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Retaining Employees After Downsizing

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MBA, Robert Gordon University, 2014

BEng, Enugu State University, 1995

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Oil and gas industry business leaders who fail to implement adequate talent retention strategies experience reduced profits and sustainability challenges. During the first 2 years following downsizing, 67% of organizations using excuse-based downsizing reflected reduced sales and profitability, and 11% of such organizations experienced financial losses. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the strategies that successful Calgary medium size oil and gas businesses implemented to retain talented employees after downsizing. The population for the study included business leaders of 3 medium oil and gas businesses in Calgary, Canada, who had successfully implemented talented employee retention strategies. Data were collected from interviews with the leaders and from artifacts such as the company websites and social media pages. Inductive analysis was guided by the transformational leadership theory and human capital theory, and trustworthiness of interpretations was bolstered by member checking. Five themes emerged: transformational leadership, training survivors, establishing trust, rewarding and recognizing surviving employees, and competing for survivor employees with other industries. The application of the findings from this study could contribute to positive social change by providing insights for medium oil and gas business leaders on the strategy implementation for talent retention that increases workplace stability and employees supporting their families as well as contributing positively to their communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my wife Lilian, my children Kelvin and Ivy for their prayers, love, and support during this doctoral journey.

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I would like to thank Dr. Carol-Anne Faint, Dr. Rocky Dwyer, Dr. Al Endres, and my other instructors and classmates at Walden University for your tremendous support. Your mentorship and guidance significantly contributed to my success. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Freda Turner and Mr. Fred Walker for your leadership in the Doctor of Business Administration program.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Downsizing is a common business strategy that business leaders use for reducing the number of employees to improve organizational productivity, efficiency, profits, and competitiveness. However, the outcomes of downsizing employees can create financial and social problems (Gandolfi, 2013). Volatility in the oil and gas industry leads to market uncertainty for oil prices and revenue which affects oil and gas companies' future projects (Burns, McLinn, & Porter, 2016). Consequently, some oil and gas business leaders implement employee downsizing when there are revenue shortfalls. However, when business leaders downsize without adequate strategies in place for retaining talented employees, there are adverse effects on organizational performance (Hansson, 2015). The loss of talented long-term employees results in efficiency losses that can have a long-term adverse effect on an organization's performance (Kraemer, Gouthier, & Heidenreich, 2016). Such reduction in organizational performance can affect the future sustainability of the organization, and may jeopardize the employment of employees with different skill sets. My objective in this study, therefore, was to explore the strategies oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing.

Background of the Problem

Organizational downsizing does not always yield the expected results because the industry does not implement downsizing correctly (Marques, Galende, Cruz, & Portugal-Ferreira, 2014). Uncertainty increases during periods of oil price volatility, thus affecting oil and gas companies' future exploration and drilling projects (Burns et al., 2016). Companies operating in Calgary suffer heavily from volatility because Calgary is the oil and gas hub of Canada. Consequently, oil and gas industry leaders fear for the future sustainability and profitability of their businesses, and may implement employee downsizing as one strategy for maintaining profitability (Mellert, Scherbaum, Oliveira, & Wilke, 2015). Conglomerates and investment firms with strong financial bases buy-out companies and implement employee downsizing during organizational restructuring.

Some of the reasons for organizational downsizing include reducing costs, and improving efficiency and profits (Hansson, 2015). Contrary to some leaders' expectations, downsizing through layoffs does not guarantee improved organizational performance, but can lead to suboptimal organizational sizing (Luan, Tien, & Chi, 2013). During downsizing, some talented employees separate from the company, while some voluntarily leave for fear of being next in line for downsizing because of the organization's lack of well-executed talent management and retention strategies. In sum, the loss of talented employees can affect the organization's performance following downsizing (Marques et al., 2014).

Problem Statement

Oil and gas business leaders are unable to retain their experienced employees after downsizing, which can negatively affect organizational performance (Hansson, 2015). During the first 2 years following downsizing, 67% of organizations in Canada using *excuse-based* downsizing reflected reduced sales and profitability (Chhinzer & Currie, 2014), and 11% of organizations experienced financial losses (Matsa & Miller, 2014). The general business problem is businesses can experience lost profits and a lack of sustainability from failures to retain employee talent after a downsizing. The specific business problem is some oil and gas industry business leaders lack strategies to retain talented employees after downsizing.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. The population for the study included business leaders of three medium oil and gas businesses in Calgary, Canada, selected because they successfully implemented talented employee retention strategies. Oil and gas business leaders may use the findings of this study to develop and implement better talent management strategies, thus increasing talent retention. Improved workforce retention leads to employees with healthier, more stable lives and the reduced feeling of job insecurity (Snorradottir, Tomasson, Vilhjalmsson, & Rafnsdottir, 2015). The study findings could help other business leaders increase workplace stability, and thus have happier employees with stable families and communities.

Nature of the Study

Researchers use one of three methodologies—quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods—depending on their needs. I used a qualitative multiple case study because I determined that this methodology was the most appropriate way to answer the research question. Researchers employ the qualitative method to explore a phenomenon where little or no understanding exists (Johnson, 2014), and use the case study design to ask *what, how* or *why* questions to address a research question (Yin, 2014). Qualitative data is collected through semistructured interviews, observations, pictures, symbols, and reports

(Yin, 2014). Conversely, quantitative researchers test theories using hypotheses (Antonakis, Bastardoz, Liu, & Schriesheim, 2014). For instance, a researcher employing the quantitative research method uses hypotheses to test the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Testing the relationship or differences between quantitative variables was not appropriate for this study because of the explorative nature of the research. The mixed method involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting both qualitative and quantitative data in the same study (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). Because of the inclusion of quantitative data in the mixed method, the mixed method was likewise not suitable for this study.

The four qualitative research designs I considered using included (a) narrative, (b) ethnography, (c) phenomenology, and (d) case study. Narrative research is suitable to study life stories of individuals but not organizations (Germeten, 2013). Therefore, I did not select a narrative design for this study. Ethnographers focus on studying the cultural behavior of groups (Cayla & Arnould, 2013). Since studying the cultural behavior of groups was not my intention, I did not select the ethnographic approach. Phenomenology is an approach researchers use to understand and capture the meanings of individual lived experiences of a common phenomenon (Berglund, 2015), which was not my intention in this study. A qualitative case study research design was the most appropriate because the purpose of the study was to identify and explore strategies oil and gas industry business leaders use to retain talented employees' after downsizing. Researchers use multiple case studies to explore separate occurrences of a phenomenon to obtain multiple perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In a case study, controlling the behavior of the participants is not possible, and hence having case boundaries is an essential requirement for a case study (Yin, 2014).

Research Question

The central research question was: What strategies do oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing?

Interview Questions

The strategy-related interview questions for this study included:

1. What strategies did the management of your organization have in place to prevent talented employee turnover after downsizing?
2. Based upon your experience, what specific features of the strategies contributed to talented employees remaining after downsizing?
3. What are the principal internal and external barriers to implementing talent retentions strategies?
4. How were the internal and external barriers addressed?
5. How have you assessed the strategies' efficacy?
6. What additional information can you provide to assist me in understanding the retention of talented employees after downsizing occurs?

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the basis for any qualitative research study, and reflects particular ideas from existing literature or theory on the research topic (Lightfoot, 2015). Conceptual frameworks are bodies of knowledge that researchers use to explain and predict phenomena and show how a study could relate to existing knowledge (Kumar

& Antonenko, 2014). As the conceptual framework for this study, I combined key elements of the transformational leadership and human capital theories.

Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It includes determining followers’ motives, treating followers well, and fulfilling their basic needs (Northouse, 2013). Transformational leadership inspires people to perform their best because transformational leaders offer a positive working environment that positively impacts organizational efficiency while enhancing the performance of low performing individuals and groups (Arthur & Hardy, 2014). Transformational leadership theory first gained prominence through the works of Burns (1978). According to Northouse (2013), the fundamental concepts of transformational leadership include: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. Downsizing can occur after a merger and acquisition process (Hansson, 2015), and thus requires a leadership style that can give employees a sense of security while inspiring them to put their best effort into making the new organization successful (Flewellen, 2013). Transformational leadership is the appropriate leadership style to achieve this level of inspiration during and after downsizing because transformational leaders introduce changes in the organization by changing employees’ attitudes and assumptions and creating a collective agreement (ElKordy, 2013; Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015).

Becker (1962) introduced the human capital theory as a theory of skills acquisition. Becker explained that there is a correlation between an employee’s level of training, job experience, and compensation. The expectation is that investment in training and education will lead to increased benefits for both the organization and the employee. Becker posited that workers with higher levels of education and job experience earn higher compensation than employees with a lower standard of training. Employees invest in personal training and development to decrease the likelihood of layoff and to improve employability, while organizations invest in employee-specific training to improve organizational productivity (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). Given the risk involved with investing in human capital development, organizations may elect to invest less in employee training to reduce the possibility of employee turnover. However, investment in specific training can provide job security for employees (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014).

Operational Definitions

I offer the following operational definitions to assist readers in comprehending the meaning of some specialized terms I use throughout the study.

Downsizing: Downsizing is a planned set of policies and activities for reducing companies’ employees with an expected outcome of reduced overhead costs, increased operational efficiencies, and increased profits (Chhinzer & Currie, 2014).

Employee retention: Employee retention is an organization's human resources policies, procedures, and strategies for hiring and ensuring talents remain in the organization's employment for a long time (Idris, 2014).

Employee turnover intention: Employee turnover intention refers to employees desire to quit voluntarily or intentionally (Qazi, Khalid, & Shafique, 2015).

Layoff: The term layoff is used to explain the termination of full-time employment of individuals for business reasons such as cost reduction (Davis, Trevor, &

Feng, 2015).

Organizational change: Organizational change is a process through which an organization changes its structures and strategies to influence change within the organization (Mellert et al., 2015). Companies engage in organizational change processes such as mergers and acquisitions (M & A), layoffs, and restructuring to succeed in challenging business environments (Mellert et al., 2015).

Restructuring: Restructuring is an organizational change process for adapting and improving the business performance of the organization (De Jong et al., 2016).

Survivors: Survivors are individuals who remain in the organization after a significant reduction in workforce (Neves, 2014).

Talented employees: Talented employees are people who are skilled, knowledgeable, and frequently demonstrate high performance and achievement for the organization (Latukha, & Tsukanova, 2015).

Talent management: Talent management involves policies and process with the objective of recruiting, developing, and retaining high performing individuals for the organization (Majeed, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions in research are elements that researchers understand to be facts without proof (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). The following assumptions affected the study. First, I assumed the interview participants had sufficient knowledge of the organization's retention practices and responded to the interview questions truthfully and honestly. To mitigate the risk of dishonesty, each participant received a consent form explaining the participant's rights to answer or not to answer any question. Second, I assumed that the classification of Canadian medium size businesses as those that employ between 100-499 employees was relevant for my case study (Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada [ISEDC], 2013).

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of a study. Researchers should state the limitations that are not within the control of the principal investigator (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). The key limitation of my study was the inability to generalize the study findings for two reasons. First, the geographic location of the study was Calgary, Canada, and the study contained only three cases, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, there may have been some biases in the participants' responses.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries set for a study (Nelms, 2015). Delimitations for this study involved the sizes of the organization, the geographic location of the study, and the sector of the industry. First, I only focused on the oil and gas industry because the purpose of the study was to explore strategies oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. Second, I only included medium size oil and gas companies. Medium size businesses are businesses employing fewer than 500 employees (Lingard, Turner, & Charlesworth, 2015). Larger size oil and gas companies were not part of the study. Third, each of the companies was located in Calgary, Canada.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is evident when considering the extent to which organizations lose profit and talented employees because of business leaders not having, or having poorly executed talent management retention strategies. Gandolfi (2013) identified workforce reduction and employee downsizing as a continuous and iterative business phenomenon. Although downsizing is still popular among the leaders of Calgary Canada oil and gas companies, some organizational leaders who implement downsizing do not realize the expected outcomes (Luan et al., 2013).

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings from my study could have significance for oil and gas business leaders looking to increase awareness of how businesses can loose profits when experienced and talented employees leave due to organizational restructuring and downsizing (Manz, Fugate, Hom, & Millikin, 2015). The findings could stimulate business leaders, human resources managers, supervisors, and managers to reevaluate their organization's downsizing and talent retention strategies. Findings and recommendations from this study may inspire business leaders to develop and adopt alternate methods for downsizing and strategies for talent retention, thus increasing organizational performance of oil and gas companies operating in Calgary, Canada.

