consistent with Pougajendy et al. (2024), who highlighted the importance of a supportive organizational culture for employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. Similarly, Das (2025) posited that a strong organizational culture, in conjunction with transformational leadership, significantly enhances employee retention. Organizational

culture can be positively influenced by effective HRM strategies that aim to increase employee satisfaction and retention.

Consistent with the literature review, organizational culture plays an essential role in influencing employee retention. Acharya et al. (2021) found that effective HR practices, along with selecting the right person and fostering organizational culture, positively impact employee retention. Organizational cultures that promote open communication, trust, and employee engagement contribute to increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which significantly influence employee retention. Ultimately, organizational culture serves as a foundational piece that impacts employee experiences and strengthens organizational commitment and long-term employee retention.

Theme 3 connects with the hierarchy of needs theory in which Maslow (1943) stated that self-actualization (i.e., personal growth), safety and security (i.e., safe working conditions and job security), and esteem (i.e., achievement, respect of others) are essential to an individual's level of satisfaction and motivation. Almerri (2023) reported that a positive organizational culture can yield multiple benefits for an organization, such as increased unity, common goals among employees, and more effective teamwork and collaboration, resulting in improved retention and organizational commitment. A positive organizational culture that supports these needs fundamentally strengthens an individual's motivation and commitment, further emphasizing Maslow's belief that the fulfillment of psychological and developmental needs is key to sustained satisfaction and motivation, which can positively impact retention.

Theme 4: Training and Development

Organizations that continue to take a more strategic approach to employee retention recognize the importance of offering training and development as a key employee benefit. Training and development strategies play a pivotal role in employee retention, aligning directly with the conceptual framework that emphasizes self-actualization by fulfilling the need for personal growth. Organizations continue to partner with HR managers to develop and implement strategic HR practices that focus on increasing employee retention and improving the organization's sustainability. P4 noted "Training and development programs that are targeted and geared towards advancement opportunities, helping educate and strengthen somebody's skill set have been the ones...and have been found to be the most beneficial in employee retention." P6 also noted that "continual training, learning, and development of the workforce is a benefit that reaps solid retention in the workforce, along with increased safety and productivity." Participants frequently commented on the importance of having training and development programs that focus on meeting employees' needs rather than having them attend training for the sake of attending. The strategy aligns with Yuniana and Hanafia's (2024) findings that organizations that provide appropriate employee training achieve higher employee retention. Akbar et al. (2024) supported the effectiveness of implementing HR manager-led training and development initiatives in promoting organizational growth and employee retention.

Organizational success depends on the training of its employees and its leaders. P2 emphasized,

What was effective was a lot of the training that my team and I developed...from there we developed line leader training, higher level, and midlevel training that leaders could learn and then go back and share that information with their employees.

Tarek et al. (2025) provided insight into the importance of HR managers supporting leadership training, which fosters a positive workplace and enhances employee morale and engagement. Hasan and Mishra (2025) concluded that it is essential for manufacturing firms to focus on supporting positive supervisor–employee relationships and enhancing working conditions through leadership training to promote employee retention. Effective training and development for leaders can help them build their skill set, improve engagement with their team, increase productivity, and enhance job satisfaction. Furthermore, building strong relationships between leadership and employees can positively impact organizational commitment and increase employee retention.

Training and development emerged as a critical HR strategy for supporting employee growth and retention. The literature review supports the view that training and development are key components of talent management. Muzanenhano and Rankhumise (2023) posited that talent management practices, such as employee wellness initiatives, leave opportunities, and training and development programs, positively influenced employee job satisfaction and retention. Similarly, Kumar (2021) reported higher retention rates in organizations that focus on employee development and career growth

opportunities. Together, these findings reinforce the importance of integrating training and development within talent management strategies to sustain long-term retention.

Theme 4, like organizational culture, aligns with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory, in that esteem, self-actualization, and safety create a framework for motivation by ensuring that individuals' foundational needs are met. Goswami et al. (2025) stated that effective training and development programs can significantly improve employee engagement and performance and align with the fulfillment of higher order needs outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, such as self-esteem and self-actualization. All these perspectives highlight how training and development function as pivotal factors of the higher order need for fulfillment and lead to improved employee motivation, engagement, and retention.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

The findings indicate that effective HR strategies have a significant impact on manufacturing and provide practical insights for improving employee retention. Employee feedback emerged as a key factor in employee retention, supporting open communication between leaders and employees, which, in turn, cultivates a positive workplace environment. Rasheed et al. (2024) highlighted that leaders who provide effective employee feedback foster a workforce that feels engaged and empowered, which, in turn, positively impacts employee retention. Leaders who engage in effective employee feedback also provide employees with the opportunity to provide feedback to leaders, which has a positive impact on employee retention. Feedback sessions facilitate

open communication, enabling employees to share ideas and feel trusted and respected by their leaders (Almerri, 2023).

