

2017

# Employee Retention Strategies in the Fast Food Industry

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Darren Cross

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2017

Abstract

Employee Retention Strategies in the Fast Food Industry

by

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MBA, Fontbonne University, 2001

BSB, University of Phoenix, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2017

## Abstract

Voluntary employee turnover in the fast-food industry is 50%. Employee turnover costs fast-food restaurants \$10 billion annually. The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the strategies of 5 fast-food restaurant managers in the Midwestern United States who achieved higher employee retention than did peers in their districts. The conceptual framework was the 8 motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover. Data were collected via semistructured, face-to-face interviews, recruiting materials, retention activities, policy manuals, and overall voluntary termination reports. Data were compiled, disassembled into groups, reassembled into patterns and themes, and interpreted for conclusions, revealing 3 themes that influenced the managers' employee retention: organizational support, communication, and employee training. These findings suggest that proactively developing a culture of support, implementing communication and feedback channels for employees, and maintaining a training and development program can improve employee retention. Findings might contribute to social change by helping managers develop strategies for improving employee retention, and in turn, financial performance. Employees of fast-food restaurants could benefit from improved retention and financial performance, as they could contribute to new employment opportunities and increased career longevity. Society could benefit from expanded aggregate employment and tax revenue.

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## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge many people who, in some way, helped me along my journey. First, I would like to thank my wife, Jocelyn, and my three kids, Mikayla, Kai, and Carson for sacrificing along with me. Your support has been crucial, and in my heart and mind, your names are right alongside mine on my degree. To my mother, Sydonia, you taught me at a young age how to keep fighting, even in the face of adversity, and that spirit was an essential part of this process. My sister, Luciana, has been the best example of strength. With every reason to curl up, you refused. I'm your big bro, but you have been a great example of perseverance for me. Mikey, you are my little brother, but your example of integrity and straight talk have kept me humble. I have a list of men who have been surrogate fathers along the way. Uncle Al Blumenberg, Uncle Butch Blumenberg, Steve Bennett, and Ron Trelow, you all stepped in and taught me how to be a man. My success is your success. I would also like to thank my committee members. Dr. Alice Denomme, you were my first chair and you get me started on the right foot. Dr. Lynn, Szostek, you picked me up and carried me through the process. Dr. Kim Critchlow, you whipped me into shape when I started to stray, and Dr. Diane Dusick, you are the best university reviewer. Without you all, the joy I feel today would not be possible. Thank you!

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Voluntary employee turnover can be costly to business (Gialuisi & Coetzer, 2013). The voluntary employee turnover rate in the fast-food industry is 50% (Perez & Mirabella, 2013). The estimated cost of the high employee turnover rate in the fast-food industry is \$10 billion per year in the United States (Dike, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention.

### **Background of the Problem**

Voluntary employee turnover has an adverse impact on firm outcomes, including quality, customer service, and the efficiency and effectiveness of operations (Abii, Ogula, & Rose, 2013; Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pearce, 2013). Voluntary employee turnover also has an influence on overall firm performance (Kwon, 2014). Many managers in the fast-food industry are concerned that voluntary employee turnover is among the highest of all industries (Mohsin, & Lengler, 2015; Perez & Mirabella, 2013). In response to voluntary employee turnover, many managers realized that focusing on strategies to improve employee retention rates is an increasingly important task (Dunnagan, Maragakis, Schneiderjohn, Turner, & Vance, 2013). When managers implement employee retention strategies, employees are less likely to leave the organization (Robinson, Kralj, Solnet, Goh, & Callan, 2014). Exploring employee-retention strategies is crucial to organizational success (Kwon, 2014).

### **Problem Statement**

In the United States, the voluntary turnover rate in the fast food industry is 50% (Perez & Mirabella, 2013). Voluntary employee turnover accounts for an estimated 30%-50% of the cost of labor for these entry level positions (Hancock et al., 2013). The general business problem is that voluntary employee turnover has a negative impact on the profitability of fast-food restaurants. The specific problem is that some fast-food restaurant managers lack strategies to improve employee retention.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention. The population consisted of fast-food managers in the Midwestern United States with higher employee retention results than their peers in their district. The results of this study could have implications for positive social change. As businesses improve financial performance and expand, they may develop an increased capability to pay employees a higher wage or complement wages with better employee benefits. Employees and their family members could benefit from increased job stability as employees seek to stay employed with their restaurants rather than choosing to terminate employment.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used the qualitative method for this study. Researchers use a qualitative method to explore themes and perceptions in a phenomenon as well as factors that relate to practices, a case, culture, or theory (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers who use quantitative methods measure relationships that relate to, but do not facilitate, exploration

of practices or phenomena (Cokley & Awad, 2013). Mixed method studies include both quantitative and qualitative methods in studies with research questions that require deep exploration of phenomena in addition to measurements of relationships among variables (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2014). Because the purpose of this study was to explore practices in five organizations, the qualitative method is the most valuable.

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention. Researchers use multiple case study designs to facilitate exploration of activities in multiple organizations (Yin, 2014). Other qualitative methods include phenomenological methods, which researchers use to explore participants' experiences with a specific phenomenon, grounded theory, which facilitates the development of theories from emerging themes and elements, and ethnography, which helps researchers understand phenomena within a specific ethnic or cultural group (Yates & Leggett, 2016). The multiple case study method best facilitates exploration of strategies within the five organizations.

### **Research Question**

RQ: What strategies are some fast-food managers using to improve employee retention?

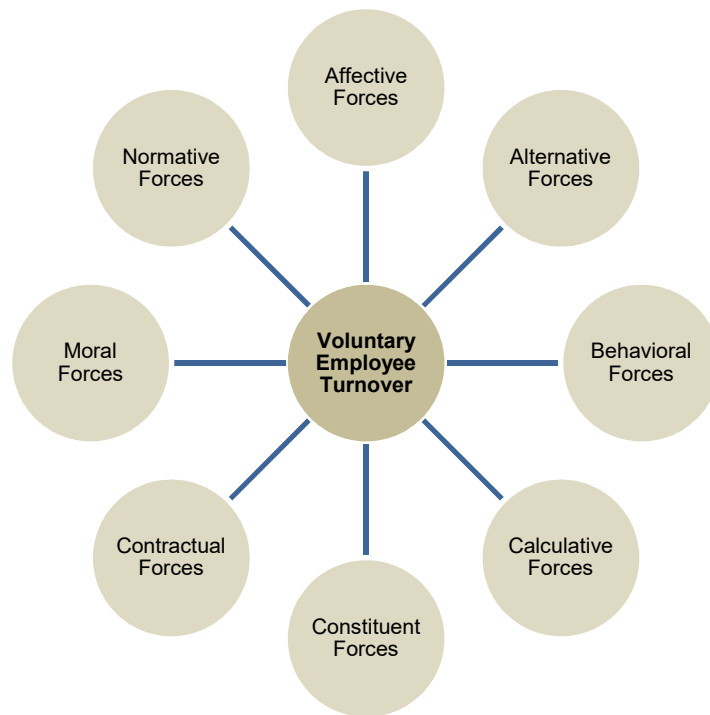
### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies do you use to improve employee retention?
2. What strategies do you use to improve job satisfaction among your employees?
3. How do you make your restaurant a more attractive place to work?

4. What strategies do you use to increase employees' commitment to their positions?
5. How do you help employees achieve their personal goals at work?
6. How do you support employees realizing the career opportunities within the organization?
7. How do you foster employees' attachment to coworkers and groups within your organization?
8. What additional information would you like to add to explain what strategies you use to improve employee retention?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was voluntary employee turnover theory (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Maertz and Griffeth (2004) introduced the eight motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover theory in an American academic journal in 2004. The eight motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover synthesized process-oriented theories of turnover as well as content-oriented theories of turnover into the eight categories. The eight motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover include (a) affective forces, (b) alternative forces, (c) behavioral forces, (d) calculative forces, (e) constituent forces, (f) contractual forces, (g) moral forces, and (h) normative forces (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Eight motivational forces of employee turnover.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms and definitions used in this study included the following:

*Job embeddedness:* Job embeddedness is the degree of connection that an employee has with their organization (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001).

*Job satisfaction:* Job satisfaction is employees' feelings of contentment towards their job (Collie, Shapka, Perry, & Martin, 2015).

*Organizational commitment:* Organizational commitment is an employee's psychological bond with an organization (Jun-Cheng, Wen-Quan, Zhao-Yi, & Jun, 2015).

*Voluntary employee turnover:* Voluntary employee turnover is the voluntary cessation of membership in an organization by an individual who receives monetary



compensation for participation in that organization (Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of a study may require disclosure and mitigation. Assumptions refer to the presumed but unverified facts that relate to a study (Connell, 2013). Limitations are the potential weaknesses of a study that are out of the researchers control (Connelly, 2013). Delimitations are the researcher-imposed boundaries that limit the scope of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Included in this subsection is a description of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that may have an impact on this study.

#### **Assumptions**

Three assumptions may influence this study. The first assumption was that the managerial actions of the participants influence the employee-retention rates and further, that managers with higher employee-retention rates successfully implement retention strategies. Therefore, the participant responses were helpful in answering the research question. The second assumption was that the participants would answer honestly and thoroughly. The final assumption was that themes that relate to employee retention are inherent in the results of this study.

#### **Limitations**

The first limitation was the small sample size. The participants in this study were five managers with experience in this field. Another limitation was the geographical area in which this study was conducted. All of the managers were in the Midwestern United

States. The culture of the geographical location might influence the results of this study. The final limitation of this study was the potential for researcher bias. Although this study included measures to mitigate bias, there was no guarantee that bias did not influence the results of this study. Finally, this study was limited by the honesty of the participants.

### **Delimitations**

This research was limited to purposefully selected managers in five fast-food restaurants in one fast-food chain in the Midwestern United States. This multiple-case study was limited to the experiences of managers in one district. The results of this study were not necessarily generalizable to wider populations.