Implications for Social Change

Downsizing has unexpected implications for an organization’s business environment and the survivors’ affective commitment (Marques et al., 2014). Engaged employees earn income and provide for their families while also contributing to the larger community. The local businesses and economies can continue to thrive when community members have jobs and stable incomes. Moreover, an improved workforce leads to employees with healthier, more balanced lives, and a reduced feeling of job insecurity (Snorradottir et al., 2015). The findings from this study could contribute to social change by helping other business leaders increase workplace stability and thus have happier employees working to support their families and contributing positively to their communities and society in general.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. Employee downsizing and the loss of talented employees can jeopardize the future sustainability of the Calgary oil and gas sector because of the uncertainty and volatility in the oil and gas prices (Burns et al., 2016). The resultant low revenue streams will reduce profits, and business owners can implement employee downsizing when there are shortfalls in projected revenue, but employee downsizing has negative effects on organizational performance (Hansson, 2015).

In this literature review section, I offer a general background on previous studies regarding employee downsizing and workforce reduction outcomes. The purpose of the literature review is to provide the reader with overall knowledge about the topic of post-downsizing employee retention. I have broken the literature review down into the following subsections: (a) the relevant theories; (b) downsizing, restructuring, and organizational performance; (c) employee retention and talent management; (d) organizational change and employee productivity; and (e) turnover intention, talented employees, and job satisfaction.

A significant portion of the information in the literature review is from academic peer-reviewed journals. The primary search terms I used to gather this information were *downsizing, talented employees, talent management, retention strategies, organizational restructuring, turnover,* and *organizational performance*. I searched for these terms using Google Scholar and various business and management databases such as Business Source Complete, Emerald Management, ABI/INFORM Complete, and SAGE Premier. Other databases I employed included ScienceDirect, ProQuest Central, Expanded Academic ASAP, Academic Search Complete, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. The other materials include books, dissertations, and Canadian government publications. Of the 174 references, 170 (97%) were published within the 5 years (2013 – 2017) of my expected year of CAO approval of my completed study, and 96% of the total references are peer-reviewed. Therefore, these percentages comply with the DBA doctoral study rubric requirements. Table 1 provides a summary of the different totals and types of sources.

Table 1

Summary of Reference Types and Their Currency

	Older	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total	Percentage
Peer-reviewed Journals	3	44	48	42	30	0	167	95.98
Dissertations	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	1.15
Government publications	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.57
Textbooks	1	1	1	0	1	0	4	2.30
Total	4	47	49	43	31	0	174	100

The Relevant Theories

The two theories that comprise my conceptual framework are the transformational leadership theory and human capital theory. Both theories are potentially relevant to the study of business organizations. Transformational leaders build a relationship and inspire followers to support a common vision (Zhang et al., 2015). Regarding the human capital theory, analysis of the reasons individuals and organizations engage in employee and organizational training is necessary to understand employees' feelings regarding corporate downsizing.

The transformational leadership theory. Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. Transformational leaders determine followers' motives, treat followers well, and fulfill their basic needs (Northouse, 2013). Transformational leadership inspires people to perform their best because transformational leaders offer a positive working environment, which positively affects organizational efficiency while enhancing the performance of low performing individuals and groups (Arthur & Hardy, 2014). The fundamental concepts of transformational leadership theory, which first gained prominence through the works of Burns (1978), include: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Northouse, 2013). Hansson (2015) showed that downsizing following a merger and acquisition requires a leadership style that can inspire and give employees a sense of security and motivation to put their best effort into making an organization successful. ElKordy (2013) underscored that transformational leadership is the right leadership strategy to achieve this level of inspiration and visionary leadership during and after downsizing.

Arthur and Hardy (2014) sought to determine the effectiveness of transformational leadership interventions for improving the performance of poorly performing organizations. The subject organizations were low performing, as viewed by the senior management, and required responses. Arthur and Hardy (2014) concluded that remediating actions associated with transformational leadership offered a positive working environment, and positively influenced organizational efficiency while enhancing the performance of low performing groups. Additionally, transformational leadership training can help supervisors and managers gain the full benefit of improved job satisfaction and performance outcomes from transformational leadership behaviors at the individual and team levels (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013). Furthermore, Men (2014) found that the interactive, empowering, and communicative nature of the transformational leader suited employee communication needs and enhanced employee satisfaction.

The transformation of an organization requires good decision-making and leadership approaches. The quality of the leader’s decision plays a key role in establishing the business performance (Verma, Bhat, Rangnekar, & Barua 2015). Singh (2015) sought to determine if there was a relationship between leadership styles and employee productivity, with a particular focus on private and foreign banks operating in India. Singh showed that there was a direct cultural impact influencing the two constructs. Verma et al. (2015) noted that culture was a fundamental part of the entire value and leadership systems in India. Verma et al. also found that transformational leaders are more practical, while transactional leaders’ decisions are conditional. Singh (2015) concluded that transactional leadership significantly influenced private bank employee productivity, while transformational leadership influenced employees’ productivity for the foreign banks. Mittal and Dhar (2015) also concluded that the transformational leadership style fosters employee creativity and knowledge sharing for increased performance.

Researchers have shown that innovation drives an organization’s competitive advantage, and leaders can influence innovative employee behavior. For example, Li, Mitchell, and Boyle (2016) investigated the different effects of transformational leadership on innovation and found that transformational leadership has a different effect on individual and team innovation. Li et al. (2016) contended that group-focused transformational leadership only increased group-focused innovation output, while individual-focused transformational leadership increased individual-focused innovation output. When the leader's behavior encourages group vision and collective contribution, task affiliation makes individual employees reluctant to make individual contributions to innovation (Li et al., 2016). Therefore, group-focused transformational leader behavior had a positive impact on team innovation, and a negative impact on individual innovation (Li et al., 2016).

ElKordy (2013) sought to determine the extent to which transformational leadership and organizational culture influenced employee behavioral dispositions and the effect of employee job satisfaction on organizational commitment. Using data collected through online survey instruments administered to business executives and graduates of the University of Alexandria, ElKordy found that job satisfaction was a key determinant of the employee commitment to the organization. ElKordy concluded that studying the perceptions of the organization's leaders provided valuable information on how transformational leadership style acts as a predictor of employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Appelbaum, Degbe, MacDonald, and Nguyen-Quang (2015) highlighted that during a period of organizational change, the leadership requires competence and skill at communicating and coaching to motivate, reward, and good team building. A leader who combines these attributes in delivering organizational change is a transformational leader (Appelbaum et al., 2015). This view supports the ElKordy’s findings that transformational leadership is the right leadership style to achieve inspiration and visionary leadership during a period of organizational change, such as during and after downsizing.

Business leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors enhance the employee’s passionate devotion to achieving organizational change (Abrell-Vogel & Rowold, 2014) and improve business performance (Birasnav, 2014). Abrell-Vogel and Rowold (2014) discovered that transformational leadership behavior positively contributed to employee commitment to organizational change when the leader's commitment toward change was high. Birasnav (2014) showed that top performing leaders exhibited transformational leadership behaviors while implementing the organization’s business strategies. Furthermore, Birasnav found that transformational leaders demonstrated the critical capability to successfully transform their organization's manufacturing processes, thus strengthening the organization's business position (Birasnav, 2014). Mason, Griffin, and Parker (2014) emphasized the importance of implementing transformational leadership training for supervisors and managers. Leaders whose self-efficacy, perspective taking, and positive influence increased during the transformational leadership training displayed improvements in their transformational leadership behaviors (Mason, Griffin, & Parker, 2014). Therefore, practical leadership training may be necessary for achieving a change in the leader’s behavior, which eventually impacts the entire organization.

Braun et al. (2013) investigated the effects of transformational leadership at multiple levels between individuals and teams, and assessed the outcomes for the organization. Braun et al. emphasized the importance of perceived trust in the supervisor’s leadership, and maintained that transformational leadership enhanced individual employee job satisfaction and team performance. Similarly, Burton and

Peachey (2014) found that the relationships between organizational culture and leadership affect organization performance outcomes and turnover intentions. The transformational leader encourages employee risk-taking while also supporting initiatives for innovative approaches to problem solving that ultimately lead to performance improvements and growth (Burton & Peachey, 2014). Burton and Peachey concluded that transformational leadership behaviors reduced employee intention to leave the organization.

Transformational leaders inspire followers to perform beyond expectations. The manager's leadership style plays a significant role in determining project success (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016; Chou, Lin, Chang, & Chuang, 2013). Project managers exhibiting transformational leadership skills are more likely to create team-building practices that will help in the realization of project success (Aga et al., 2016). Team building practices include (a) project goal setting, (b) role-clarification, (c) interpersonal relations, and (d) problem-solving techniques, which together motivate and propel a project team towards project success (Aga et al., 2016). Therefore, transformational leadership and team building enhance project successes in organizations that engage in team building activities (Aga et al., 2016).

Similarly, Chou et al. (2013) showed that transformational leadership directly helps foster members' cognitive trust in the team leader and among team members. As the team's emotional trust in the transformational leader increases, the collective effectiveness of the team improves and this confidence ultimately helps achieve better team performance. Tyssen, Wald, and Heidenreich (2014) added that while both the transactional and transformational leadership behaviors influenced followers' commitment, transformational leadership behavior was more efficient in temporary organizations undergoing a high level of uncertainty and change. The implication of the finding, therefore, is that the transformational leadership style is effective at achieving project success in both permanent and temporary organizations.

The human capital theory. The second theory within my conceptual framework is the human capital theory. Becker (1962) introduced the human capital theory as skills acquisition. Becker explained there is a correlation between employees' training, on the job experience with the degree of compensation. The expectation is that investment in training and education will lead to increased benefit for both organization and the employee. Becker expanded that workers with higher levels of education and job experience earn higher compensation than employees with a lower standard of training. Employees invest in personal training and developments to experience fewer layoffs and to improve employability while organizations invest in employee specific training to improve organizations productivity (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). Due to risky investment in human capital development, organizations may elect to invest in less training for employees to reduce the possibility of employee turnover. However, investment in specific training can provide job security for employees (Seong-O & Patterson).

An organization's business success depends on the employees involved and their level of competence and experience. Human capital is the knowledge and skill acquired through continuous working experience and education (Harpan & Draghici, 2014). The investment in human capital creates employee expertise that leads to the production of particular goods and services that improve the organization’s competitive advantage. Harpen and Draghici (2014) underscored that human capital should focus on both the financial aspect and the other aspect such as creativity and innovation in contemporary organizations. Citing previous studies in human capital, both (Harpan & Draghici, 2014), and Gamerschlag (2013) agreed that the organization's human assets are a valuable resource that leads to sustainable competitive advantage.

Mackey, Molloy, and Morris (2014) explained that the supply of human capital is scarce while particular expertise is harder to find compared to the demand. Mackey et al. (2014) established that the scarcity of human capital could be naturally occurring or organization imposed. Gamerschlag (2013) found that experience and competency information about a company’s human capital always lead to a positive appreciation of the businesses market value. Although there was no short-term benefit of valuation of a company’s employees’ competence, the availability of the human capital information helped improve the assessment in the market (Gamerschlag, 2013). Investors will have a more positive appreciation of the potentials and opportunities within the company because of the information on the human capital.

The investments in training for a talented employee is lost as costs when the employee separates from the organization (Yongbeom, 2013). The loss of skills and expertise of these employees can affect the organization's productivity and profits. Also, good performing employees are more inclined to separate from the organization when job satisfaction declines due to their higher market value and ability to get a better job elsewhere (Yongbeom, 2013). In particular, Shankar and Ghosh (2013) established that the turnover rate for high performing employees is greater than low performing employees in high technology industries. Yongbeom (2013) concluded that low job satisfaction leads to high voluntary turnover rate in the public sector, which is costly in relations to the high replacement costs of the organization. Additionally, Wei (2015) submitted that a high performing human resources practice enhances retention of human capital and reduces turnover intention.

Seong-O and Patterson (2014) underscored the importance of human capital and posited that training enhanced the human capital of an organization and by extension the organization's productivity. While employees invest personal time and resources in general training and education to improve their market value and reduce the probability of layoffs, employers invest in company-specific training on employees to enhance productivity (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). Therefore, while the loss of the trained and skilled workers could lead to loss of productivity and profits for some industries, (Shankar & Ghosh, 2013) concluded that employee turnover improved the transfer of knowledge across multiple high technology firms.