Leaders who exhibit characteristics that focus on their employees' needs and development and are flexible in their leadership styles will gain a deeper understanding of the workforce and can be instrumental in increasing employee engagement, fostering teamwork, and enhancing employee retention. Studies demonstrated that leadership styles are beneficial in increasing employee retention and achieving organizational goals (Purba & Yanti, 2025). Leaders whose behaviors align with employees' needs build a loyal workforce and improve retention (I. Nurjanah & Octafian, 2025). Organizational leaders have started to recognize the importance of aligning organizational goals with effective HR strategies to attract and retain top talent. The current project supports these findings, showing that HR managers and leaders who employ strategic HR practices to achieve the organizational goal of enhancing the workplace environment achieve better results in terms of employee satisfaction and increased employee retention.

The results underscore the significance of organizational culture and training and development in enhancing employee retention. Effective HR strategies can have a profound impact on an organization's culture. Adeniyi et al. (2024) found that organizations that recognize the impact of organizational culture on overall employee engagement, performance, and leadership development understand and embrace the importance of implementing HR best practices to enhance employee retention and organizational performance. In today's competitive global market, maintaining a competitive advantage is crucial. The training and development of an organization's

employees is paramount in achieving that goal. The HR strategy of training and development has moved to the forefront within organizations, being recognized as imperative for organizational success, cultivating employee engagement, and enhancing organizational performance (Goswami et al., 2025). Organizations will need to establish strategic partnerships with HR managers to develop and implement HR initiatives that support employee satisfaction, employee retention, and overall organizational performance.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change in this project include the potential for HR managers and team leaders within small- to medium-sized manufacturing industries to implement strategies that promote positive change, thereby increasing job and life satisfaction, enhancing feelings of job security, and fostering improved organizational commitment. When HR managers and team leaders seize the opportunity to identify, develop, and implement HR strategies that meet the needs of their employees, it fosters a positive work environment characterized by increased employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention. Bharathi et al. (2024) examined the various HR strategies employed by manufacturing industries to retain skilled employees and found significant value in the implemented HR strategies, which improved employee satisfaction and retention. In a manner similar to Bharathi et al., Adegoke et al. (2024) examined the role that HR strategies play in supporting sustainability efforts and found that team leaders who successfully integrate HR sustainability initiatives create a positive impact on the workforce, environment, and society. Their research aligns with the current project's

emphasis on the impact of HR strategies on employee retention in the manufacturing industry, showcasing the potential for these strategies to create a positive social change, including job sustainability, increased revenue within the community, and the potential to bring in new business, which can create new job opportunities.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project, I explored the strategies HR managers in the manufacturing industry use to retain employees for more than 5 years. The target population consisted of seven HR managers employed in the manufacturing industry who had implemented retention strategies. Finding people to fill positions has become a challenge for many organizations; therefore, retaining current employees has become a top priority. Leaders are beginning to recognize the important role HR managers play in achieving this goal. I would recommend expanding the target population and exploring strategic partnerships between HR and the organization. Al-A'Ali (2025) noted that people management is an essential factor in maintaining a competitive advantage and that forming a strategic partnership between HR managers and team leaders is vital. As the global market continues to expand, maintaining a competitive advantage will become increasingly crucial to an organization's sustainability, and strategic partnerships with HR can play a vital role in ensuring success.

Conclusion

In this study, I examined the practical employee retention strategies that HR managers implemented to retain employees beyond 5 years, using data gathered from

seven participants across various manufacturing industries. Based on 107 references, I identified four key themes for effective employee retention: employee feedback, leadership, organizational culture, and training and development. HR managers who employed strategies, such as training and development, career advancement, and fostering a positive work environment, effectively addressed employee retention challenges and enhanced overall employee motivation (Shrestha, 2025).

In the findings, I emphasized the significance of organizational culture, leadership styles, and effective employee feedback. HR managers who implemented strategies aligned with organizational goals effectively addressed issues impacting employee retention, increasing employee engagement and commitment (Kusumaningrum & Winarno, 2024). This project contributed to the current literature by providing a fresh perspective on the impact of effective HR strategies on employee retention. The manufacturing industry comprises a significant portion of the global market and the overall economy. Retaining employees will play a crucial role in organizational sustainability in this challenging market, and integrating the four themes identified in this project will be essential to retaining employees beyond the 5-year mark and enhancing organizational success.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Steps of Initial Interview

1. Provide an introduction of the researcher to the participant.
2. Turn on the recording device.
3. Conduct interviews consisting of eight interview questions.
4. Allow participants to elaborate if needed during key pieces of data provided during the interview that warrant further discussion, being mindful to keep the interview on track.
5. Repeat answers to participants.
6. Thank the participant for participation.
7. Stop recording.
8. Instruct participants on the next steps, like member checking, and assure them of the receipt of the summary of the interview for review and clarification if necessary.

Interview Questions

1. What specific retention strategies have you implemented, and how successful were they?
2. What, if any, challenges have you experienced with employee retention?
3. What types of training and development programs have you found to be the most effective in retaining employees?
4. What role do you feel human resources has in employee retention at your organization?

5. What human resource strategies were implemented that showcase recognition programs, and were they successful in retaining employees?
6. How have you supported employee retention?
7. What benefits have you found to be effective in improving retention?
8. What additional information would you like to share about effective human resource strategies for improving employee retention?