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study could prove valuable to some managers and executives in the fast food industry. Gaining an understanding of the results of this study could help managers to reduce the financial impact of employee turnover. Also, this study could have a positive impact on society in several ways. When fast-food restaurants can reduce the financial impact of employee turnover, it could lead to a positive impact on the economy as restaurants perform better. Second, the aggregate impact could improve employee retention, thus creating a trained workforce in the fast food restaurant environment. Finally, reduced turnover in the fast-food industry could affect the longevity, pay, and upward mobility of employees who previously may have had limited options for career advancement.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention. The results of this study could expand the body of knowledge related to the employee-retention strategies used in the fast-food industry. Managers gaining a better understanding of retention strategies could help them develop and implement processes that cause people to remain employed with the company.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results of this study could effect social change. High turnover cost the fast food industry \$10 billion per year (Dike, 2012). Mitigating the financial burden on corporations could facilitate higher wages and expanded benefits in the fast-food industry. As fast-food restaurants shed the financial burden of employee turnover, there are more financial resources to reward employees with increased salaries. The result of increased salaries could have a positive impact on the career longevity of employees who are not otherwise inclined to pursue a career in the fast-food industry.

Finally, reducing employee turnover could have a positive impact on the lives of those who experience the phenomenon. As employees in the fast-food industry field begin to settle into one company rather than moving from job to job, they may experience increased employment stability, financial security, and general well-being. Increased stability could have a positive impact on cohesiveness among family members, which could have an aggregate positive impact on society.

## **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention. The research question was as follows:

RQ: What strategies are some fast-food managers using to improve employee retention?

Eight main elements from the eight motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover emerge as a succinct representation of the literature regarding voluntary employee turnover. This literature review included a review of the research regarding these eight elements.

### **Organization**

Voluntary employee turnover refers the number of employees who voluntarily leave a job within a specific time-period of study (Alonazi & Omar, 2013). Research on voluntary turnover seems to fall into one of two categories: process-oriented theories and content-oriented theories. Process-oriented research seems to focus on how employees make the decision to leave a company, and content oriented research seems to focus on elements that influence voluntary turnover (Shipp, Furst-Holloway, Harris, & Rosen & 2013).

The conceptual framework of this study was the eight motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004), which is a content-oriented theory. According to the eight forces model, there are eight general categories of forces that might influence an employee's decision to leave a job: (a) affective forces, (b)

alternative forces, (c) behavioral forces, (d) calculative forces, (e) constituent forces, (f) contractual forces, (g) moral forces, and (h) normative forces. Further, the eight forces model represents a synthesis of all of the elements that might contribute to employee turnover.

This review of literature includes a chronological illustration of the evolution of research that informs the eight motivational forces of employee turnover. Thus, the beginning of this review of literature was an exploration of the early theories and thought processes that inform the framework of this study. Further, this review of literature includes exploration of elements that the eight forces synthesize and that relate to the topic of voluntary employee turnover.

### **Documentation**

A thorough search of many academic databases yielded peer-reviewed scholarly sources related to the research question. The databases included (a) Google Scholar, (b) Business Source Complete, (c) Proquest, (d) PsycInfo, and (e) PsycArticles. Relevant literature for this study derived from the following search terms: (a) *employee turnover*, (b) *employee engagement*, (c) *job embeddedness*, (d) *organizational commitment*, (e) *job satisfaction*, (f) *employee motivation*, (g) *employee turnover in fast-food restaurants*, (h) *antecedents of employee turnover*, and variations of these terms.

Table 1

*Synopsis of Sources Researched in Literature Review*

Reference type	Total	Less than 5 years	Greater than 5 years	Percent
Research-based peer-reviewed journals	65	57	10	87.7%
Seminars and contemporary books	2	0	0	
Total reference	67	57	10	85.07%

**Ease and Desirability**

Most of the early research on voluntary employee turnover stems from March and Simon (1958), who theorized that employees make decisions to leave a company based upon their perception of the ease and desirability of leaving. In their theory, March and Simon posited that employees make the decision to leave based upon their perception of how satisfied they are with their job (desirability) and what job alternatives exist in the market (ease; Mobley, 1977). Mobley (1977) expanded the ease–desirability theory with a model of intermediate linkages that lead to employees’ making the decision to leave their jobs. Mobley’s model includes the following linkages: (a) evaluation of existing job, (b) experienced job satisfaction–dissatisfaction, (c) thinking of quitting, (d) evaluation of utility of search and cost of quitting, (e) intention to search for alternatives, (f) search for alternatives, (g) evaluation of alternatives, (h) comparison of alternative to present job, (i) intention to quit/stay, and (j) stay/quit (Mobley, 1977).

The intermediate linkages model presented a heuristic process of the development of an employee’s voluntary-turnover cognition, which is an inherent assumption about

the predictors of voluntary turnover. Researchers seem to support the intermediate linkages model. A correlational study of 1,789 police officers in the United Kingdom supported several hypotheses regarding the intermediate linkages model. Most notably, Allisey, Noblet, Lamontagne, and Houdmont (2014) concluded that job satisfaction is the mediating factor between distal variables and employees' intention to quit a job. The significance of this study was twofold. First, the suggestion of this study was that job satisfaction was a significant link in the process of voluntary turnover. Allisey et al. (2014) also suggested several elements such as job stress, organizational relationships, and organizational support as distal predictors of voluntary turnover. Maurya and Argarwal (2015) agreed, concluding that organizational support influences job satisfaction. While the intermediate linkages model is a process-oriented model, the introduction of distal variables suggests other elements as potential influencers of voluntary turnover, which represents a content-oriented perspective.

Another correlational study of 651 alumni of a Canadian university supported a portion of the intermediate linkages model. Paille (2013) concluded that there was a positive relationship between employees' perceptions of alternative jobs and employees' intentions to search. Further, there was a positive relationship between intention to search and intention to leave. The conclusions presented by Paille support the intermediate linkages model and the presence of two of the linkages that Mobley (1977) proposed in the process of voluntary employee turnover: (a) intention to search for another job and (b) intention to leave a position.

While there is no agreement on a single cause of turnover, most researchers agree that distal variables influence (via some process) attitudinal factors such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which are proximal antecedents of voluntary turnover (Hom et al., 2012). The implication is that job attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment) are essential elements of the voluntary turnover process (Hom et al., 2012).

### **Unfolding Model of Turnover**

Lee and Mitchell (1994) strayed slightly from traditional thinking, indicating that attitudinal elements accounted for less than 15% of the variance of involuntary turnover. The authors put forth their unfolding model of employee turnover, which injected that an unexpected event (shock) such as a death or illness in the family or a change in a spouse's employment status could also influence employees' decisions to leave a job, regardless of their attitude toward the job. Employees could be satisfied with or committed to their job, but the shock would cause them to leave employment (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

The unfolding model of voluntary turnover introduced the concept of shock into the voluntary turnover equation (Lee & Mitchell, 1994), with a departure from the widely accepted assumption that job satisfaction was an essential element in the turnover process. In the unfolding model, Lee and Mitchell (1994) indicated that a shock or unexpected event in employees' lives might cause them to leave a company, even if they are satisfied with their jobs. The shock might include events such as a death in the family or change in a spouse's employment status.



The unfolding model is a departure from traditional process theories of turnover because it does not include job satisfaction as an essential element of voluntary turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Employee shock, while it is a critical consideration in the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994), could manifest as an element in the various content-oriented models and is an alternative force that might influence an employee's decision to leave an organization (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

The unfolding model borrows three constructs from image theory (Beach, 1990), which inform an employee's decision to leave an organization: (a) value image, (b) trajectory image, and (c) strategic image (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Value image represents employees' perception of their values, standards, and principles (Beach, 1990). Trajectory image represents the goals that guide an employee's behavior (Beach, 1990). Finally, strategic image represents the strategies that an employee perceives as effective in the achievement of their goals (Beach, 1990). According to the unfolding model (Lee & Mitchell, 1994), employees compare their circumstances to their perceptions and preconceived (value, trajectory, or strategic) images (Beach, 1990) and take one of four different paths in their decision to leave a position (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

The first path of the unfolding model is one where an employee experiences a shock and then probes their memory for a previously programmed response to this type of shock (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). In this path, the employee also experiences a match (scripted response) that informs their decision to leave a company (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). If scripted responses include leaving the job as an option, an employee often

decides to leave with very little deliberation (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Thus, job satisfaction is less significant in the first path (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

In the second decision path, an employee does not experience a match to a scripted response after having experienced a shock (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Additionally, the employee does not perceive a specific job alternative in the labor market (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). In this path, an employee evaluates their (job) satisfaction as well as (organizational) commitment before making the decision to leave (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). This path is congruent with March and Simon's (1958) desirability construct. In this path, job satisfaction is a factor, as it is in historical models of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

The third decision path involves an employee's experience of shock, followed by no scripted response, as well as the perception of a specific job alternative in the market (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). March and Simon's (1958) ease and desirability construct informs this path. Although employees have no programmed scripted response, they are likely to evaluate the desirability (job satisfaction) as well as the ease (job alternatives) of leaving a position (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

In the fourth decision path, the employee does not experience shock (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Rather, nonjarring events gradually initiate affect (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The fourth path is congruent with historical models of turnover in that job satisfaction is a significant component of the consideration (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

Hom et al. (2012) argued that the traditional models ignore turnover that does not derive from job satisfaction (desirability) or perceptions of job alternatives (ease). The

unfolding model of turnover introduced the notion that nonattitudinal factors could influence turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). While theories regarding the predictors of voluntary employee turnover and the processes of voluntary turnover dominate the literature, there is still little agreement about a single cause of turnover (Hom et al., 2012). To mitigate the lack of consensus, Mitchell et al. (2001) introduced a construct called job embeddedness.