Employee human capital development could also determine employee pay. Hayek, Thomas, Novicevic, and Montalvo (2016) showed that while nonmanagement staff receives compensation for their performance, the management staff receive compensation and rewards not for performance but the accumulation of credentials. This discovery contrasts with the human capital theory that emphasizes that employees receive compensation because of the accumulation of education, experience, and skills that reflect in productivity improvements (Becker, 1962). The more education and training the employee or manager receives, the more compensation and reward the employee or manager obtains because of productivity and performance gains (Becker, 1962). Hayek et al. (2016) conducted a study within the Ecuadorian country context in which other institutional and social factors affect the relationship between the compensation levels for management and other employees. Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) underscored that the key constructs in human capital development and management were education and training. This position further underpinned the human capital theory (Becker, 1962). Therefore, the growth of human capital for an organization can lead to the organization gaining a competitive advantage from having sufficient experience and skills (Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015), while a lesser buildup of human capital might result in the organization losing business and profits.

Biswas (2016) acknowledged that downsizing and layoffs would continue to occur in several business organizations due to changes in business strategy and policy implementation. Norman, Butler, and Ranft (2013) espoused that downsizing is a common business management strategy that business leaders use for reducing the number of employees and, by extension, the organization’s human capital. In particular, Norman et al. (2013) asserted that downsizing has the effect of causing disruptions and also damage to the organization’s human capital, thereby reducing the competitive edge as the company loses valuable knowledge. Norman et al. however, found that certain types of organization’s intangible resources may help mitigate the effect of negative performance following downsizing and thereby reducing the likelihood of bankruptcy.

Chang, Wang, and Liu (2016) established there was a direct positive relationship between increases in organizations knowledge base from the highly educated workforce and organizational productivity. Chang et al. affirmed that within a particular city in Taiwan, a 1% increase in highly educated workforce resulted in between a 0.93 and 1.15% increases in productivity while also noting that the productivity ratio was higher for high technology industries. Muda and Rahman (2016) explained that human capital as intangible resources significantly influenced an organization's business performance. Muda and Rahman underscored the importance of business leaders possessing the human capital expertise required to give the organization both a competitive advantage and help in maintaining a higher market share and larger revenue stream through increased customer patronage. Therefore, an organization retains a competitive edge that drives business performance when the human capital base is high with the right expertise and knowledge base (Chang et al., 2016; Muda & Rahman, 2016).

Downsizing, Restructuring, and Organizational Performance

Business organizations implement downsizing during restructuring after a merger, and the procedure can affect organizational performance. Downsizing is a strategy that business leaders employ to reduce the organization's workforce, introduce efficiencies to improve profits (Ramesha, 2014). Gandolfi (2013) defined workforce downsizing as a methodical strategy for reducing organizational employees to improve organizational productivity, efficiency, profitability, and competitiveness but creating unexpected financial and social problems. In discussing various downsizing strategies, downsizing archetypes and downsizing approaches, Gandolfi (2013) acknowledged previous scholarly work in concluding that workforce reduction and employee downsizing is a continuous and iterative business practice.

Organizations experiencing economic prosperity and financial difficulties implement downsizing (Chhinzer & Currie, 2014; De Meuse & Dai, 2013). However, the financial outcome of the downsizing exercise depends on the timing of implementation and the rationale for downsizing. De Meuse and Dai (2013) sought to determine the impact of downsizing on employee and organization performance during a period of economic prosperity. During the first 2 years following downsizing, 17% of Fortune 1000 companies experienced reduced return on assets, profit margin, and revenue growth when compared to Fortune 1000 companies that were not implementing downsizing (De Meuse & Dai, 2013). Chhinzer and Currie (2014) similarly found that publicly traded organizations engaging in justification or excuse-based downsizing experienced a decline in financial performance 2 years after implementing downsizing. Brauer and Laamanen (2014) worked at determining the implications of disruptive routines in the organization's performance through the elimination of critical employees during workforce downsizing procedures. Brauer and Laamanen (2014) established that moderate downsizing leads to efficiency improvements without disrupting organizational routines while larger routine disruptions occur in both medium and large-scale downsizing. The implication is a proactive downsizing procedure improved the organizations' return on investment.

Neves (2014) explored to know why some supervisors abused individual employees especially after a downsizing procedure and established a fear factor. Some employees for fear of experiencing downsizing became helpless and easily submissive to aggressive and abusive supervisors because core self-evaluations and co-worker support (peer protection) decreased or became unavailable. The abusive supervisor practice was more frequent in downsizing organizations, and the employees developed “learnt helplessness” (Chen & Mykletun, 2015, p. 4). As such, the employees exhibit some counterproductive workforce behaviors (Chen & Mykletun, 2015; Neves 2014). Fraher (2013) researched to understand how downsizing could affect a high-risk team’s performance through an increase in mistakes, distraction, and occupational stress; thus, examining the effect of organizational downsizing on the pilot's trust, morale, and organizational commitment. The pilots are working in the organization that implemented downsizing experienced increased mistakes, distractions and stress resulting in mistrust, low morale, and reduced commitment. Fraher (2013) concluded that for high-risk occupations, management should have good restructuring policies for managing the employees, their work groups to gain trust and mitigate the high long-term cost of employee mistakes and errors.

Mellert et al. (2015) focused on examining the relationship between organizational change and financial loss. Mellert et al. established that the Swiss insurance companies that experienced financial losses earlier implemented organizational change, and thus underscored the risks of change such as the organizational change involving downsizing. De Meuse and Dai (2013), and Chhinzer and Currie (2014) agreed that the strategic benefit of downsizing takes many years to manifest contrary to the expectation of business executives who aspire to have improved financial results immediately after the downsizing exercise.

Downsizing also has implications for organizations as well as consequences for employees. Hansson (2015) discussed several reasons global organizations implement downsizing procedures. The reasons for downsizing include (a) reduce costs, (b) remain competitive, (c) improve return on investments for shareholders, and (d) increase organizational efficiencies. Contrary to the reasons, Hansson (2015) found that downsizing has the tendency to generate negative performance results and detrimental emotional effects on the stakeholders and people involved. Boyd (2013) also acknowledged downsizing as an organization's improvement strategy, mostly utilized by business leaders. Boyd argued that the benefit of downsizing is most evident with a reduction of senior level positions than with lower level positions. Boyd (2013) thus suggested a combination of other options such as (a) attrition, (b) early retirement, (c) reduced work schedules, and (d) benefits, instead of downsizing as measures to improve the organization’s performance.

Ramesha (2014) discussed downsizing within the context of management of the organization’s human resources. Ramesha also agreed that downsizing is a globally accepted strategy for improving the organization’s sustainability and profits through cost reductions to increase revenue. However, the human resources consequences of downsizing have the tendency to exploit the management efforts leading to the organizations not experiencing improved performance after the implementation of downsizing. Organizations are better prepared to deal with the effects of downsizing through training and development of employees (Ramesha, 2014). Hansson (2015) agreed that organizations implementing training for downsizing survivors and human resources policies to moderate the downsizing effects mitigated the adverse impacts. Furthermore, Bellou and Chatzinikou (2015) added that the more radical the organizational change is, the more training the employees require for acceptance and practical realization of change.

Vuontisjärvi (2013) examined the argument of organizations' corporate executives for employee downsizing and their social responsibility obligations discussed in the annual reports. On the contrary, (Long 2012) argued that downsizing is an act of social irresponsibility with several ethical and social implications such as breach of contract, ignoring rights, and the creation of social injustice. Vuontisjärvi (2013) identified several techniques such as rationalization, normalization, emotional/ moral distancing and inevitability. Vuontisjärvi thus concluded that executives implementing downsizing techniques view downsizing as a standard process for improving customer service, for increasing the economic performance of the organizations and thereby helping the power relationships between shareholders and stakeholders.

Luan at al. (2013) investigated the relationships between downsizing and organizations' performance during periods of economic downturn. The authors sought to ascertain the effects of layoffs, pay cut, and organizational slack on organizational performance. Luan et al. (2013) established that downsizing through layoffs and organizational slack may reduce the organization short-staffed that sets back performance. Luan et al. also found that while pay cutting does not negatively affect performance, the pay cutting was an ineffective strategy to implement during economic downsizing. Interestingly, Goldhaber, Strunk, Brown, and Knight (2016) found that the layoff process leads to many teachers voluntarily leaving the school to teach in other schools for fear of being next for downsizing. The leadership implemented the layoff because of a massive budget cut due to the recession, and management historically relied on Last-In-First-Out (LIFO) for determining the order in which teachers were to leave the school (Goldhaber et al., 2016).

Marques et al. (2014) analyzed the simultaneous effects of perceived job insecurity and organizational commitment on the innovative behavior of employees after the announcement of downsizing intentions in a Portuguese multinational high technology innovation company that previously experienced two downsizing procedures. Marques et al. (2014) discovered that job insecurity has a negative effect on workers' attitudes and lowers commitment to the organization. Marques et al. also found that the employees have good intentions and strong desires to identify with the organization's goals and objectives, but the announcement of downsizing plans or the implementation of actual downsizing procedures negatively influenced this desire. Kambayashi and Kato (2016) established that job stability, and employee retention practices were different for USA and Japan, noting that Japanese employees with at least 5 years' job tenure experience a higher level of job stability compared to a counterpart in the USA. Kambayashi and Kato (2016) added that most Japan senior employees experience fewer job losses than senior employees in the USA.

Matsa and Miller (2014) sought to determine if, and if so, how gender affects business leaders' intentions towards downsizing. Matsa and Miller used the multivariate regression framework to examine gender differences as a predictor for organizational downsizing and found that privately held small businesses owned by women in the United States had less possibility to downsize than privately-owned companies by men during the great recessions. Matsa and Miller (2014) concluded that female business leaders are more concerned about employee welfare, motivation, and less disposed to layoff or downsizing but have a greater preference to long-term employee retention for sustained profit. Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo, and Michel (2016) showed support and underscored that some women business leaders are great leaders. Also, Hoobler et al. (2016), Pathan and Faff (2013) agreed that women leaders were more likely to influence the organization's performance positively in a more democratic culture.

Jorge-Correia and van-Dierendonck (2014) sought to understand how servant leadership can affect employee engagement during a merger process with an unpredictable level of uncertainty through empowering, and the authors focused more on the external change that may occur during a significant consolidation process. Jorge-Correia and van-Dierendonck (2014) tested four hypotheses that are relevant to examining corporate mergers with high levels of uncertainty, and established that servant leadership, which gives a sense of belonging and employee engagement, promotes employees' retention. Servant leadership exists across different multicultural settings while through the focus on individual employee's needs, servant leadership could be applicable during a downsizing after a merger. However, transformational leadership goes beyond employee engagement as the employees who worked under a transformational leader have a high self-esteem of their capability and show commitment to their leaders which ultimately leads to a higher employee performance (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Snorradottir et al. (2015) focused on comparing the health and well-being of survivors with the health and well-being of downsized employees and the resultant feelings of job insecurity among survivors. Snorradottir et al. concluded that following downsizing, survivor bank employees experienced more health problems compared to employees who left and took temporary jobs. Snorradottir et al. contended that the health related issues were indicative of the social and psychological effects of feelings of job insecurity among survivors in downsizing organizations. Biswas (2016) and Flewellen (2013) submitted that business leaders need to show sympathy for surviving employees as well as to develop procedures to help deal with the psychological effects after the implementation of downsizing.

Tiwari and Lenka (2016) discussed emotional safety about employee engagement after a post-recession activity such as cutbacks, layoffs or downsizing. According to Tiwari and Lenka, a psychological safe work environment encourages teamwork, supportive and trustworthy relationships among the employees, and employees can be creative, exchange ideas, and take risks without fear for their careers. Within such safe work environments, employees can learn and develop new competencies that increase competitiveness to drive the overall success of the organization. Additionally, Taneja, Sewell, and Odom (2015) described strategies for building employee engagement for increasing the organization’s competitiveness and business performance. According to Taneja et al. (2015), the more employees are enthusiastic about their job and workplace, the more employees engage and share in the organization's business and values. Taneja et al. suggested that organizations implement strategies to increase employees' involvement and engagement in decision making to achieve a high level of employee commitment to organizational success.