### **Job-Embeddedness Theory**

Employee-turnover concepts inform the job embeddedness construct, but two nuances distinguish this new idea from traditional thought (Mitchell et al., 2001). First, the job embeddedness construct represents a different perspective in their query. Rather than focusing on what causes people to leave employment, the job embeddedness construct focused on what causes people to stay employed with a company (Mitchell et al., 2001). Secondly, the job embeddedness construct sought to synthesize the dominant research approaches regarding voluntary employee turnover, which focused on attempting to understand the predictors and processes of voluntary employee turnover (Mitchell et al., 2001). The job-embeddedness construct is a content-oriented theory. Thus, it focuses on the dimensions of voluntary turnover (Mitchell et al., 2001).

The psychology of staying at a place of employment is different from the psychology of leaving a place of employment, in that deciding to leave means departing from a state of familiarity (Woo & Allen, 2013). The implication is that employees do not look for reasons to stay in the job. Rather, job dissatisfaction (Mobley, 1977) or shocks (Lee & Mitchell, 1994) cause employees to look for job alternatives. Mitchell et

al. (2001) introduced the job embeddedness construct to conceptualize and codify the reasons that employee might stay in a particular job.

Three dimensions compose the job embeddedness construct: (a) links, (b) fit, and (c) sacrifice (Mitchell et al., 2001). Links are the connections between employees and the organization, as well as the community (Mitchell et al., 2001). More links strengthen the degree of embeddedness to the organization, thus, an employee's intent to stay employed with an organization (Mitchell et al., 2001). Fit refers to employees' perception of their compatibility with an organization and associated community (Mitchell et al., 2001).

When employees feel more compatible with an organization or the associated community, embeddedness is stronger (Mitchell et al., 2001). Finally, sacrifice is the loss that employees associate with leaving a job or an associated community (Mitchell et al., 2001). When employees perceive greater loss associated with leaving a company, their embeddedness to the company is high (Mitchell et al., 2001). According to the job embeddedness theory, the process of turnover intention is less important than the strength or degree of embeddedness as expressed through the three dimensions of job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Borah and Malakar (2015) researched the nature of the relationships among the three dimensions of job embeddedness, as well as the relationship between job embeddedness and turnover intention. Borah and Malakar conducted several correlational surveys among a random sample of 120 banking professionals in Guwahati, India, and arrived at several conclusions. First, the researchers determined that the

dimensions of the job embeddedness were reliable and valid constructs. Also, Borah and Malakar determined that there is a negative relationship between job embeddedness and turnover intention. In other words, employees with high job embeddedness were less likely to leave a position.

### **Eight Motivational Forces of Voluntary Turnover**

Maertz and Griffeth (2004) presented another comprehensive synthesis of voluntary turnover research that includes most of the elements in both traditional and emerging research, including those presented in the job embeddedness construct. In their synthesis, the authors put forth eight motivational forces of voluntary turnover. The eight motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover model conceptualized all of the distal and proximal variables that might correlate with employee turnover, as well as variables that might influence the process (or steps in the process) leading to employee turnover (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). The eight motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover include (a) affective forces, (b) alternative forces, (c) behavioral forces, (d) calculative forces, (e) normative forces, (f) moral forces, (g) contractual forces, and (h) constituent forces (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

Using item generation to develop content validity for proposed dimensions of the eight forces of motivation, Maertz and Griffeth (2004) developed 18 subdimensions of the eight motivational forces of employee turnover. They conducted surveys of two samples of unskilled and semiskilled workers in a poultry processing plant and furniture plant. To develop an instrument for measuring motivational forces of employee turnover,

the researchers surveyed 175 workers in the poultry processing plant and 432 workers in the furniture plant.

Maertz and Griffeth (2004) implemented structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis to validate the predictive ability of 13 of the 18 subdimensions of the motivational forces of employee turnover. While Maertz and Boyar seemed to validate several of the motivational forces, Maertz, Boyar, and Pearson (2012) suggested that the 18 subdimensions have inadvertently omitted some antecedents of employee turnover. However, the eight motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover best conceptualize most of the distal and proximal antecedents and elements that correlate to voluntary employee turnover (Maertz et al., 2012).

### **Affective Forces**

Affective forces are those that derive from employees' emotional feeling about their association with an organization (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). The emotional feeling creates a hedonistic-avoidance response, in that employees will feel more attached when they feel positive emotions towards their organization, and less attached when they feel negative feelings (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Affective forces might include such elements as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Maertz et al., 2012).

**Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction is the psychological state of affection that employees have towards their job (Pan, Shen, Liu, Yang, & Wang, 2015). Job satisfaction is perhaps the most heavily studied predictor or dimension employee turnover (Sukriket, 2015), and it is a dominant element in most theories of turnover. Job satisfaction best conceptualizes the desirability component of the March and Simon's

(1958) ease and desirability theory, in that job satisfaction could reflect an employee's perception of how desirable it is to leave a job. Mobley (1977) included job satisfaction as an essential component of the intermediate linkages model.

Leip and Stinchcomb (2013) conducted a study of 1924 line-level jail workers in 46 states in the United States. The researchers found that there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and intent to stay. Lee and Mitchell (1994) noted that job satisfaction accounted for a small portion of the variation of voluntary employee turnover, but they did include it as a possible component in some of the paths in the unfolding model that employees might take in response to shock and preconstructed mental images (Beach, 1990). While the Mitchell et al. (2001) put forth elements that might contribute to job satisfaction, they do not present it as such. Rather, they put job satisfaction forth as an alternative predictor of employee turnover (Mitchell et al., 2001). Maertz and Griffeth (2004) suggested that, as an affective force, job satisfaction might influence a composite predisposition to leave a position. While job satisfaction is an affective force, it could also be an alternative force or calculative force as it may influence organizational commitment (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

The implication regarding affective-motivational forces of employee turnover is that decrease in job satisfaction could cause employees to be less committed to a job, which could lead them to seek other options (El-Nahas, Abd-El-Salam, & Shawky, 2013). While job satisfaction and organizational commitment as may act as affective-motivational forces of employee turnover (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004), there still is the problem that Lee and Mitchell (1994) noted, which is that these elements accounted for

only 15% of the variance in employee turnover. Factors that comprise alternative forces might be helpful in understanding the unaccounted variance in the relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover, as well as organizational commitment and employee turnover.

**Organizational commitment.** Organizational commitment is an employee's acceptance of an organization's goals and values, as well as a willingness to extend effort, to advance the mission of and maintain membership in the organization (Jun-Cheng et al., 2015). Traditional models of employee turnover suggest that organizational commitment, mediated by job satisfaction, is a crucial element in the turnover process (Casimir, Ng, Wang, & Ooi, 2014; Neubert & Halbesleben, 2015). Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed three components of organizational commitment that provide clarity about its relationship among the various elements related to voluntary employee turnover: (a) affective commitment, (b) continuance commitment, and (c) normative commitment.

***Affective organizational commitment.*** Affective commitment reflects an employee's emotional feeling towards a company, as well as the desire to stay employed with a company (Meyer & Allen, 1991), and is the component of organizational commitment that represents affective forces (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). The result of affective commitment is an employee staying with a company (Thanacoody, Newman, & Fuchs, 2014). Antecedents of affective commitment relate to personal characteristics or organizational characteristics (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

***Personal characteristics.*** Personal characteristics might include such elements as demographic factors and an employee's personal values system (Meyer & Allen, 1991).



Kermati, Horri, and Afzalipoor (2013) conducted a correlational study of university professors in Iraq. The researchers sampled 269 participants of various demographic backgrounds. The participants completed surveys that assessed six independent variables: (a) age, (b) gender, (c) educational achievement, (d) marital status, (e) job experience, and (f) salary. The researchers used a Pearson correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between each of these six independent variables and organizational commitment. Kermati et al. (2013) concluded that all of these variables had a significant relationship with organizational commitment. Further, the researchers concluded that age and gender had a stronger relationship with organizational commitment. The inherent suggestion is that older people and married people have value systems that are congruent with being committed to their organization (Kermati et al., 2013).

Inherent in the traditional framework of content-related turnover research is the suggestion that the variables presented by Kermati et al. (2013) serve as elements that contribute to voluntary turnover. Process-oriented research, however, supports the notion that the sequence that leads to an employee leaving includes some of these factors as they might influence job satisfaction (Mobley, 1977), and in turn, the desirability of leaving (March & Simon, 1958). Within the framework of the eight motivational forces of voluntary turnover (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004), these demographic elements might influence the affective force that motivates employees to stay with or leave an organization. While researchers support the conclusion of a strong relationship between

personal demographic factors and organizational commitment (Khan & Zafar, 2013), these factors are not the only influence on affective commitment.

Employees' perceptions about organizational values are another personal characteristic that might influence affective commitment (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). The perception of value incongruence might also be a component of affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In turn, value incongruence might also serve as an affective force (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004) that influences employee turnover.

Howell, Kirk-Brown, and Cooper (2012) conducted a correlational study of 343 employees in five private sector organizations in Australia. The researchers hypothesized that affective organizational commitment is higher when employee perceptions of espoused and enacted values are congruent (with the organization). Howell et al. used a generic values survey instrument to collect data regarding employees' values and collected data regarding organizational values and employee commitment using established (and presumably valid) survey instruments. Using a regression analysis methodology, the researchers determined that the result supported their hypothesis. The conclusion was that employees experience higher affective commitment (an affective force) when they perceive congruence between organizational values and their own (Howell et al., 2012).

*Organizational characteristics.* Organizational characteristics are an affective force that influences turnover intention (Keller & Semmer, 2013). Hopkins, Mallette, and Hopkins (2013) indicated that organizational characteristics might include organizational structure, organizational culture, and organizational leadership. Zohar and

Polachek (2014) suggested that facility working conditions are another organizational characteristic that influences affective commitment.