Taneja et al. (2015) discussed some of the drivers for employee engagement in organizations. The drivers include (a) being socially responsible in the community, (b) enhanced brand and reputation, (c) workplace support democracy, (d) support work-life balance, and (e) have a culture of reward for increased effort and productivity. Anitha (2014) sought to determine the effect of employee engagement on employee performance as well as identifying factors influencing employee engagement. The author established that working environment and co-worker relationships had the highest effect on employee engagement and employee performance. Anitha (2014) also established that a significant and high association exists between employee engagement and employee performance.

A responsible downsizing strategy means the organization developing a downsizing protocol that includes adequate training for managers and supervisors involved with the implementation (Flewellen, 2013). Cheng-Fei, Tsai, and Shih (2013) posited that a responsible downsizing strategy improves the organization's dynamic capabilities. Cheng-Fei et al. (2013) defined *dynamic capabilities* as a representation of a group's attributes and skills that give the organization a competitive advantage; suggested that the organization's management considers downsizing as resources management rather than as cost reduction measures. Tsai and Shih (2013a) supported the constructs of a responsible downsizing strategy as a performance enhancer for organizations. Tsai and Shih (2013a) established that performance increased considerably for organizations adopting the employee favored leadership style after downsizing because the responsible downsizing strategy increased the support and trust of employees for their employer. Tsai and Shih (2013b) noted that the success of the Labor unions involvement in the negotiation between the employees and management could change the organization’s business performance positively or negatively. As such, the mediating effect of labor negotiations can influence the business performance positively but can have an adverse effect by increasing the organization's overhead costs.

Klarner and Raisch (2013) acknowledged that a high frequency of organizational change negatively affects the organization’s long-term performance. Vuontisjärvi (2013) explained that the size and frequency of downsizing frequently lead to the conclusion that organizations were failing to live up to expectations and on their moral sense of duty. However, the combination of increased change frequency and change rhythms improved long-term organizations performance. Klarner and Raisch (2013) defined *change rhythm* as the timing of several changes within a given period. Klarner and Raisch (2013) argued that organizations experiencing stable performance can be slow to react to changing environmental conditions because the loss of momentum can be damaging to achieving a competitive advantage and sustainable performance. The implication, therefore, is that a natural and sequential balance between change and stability affects long-term performance. Furthermore, organizations implementing regular change experience improved organizational performance more consistently than organizations implementing change less consistently.

Business leaders can also implement organizational change following a downsizing. During periods of uncertainty due to organizational change, employees fear the possibility of loss of positions or benefits and the unintended consequences of the change process (Luo, Song, Gebert, Zhang, & Feng, 2016). Consequently, employees resist the change and are unwilling to help with the change process. The role of the leader's communication style is to reduce and eliminate the employees' fear of change (Luo et al., 2016). Since employees' support is necessary for a successful implementation of the organizational change, the leader's communication style could increase employees' support. Luo et al. suggested that the leader implementing change use hope orientation, subordinate orientation, and support orientation communication techniques. Therefore, communication is essential and plays a significant role in the successful implementation of downsizing exercise (Bayardo, Reche, & Cabada, 2013) while ensuring employee satisfaction (Men, 2014). Keeping the supervisors updated with information about the implementation process and the effect of the changes can reduce rumors. Rumors are a result of inadequate information which can lead to unpredictable effect for the organization.

Organizations also downsize in reaction to challenging economic times as well as during implementation of new organizational structure to improve the business performance (Schenkel & Teigland, 2016). Gandolfi (2014) sought to know the reasons why business organizations adopt employee downsizing as a management strategy.

Notably, some of the reasons include (a) a reaction to mergers and acquisition, (b) preparations for privatization, and (c) need to reduce costs to remain competitive in the marketplace (Gandolfi, 2014). Aalbers, Dolfsma, and Blinde-Leerentveld (2014) noted that a management implementing company reorganization has the choice of downsizing considering the social effect to the employees' or downsizing considering the cost reduction benefit for the organization. The implementation of social contracts such as severance pay, schooling, and training for both laid-off and surviving employees does not improve the organization's performance one year after implementing downsizing (Aalbers et al., 2014). However, Aalbers et al. concluded that a gradual implementation of downsizing improved the workers' performance significantly because the employees perceived fairness with a gradual reorganization.

Performance management systems can help balance and stimulate an organization after downsizing, but a nonselective downsizing strategy destroys the system (Bragger, Kutcher, Menier, Sessa, & Sumner, 2014). The factors that influence the success of performance management systems and weakening of organizational downsizing include (a) development of trust between employee-organization, (b) manager-employee communication mechanism, (c) goal setting, and (d) management accountability (Bragger et al., 2014). Aggerholm (2014) explained that the surviving employees' develop negative feelings following organizational downsizing because of inadequate or lack of communication from the management and the non-acceptance of the downsizing strategies. Lightfoot (2015) concluded that the lack of trust contributed to employees voluntarily leaving the organization following downsizing, but good communication and transparency policy could help to reduce the employee intention to leave the organization.

When the business leaders do not directly discuss with the surviving employees' about the downsizing event, the management does not understand the reasons why employees oppose the rationale for the downsizing (Aggerholm, 2014). The practical implication, therefore, is that the use of an efficient communication feedback mechanism could be a strategy to motivate surviving employees'. Erbert (2014) added that employees often seek interpretation through more open communication and to make sense about any sudden or unexpected change in the workplace, such as a reorganization, to reduce uncertainties. As such, workers are most willing to support fellow workers affected by the sudden change as well as the organization (Erbert, 2014). Cameron and McNaughtan (2014) concluded that organizations implementing the actual positive practices such as offering support, expressing appreciation, and showing kindness to the employees experience improved performance and customer satisfaction.

Employee Retention and Talent Management

A good work-life balance and reward mechanism can influence an employee's long-term stay in a company. Deery and Jago (2015) examined how work-life balance affected the talented employees' and their intentions to remain in the organizations; focusing more on talent management, work-life balance, and retention strategies. Cameron and McNaughtan (2014) explained that positive practices from the management such as the show of support and affection to the employee produce positive outcomes such as increased performance and employee retention. L. Madden, Mathias, and Madden

(2015) noted that perceived organizational support through recognitions, good reward mechanism, and growth opportunities enhance retention. Deery and Jago (2015) added that a talented employee intention to stay and contribute to the organization's performance is dependent on the organization's involvement with developing and helping the employee manage work-life balance correctly. Therefore, the lack of work-life balance might lead to stress and other health issues on the employees. Deery and Jago concluded that conflicts with work-life balance, lesser opportunities for growth, and a lack of job clarity were the main reasons employees leave an organization.

Idris (2014) conducted a study on flexible working as an employee retention strategy, noting how full-time employment in developing countries was very costly. Employee retention is a strategy used for hiring and retaining good individuals to remain in the organization for a long time (Idris, 2014). The flexible working strategies include (a) flex time, (b) job sharing, (c) flex leave, (d) flex career, and (e) flex place; and flex time is popular among employees with young school aged children and the organization's looking to save costs. Snorradottir et al. (2015) added that the surviving employees' experienced health related issues compared to employees who left and took temporary jobs following downsizing implementation.

Mensah (2015) defined talent management as the organization's set of policies for hiring and retaining talented employees'. Majeed (2013) explained that talent management was the administration of the entire work-life of the employee from recruitment to retirement. Ross (2013) emphasized that the basis for talent management was the recognition of talent, while talent is the input. Ross (2013) argued that competency-based approach to defining talent often lacked substantial organizational influence because of the general use of the competency approach. When an organization is unable to recognize and develop talented employees’ in the near term, the organization will have difficulty in understanding whether an employee has the potential to fill a talent profile in the future. Rana, Goel, and Rastogi (2013) also explained that effective talent management strategies could help an organization retain their talented employees’. According to Rana et al. (2013), the talent management processes include (a) balanced scorecard and e-map, (b) online performance planning, (c) performance counseling and final review, and (e) reward.

Mensah (2015) explained that a talent management result moderates the relationship between talent management and employee performance. Mensah added that the investments in talent management activities would yield good outcomes such as increased employee satisfaction, motivation, engagement, and commitment. Majeed (2013) then concluded that a company develops a talent database to fill strategic positions within the company and to meet the company’s future need for talented employees. Thus, the availability of a talent database, which is the result of having a good talent management and retention policies, could help the company achieve the business process reengineering plans. Business process reengineering is a calculated technique that organizations can use to reduce costs and to achieve required results (Majeed, 2013).

As part of an organization's succession and talent retention strategy, any employee having the talent and potential can grow to the highest level in the organization (Rana et al., 2013). The leadership of such organization can view the retention of talented employees' as a strategic policy to beat the competition. Rana et al. added that the retention of talent is a business priority required for the continual survival of the organization. Canavan, Sharkey, and Mangematin (2013) suggested that business leaders develop talent management strategies to attract and retain talented employees' who possess the enthusiasm and drive to help achieve the organization's business objectives. Ross (2013) and Canavan et al., (2013) agreed and emphasized that business leaders need to make investments towards identifying and developing the employee competency base to have an in-house workforce that will help the organization maintain the competitive edge.

Organizational Change and Employee Productivity

Transformational change involves every employee, cuts across the different levels of the organization, and is, therefore, more complicated than the transactional change (Stilwell, Pasmore, & Shon, 2016). Singh (2015) sought to determine if there was a relationship between leadership styles and employee productivity with a particular focus on private and foreign banks. Singh established that there was a direct cultural impact influencing the relationships between leadership style and employee productivity. While transactional leadership significantly influenced the private bank employee productivity, transformational leadership influenced the foreign bank employee productivity. Mozammel and Haan (2016) established a view that was contrary to the findings of (Ghadi, Fernando, & Caputi, 2013) on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement within a particular cultural context. Mozammel and Haan concluded that transformational leadership style does not necessarily assure employee engagement within the particular culture where the ineffectiveness of the supervisory leadership is high.

Kaur-Sahi and Mahajan (2014) tested an integrated model incorporating the existence of organizational commitment, behavioral intentions, and work characteristics to investigate the impact to employees. Kaur-Sahi and Mahajan noted that the high employee turnover of knowledge employees' was caused increasing costs to the organizations and decreasing performance (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013). The costs include the cost of hiring, training, and employee development that ultimately impacts on profits. The loss of talented long-term employee results in efficiency losses that can have a long-term adverse effect on the organizations' performance (Kraemer et al., 2016). However, Helm (2013) and Kraemer et al. (2016) emphasized that organizational pride and employee personal pride can enhance job satisfaction and a decrease in turnover intentions.

Senior executives can also implement organizational change following a downsizing exercise. During periods of uncertainty due to organizational change, employees fear because of the possibility of a position or benefits loss (Luo et al., 2016). Consequently, employees resist the change, become unwilling to help with the change process and might start exhibiting some "counterproductive workforce behaviors" (Chen & Mykletun, 2015, p. 3). The role of the leader's communication style is thus, to reduce and eliminate the employees fear of change (Luo et al., 2016). Since the employee's support for the change process is necessary for the successful implementations of the organizational change, the leader's communication style can improve the employee support. Luo et al. added that such a leader use hope orientation, subordinate orientation, and support orientation communication techniques.

Similarly, internal communication is relevant and plays a significant role in the successful implementation of downsizing exercise (Bayardo et al., 2013). Keeping the supervisors updated with information about the implementation process and the effect that the changes may have will reduce rumors. Appelbaum et al. (2015) posited that during a period of organizational change, the leadership type required is a leadership that combines competence and skill at communicating and coaching to motivate, reward and builds good teams. Such a leadership that can combine these attributes in delivering organizational change is the transformational leader (Appelbaum et al., 2015). Men (2014) added that the interacting, empowering, and communicative nature of the transformational leader enhances employee satisfaction.

Turnover Intentions, Talented Employees, and Job Satisfaction

Turnover can be costly for any organization as the business and hiring managers will spend time and money on recruitment and training of new hires. Kaur-Sahi and Mahajan (2014) argued that the high employee turnover of knowledge employees working in different business sectors cause increasing costs for the organizations. McClean, Burris, and Detert (2013) sought to determine the relationships between employee voice and rate of turnover. McClean et al. found that the employees expressing their dissatisfaction and challenge to the current state of affairs in the organization might cause an investigation into the underlying issues causing resentment, instead of employee quietly leaving the organization. The success of the intervention depends on the motivation of the leadership to addressing the issues raised to bring improvements that will reduce turnover. McClean et al. concluded that the leader's responsiveness to employee voice affects the employee intentions to either leave or stay after speaking up.

Aladwan, Bhanugopan, and Fish (2013) investigated the decisions by key influential employees to quit an organization. Aladwan et al. (2013) argued that the impact of high key employee turnover includes the loss of experienced employees with company knowledge, loss of good customer relationships, customer satisfaction, and the high cost of hiring and training new employees. Aladwan et al. also added that employee intention to quit an organization might alert the management of the need to review the conditions of work, personnel management, and retention policies. The implication, therefore, is that employees tend to leave a company because of alternative job opportunities in other organizations and the desire to meet other personnel needs. Ali (2015) argued that employees can resist the intention to leave a company when the organizational continuance commitment is high because the job characteristics in the current organization are better than the employee will receive in alternative organizations. L. Madden et al. (2015) underscored that increased organizational support through several positive factors reduced employee turnover intentions.

Maden, Ozcelik, and Karacay (2016) sought to determine the influencing role of future job expectations and efficacy beliefs on employees responses to emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. Emotional exhaustion refers to an extreme feeling of emotional and mental depletion while on the job (Salem, 2015). Maden et al. (2016) noted that the employees with more secure future expectations experienced less emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction when their job expectations are unmet contrary to employees with less positive job expectations. Bellou and Chatzinikou (2015) agreed, adding that the employee overall job satisfaction reduces the effect of burnout on organizations implementing infrequent organizational changes. Maden et al. concluded that while future job expectations do not influence the relationship between unmet job expectations and employees turnover intentions, turnover intentions were higher when on-the-job expectations are unmet for employees with high success beliefs.

High employee turnover of knowledge employees leads to increased costs to the organizations and negative effect on profits (Kaur-Sahi & Mahajan 2014). Also, the loss of talented long-term employees’ results in efficiency losses that could have a long-term effect on the organizations' performance (Kaur-Sahi & Mahajan). Kaur-Sahi and Mahajan added that increased employee participation and involvement in the organization’s activities could help increase commitment and emotional attachment that minimize the employee intentions to leave the organization. Kundu and Gahlawat (2016) added that organizations adopting the high-performance work systems experience less employee intention to leave the organization because of employee trust, motivation, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Zhang and Morris (2014) emphasized that high-performance work systems reduced turnover and increased productivity with a positive effect on organizations performance. Kaur-Sahi and Mahajan concluded that business leaders develop and implement employee-friendly programs that can influence organizational commitments and lead to high employee retention.

Arshad (2016) sought to understand the influence of cultural value orientation in the relationship between the Psychological Contract Violation resulting from downsizing experiences and turnover intention. Arshad (2016) focused on employee turnover intentions and downsizing survivors for an organization that used downsizing as a cost reduction and performance improvement strategy. Arshad (2016) explained that there was a significant relationship between cultural value orientation and psychological contract violation in predicting employee turnover intentions. Biswas (2016) added that a healthy leader-exchange relationship mediates the psychological contract violation. Psychological contract violation contributes to a high voluntary employee turnover (Lightfoot, 2015). Biswas (2016) suggested that business leaders show personal concern for employee welfare, seek feedback to develop strategies to reduce bitterness, anger, and withdrawal. Arshad (2016) concluded that employers planning downsizing activities should be more sensitive to the employee's individual cultural orientations, and knowledge of which may help managers deal with a downsizing, provide better training, and motivational systems that suit the employee behaviors.

A high employee turnover also results in loss of revenue from missed opportunities in meeting production and budget forecasts, which ultimately results in additional costs to the company (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones, 2015), and reduced organizational performance (Hancock et al. 2013). Cloutier et al. (2015) explained that a company could achieve improved performance by developing and implementing employee retention strategies. According to Cloutier et al., such strategies include (a) an effective communication from the leadership, (b) hiring and retention of a diverse workforce, (c) recruitment of skilled people with the right fit, and (d) offering employees career development and training opportunities. Wei (2015) emphasized that for a company to reduce the adverse effect of loss of talented employees, the management of the company need to ensure the employees are a good fit for the organization. Cloutier et al. concluded that organizations could achieve their financial goals with better employee retention strategies, which should be a part of the overall operating and business strategy.

Transition

Section 1 was an overview on downsizing, particularly the issues and problems confronting businesses implementing employee downsizing. Businesses, such as oil and gas companies implement downsizing for different reasons that yield different results. Oil and gas business leaders experience an adverse effect on organizational performance because of their inability to retain their experienced employees after downsizing (Hansson, 2015). I conducted a multiple case study of three medium oil and gas businesses in Calgary to explore strategies oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. A case study was the most appropriate method for answering the research questions of *what strategies do oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing*? Oil and gas business leaders who comprehend the potential adverse business performance after downsizing can develop better strategies for retaining talented employees, thus getting better performance.

Section 2 include the research procedure with a detailed explanation of the role of the researcher, the participants, the research method and design, data collection instruments and techniques, and how to assure reliability and validity. Section 3 will include the presentation of the findings from the study, interpretations, and recommendation for further research.

Section 2: The Project

In this, I focused on strategies business leaders use to retain employees after downsizing. Downsizing is a common business management strategy that business leaders use for reducing employees to improve organizational productivity, efficiency, profits, and competitiveness (Norman et al., 2013). However, the outcomes of downsizing can create financial and social problems (Gandolfi, 2013). In this section, I described the approach I took to exploring the strategies oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. The major topics I discuss in Section 2 include the role of the researcher, the research method, research design, the participants, and ethical consideration in research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. The population for this study included business leaders of three medium oil and gas businesses in Calgary, Canada, selected because they successfully implemented strategies to retain talented employee. Oil and gas business leaders may use the findings of this study to develop and implement better talent management strategies, thus increasing talent retention. Improved workforce retention leads to employees with healthier, more stable lives and the reduced feeling of job insecurity (Snorradottir et al., 2015). The study findings could help other business leaders increase workplace stability, and thus have happier employees with stable families and communities.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher included collecting and analyzing data from the research participants. Kavoura and Bitsani (2014) noted that the role of the researcher is to ensure the presentation of varying views and perspectives that emerged from the study. A researcher from outside the organization can ensure the objectivity of the research (Collins & Cooper, 2014). Further, the researcher can work to avoid research bias by maintaining an awareness of personal biases and potential ethical issues. Maintaining a neutral perspective when analyzing participants' responses is vital to enhancing the research quality (Collins & Cooper, 2014).

Although currently working in the Calgary oil and gas sector, I do not have any business relationship with the organizations and research participants and, by using an interview protocol, I ensured that my previous experience with the employee downsizing phenomenon did not influence data interpretation. I used an interview protocol to ensure consistent focus on the recorded interview only, to consciously separate my perspective from the objectives of gathering data, and I used member checking to ensure that my data collection was accurate. Data collection commenced only after I received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB provides oversight and ensures the research complies with ethical standards and the three foundational ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report (Connolly, 2014). The Belmont Report provides three principles guiding the conduct of research involving human participants (Wessels & Visagie, 2015) in order to protect vulnerable people who may have limited capacity for decision making and self-determination such as the elderly, prisoners, children under the age of majority, or people with mental health issues (Wessels & Visagie, 2015).

The three foundational principles of the Belmont Report are respect-for-persons, beneficence and nonmaleficence, and justice (Schrems, 2014). Respect-for-persons involves respecting and protecting the human participants with limited autonomy. The human participant should fully agree to participate, and researchers should use informed consent to ensure the research participants are aware of the purpose of the study. Beneficence and nonmaleficence are the ideas of avoiding the risk of doing more harm than good, that is, maximizing the benefit and reducing the risk of harm. Justice is the concept of equal treatment for everyone (Schrems, 2014). Wessels and Visagie (2015) underscored that full compliance with the Belmont Report's ethical principles is a way to ensure the research is ethical.

For this qualitative multiple case study, I collected data from two primary sources. First, I collected data from interviews with leaders of medium size oil and gas businesses. According to Yin (2014), the interview is an important mode of data collection during a qualitative research study. Second, I collected data from company artifacts such websites and social media pages. For the interviews, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A). An interview protocol contains the interview questions and step-by-step guidance that a researcher can use consistently for several interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Platt & Skowron, 2013). An interview protocol includes having a ready set of interview questions and using a script so the researcher maintains focus.

Jacob and Furgerson (2012) noted that an interview protocol includes providing an informed consent form to participants, ensuring participants meet the established criteria, arranging a location for the interview, providing information on the interview process, maintaining confidentiality, and following-up via member checking. Yin (2014) emphasized that the interview protocol is a significant way to increase the reliability of the multiple case study. Roulston and Shelton (2015) added that researchers help eliminate bias and ensure validity through the use of multiple data sources for cross-referencing. Multiple sources of evidence enable methodological triangulation to assure the validity of research findings (Yin, 2014).

Participants

I initiated the data collection process only after receiving the approval from the Walden University's IRB, and used purposeful sampling to gain access to three oil and gas business leaders in 3 distinct companies. Having more than two cases may produce a result with a higher overall quality (Yin, 2014). For an excellent case study, researchers collect evidence from multiple sources to ensure rigorous research quality (Yin, 2014), and so my selection of three oil and gas business managers in Calgary Canada was appropriate. To meet the criteria for inclusion in the study, candidates had to work for medium size oil and gas companies whose managers had successfully developed and implemented retention strategies for talented employees after downsizing. Moreover, each of the three oil and gas businesses contained fewer than 500 employees (ISEDC, 2013; Lingard et al., 2015).

To gain access to participants, I connected with them on LinkedIn, and then emailed the informed consent form to potential participants. The consent form also served as the invitation letter and a reply with an “I consent” indicated agreement to participate in the study. The interview participants, therefore, were from oil and gas companies whose business leaders successfully developed and implemented policies that maintained talented employees after downsizing.

Research Method and Design

Selecting an appropriate research method and research design is vital in a study. Marshall and Rossman (2016) underscored that the selection of research method and design flows from the research question. The three research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). Generally, researchers using the quantitative method work within the “positivist paradigm” (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014, p.109), and test theories using hypotheses (Antonakis et al., 2014). Qualitative researchers explore a phenomenon where little or no understanding of the subject phenomenon exists (Johnson, 2014), and work from a positivist view (Latham, 2013). The mixed method is the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, and is more suitable with a pragmatic worldview. I did not use a mixed method approach because the mixed method includes quantitative analysis, focusing on the generation of numerical evidence to generalize findings, which was not necessary for addressing my research question.

Research Method

The research method is the method researcher's use to obtain knowledge about their research interests (Gill, 2014). I determined that qualitative research was the most appropriate methodology for this study because of the explorative nature of the research question (see Yin, 2014), and because qualitative research takes place in the natural world, focuses on the context, and is mostly interpretive (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The quantitative researcher uses numerical evidence to explain relationships and differences among variables and does not take into consideration the context (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). An examination of the relationship or differences between variables was not needed for this study because of the explorative nature of the research. The mixed method is a research method that involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting both qualitative and quantitative data in the same study (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). Thus, neither the quantitative or mixed method would have been appropriate for this study. Therefore, I employed the qualitative method.

Research Design

Colorafi and Evans (2016) posited that the five most frequent designs for the qualitative inquiry are narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study. Narrative research is suitable to explore life stories of individuals, but not organizations (Germeten, 2013). Therefore, the narrative approach was not appropriate for this study. Ethnographers focus on studying the cultural behavior of groups (Cayla & Arnould, 2013). Given that studying the cultural behavior of groups was not my intention, the ethnographic approach was not appropriate for this study. Phenomenology is an approach researchers use to understand and capture the meanings of lived experiences of a common phenomenon (Berglund, 2015; Gill, 2014). My intention was to explore strategies oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing, rendering a phenomenological study inappropriate. Finally, grounded theory is a design researchers use to develop theories to explain a phenomena (Charmaz, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Since developing theories was not my intention, the grounded theory design was not appropriate for this study.

A qualitative case study was the most appropriate design because the purpose of the study was to identify and explore strategies oil and gas industry business leaders use to retain talented employees after downsizing. A case study is an empirical research method in which the researcher employs a variety of rich data from a natural context to explore a particular phenomenon (Leppaaho, Plakoyiannaki, & Dimitratos, 2015). A single case study would typically focus on one business. Vohra (2014) added that the multiple case study captures a rich description of the context. Therefore, I selected a qualitative multiple case study for the research. Data collection continued until reaching data saturation during interviews of oil and gas business leaders from organizations that had successfully downsized.