*Organizational structure.* Organizational structure is another element that might function as a (motivational) force of employee turnover. Organizational structure is the hierarchical structure, allocation of work roles, and control mechanisms of an organization (Wahba, 2015). Dimensions of organizational structure include centralization and formalization (Koufteros, Peng, Lu, & Peters, 2014). Centralization is the extent to which the executive managers make decisions for an organization (Koufteros et al., 2014). Formalization is the degree to which organizations use written rules and policies. The dimensions of organizational structure can also manifest as affective forces that can function as an antecedent of organizational commitment, thus employee retention (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

Kim, Wehbi, DelliFraine, and Brannon (2014) conducted a regression analysis in a convenience sample of 1303 direct-care workers in 148 long-term care facilities. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between organizational structure and HR practices on job satisfaction and intent to leave. The researchers concluded that (a) there was a positive relationship between organic organizational structures (those with lower levels of centralization and formalization) and job satisfaction and that (b) there was a negative relationship between organic organizational structures and turnover intention. The inherent suggestion in the researchers' conclusions was that employees are less likely to leave organizations with lower levels of centralization and formalization (Kim et al., 2014). In agreement with other studies, Kim et al. found that job satisfaction

is a mediating factor in the relationship between organizational structure and turnover intention.

*Organizational culture and leadership.* The culture and leadership of organization can serve as an affective force that influences an employee's organizational commitment (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Organizational culture is the shared beliefs, values, and assumptions of the employees of an organization (Körner, Wirtz, Bengel, & Göritz, 2015). Further, organizational culture is a determinant of many organizational outcomes including job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Spath, Strand, & Bosco-Ruggiero, 2013). Leadership is influencing employees to achieve organizational goals (Hoxha, 2015).

Ruiz-Palomino, Martínez-Cañas, and Fontrodona (2013) studied the relationship between employee perception of ethical leadership, job satisfaction, and turnover intention among 436 employees at various banking institutions in Spain. The results of this study infer that employees who perceive that their leaders are ethical are more satisfied with their jobs, thus, less like to leave it. A significant point in this study is that, as in most other research, job satisfaction emerged as a mediator between culture and turnover. Organizational culture and leadership also effectively interact with personal characteristics (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees perceive contrast between personal value systems and the culture or leadership of an organization, the employees are more likely to discontinue employment (Howell et al., 2012).

*Working conditions.* The physical conditions, in which, employees work, could manifest as affective force that influences employee behavior. In a correlational study,

Arnoux-Nicolas, Sovet, Lhotellier, Di Fabio, and Bernaud (2016) examined the relationship between working conditions and turnover intent among 336 employees in various positions and at various organizations. The results of the study suggest that is a significant positive relationship between perceived bad working conditions and an employee leaving the position.

Within the traditional research framework regarding voluntary employee turnover, an employee's perception of working conditions might influence job satisfaction, as in the intermediate linkages model (Mobley, 1977). Working conditions could also function as a shock that activates one of the paths in the unfolding model (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Another inherent suggestion by Arnoux-Nicolas et al. (2016) is that although job satisfaction seems to be a dominant influence of affective force, it is not essential. As supported by the unfolding model of turnover, unfavorable working conditions could alternatively represent a shock to the system (Lee & Griffeth, 1994). In either case, working conditions serve as an affective force that might influence employee turnover.

### **Alternative Forces**

Alternative forces represent those forces that provide an incentive for employees to look elsewhere for employment (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). The concept of alternative forces is congruent with the ease component of March and Simon's (1958) ease and desirability theory. Employees' perceptions of more or more attractive job alternatives might increase their motivation to leave and organization.

Conversely, the perception of fewer and less attractive job alternatives might motivate employees to stay employed with their company (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Employees' perception of the availability of alternative opportunities is essentially their perception regarding how easy it would be to move (March & Simon, 1958). The concepts perceived job alternatives and perceived employability best conceptualize alternative forces (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

**Perceived job alternatives.** Employees' perceptions of alternative external job opportunities might influence their decision to leave a job (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Perception of job alternatives reflects their perception of their value to the labor market, thus the ease of leaving their organization (March & Simon, 1958). In Mobley's (1977) intermediate linkages model, employees' perceptions are a mediating step in the process of voluntary turnover. Decreased satisfaction may not translate to turnover intent without an employee's perception that it is easy to leave (March & Simon, 1958) because there are alternative external job opportunities. Paille (2013) also concluded that perception of an alternative leads to intention to search, which in turn could lead to intent to leave a position.

The concept of perceived employability is another dimension of perceived job alternatives (Van den Broeck et al., 2014). When employees perceive that they have knowledge, skills, or education that are in high demand in the labor market, it might influence their perception of the ease of leaving an organization (Mäkikangas, De Cuyper, Mauno, & Kinnunen, 2013; March & Simon, 1958). While the perception of

ease of movement alone is not a predictor of voluntary turnover, perception is an alternative force that might influence voluntary turnover.

### **Behavioral Forces**

Behavioral forces derive from employees' perceptions of the cost of leaving an organization (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Perceived higher costs of leaving motivate employees to stay employed with an organization and perceived lower costs might decrease an employee's motivation to stay with a company. Behavioral forces also represent the sacrifice element of the job embeddedness model (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Continuance commitment captures the essence of behavioral forces.

Continuance commitment is the dimension of organizational commitment that relates to employees' perceptions of the cost of leaving a job (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees measure the cost of losing elements such as an employee's tenure, achieved position, attained knowledge level, and attained salary level (Abreu, Cunha, & Rebouças, 2013). While organizational commitment, in general, correlates to employee retention, continuance commitment has a relatively weak and inconsistent relationship with retention (Stanley, Vandenberghe, Vandenberg, & Bentein, 2013).

Taing, Granger, Groff, Jackson, and Johnson (2011) conducted a study of 476 part-time and full-time employees in the southeast United States, in which, the researchers put forth two dimensions of continuance commitment: (a) economic exchange and (b) perception of other job alternatives. The researchers concluded that there was a negative relationship between both dimensions of continuance commitment

and turnover intention. Continuance commitment, in and of itself, does not equate to turnover.

Rather, continuance commitment might represent what Mitchell et al. (2001) as the sacrifice dimension of job embeddedness. According to the job-embeddedness theory, employees' perceptions of sacrifice influences their decision to stay employed with an organization. Employees who associate a higher level of sacrifice with leaving a job are less likely to leave (Mitchell et al., 2001). In this way, continuance commitment might function as a motivational force that influences turnover.

### **Calculative Forces**

Calculative forces are those that represent employees' calculations regarding the likelihood of achieving their goals by staying employed with an organization. An unfavorable calculation creates a motivational force to quit a job. Factors of job satisfaction that might contribute to an employee's calculation include pay and reward satisfaction, employee benefits, and employee (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

**Pay satisfaction.** Pay satisfaction is the general feeling of contentment that employees have about their pay (Barnabas, Tobias, Ngozi, Solomon, & James, 2013). Further, pay satisfaction is an important consideration in employees' turnover intention (Jayasingam, & Yong, 2013). Ucho, Sunday, Ngbea, & Banje (2015) hypothesized that employees' pay satisfaction reduces their intention to leave a job. In their study of 299 teachers, the researchers conducted an ANOVA and concluded that pay satisfaction was statistically significant on the turnover of these teachers.



Schreurs, Guenter, Schumacher, Van Emmerik, and Notelaers (2013) also examined pay satisfaction. While the researchers recognized the predictive value of pay satisfaction on voluntary employee turnover, they added a different perspective. In their study of 22,662 employees in 134 organizations in Belgium, Schreurs et al. (2013) concluded that pay satisfaction, in and of itself, does not always result in lower intention to turnover. Further, the researchers also concluded that factors such as an employee-involvement culture, characterized by organizations that value and empower their employees, moderated the negative relationship between pay satisfaction and turnover intention, such that employees with low pay satisfaction were less likely to leave an organization with a high employee-involvement culture. The researchers implied that pay satisfaction was a dimension of job satisfaction, but that job satisfaction is not necessarily a predictor of turnover, a notion supported by the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

**Employee benefits.** The contrast between the conclusion of this study by Ucho et al. (2015) and the study by Schreurs et al. (2013) suggested that other factors, in conjunction with pay satisfaction might influence an employee's decision to leave a position. Other factors, such as employee benefits might serve as motivational forces. Ancillary employee benefits are usually a significant portion of employee compensation packages (Frazis & Loewenstein, 2013). While employee benefits are a complement to the employee compensation package, companies use them specifically as a tool for reducing employee turnover (Frazis & Loewenstein, 2013).

Saxena and Rai (2016) conducted a study of 203 hospital workers on Lucknow, India. The researchers concluded that when employees are satisfied with their employee benefit package, they are more likely experience higher job satisfaction. Within the framework of process-oriented theories, benefits might influence job satisfaction, which, in turn, might influence turnover intention. This assertion, however, ignores the turnover that does not relate to job satisfaction, as noted by Lee and Mitchell (1994).

Ko and Hur (2014) examined employee benefits from a slightly different perspective. The researchers examined the relationship between employee satisfaction with traditional employee benefits, employee satisfaction with family-friendly employee benefits and employees' turnover intention among federal employees across all agencies in the United States. The results of the regression analysis in this study revealed that while there was a positive relationship between employees' satisfaction with family-friendly benefits and turnover intention, there was not a positive relationship between employees' satisfaction with traditional employee benefits and turnover intention. The results of these studies support the notion that employee benefits, on some level might serve as a motivation force that influences an employee's decision to leave a job.

In agreement with the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Griffeth, 1994), the inherent suggestion in the studies by Saxena and Rai (2016), and Ko and Hur (2014) is that while job satisfaction might indirectly influence employee turnover, it is not a necessary component of the turnover process. Rather job satisfaction might serve as a motivational force that influences turnover (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Thus, factors that

influence job satisfaction such as pay satisfaction (Saxena & Rai, 2016) and employee benefits (Ko & Hur, 2014) are important considerations.