Population and Sampling

The population for this qualitative multiple case study comprised three medium size oil and gas businesses in Calgary, Alberta Canada that successfully implemented downsizing. These companies had less than 500 employees. The Alberta economy is heavily dependent on the extraction of natural resources such as oil, gas, tar sands, and coal (Swallow & Goddard, 2016). In this study, I used a purposeful sampling method and selected three business leaders of medium size oil and gas companies who successfully implemented downsizing. The determination of an appropriate sample size is an important part of a qualitative research design (Rosenthal, 2016), and the appropriate sample size for a qualitative multiple case study depends on both theoretical and practical deliberations (Robinson, 2014).

Purposeful sampling is a traditional sampling method for exploring the cases with sufficient information related to the study phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2013). The preliminary decision on the sample size at the initial design stage underscores the practical reality of the research. Robinson (2014) provided a four-point approach to sampling in qualitative research that includes (a) defining the sample universe, (b) deciding the sample size, (c) devising the sampling strategy, and (d) sourcing the sample. According to Benoot, Hannes, and Bilsen (2016), purposeful sampling provides an opportunity to include new aspects and perspectives to the study such that the outcome aligns with the research purpose. Therefore, I used purposeful sampling when selecting the participants.

The participating organizations were three medium size oil and gas companies operating in Calgary Canada. Medium size oil and gas companies have between 100 and 499 employees according to the ISEDC (ISEDC, 2013). The interview participants had the capability of providing rich answers to the research questions because they had previous successful experience with the phenomenon. Thus, the research participants were only business leaders who successfully implemented downsizing.

The setting for the interviews was a quiet location in downtown Calgary where there was minimal disruption for the participants as well as minimal noise for the recording. The use of an interview protocol ensured that I remained focused and consistent during the interview process that lasted between 50 – 90 minutes. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) suggested that researchers avoid doing the interview too long and should plan for 60 – 90 minutes for a session. Upon receiving IRB approval and before the interviews, I ascertained the participants' academic qualifications, work experiences related to my topic. The main reason for ascertaining each participants' eligibility in advance was to ensure that each person met the qualification criteria.

Ethical Research

Protecting the study participants is critical in ensuring ethical research (Wessels & Visagie, 2015). I completed the training for Protecting Human Subject Research Participants by the National Institute of Health Training on Human Participants (see Appendix B) ensured minimal risk to participants. I explained that participation was voluntary and a participant can withdraw at any time before or during the interview and no one with treat the participant differently, and I stated this information in the informed consent form. The informed consent form contains the researcher contact information, the Walden University IRB contact email and phone numbers. The Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) has the oversight and approves research involving human subjects to ensure compliance with the guidelines set for ethical research. The IRB procedures stipulate that research participation is voluntary (Connolly, 2014) and that the researcher will ensure the minimal likelihood of harm to the human participants

(Cross, Pickering, & Hickey, 2014). The issue on the researcher being ethical includes assuring the study participants of their privacy and the confidentiality of information (Rashid, Caine, & Goez, 2015). I used acronyms to protect the personal identities of the participants. I numbered the participants according to the order of the interview where the first participant is PA1, the second participant is PA2, and the third participant is PA2. I will maintain in a safe location the data collected for 5 years to safeguard the rights of participants, and after that destroyed according to the Walden University policy.

Researchers must be clear and inform the research participants on the purpose of the study as well as obtain informed consent before conducting the research (Murthy, 2013). Informed consent is a process that protects the human participants in a research and ensures that participation is voluntary and independent (Judkins-Cohn, Kielwasser-Withrow, Owen, & Ward, 2013). Connolly (2014) posited that the researcher has the responsibility of getting approval from the university's institutional review board (IRB) before conducting the research. Furthermore, the IRB board has the oversight of ensuring the protection of the human subjects by evaluating any possible harm to the participants against the potential benefits (Connolly, 2014). The participants received no compensation for their involvement in the study. However, each participant will receive a final approved copy of the study. Walden University's approval number for this study is 02-16-17-0564803.

Data Collection Instruments

As the primary instrument in the multiple case study, I collected data from the oil and gas companies operating in Calgary; conducted semistructured interviews with business leaders who successfully implemented downsizing. Sutton and Austin (2015) stated that the researcher is the primary person to collect data during the research process. The case study interview protocol includes the interview protocol, contains a description of the procedures and general rules guiding the research and is essential in multiple case studies (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) maintained that the interview protocol helps increase the reliability of case study research. Yin (2014) explained that the investigator in a case study must: (a) ask relevant questions, (b) be a good listener, (c) show flexibility, (d) have a firm grasp of the subject topic, and (e) avoid bias.

During the interviews, I captured each participant’s answers using a digital recorder and also used a notebook for tracking notes and ideas throughout the data collection process. Using the digital recorder also ensured an accurate recollection of the participants’ answers. Through the process of member checking, the participants had the opportunity to review the summaries of the interview findings, check for correctness, provide further insights (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), and to therefore enhance trustworthiness (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Koelsch (2013) stated that during member checking, the participant should ensure the researcher accurately captured the thoughts and stories during the interview. Therefore, to validate the data and to enhance trustworthiness, I used member checking.

Data Collection Technique

Interviewing and participant observation are the most common techniques for obtaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Jamshed, 2014; Percy, Kostere K, & Kostere, 2015). An interview is a technique for collecting data in which the researcher asks qualitative questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The researcher can select an interview format that ranges from a structured, unstructured and semistructured interview. Using a face-to-face interview enables the researcher to see, hear, and feel the participants' experiences through participant observation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Participant observation is also an additional and separate method for authenticating research findings (Jamshed, 2014). The interview protocol contains a set of interview questions and a step-by-step guidance directing the interviewer through the interview process (Chen & Mykletun, 2015; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Therefore, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A).

The advantage of using the face-to-face interview for a case study is that through the face-to-face interview, the researcher gains useful insight and deeper context while also rapport and trust (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The disadvantage of using the face-to-face interview is that there is the propensity for bias (Yin, 2014) and the researcher can influence the interview results, thus generating inaccurate conclusions. Another disadvantage of using the face-to-face interview as the data collection technique is that the interviewee might try to please the researcher or provide personal views rather than objective feedback (Doody & Noonan, 2013). However, being aware of personal bias is a way to mitigate influencing the interview results. A researcher can reduce personal bias through the use of member checking. Member checking is a process to share interview data with the participants to assure the accuracy of interview data and credibility of research findings (Birt et al., 2016; David, Hitchcock, Ragan, Brooks, & Starkey, 2016). I, therefore, used member checking to mitigate bias and increase trustworthiness.

The data collection technique comprised semistructured interviews and the examination of company artifacts such as the websites and social media sites. Since the purpose of this study was to identify and explore what strategies oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing, the semistructured interview was appropriate for the study. Doody and Noonan (2013) posited that the semistructured interview is a useful technique to collect data in qualitative research. Jamshed (2014) added that through the semistructured interview, the researcher can ask open-ended questions to obtain rich data and, as necessary, to seek clarification.

Data Organization Technique

Each research participant had a distinct code and labeling for differentiation, and a log of the research progress documented. I kept all research data such as recorded interviews and a field journal that had my handwritten notes. Reflective journaling helps researchers keep personal logs that the researcher reviews to interpret the field data (Applebaum, 2014). I used an iPhone smartphone for recording the interviews and transcribed the interviews into text and backed up the data to an external drive and Google cloud drive. According to Quick and Choo (2014), cloud storage is becoming a popular way of storing information and Google drive provides this service. According to Novak (2014), confidentiality is essential to maintaining the trust between the researcher and the participant. The stored data had password protection for confidentiality, and I will keep data for 5 years according to Walden University policy on the retention of research data.

Data Analysis

Methodological triangulation is using and comparing multiple types of data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Yin (2014) added that the collection of multiple types of data such as in open-ended interviews, documents, direct and participant observation as a part of the same study validate the same research finding. Marshall and Rossman (2016) underpinned that researchers use the research question and related literature as guidelines for data analysis. The use of the participants' responses from the interview questions (see Appendix C), and examination of the company artifacts helped in answering the research question: What strategies do oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing?

Analyzing research data involved organizing the data, reviewing the data, data coding, and subsequent development of themes. Each phase of the data analysis required data reduction and data interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Data interpretation is the process of making meanings out of raw and inexpressive data that is relevant for a study. I transcribed the audio recording and coded the interviews during the data analysis phase, using computer NVivo software. NVivo is a computer software program for organizing and facilitating the analysis of qualitative data (Lensges, Hollensbe, & Masterson, 2016). When the researcher defines the set of codes, a computer software program can help locate the matching words or phrases from the data (Yin, 2014). I coded and analyzed the data with the computer software program, while also sorting the coded words into categories for theme identification. After coding the words, I sorted, categorized, and organized the code words to aid me to identify emerging themes (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014).

Theme analysis is the process of identifying repeated patterns in words from a qualitative data (Percy et al., 2015). In particular, word repetition and new keywords are the fundamental techniques for theme identification. Also, the use of NVivo computer software assisted me in identifying the key themes from the transcribed data, thus leading to the reporting phase. The last stage was the development of a clear summary of findings of the study. Koch, Niesz, and McCarthy (2013) noted that during the reporting of results of research, precision and in-depth representation of the participants' views, as well as a good description of the case, is necessary. So, based on the methodological triangulation of transcribed data, the examination of information from the company artifacts, I identified and verified emerging themes. I also provided citations of the participants' views and comments supporting the emerged themes.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research means the extent to which research is consistent (Leung, 2015). Reliability is the consistency and replicability of the research methodology for a case study (Yin, 2014). The researcher can enhance the reliability of the study by asking the right questions during the interviews as well as properly documenting the processes and rationale for any decisions made during the research process (Grossoehme, 2014). Also, the use of interview protocol assures that the researcher stays focused and unbiased during the interview sessions. Therefore, I used the interview protocol as well as asked questions that are relevant to answering the central research question.

El Hussein, Jakubec, and Osuji (2015) explained that rigor in a qualitative research means achieving a correct and genuine representation of the study participants' experiences and situations. Marshall and Rossman (2016) added that a researcher could ensure rigor in a qualitative study through triangulation. Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) explained that triangulation is a strategy of collating different types and sources of data in research. I interviewed the participants as well as examined relevant company artifacts (e.g., the participating companies' websites, Twitter, Linkedin, Facebook) to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. To assure the study's dependability, I used member checking.

Validity

The validity of qualitative research refers to the use of the appropriate methodology for data collection and data analysis for the realization of a creditable result (Leung, 2015). Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that a researcher could enhance the validity of the study through the methodological triangulation of data from multiple sources, member checking, and peer debriefing. Carter et al. (2014) underscored that the use of triangulation would help assure the validity of research findings. Member checking is a process that involves getting the participants to review the themes from the collected data, review the summary of the interpretations, and offer feedback to ensure credibility and validity of the findings (Andraski, Chandler, Powell, Humes, & Wakefield, 2014).

Therefore, I used both methodological triangulation and member checking to assure my study's validity.

El Hussein et al. (2015) discussed trustworthiness, positing that trustworthiness in qualitative research signifies the level of trust, confidence in the data, and addresses the quality or credibility of the research. Trustworthiness is a concept that incorporates transferability, confirmability, and credibility of the research findings (El Hussein et al., 2015). Transferability means enabling others to form conclusions if findings from a particular research study apply in a different field or location. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) stated that to enable others to determine transferability; researchers should provide rich descriptions of the context of the research and rich descriptions of the participants' accounts to enhance transferability.

Kihn and Ihantola (2015) added that the researcher achieves confirmability when the findings and data leading to the results are easily understood. QSR NVivo® is a useful management tool for providing a full audit trail of all decisions made during the research process (Houghton et al., 2013). Describing the processes to prevent bias in a research project contributes to increasing the credibility of a study (Morgan, 2016). El Hussein et al. (2015) alluded that the higher the quality of data, then the greater the credibility of the entire study. Kornbluh (2015) added that researchers could also establish the trustworthiness of their studies through member checking and the incorporation of participants' feedback mechanism into the data analysis process. By using the interview protocol (Appendix A), I sought to avoid influencing the data collection, data analysis process with my personal views and by using member checking, I ensured my interpretation of data is a true representation of the participants' views.