**Employee recognition.** While monetary compensation and employee benefits are tangible employee motivators, some employees have abstract needs. Employee recognition is an organization's judgment of employees' motivation, dedication, and contribution to the goals of the organization (Vadivelu, 2013). Employee could serve as a calculative force that motivates employees to stay employed with an organization.

Terera and Ngirande (2014) conducted a study of 180 nurses in the East Cape Province of South Africa and discovered a positive relationship between employee rewards and employee retention. However, Terera and Ngirande also concluded that there was a negative relationship between employee rewards and job satisfaction. The inherent suggestion is these findings are congruent with other research in the field, which is that job satisfaction is often a component in the turnover process, though it is not an essential element of turnover.

Zargar, Vandenberghe, Marchand, and Ayed (2014) studied the moderating effects of the need for achievement in the turnover process. In this study of 230 employees in various organizations, the researchers concluded that employee growth needs moderated the relationship between job scope and affective organizational commitment, such that employees with a greater need for achievement had higher levels of affective organizational commitment to organizations when the job that they perform had a wider scope. Inherent in this conclusion is the suggestion that the manipulation of

the scope of a position might, in turn, influence affective organizational commitment, thus turnover.

Calculative forces seem to require a contemplation of needs. Employees who feel that an organization does not meet their needs experience job dissatisfaction (Choge, Chepkiyeng, & Chelimo, 2014; Naz & Gul, 2014). Another perspective is that unmet needs might be dimensions or components of an employee's composite turnover intention (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004), rather than a step in the sequential process that leads to employee turnover.

### **Contractual Forces**

Contractual forces are those that relate employees' perception of their obligation to an organization (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). If employees believe that they would be breaching an obligation to an organization by leaving the organization, they are less likely to leave. Normative commitment best represents normative forces.

**Normative (organizational) commitment.** Normative commitment reflects employees' perception of their obligation to an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). A psychological contract is an employee's perceived agreement with an organization (Kiazad, Seibert, & Kraimer, 2014). The psychological contract influences employees' feelings of obligation to stay employed with the organization (Bains, 2015).

In a study of 294 employees who voluntarily left jobs in various industries, Clinton and Guest (2014) hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between psychological contract breach (PCB) and actual voluntary turnover. The researchers collected data regarding the variables by surveying employees after they voluntarily left

their jobs. The survey instrument measured 16 dimensions of PCB, as identified by previous research, including expected elements such as opportunities for advancement and development, as well as other elements, such as flexible or favorable scheduling. The researchers concluded that when employees perceive that an organization has breached the psychological contract, they are more likely to leave the position (Clinton & Guest, 2014).

Pao-Ling and Min-Li (2013) posited that certain moderators might influence the relationship between PCB and turnover. Not only did the researchers hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between PCB and turnover intention. They also hypothesized that elements such as employees' responses to adversity (Adversity Quotient), as well as employees determine the whether PCB will lead to turnover intention.

This study included 553 insurance agents in a leading insurance sales company is Taiwan. In addition to measuring PCB, the instrument in this study also measured turnover intention. Pao-Ling and Min-Li (2013) concluded that there is a positive relationship between PCB and turnover intention and that adversity quotient significantly moderated that relationship. However, gender did not moderate that relationship. Moderating factors seem irrelevant to the managers of organizations who are concerned about the impact of the PCB on organizational outcomes, as PCB is dependent upon the actions of the organization.

While normative commitment may serve as a calculative force that reflects an employee's sense of obligation (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004), employees offer their loyalty

and (normative) commitment, in exchange for support, loyalty, and employment security from the organization. A breach of the psychological contract may result in a decrease in employees' sense of obligation, thus, their (normative) commitment to the organization (Clinton & Guest, 2014; Pao-Ling & Min-Li, 2013).

### **Constituent Forces**

Constituent forces are those forces that relate to employees' perception of their leaders and coworkers (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Constituent forces do not relate to an organization itself but do influence an employee's decision to leave the organization (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). The concept of foci of commitment best conceptualizes constituent forces (Becker, 1992; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

**Foci of commitment.** The concept of foci of commitment is the span of entities to which an employee might feel committed (Becker, 1992). While the focus of traditional conceptions of organizational commitment is employees' commitment to an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), the focus of the concept of foci of commitment is employee commitment to the people within an organization (Becker, 1992).

Askew, Taing, and Johnson (2013) studied the relationship between employees' commitment to various foci of commitment and turnover intentions in a population of 279 employed undergraduate students at a university. The researchers determined that there is a negative relationship between an employee's commitment to their supervisor and turnover intention. The implication is that employees' affective commitment to their supervisor makes them less likely to leave an organization. Askew et al. did not examine the commitment to other employees in an organization, a variable that could also

represent a constituent force that influences turnover. Kwantes and Prasad (2014) did examine employee commitment to other employees in a population of 134 hospital employees in India and arrived at a similar conclusion. The researchers determined that employees' commitment to other employees also makes them less likely to leave an organization.

Another perspective of constituent forces of turnover is that this element relates to the link element of the job embeddedness construct presented by Mitchell et al. (2001). Various foci of commitment represent links that employees have to an organization. The number and strength of the links reduce turnover intention (Mitchell et al., 2001). From a content-related perspective, constituent commitment might be a constituent force that influences employee turnover (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

### **Moral Forces**

Moral forces represent an employee's perception of the morality of the turnover decision itself (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Employees might make decisions based upon their opinions about turnover intentions themselves (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). For instance, employees might hold the value that leaving organizations is immoral because it violates their commitment to the organization. Another perspective might be that changing jobs is good, thus leaving would be the ethical thing to do. Normative forces and moral forces are similar, but the latter represents an employee's internalized perspective (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Research regarding moral forces is scarce, but the concept is congruent with traditional models of turnover, in that it moderates job dissatisfaction and organizational commitment, thus turnover (Maertz et al., 2012).

## **Normative Forces**

Sometimes employees make decisions about leaving or staying with an organization based upon the expectations of family members and friends outside the organization. Employees must be motivated to meet the expectations of others, but in these cases, normative forces are more predictive than attitudinal elements (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). Work-family conflict and stress in the workplace best summarize the impact of normative forces on turnover intention.

**Work-family conflict.** Work-family conflict results when the elements of employees' work life are incompatible with elements of their home life (Allen et al., 2014). Work-family conflict causes a strain on employees, which eventually manifests in decreased job dissatisfaction (Matthews, Wayne, & Ford, 2014). Certain elements in the workplace, such as work overload, stress, and the perceived danger of the job, might predict work-family conflict (Lambert, Minor, Wells, & Hogan, 2015). Nohe and Sonntag (2014) conducted a study of 2148 employees at a large company in Germany. The researchers were looking at the relationships among work-family conflict, organizational support, family support, and turnover intention. In general, the researchers concluded that work-family conflict increases the likelihood that an employee would leave a position. However, Nohe and Sonntag concluded that leadership organizational support is negatively associated with turnover intention. In other words, in organizations where employees perceive that they have support there is less turnover, even when there is work-family conflict.



**Stress in the workplace.** Rizwan et al. (2013) added that work overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict in the workplace could cause job stress. As employees experience stress, they become less satisfied with their job, and alternative positions may seem like a potential relief from the stress (Rizwan et al., 2013). For instance, Mosadeghrad (2013) determined that workplace stress leads to turnover intention in a study of 296 nurses in Iran. Stress can contribute to job satisfaction, thus turnover intention. However, as Lee and Griffeth (1994) stated, not all turnover is influenced by job satisfaction. In those cases, stress might show up as shock that influences turnover, as noted in the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Griffeth, 1994).

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 1 included a discussion of the background, concepts, limitations, and significance of employee turnover in the fast-food industry. The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention. The research question in this study was as follows: What are some fast-food managers doing to improve employee retention? The concepts that comprise the literature review derive from the eight motivational forces of employee turnover.

The literature review revealed an evolution of the research related to employee turnover. Employee motivation elements such as pay, benefits, and recognition, as well as situational factors, such as organizational culture, working conditions, and organizational leadership, affect job satisfaction. Decreased job satisfaction predicts decreased organizational commitment, which predicts intent to stay. The elements that

may emerge in a path leading to turnover may also emerge as a factor or motivational force that influences turnover intention.

A gap in the literature exists regarding the path to job embeddedness.

Understanding the results of this study could help managers of fast-food companies reduce the significant cost of employee turnover. Section 2 includes a justification of the research method and design, the sampling method and size, and methods to reduce threats to reliability and validity. Section 3 includes a presentation of the findings, the impact of these findings on business practice and positive social change, and recommendations for future research.

## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention in purposefully selected restaurants in a large fast food restaurant chain in the Midwestern United States. The results of the study could help businesses mitigate some the adverse impact of employee turnover. The study could contribute to positive social change by affecting the profitability of the restaurants in the industry, thus creating opportunity through expansion, and by facilitating employment stability to employees with limited employment options.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is the primary instrument in all the steps in the qualitative-research process (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Researchers have the responsibility to facilitate understanding and exploration of the research topic while maintaining neutrality in the process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In the role as the human instrument, I was solely responsible for all aspects of data collection, including developing the interview questions, coordinating the individual interviews, and conducting the interviews.

My relationship with this topic was limited, as I have never worked in the fast-food industry. I had no known relationships with any of the proposed participants of this study. However, I did have a relationship with some executives of the corporation in which the restaurants exist.

The researcher's role also includes the responsibility to ensure respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). In my role as the researcher, I took several steps to adhere to the principles of the Belmont Report. I applied fairness in the selection of participants. I reviewed the informed consent form to provide the participants the information needed to determine if they would like to participate in the study. I also disclosed potential foreseeable risks and benefits of the study to the participants.

The perspective and experiences of the researcher have the potential to bias the data (Mügge, 2016). Researchers can mitigate for potential researcher bias by adhering to a specific protocol for each interview (Jørgensen, Dybå, Liestøl, & Sjøberg, 2016). Before conducting interviews, I provided the details of the protocol for this study to each participant, and I adhered to the protocol throughout the research process.

### **Participants**

Choosing a proper sample of the population helps the researcher to gather rich information that is relevant to the purpose of the study (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015). The participants included a purposive sample of the general managers of the five restaurants with the highest record of employee retention in their district. To qualify to participate in this study, managers must have been managing their respective restaurants for at least 2 years. This requirement helped to ensure that I interviewed the manager who was presumably responsible for the employee-retention results. The participants' restaurants must also have had higher employee retention rates than the other restaurants in the district. Inherent in these eligibility requirements was the assumption that the strategies

these managers used had a positive influence on employee retention in their respective restaurants.

The management team at the corporate headquarters for the fast-food restaurant helped identify the five restaurants with the highest employee retention rates. The company provided the names and contact information of the top five eligible managers for participation in this study. After the company provided the names of the eligible participants to me, I had an initial conversation with the potential participants. Subsequent to the initial conversation, I e-mailed the informed consent forms and scheduled the interviews.

### **Research Method and Design**

There are three methodologies to choose from in the research process (McLaughlin, Bush, & Zeeman, 2016). Additionally, there are several research designs from which researchers can choose (Delost & Nadder, 2014). Understanding the differences among various research methodologies and designs can help the researcher select and employ the most useful approach for the given research problem and question (Yin, 2014). The following section includes a discussion of the justification of the research method and the research design.

#### **Research Method**

In this study, I used a qualitative method. Researchers use qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of phenomena from a broader perspective (Yin, 2016). Thus, using a qualitative method allowed me to explore employee-retention strategies implemented by managers of fast-food restaurants with the highest employee retention

rates in a specific district in the Midwestern United States, which was the purpose of this study.

Other methodologies were less valuable for this study. Quantitative methods are useful in searching for facts (Barnham, 2015). In addition, researchers use quantitative methods to understand the relationships among variables. Mixed-method research includes qualitative methods as well as quantitative methods in the same study (McLaughlin et al., 2016). Quantitative and mixed-method were less valuable methods of exploring employee-retention strategies in the fast-food industry, as doing so does not require the discovery of facts or relationships among variables.

### **Research Design**

Case study design is a form of learning that requires active involvement on the part of the researcher and the participant (Ullah, Burhan, & Shabbir, 2014). A case-study design is useful when the purpose of the research is to explore how something occurs when the researcher has no control over behavioral outcomes, and when the focus of the research is contemporary issues (Yin, 2014). Further, researchers can use a case-study design to help them explore a specific organization as a unit of analysis (Yin, 2014). The case-study design is valuable for exploring how some fast-food managers improve employee retention, which was the purpose of this study.

Other qualitative designs were less valuable for this study. Phenomenology is a valuable tool for understanding the perspectives of those with lived experience of a particular phenomenon, which was not the goal of this study (van Deurzen, 2015). Ethnography was not useful for this study because the research question did not focus on

a specific cultural group (Cruz, 2013). The purpose of this study was not to develop theory. Thus, a grounded theory design was not valuable for this study (Lewis, 2015).

Data saturation is the point where no new themes emerge (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Ensuring data saturation, in turn, ensures completeness of inquiry. I conducted in-depth, semistructured interviews and continued to probe with subsequent interviews until achieving data saturation.

### **Population and Sampling**

I used a purposive sampling approach to select five fast-food managers who used strategies to improve employee retention results in their restaurants. The participants consisted of one manager in each of the five fast-food restaurants with the highest employee retention rates in a district. Gogarty (2013) used purposeful sampling to explore the experiences of first responders in the Gulf of Mexico coastal area during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Davis (2013) used purposeful sampling to explore the experiences of customer service employees regarding employee turnover across several industries. Using purposeful sampling helps the researcher to isolate the sample to participants who influence the phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015).

I used a small sample size for this study. Small sample sizes are often sufficient for qualitative research (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). The size of the sample is less important than the richness (quality) and thickness (quantity) of the data (Booth et al., 2013). Alamir (2014) interviewed three human resources managers who implemented human resources strategies to comply with labor regulations in Saudi Arabia. Beach and Cleovoulou (2014) interviewed one teacher to understand the

pedagogy of a literacy program in a second-grade classroom. Reynolds (2014) sampled five managers to explore innovation and efficiency at a corporation.

It is important for researchers to ensure data saturation in qualitative research (Marshall et al., 2013). Data saturation is the point where no new information emerges in a research study. Yin (2014) suggested that repeat interviews with each participant could help to achieve data saturation. I continued to interview participants until reaching data saturation. The interview setting was the training room in the restaurant where the managers work. The training room is typically quiet, private, and conducive to concentration, which helped to facilitate the in-depth, semistructured interviews.

### **Ethical Research**

This study included several steps to ensure the ethical protection of the participants. I received approval from the Institutional Review Board at Walden University before collecting any data. The approval number is 02-13-17-0269097. I e-mailed the consent form to all participants and received their signed consent prior to the interviews. In the consent forms, I disclosed the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participating, potential benefits, and risks of the study. I also informed participants that they could withdraw from the study without penalty at any time by informing the researcher, using the contact information provided to them. If a participant had withdrawn from participation, I would have deleted and destroyed all related collected data. Participants might have perceived a derived benefit in the outcome of this study, in that the results could help managers improve strategies to retain employees. However, I offered no incentives for participating in this study.



I ensured confidentiality by storing electronic data in secure, electronic password-protected folders and hard copies of information in a locked file cabinet. I also protected the identity of the participants by using codes P1 through P5. Finally, I will delete all electronic data and shred all hard-copy data after a period of 5 years.

## **Data Collection**

### **Instruments**

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument in qualitative studies (Moustakas, 1994; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Using interviewing as a data collection technique helps the researcher to gain a depth of understanding (Dixon, 2015). As the primary instrument, I conducted semistructured interviews with purposefully selected managers from five fast-food restaurants with the highest employee retention rates.

The interview instrument was the Cross Fast-food Employee Retention Interview Instrument, which included eight open-ended questions that centered on the conceptual framework of this study (see Appendix A). The interview questions aligned with the purpose of the study, which was to explore the strategies that some managers use to improve employee retention in the fast-food industry. I included a summary of the data collected in an appendix and will keep all raw data in password-protected folders.

I employed measures to reduce the threats to reliability including recording the semistructured interviews with a digital recorder, transcribing the recorded data, rechecking the recorded data against the transcribed downloaded data, and engaging in member checking with participants. Member checking is a process where researchers

share results with participants to validate the interpretations of the participants' responses (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Methodological triangulation can help a researcher enhance the validity of the data collection process by providing confirmation of the findings (Spadafino et al., 2016). In addition to semistructured interviews, I examined recruiting material, retention activities, policy manuals, and overall voluntary termination reports. I used methodological triangulation to compare these documents with the results of the semistructured interviews. This process allowed me to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention through rich descriptions of the phenomenon. These ancillary sources of data provided insight about the strategic intent of the organization (Russell & Lamme, 2016).

### **Data Collection Technique**

Data collection included using semistructured in-person interviews. Using interviews as a data collection technique can be time-consuming, susceptible to inadvertent bias, and can never be completely confidential (Alshenqeeti, 2014). However, interviews are a natural method of collection that usually leads to higher rates of return, fewer incomplete answers, and opportunities for the interviewer to gain clarity (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Yin, 2014).

In addition to in-depth interviews, I also collected data from archived records, as well as company documents. I examined recruiting material, retention activities, policy manuals, and overall voluntary termination reports. I supplemented the findings of the semistructured in-depth interviews by using additional company documents.

After completing the initial phase of the data collection process, I ensured the digitally transcribed data matched the recorded data. I then provided copies to participants for their transcription review. I reviewed and interpreted the interview transcripts. I provided a succinct synthesis of each response to each participant. Through member checking, I verified that the synthesis represented participants' responses or if there was additional information they wished to share. I continued member checking until reaching data saturation.

### **Data Organization Techniques**

Keeping track of the data and documents that related to this study included storing the collected data in a password-protected electronic folder on my laptop as well as an external hard drive. The name of the main folder is Fast Food Turnover, and additional subfolders named P1 through P5, which correspond to each of the participants. Protecting the identity of the participants involved keeping all hard copies of any information about participants in a locked file cabinet in my office. Each of the folders in the cabinet labeled P1 through P5 correspond to one of the five participants in the study. After 5 years, I will destroy all data in the electronic and hard copy files.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

The data-analysis stage of research includes the following steps: (a) compiling the data, (b) disassembling the data into groups, (c) reassembling the data into patterns/themes, (d) interpreting the data, and (e) developing conclusions (Yin, 2016). To analyze data, I used methodological triangulation. Researchers use methodological triangulation to gain a more complete and comprehensive understanding of a

phenomenon (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Methodological triangulation also included collecting data from recruiting material, retention activities, policy manuals, and overall voluntary termination reports. I used software to help manage each of these steps in the process.

Researchers use data coding to assist in the grouping process, as codes help to organize the initial groups of data that emerge (Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Nvivo 10 is a software program that enables the organization of qualitative data so that the researcher can regroup dominant themes in the participants' perceptions regarding employee retention. The dominant themes emerging from the data analysis are elements that contribute to the phenomenon of the study from the perspectives of managers who successfully implement employee-retention strategies in the fast-food industry. The themes that emerge from qualitative analysis should be helpful to the researcher in answering the research question.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The quality of research relates to its reliability and validity (Yin, 2014). Reliability and validity, however, are traditional measures of quality in quantitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In qualitative research, dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability help to describe the quality of the research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). As this study is qualitative, it is important to address these quality measures. Included in this section, is a discussion of the measures taken to ensure protection from risks to the dependability and confirmability (reliability), as well as the credibility and transferability (validity) of this study.