Fusch and Ness (2015) explained that one method for reaching data saturation is by asking multiple participants the same questions. Data saturation is the point when the researcher receives no new information or emerging themes after several interviews with the same participants (Gibbins, Bhatia, Forbes, & Reid, 2014). Therefore, I interviewed the same three participants until no new data were available or until there were no new emerging themes for coding, to verify data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) added that a researcher attains data saturation when there is enough data to repeat the study and when further coding is no longer necessary. By attaining data saturation, I sought to affirm and demonstrate the confirmability, credibility, and transferability of the research findings.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included a detailed discussion of the different stages of the research project. The stages include discussions on the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, participants and population, the research design, and methods. I also discussed the data collection instruments, techniques, and data analysis. The most appropriate research method and design were the qualitative multiple case study to explore the strategies oil and gas business leaders in Calgary Canada implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. The data collection technique was through semistructured interviews and a review of the company artifacts. Section 3 includes the presentation of the study's findings, discussion of the application to business practice, the implication for social change, recommendations for future research, and my summative conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. In this section, I present my findings and discuss the themes identified. I also discuss applications to professional practice and implications for social change, and provide recommendations for action and further research, personal reflections, and my conclusions.

My findings included five themes for the successful retention of talented employees after downsizing: (a) transformational leadership, (b) training survivors, (c) establishing trust, (d) rewarding and recognizing surviving employees, and (e) competing for surviving employees with other industries. All the participants mentioned transformational leadership as critical during a period of organizational downsizing. Participants reported that training surviving employees increased employee expertise and the organizational knowledge base, and resulted in a competitive advantage for their organizations. There is improvement in employee engagement when there is a history of trust between the employees and management of the organization. Employees feel emotionally safe when there is a guarantee of their future job security and thus, can be creative and take risks for the organization. Participants reported that organizational support through recognition, efficacious reward systems, and career development opportunities (e.g., through training) enhanced retention of talented employees.

Additionally, because of the volatile nature of the oil and gas industry, building strong employee engagement levels helped sustain the talented employee retention levels.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question for this study was: What strategies do oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing? Through interviews with oil and gas business leaders who successfully retained talented employees after downsizing, I identified five themes and present them in the following pages. The conceptual framework included transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) and human capital theory (Becker, 1962). I describe how the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge, and tie the findings to the conceptual framework used for this study. I also review available information from the company websites and social media sites. Table 2 contains the summary demographic information about the three participating oil and gas business leaders. The three participants had a total of 21.5 years of combined experience as business leaders in the oil and gas industry.

Table 2

Demographic Information About the Oil and Gas Business Leaders

	Characteristics	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Business leader	Code Name	PA1	PA2	PA3
	Age	36	44	55
	Country of Birth	India	Nigeria	Nigeria
	Highest Level of Educational	Masters' Degree	Masters' Degree	Masters' Degree
	Length in Current Organization	9.5 years	2 years	5 years
	Years of Experience as a Business Leader	6.5 years	5 years	10 years

As I noted in the introduction, the five themes were: (a) transformational leadership, (b) training survivors, (c) establishing trust, (d) rewarding and recognizing surviving employees, and (e) competing for surviving employees with other industries. The participants provided consistency in answers to the research questions that, in combination with the conceptual framework, literature review findings, and triangulation helped me identify themes during data analysis.

Theme 1: Transformational Leadership

Leadership in the organization was the first factor that participants agreed was very important to a successful implementation of strategies for talent retention. Each of the three business leaders seemed to agree that the leadership in their organizations is inspiring and transformational. Transformational leadership inspires as well as motivates followers to perform their best when executing the organization's policies after the downsizing. ElKordy (2013) explained that transformational leadership is the right leadership style to achieve this level of inspiration and visionary leadership during and after downsizing. According to the participants, their companies' leaders implemented strategies that contributed to successfully retaining talented employees after downsizing. These strategies included implementation of furlough programs and interdepartmental exchange programs where the talented employees switched roles into other product lines or departments to ensure that they were kept fully engaged after the downsizing.

The transformational leadership theme confirms the findings of Hansson (2015) that downsizing requires a leadership style that can inspire and give surviving employees a sense of security and motivation to put their best effort into making an organization successful. The theme also resonates with the findings of Appelbaum et al. (2015) that the transformational leader combines the competence and skill at communicating and coaching to motivate, reward, and build good teams. Arthur and Hardy (2014) added that the remediating actions of the transformational leader offer a positive working environment and positively affect organizational efficiency. This theme thus aligned with the transformational leadership theory, which is one of the conceptual frameworks for this study. Table 3 contains the participants' statements about leadership styles in their organizations.

Table 3

Theme: Transformational Leadership

Participant	Participant’s Comments
PA1	The leadership has signs of creating change through transformation….Cross training is one of the decisions and experimentation by the leadership of the organization for retaining talented employees after downsizing.
PA2	Because of the transformational attributes of the leadership of the organization, the talented employees can open up and discuss the roles and positions that they feel more qualified to fill within the organization based on their experiences and qualification.…The type of leadership that we have in the organization is transformational leadership that inspired these talented employees to aspire to work best for the organization in their various capacity.
PA3	So the low attrition rate is related to the success of the strategies implement by the leadership to keep their employees that also includes the talented ones….It is the leadership at the end of the day that makes these strategies and sees to the full implementation....One can categorize the leadership in the organization as being transformational, and being inspirational and this is absolutely the right way to go….The clarity of vision from the management is needed so that the talented employees can see the plans and what their roles or place is in a new organization.…When you talk about talented people, these are smart people that can read the lines, and I know that the more the leadership can step in the front of the message and make it clear what the mission is the better for everybody.

Theme 2: Training Survivors

All three business leaders agreed on the relevance of cross-training on multiple product lines and career development for the talented surviving employees. The cross-training prepared individuals for transferring to a different product line or department to keep busy and engaged. The knowledge that the management is providing the platform and opportunity for achieving their career aspirations through organization-specific training, and assurances that they are part of the organization for the future is important to the surviving employees. Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) underscored that the key constructs in human capital development and management were education and training. PA2 explained, “It is not easy to get talents as the organization spends time and money hiring new employees and having to train them to perform and succeed.” PA3 added, “When you lose your talented employees during downsizing when things are back on an upswing, you need to rehire, retrain and sometimes pay twice or thrice leading to huge costs to the organization.” Thus, investment in training for a talented employee is lost as costs when the employee separates from the organization (Yongbeom, 2013).

The training survivors theme confirms the findings by Seong-O and Patterson (2014) that employees invest in personal training and development to experience fewer layoffs and to improve employability while organizations invest in employee specific training to improve organizations’ productivity. In my examination of the participating companies’ websites, I identified statements such as “we invest in the learning and development of our employees to increase competency” and “we attract, retain, and develop our people.” The supply of human capital for most types of organizations is scarce, and the supply of particular expertise is harder to find compared to the demand (Mackay et al., 2014). All the participants emphasized that there is a scarcity of talented employees willing to work in the oilfield locations. However, an organization can address this scarcity by making investments in training and development for its human capital (Mackey et al.).

The investments in human capital create employee expertise that leads to the production of specific goods and services that improve the organization's competitive advantage (Harpan & Draghici, 2014) and in-house talent pool (Ross, 2013). However, the loss of the talented individuals from the organization could also lead to loss of productivity and profits (Shankar & Ghosh, 2013), loss of company knowledge, loss of good customer relationships, and loss of customer satisfaction (Aladwan et al. 2013). Thus, this theme aligns with the human capital theory in that the investments in training and education lead to increased benefit for both the organization and the employee. Table 4 includes several statements from participants related to training after downsizing.

Table 4

Theme: Training Survivors

Participant	Participant's Comments
PA1	Cross training of the employees to transition into a different job group during downsizing also gives the employee the sense of belonging that our organization has their interest at heart…. Although it costs the organization a significant amount of money to invest in the training for the talented employees, it saves them a huge money and time hiring new employees and retraining in the long run when things are back in full business.
PA2	The management worked at nurturing them through more specific training to fill these roles. So instead of looking outside the organization to recruit and fill certain roles, these talented employees are promoted and moved to fill different core roles in other departments that better suits them. In effect, we cross trained these employees to work in order departments in order not to lose them during downsizing….We implemented strategy for the evaluation and appraisal of competencies to ensure the talented employees are working where they have a "strategic fit." …."What we have done so far is a better evaluation of the relevancy of the employees' qualifications to their current roles and that way we can better access their suitability for their current roles.
PA3	The allocation of training resources targeted at talented people is an indication to the talented individuals that they have a place in the organization and so worked well as a counter to turnover….When you lose your talented employees during downsizing, when things are back on an upswing, you need to rehire, retrain and sometimes pay twice or thrice leading to huge costs to the organization.

Theme 3: Establishing Trust

Employees are emotionally affected by downsizing and worry about their future job security. Talented employees have high trust when there is a guarantee of their job security after downsizing and thus feel emotionally safe when assured of their future.

PA1 stated that the specific features of the strategies that contributed to successes included the involvement of mid-level management, including direct supervisors. The direct supervisors were primarily involved with core daily operational activities. The supervisors knew the individuals, built trust, and contributed to ensuring the retention of talented employees in their respective departments after downsizing. Braun et al. (2013) emphasized that the perceived trust in the supervisors' leadership enhanced individual employee job satisfaction and team performance. PA1 also stated, "The specific features of the strategy include having the right people at the right time in the right departments." PA3 explained, "People are happy when their leader protects their interest and job security." This theme confirms the conclusions of Tiwari and Lenka (2016) and Biswas (2016) that a psychologically safe work environment encourages teamwork and supportive and trustworthy relationships among employees. In such environments, employees can be creative, exchange ideas, and take risks without fear for their careers. The methodological triangulation of the interview data and information from the participating companys' websites such as "we value our people and their family life" and "we value and share the successes of our employees" underpins the establishing trust theme.

Organizations need to establish a history of trust between the management and employees for improved employee engagement. Some of the drivers for employee engagement include workplace support and democracy, and support for work-life balance (Taneja et al., 2015). Cameron and McNaughtan (2014) and Deery and Jago (2015) explained that positive practices from management such as help with managing work-life balance correctly, and the show of support and affection to the employee produce positive outcomes such as increased performance and employee retention. Lightfoot (2015) added that the lack of trust contributed to employees leaving the organization following downsizing, but good communication and transparent policies can help to reduce employee turnover intentions. The transformational leader communicates and builds trust between employees and management (Appelbaum et al., 2015). The establishing trust theme thus aligned with the transformational leadership theory. Table 5 contains a summary of related statements made by the participants on establishing trust.

Table 5

Theme: Establishing Trust

Participant	Participant’s Comments
PA1	The talented employee wants to have an active, good engagement, challenging work and great team building environment, clear and transparent communication from the top to bottom, trust, and positivity for the future.
PA2	Sometimes you need to get less trained individuals and train them so that your customers can have faith and trust to patronize you.
PA3	People have the trust in the leadership, and the leadership inspires people to put their best at making the organization continually successful. People believe the leadership will watch their back and protect their interest and job security.

Theme 4: Rewarding and Recognizing Surviving Employees

Each of the research participants agreed on the benefit and the value of having a competitive compensation and reward mechanism. PA1 and PA3 explained that having “pay equity” among the same employees with the same level of experience and doing the same job was a key factor in ensuring that the talented employees remained after downsizing. PA2 explained that having a good bonus system and recognition program was a key factor for reducing talented employee turnover. The theme confirms the findings of Rana et al. (2013) that perceived organizational support through recognition, effective reward mechanisms, and growth opportunities enhances retention. Additionally, reward and recognition are key components of employee engagement (Taneja et a., 2015). The methodological triangulation of the interview data and the information from the company websites such as “we are an equal employment company with a competitive total compensation package” and “each employee receives a comprehensive benefits package” supports the rewarding and recognizing surviving employees theme. Becker (1962) explained the human capital theory as skills acquisition. The talented employees expect to get commensurate compensation and reward for their skills and experience. PA2 explained that “the organization base the reward on achievement of a target or meeting certain obligations”. PA3 added that “what matters is the entire value proposition from the employer”. Thus, the more education and training the employee receives, the more compensation and reward the employee obtains because of productivity and performance gains (Becker, 1962). Table 6 contains a summary of several key related statements made by the participants about the organizations’ reward and recognition of surviving employees theme.

Table 6

Theme: Rewarding and Recognizing Surviving Employees

Participant	Participant's Comments
PA1	Recognition and award programs to employees who exceed performance, especially in sales are given more frequently now than in the past. Also, the organization has another reward program called Long Term Incentive program to reward employees who stay with the organization for long term…These awards are now considerable.
PA2	We do have a recognition program where the employee receives several points that can translate into gift vouchers and physical cash. The reward is based on achievement of a target or meeting certain obligations such as providing a good lead that translates to big business for the organization or following up on some leads, exceeding their performance targets, and also helping other less performing colleagues to achieve their performance goals and objectives better.
PA3	Need to ensure pay equity and clarity in the value proposition that based on market data.