**Reliability**

Dependability and confirmability comprise the reliability of qualitative research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). The dependability of research refers to the stability of the data (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Confirmability is the accuracy of the data (Houghton et al., 2013). Providing an audit trail can help increase the dependability and confirmability of qualitative research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). To enhance dependability and credibility, I adhered to the stated parameters. I also maintained consistency in each interview and provided a detailed description of each step in the research process.

**Validity**

Credibility and transferability affect the validity of a qualitative study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Credibility is the believability of the study (Houghton et al., 2013). Prolonged engagement in the interview process can help the researcher to explore the natural environment of the case (Houghton et al. 2013). Triangulation also enhances the credibility of qualitative research (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014).

I used geographical triangulation by conducting a multiple-case study. I also used methodological triangulation by exploring recruiting material, retention activities, policy manuals, and overall voluntary termination reports. I used member checking to help participants clarify their thinking and to correct perceptions of inaccurate interpretations. I continued member checking until reaching data saturation.

Transferability of a study refers to the readers' or future researchers' ability to apply the findings of a study to settings or contexts outside the current research (Houghton et al., 2013). Providing a thick and rich description of the findings helps to enhance the transferability of qualitative studies (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I provided sufficient detail in thick and rich descriptions of the findings, to enhance the transferability of this study.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 included a description of the role of the researcher, as well as a justification of the research method and design. Further, the section included a rationale for participant selection process, sampling method, and sample size. Section 2 also included a detailed description of the data collection and data analysis processes, as well as a discussion of the steps for achieving reliability and validity. Section 3 will include a discussion of research findings, implications for social changes, and recommendation for and action and future research.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 includes a discussion of the results and implications of this study. This section of the study includes the following: (a) presentation of the findings, (b) applications to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, (d) recommendations for action, (e) recommendations for further study, (f) reflections, and (g) conclusion. The themes that emerged in the results of this study are organizational support, communication, and employee training.

#### **Presentation of Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention. In the United States, the voluntary employee turnover rate in the fast-food industry is 50% (Perez & Mirabella, 2013). High turnover costs fast-food restaurants about \$10 billion per year in the United States (Dike, 2012).

The overarching research question in this study was:

RQ: What strategies are some fast-food managers using to improve employee retention?

In an industry with 50% voluntary employer turnover (Perez & Mirabella, 2013), managers are increasingly concerned with the financial impact and seek out strategies for improving employee retention (Dunnagan et al., 2013). To discover themes that might provide some clarity about employee-retention strategies that some managers use, I conducted semistructured interviews with five managers of fast-food restaurants in the

Midwestern United States, whose restaurants had the highest employee-retention results in the district. I asked these five managers the following questions:

1. What strategies do you use to improve employee retention?
2. What strategies do you use to improve job satisfaction among your employees?
3. How do you make your restaurant a more attractive place to work?
4. What strategies do you use to increase employees' commitment to their positions?
5. How do you help employees achieve their personal goals at work?
6. How do you support employees realizing the career opportunities within the organization?
7. How do you foster employees' attachment to coworkers and groups within your organization?
8. What additional information would you like to add to explain what strategies you use to improve employee retention?

In addition to conducting interviews, I employed triangulation by reviewing company documents and archival records. I protected the identity and confidentiality of the participants by not using their names. Finally, I used data analysis software to help me identify themes that related to the central research question of this study. In this study, I identified the following themes: organizational support, communication, and employee training.



### **Theme 1: Organizational Support**

The first emergent theme was the need for fast-food managers to provide a supportive environment for their employees. Managers who implement strategies that contribute to a culture of organizational support can influence employee satisfaction, and in turn, employee retention. The theme of supporting employees aligns with some elements of the conceptual framework of this study, the eight motivational forces of voluntary employee turnover (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004). As an effective force, a supportive environment could influence job satisfaction, and in turn, employee retention (Maertz & Boyar, 2012). All five managers noted that organizational support was an essential element of employee retention, and that they do what they can to support their employees. P1 indicated,

It's more of how you care for your employees too. I think a lot of it is if they know that you care sincerely, not only for their work performance but their personal life, I think that, you know, that helps a lot in your business.

Some of the managers felt that supporting employees' educational goals would be a positive influence on turnover. In response to Question 5, P2 said,

You know, they got college, okay. What can I do to help you with your college career? I can't do any kind of funding for you, but if you need some time off, let me know. I'll see if I can work the schedule for you where you have time to take care of those things. I think mainly just being flexible to needs of the employee.

Additionally, P4 stated,

I mean like there are a lot of people who are like in school specifically for business, and we have marketing teams within our store, so like if they're in school for business or management, we usually try to utilize what they learn, and we build our marketing based on what they're getting a degree in.

Some managers also thought that supporting employees' career goals was also effective in influencing employee retention. P4 stated, "We have a couple different tools actually that are available to us. We have a developmental checklist where if people know they want to build their career, they know what steps they need to take to get there." Further, P4 stated,

But there's a lot of people who come in and they might only be 16, but they don't want to be just a cashier. They want to be a general manager one day, and you just work with those people. And I don't want to say give them special attention, but I mean if you know they're going to advance your business and your opportunities with them, then pay attention.

Finally, P5 said, "Anyone who ever shows interest in something with moving up, I try to really work with them." Chu, Ye, and Guo (2014) seem to agree with the results of this study in their conclusion that organizational support had a positive relationship with employees' achieving their career goals. Employees' perceiving that they can achieve their goals manifests as a calculative force that influences job satisfaction and employee retention (Maertz & Boyar, 2012).

Managers suggested that just being supportive in general would also influence employee retention. P3 shared,

We have some that have ADHD, so we make sure that they're going to position to where they can move. If it's someone that has a hard time learning, they'll be in a position to where they can take their time with it and they won't be rushed.”

P3 also indicated,

We had a lady that she's fixing to be graduating the next year, and we actually have a program that helps pay for college while you're still working. So we can communicate that. Especially when people are under 18, we give them the information on that, so they work with it even while they are in school they are able at least work part-time. We accommodate them.

A summary of exit interview data at the company seemed to support the assertions of the managers. The report from the 2016 fiscal year revealed a summary of elements that contributed to employees leaving within that year. Some of the elements, such as employees going back to school and employees working to earn money for a specific purpose, align with the unfolding theory of turnover, in that job satisfaction is not an essential element in the turnover process. Other elements, however, align with the opinions of the managers. As it relates to organizational support, employees who left the company for other fast-food restaurants most often cited feeling like their manager did not care or support them as a reason for leaving. Employees who left the industry, or went back to school, however, often noted that they enjoyed the supportive environment and fun atmosphere. Researchers also seem to agree with the notion that organizational support can help to increase employee retention. Casimir et al. (2014) indicated that there is a positive relationship between organizational support and organizational

commitment, another element that Maertz and Boyar (2012) put forth as an affective force also negatively influences voluntary employee turnover.

Job satisfaction is another prominent element in turnover-related literature. Mobley (1977) considered job satisfaction as an essential path in the turnover process. Allisey et al. (2014) clarified the role of job satisfaction in their assertion that it is the mediating factor for many distal predictors of employee turnover, including organizational support. Thus, organizational support is a distal predictor of employee retention. Maurya and Agarwal (2015) agreed, noting that employees' perceptions of organizational support specifically increases job satisfaction. As suggested by most other researchers, increased job satisfaction in turn essentially leads to increased employee retention (Sukriket, 2015).

## **Theme 2: Communication**

The second theme that emerged in this study was communication. Fast-food managers can use communication to understand the employees' goals and desires, keeping employees informed about information that relates to the business and giving employees feedback about their progress on the job. In these ways, communication can also influence job satisfaction, thus employee retention. Managers who implement effective communication can improve employee retention. In each of the participant stores, the managers implemented the "Shining Star" program, the purpose of which was to communicate the employees' value to the organization. All the managers had notices posted in their restaurants that communicated the culture of support. For instance, the stores had signs that said, "You're a Shining Star!", and "When You Shine, We Shine!"

Managers also communicated the value of employees' contributions through employee of the month program. Each month, the employee of the month is recognized as a "Shining Star" as well as receiving other rewards such as movie tickets, gift cards, and preferred parking. Local policies also included incentives for employee suggestions. Managers encouraged employees to make suggestions that improved processes, procedures, or culture in the store. Employees received gift cards if managers implemented their suggestions.

Store policies included the "Talk in" and "Talk out" processes. The talk-in process is a preparatory meeting at the beginning of each shift, and the talk-out process is a post shift meeting in which employees and managers discuss the successes, failures, and learning opportunities of the shift. Other meetings included morning informational huddles with managers and shift leaders, monthly employee meetings that included everyone, and at least one recreational meeting per quarter. The purpose of the meetings was to communicate information that the managers thought employees needed to know and to communicate employees' value to the organizations. One hundred percent of the managers talked about communication. P2 indicated,

One of the things that I'd like to be able to do is to get to know the employees. Know what drives that employee and what I can do to help them along in their life. You know, because if you take an interest in what the employees are doing, then they'll be a little bit more attentive to the needs of the restaurant.

P2 also stated,

You communicate with the employees, and they're able to understand what your goals are, it helps them to help you achieve your store goals. Understanding employees' goals can also help managers in their efforts to create a supportive culture for employees.

The managers suggested that feedback is also an essential element in the employee-retention process. P1 stated,

I always ask, you know, questions. If they don't know something, you know, I want them to ask questions. Um, if I go to fast with trying to train somebody, you know, I'll always go back and explain it more in detail.

P3 said,

We always praise them, or let them know the different things they can do to improve even on their very first day. You know, even if it's just something as simple as ringing something up right. We do a lot of the like talk ins and talk outs we call it. We kind of talk to them before they get started to kind of boost their energy and then we do like a summary before they leave on how good they did, things to improve and things coming up maybe for the next day so that they are aware.