Theme 5: Competing for Surviving Employees With Other Industries

All three business leaders agreed that talents required to work in the oil and gas industry were increasingly becoming scarce because of the notion that the industry is volatile as well as the increasing competition from other industries such as Information Technology (IT), aviation, and government administration. This theme confirms the findings of Yongbeon (2013) that turnover rate for high performing employees was high in technology industries. The oil and gas industry is a technology driven industry, and the expertise in effect is attributable to the competition for highly talented individuals. In particular, millennial talents increasingly prefer working for such companies as APPLE, Google, TESLA, Facebook, Twitter, and the government where they believe there are also chances of utilizing their talents as well as assurance of their job security. PA1 explained that “even with a lesser paying job; they don’t want to come back to the oil and gas industry because of the cyclic nature of the industry”. The loss of these talented employees to competing industries could lead to loss of productivity and profits for the oil and gas companies but gains for the competing industries (Shankar & Ghosh, 2013). However, the examination of the participating companys’ artifacts, that is, the information from the social media sites revealed that the organizations are active in the social cycle and keep employees engaged through their active and interactive Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin handles, and other blogs.

Employee engagement reduces turnover and turnover intentions as the engaged employees feel that their contributions matter and the organization respects their ideas (Taneja et al., 2015). As such, the methodological triangulation of the interview data and the information from the participating companies’ websites verified the theme of competing for surviving employees with other industries. Based on the concept of transformational leadership theory, the transformational leader inspires, motivates the employees to support a common vision (Zhang et al., 2014) as well as to use their best effort at making the organization successful. The transformational leader also provides the enabling environment for employee engagement. According to Taneja et al. (2015) engaged employees are dedicated to their work and feel proud of the organizations' achievements. Skoric, Zhu, Goh, and Pang (2015) concluded that the use of social media had a direct relationship with engagement. PA3 underscored that their company strives to build strong employee engagement levels to sustain employee retention levels. Table 7 contains several statements made about effectively retaining employees from other competing industries.

Table 7

Theme: Competing for Surviving Employees With Other Industries

Participant	Participant's Comments
PA1	There is an aging workforce in the face of millennials, a totally different generation and we are facing disruptions in the face of competition for talents from companies like UBER, AMAZON, APPLE, TESLA, etc.… It is even more difficult now to find field workers and trades who are willing to work in the oilfield because of the frequent downsizing of personnel.
PA2	It is not easy to get talents as the organization spend time and money hiring new employees and having to train them to perform and succeed.… So, it is very challenging to get good talents to fill certain roles within the organization.
PA3	People who leave the organization tend to be the good people; they are the guys who are marketable, they are the guys who other companies are looking for….You do not allow any time lag between when you complete downsizing and when you engage those talented employees…What we did was "ensuring that the organization identifies the high potential or talented individuals up front, and keeps them engaged even through the downsizing change, give them some level of comfort and made to know that they have a role to play in the organization post-downsizing." Also a good communication from the management in expressing a clear vision of the future for the organization to those remaining after downsizing was also very critical to getting the employee engagement and commitment.

Applications to Professional Practice

The result of the study could prove valuable to current and future leaders of oil and gas businesses for implementing strategies to enhance the retention of talented employees after downsizing. Therefore, oil and gas industry business leaders can improve their business performance by applying the findings from this study. The study findings include five underlying themes: (a) transformational leadership, (b) training survivors, (c) establishing trust, (d) rewarding and recognizing surviving employees, and (e) competing for surviving employees with other industries. Additionally, the findings and conclusions can help medium size oil and gas industry business leaders mitigate against the loss of profits and sustainability from failures to retain employee talent after a downsizing. In the transformational leadership theory, the transformational leaders remediating actions offer a positive working environment and positively effect organizational efficiency and performance (Arthur & Hardy, 2014). In the human capital theory, the harnessing of the potential of the talented surviving employees while also offering employee career development programs and commensurate reward systems positively affect talented employee organizational commitment (L. Madden et al., 2015). In general, medium size oil and gas businesses do not possess adequate talent retention strategies for retaining employees after downsizing thus resulting in an adverse effect on performance (Hansson, 2015). More so, the loss of talented long-term employees results in efficiency losses that can have a long-term adverse effect on the organizations' performance (Kraemer et al., 2016). Current and future oil and gas industry business leaders could adopt and implement the strategies to improve talent retention and business performance after downsizing.

Implications for Social Change

Using the result of this study could help to improve talent retention and performance of the oil and gas businesses. Calgary is the oil and gas hub of Canada and contributes to both the provincial and national economy. Therefore, the continual survival and profitability of the oil and gas industry are very important to the individuals and communities where they operate. The lack of knowledge of the appropriate strategies can cause high talented employee turnover and, loss of performance and profits for the businesses. The result of the study can help fill the gap of knowledge of what strategies to implement for talented employee retention after downsizing. Oil and gas companies can understand and apply the new strategies to improve talented employee retention after downsizing to improve business performance and profits for benefiting employees' families and communities.

Engaged employees earn income and provide for their families while also contributing to their larger communities. The local businesses and economies can continue to thrive when community members have jobs and have a stable income. Additionally, an improved workforce leads to employees with healthier, more balanced lives, reduced feelings of job insecurity (Snorradottir et al., 2015), and a reduction in derivative social ills. The findings from the study could contribute to social change by helping other business leaders implement retention strategies that increase workplace stability for happier employees working to support their families as well as contributing positively to their communities.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that the oil and gas industry business leaders implemented to retain talented employees after downsizing. Based on the findings of this study, I propose several actions that the current and future oil and gas industry business leaders can take to improve their talent retention strategies after downsizing to improve their business performance and profits. The business leaders need to understand five key issues for influencing their success: (a) transformational leadership, (b) training survivors, (c) establishing trust, (d) rewarding and recognizing surviving employees, and (e) competing for surviving employees with other industries.

First, the senior leadership of the oil and gas businesses should adopt the transformational leadership attributes to inspire, coach, provide a sense of security and motivation to the talented employees. The leadership must show fairness and openly communicate a clear postdownsizing vision for the organization. Second, management should encourage cross training in multiple product lines or services that will increase company knowledge, improve personal development and talent pool for the organization. Employers invest in employee specific training to improve productivity (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). Wei (2015) emphasized that a high performing human resources practice enhances retention of human capital and reduces turnover intention. Third, the business leaders need to develop a history of trust and clear communication between the employees and the management. Employees are prone to be emotional during downsizing when there are uncertainties about their future and job security. In an organization where talented employees trust their business leaders; the relationships can catalyze high employee engagement. A psychological safe work environment encourages teamwork, supportive and trustworthy relationships among employees, and employees can be creative, exchange ideas, and take risks without fear for their careers (Biswas, 2016; Tiwari & Lenka, 2016). Fourth, the business leaders should implement a competitive compensation, recognition and reward system for the surviving talented employees. The policy could include the implementation of a long-term incentive award for the talented employees. It could also include a reasonable time off after a long stay in the oilfield for field workers so they can spend a good time with their families and friends to obtain the right work-life balance. Rana et al. (2013) affirmed that perceived organizational support through recognition, effective reward mechanisms, and growth opportunities enhances retention. Fifth, there is growing competition for talents from other industries where there are less downsizing cycles and more stability of jobs. Also, because of an aging workforce and millennials, talented employees willing to work in the oil and gas industry are becoming scarce. As such, business leaders should invest in increasing innovation and show currency in the social media applications to increase employee commitment. Skoric et al. (2015) confirmed that the use of social media directly influenced employees' engagement. I intend to publish the study and take advantage of opportunities to share findings with business leaders in the oil and gas industry, colleges and universities, and business forums where business leaders discuss strategies for employee retention before and after downsizing.

Recommendations for Further Research

I conducted a qualitative multiple case study on the strategies that medium size oil and gas industry business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. The population for the study consisted of three cases in Calgary, Alberta Canada, and the small size is one of the limitations of this study. The study is also limited to one geographic location. Thus, to generalize the findings, future researchers can decide on a different location such as in a different oil and gas city or countries. Furthermore, future researchers should consider doing the study in a different industry such as in medium size construction and manufacturing industries. Additionally, future researchers can use a mixed research method and conduct qualitative interviews on a select larger population as well as use the quantitative research method to develop hypotheses to test the correlation between employee retention rates and the use of themes identified in this study. The quantitative research should include using a larger set of data for analysis enabling the potential demonstration of my findings' external validity to other environments.

Reflections

In this study, I explored the strategies that oil and gas business leaders implement to retain talented employees after downsizing. I had a good opportunity to learn and conduct research to solve the business problem. I also gained significant skills and experience from interacting with the business leaders.

Experiencing the research process helped me understand that getting participants to agree to participate in research promptly is not always easy. Over 50% of the business leaders that I contacted did not participate due to various issues such as frequency of business travels out of town and scheduling conflicts. For the participants who consented to participate, developing a good relationship was critical because of the transcript review and member checking processes. I spent considerable time explaining to the participants their rights and the confidentiality of their identities to make them comfortable and establish trust. I used the interview protocol to ensure that I asked the same questions to each participant but the follow-up questions differed depending on their initial answers. Also, I did not anticipate that transcribing the audio recording would be so tedious and protracted. Now, I can confirm from my experience that transcribing the interviews required a considerable amount of time.

The participants inspired me with their answers as I did not have the knowledge of the strategies that successful oil and gas industry business leaders can implement for retaining talented employees. My experience interviewing the business leaders further strengthened my resolve of being a successful business leader and in time having my own business.

Conclusion

Downsizing is a common business strategy, and because the outcomes from downsizing employees do not always yield the expected results, downsizing can create both unexpected financial and social problems (Gandolfi, 2013; Marques et al., 2014). Businesses can experience lost profits and sustainability from failure to retain employee talent after downsizing. Growing and sustaining an oil and gas business requires having the right talent pool which is a result of the organization having and implementing adequate talent retention strategies for improving business performance and profits. Oil and gas business leaders must actively implement strategies for talented employee retention after downsizing to sustain business performance and profits. In particular, the oil and gas business leaders should adopt the transformational leadership attributes of inspiring, coaching, and providing an enabling environment for adequate talented employee engagement. The transformational leaders’ remediating actions offer a positive working environment and positively effect organizational efficiency and performance (Arthur & Hardy, 2014). Additionally, investments in human capital can create employee expertise enabling organizations to attract and retain talented employees with the right skills for attaining organizations’ performance objectives.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introduce the interview, research topic over coffee or lunch and explain the purpose and scope of the study. Assure the participants that I will keep all the collected information confidential, ask that I record the interview, and inform the participant of the right to stop the interview.

The questions for the interview are as follows:

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your age?
2. Where were you born?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. How long in the current organization?
5. How many years of experience as a business leader?

Strategic Research Questions

1. What strategies did the management of your organization have in place to prevent talented employee turnover after downsizing?
2. Based upon your experience, what specific features of the strategies contributed to talented employees remaining after downsizing?
3. What are the principal internal and external barriers to implementing talent retentions strategies?
4. How were the internal and external barriers addressed?
5. How have you assessed the strategies’ efficacy?

6. What additional information can you provide to assist me in understanding the retention of talented employees after downsizing occurs?

Wrap up the interview by thanking the participant and schedule follow-up for member checking interview.

Follow-up and Member Checking Interview

Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage over coffee.

Share a copy of the succinct synthesis for each question and interpretation.

Ask a probing question related to any information that I found during the interview and related to the research topic.

Walkthrough, each question, read the interpretation and ask: Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?

Wrap up the follow-up interview by thanking the participant.

Appendix B: Certificate of Completion

9/10/2015 Protecting Human Subject Research Participants

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Chizoba Nwoye** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 09/10/2015

Certification Number: 1845543

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Appendix C: Interview Questions

The questions for the interview are as follows:

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your age?
2. Where were you born?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. How long in the current organization?
5. How many years of experience as a business leader?

Strategic Research Questions

6. What strategies did the management of your organization have in place to prevent talented employee turnover after downsizing?
7. Based upon your experience, what specific features of the strategies contributed to talented employees remaining after downsizing?
8. What are the principal internal and external barriers to implementing talent retentions strategies?
9. How were the internal and external barriers addressed?
10. How have you assessed the strategies efficacy?
11. What additional information can you provide to assist me in understanding the retention of talented employees after downsizing occurs?