Regarding communication, P4 said, "Like I tell everyone, everyday my job is impossible if I don't have you. We communicate their value and their worth. Just really like genuinely showing appreciation for the people who work for you." P5 summed up the role of the communication in employee retention by indicating, "It's all about how you talk to them."

Researchers agree with the managers' suggestion that effective communication influences employee retention. Maertz and Boyar (2012) indicated that job satisfaction functions as an affective force of turnover. Further, Naz and Gul (2014) concluded that employees' satisfaction with organizational communication is essentially a dimension of job satisfaction. Effective communication moderates the relationship, job satisfaction, and employee retention (Kang & Sung, 2014). Thus, employee communication satisfaction is a significant element of organizational success (Wagner, Bezuidenhout, & Roos, 2015) in that it functions as an affective motivational force of employee turnover (Maertz and Boyar, 2012).

Communicating feedback and praise also aligns with the literature in that they could function as a calculative force, as employees perceive the likelihood of achieving their goals (Maertz & Boyar, 2012). Company procedures and policy manuals in each of the participants' stores required monthly performance appraisals, which provided the basis for employee feedback, rewards, and recognition. In a qualitative study by Dasgupta, Suar, and Singh (2014), the researchers determined that employee recognition was a theme of effective communication. When employees feel the need to achieve, employee recognition can influence employee retention (Zargar et al., 2014). Recognizing employees for their contributions to organizational success could help managers improve employee retention.

### **Theme 3: Employee Training**

Employee training was the third emergent theme in this study. Employee training and development might manifest as calculative force that influences turnover (Maertz &

Boyar, 2012). The results of this study imply that managers who provide training for their employees can improve employee retention. Four of the five managers mentioned training as an important factor that influences retention. P2 put employee knowledge forth as perhaps the most important factor. In response to Q1, P1 stated that strategies used to improve employee retention included, people development, lots of training and patience.”

Managers can improve employee retention by helping their employees understand their job role, as well as helping their employees develop the skills necessary to excel in the job. In response to Q4, P5 indicated that managers can increase employee commitment if they, “Train them the right way. Make sure that you go from the videos, the onboarding, the orientation book. You train them on their job and make sure they fully understand their job, and then hold them accountable for it.” P3 answered the question the same way by stating, “I think a lot of that ties in with our training. We do the hands-on training and then we also do the video training.” The recruiting materials for the company also indicated that employee training and development was a key element in maintaining a career with the company.

Several additional company documents align with the managers’ assertions. Recruiting materials for managers stressed the training provided in the company’s management development center. New employees within these stores must first watch training videos and pass tests before they may work. Employees must also certify on each station before being allowed to work that station. Through the company’s training and development program, employees can learn more about business and leadership.



Further, employees who wish to ascend in the organizations must complete the manager readiness training for each of the management levels. A summary of exit interviews revealed that one element that employees appreciated most was training and development that they received at the company. When employees are satisfied with the training that they receive at an organization, they are more likely to stay employed with the organization (Beynon, Jones, Pickernell, & Packham, 2015). The implication of the study by Beynon et al. (2015) was that employee training satisfaction is essentially a dimension of job satisfaction. Just as job satisfaction functions as an affective force that influence employee turnover (Maertz & Boyar, 2012), so does training satisfaction.

Training can also help employees feel like they can achieve their goals, which, as a calculative force, might influence turnover intentions (Maertz & Boyar, 2012). Employees may feel the need to achieve in their organization (Zargar et al., 2014). Cheng and Waldenberger (2014) suggested that when employees perceive that they can achieve to their expectations, they are less likely to leave an organization.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The effective cost of turnover in the fast-food industry is \$10 billion (Dike, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention. I identified three themes that influence employee retention in the fast-food industry. The results of this study reveal that organizational support, effective communication, and employee training are factors that managers should consider and develop in their quest to improve employee retention. Fast-food managers are concerned about the impact of turnover (Perez & Mirabella,

2013), and realize that they must seek strategies for improving professional practice and increasing employee retention.

The participants in this study indicated that providing a supportive environment helps to increase employee retention. Maurya and Agarwal (2015) suggested that a supportive environment increased job satisfaction, which, in turn leads to employee retention (Maertz & Boyar, 2012). Managers should support their employees by helping them to achieve their personal and career goals.

The participants also suggested that improving communication with their employees could help managers improve employee retention. Managers should first get to know their employees. Understanding the needs and goals could help managers to provide better support and improve employee satisfaction (Naz & Gul, 2014; Wagner et al., 2015) and in turn, employee retention. Managers should also communicate feedback to their employees. Feedback helps employees to have clarity about their purpose and status in the organization (Dasgupta, et al., 2014).

Finally, the participants suggested that managers should increase employee retention by training their employees. Training employees prepares them to be successful in their position, which might inherently lead to improved organizational effectiveness (Beynon, et al., 2015). Training might also function as organizational support, which would increase job satisfaction (Maurya & Agarwal, 2015), as well as employee retention (Maertz & Boyar, 2012).

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results of this study could influence social change by helping fast-food restaurant managers improve employee retention, and in turn, create stable employment for employees. Stable employment could create more and better career opportunities for lower-skilled employees. Further, managers could potentially improve the financial performance and longevity of their fast-food restaurants, making it more feasible to increase pay and expand benefits for lower skilled workers.

Another implication for social change is the aggregate impact that improved financial performance has on the community. As fast-food companies use the emergent themes of this study to improve their financial position, they also improve their abilities to contribute to their communities, as well as society. Increased financial performance could lead to increased and expanded employment, as well as increased tax income to society (Van Looy & Shafagatova, 2016).

### **Recommendation for Action**

The results of this study are beneficial for managers in the fast-food industry. Managers in the fast-food industry should use the results of this study to inform the development of strategies for improving employee retention in their stores. In general, managers need to proactively develop cultures of organizational support, to establish effective communication, and to implement effective training in their organizations.

Maurya and Agarwal (2015) suggested that factors such as organizational policies, fair treatment, and rewards help to create employees' perceptions of organizational support. Fast-food managers should seek to understand the values and

needs of their employees, and subsequently implement congruent organizational policies. As part of the organizational policies, managers should ensure that they treat employees fairly. Finally, managers should implement an effective and relevant reward and recognition program, which could also influence employees' perceptions of organizational support, and in turn, employee retention.

Managers should proactively seek out ways of improving communication in their stores. Specifically, managers should establish an employee suggestion program, whereby managers can come to understand employees' values and needs. While understanding employees' needs helps create perceived organizational support, it also helps to influence job satisfaction (Naz & Gul, 2014). Managers should also implement and consistent feedback and performance appraisal system. Employees will respond positively when they understand how well they are doing in the organization (Dasgupta, et al., 2014).

Finally, managers should seek to develop and deliver training to their employees. Training has its benefits, as it could lead to a workforce of employees who understand, and can perform the tasks necessary for success. However, there are benefits that relate to employee retention as well, as satisfaction with training leads to improved retention (Beynon, Jones, Pickernell, & Packham, 2015).

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The main limitations of this this study were that study was limited to the Midwestern United States, the sample size was limited to five participants, and that the

participants were managers in one district of the same company the fast-food industry.

Researchers should seek expand beyond the limitations of this study.

First, this study was limited to participants in the Midwestern United States. Researchers should seek to explore retention strategies of fast food managers in other parts of the United States, as well of other parts of the world. Since this research was limited to fast-food managers of restaurants in one chain, future researchers should conduct similar qualitative research in other chains. Future research studies should include more participants to validate the results of this study. In addition, future researchers could benefit from gaining insight from the perspectives of other populations, such as employees in the fast food industry.

Researchers should also look for similar conclusions from various industries to determine if there are common themes across these industries. Finally, researchers should conduct quantitative studies to examine the relationships between employee retention and each the common themes that emerge from the qualitative studies. Specifically, however, researchers should look for the relationships among organizational support, communication, training, and employee retention in the fast-food industry.

### **Reflections**

My journey in the DBA doctoral process at Walden University has been arduous and frustrating, but rewarding. Although achieving this degree is an essential element of my dreams and goals, there were many times when I questioned whether it was all worth it. This process has conditioned me to persevere in challenging environments.

Additionally, completing this study has helped me to improve my research and analysis skills, and it has helped me to enhance my understanding of employee turnover.

When I began this process, I had a narrow view of impact of turnover in the fast-food industry. I had little sympathy for the plight of employees in this business. I thought that these types of jobs were only meant for teenagers and unskilled workers. Further, I thought that managers accepted the turnover in this industry as “par for the course”. I have since realized, however, that turnover is a real cost of business, and managers are very concerned about controlling for it. The responses of the managers in this study helped to shift my bias. Where I initially blamed turnover on employees themselves, I came to realize that the organization can be complicit in the turnover decision. Finally, I have realized that fast-food can be a lucrative and rewarding career if employees could gain a better understanding of employee-retention strategies.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study is to explore the strategies that some fast-food managers use to improve employee retention in purposefully selected restaurants in a large, fast food restaurant in the Midwestern United States. I conducted semistructured interviews with fast-food managers who provided insight about management practices and strategies that might influence employee retention. I used methodological triangulation by collecting data from secondary sources such as archival records and company documents.

In this study, I identified the following themes: organizational support, communication, and employee training. These themes align with the conceptual

framework of this study and have implications for social change, further research, and professional practice. Inherent in the findings of this study is the suggestion that organizational support, effective communication, and employee training could help fast-food managers improve employee retention, and in turn, benefit from increased profitability and longevity.

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## Appendix A: Cross Fast-Food Employee Retention Interview Instrument

1. What strategies do you use to improve employee retention?
2. What strategies do you use to improve job satisfaction among your employees?
3. What do you do to make your restaurant a more attractive place to work?
4. What strategies do you use to increase employees' commitment to their positions?
5. What do you do to help employees achieve their personal goals at work?
6. What do you do to support employees realizing the career opportunities within the organization?
7. How do you foster employees' attachment to coworkers and groups within your organization?
8. What additional information would you like to add?