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Reducing Fast Food Employee Turnover with Appealing Working Environments

James Lloyd Forrest
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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

James Forrest

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

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Reducing Fast Food Employee Turnover with Appealing Working Environments

by

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MBA, TUI University, 2008

BS, Regents University, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2017

Abstract

While all business leaders face problems with voluntary employee turnover, fast food business leaders often face turnover rates at twice the national average. Using Weiss and Cropanzano's affective events theory, this exploratory multiple case study detailed the investigation into strategies that fast food business leaders use to establish an appealing working environment that reduces employee turnover. A purposeful sampling process identified 9 fast food business leaders from 3 different fast food organizations within the Omaha, Nebraska metro area who had successfully established a positive working environment that reduced employee turnover. Data collection included semistructured interviews and review of company documents. Using Yin's 5 step analytic approach, 3 themes (fairness, communication, and trust) emerged relative to fast food business leaders' strategies to establish an appealing working environment that reduces employee turnover. Fairness included fair interpersonal treatment, regulation, and wage setting. Communication included training, employee engagement, and corrective actions. Fast food business leaders used trust as a feedback mechanism for their fairness and communications strategies. Business leaders using strategies of fairness, communication, and trust to establish appealing working environments that reduce employee turnover could increase profitability and productivity within the fast food industry. The implication for positive social change is that more consistent employment and less work-related stress increases the potential for employees and their families to become more involved within their communities.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my children. It is never too late to pursue and achieve your dreams, just take the first step and then keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Acknowledgments

I have never completed any significant journey alone; this project was no different. I feel blessed to have had the support of my family, a phenomenal chair, an outstanding committee, and friends. Too many people to name supported me in this endeavor, but I would be remiss without acknowledging the following individuals.

First, I need to thank my wife without whose support I would have never made it. You are an absolute gift for which I am grateful. Your patience and ability to pick up the slack are incredible. Thank You. I guess that I have to help more in the garden now.

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Last but certainly not least, I need to thank my chair, Dr. Denise Land. I could not have asked for a better chair, mentor, teacher, and friend. Your ability to change roles and keep me on track was incredible. The environment within our learning cadre should be the standard for doctoral education. I am thankful for all you have done and grateful that I was lucky to get you as my chair. Thank you, Dr. Land.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

To maintain an advantage over competitors, a business owner needs to retain quality employees (Strohmeier, 2013). In 2014, 22% of the U.S. labor force, over 30 million employees, voluntarily quit their jobs (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2017). Within the fast food industry, employee turnover is a more acute problem with over 50% of the labor force quitting their jobs in 2014 (BLS, 2017). Employee turnover adversely affects the productivity and operating costs of a company. Total costs of an employee voluntarily quitting relative to that employee's annual salary can range from 40% for an entry level trainee up to 400% for a highly specialized and experienced senior employee (Palanski, Avey, & Jiraporn, 2014; Vasquez, 2014). Employee turnover can adversely affect any organization, but especially those organizations within the fast food industry with acute competition and lower profit margins.

Background of the Problem

At the behest of business leaders, researchers have studied employee turnover in general since the 1950s, with specific emphasis on identification of antecedent factors beginning in the 1970s (Brayfield & Crockett, 1955; Mobley, 1977). More recently, Palanski et al. (2014) investigated relationships between particular leadership styles on employee turnover, while Vasquez (2014) argued that leadership, empowerment, and financial incentives could be powerful tools to reduce turnover. Further, Skinner, Elton, Auer, and Pocock (2014) found that work-life conflict contributes to employee turnover decisions and changes over time. Finally, Palanski et al. found employee turnover more

complex, establishing linkages between 17 individual and organizational factors and employee turnover intention. Within the fast food industry, the employee turnover problem is acute as the rapid pace, and customer service demands exacerbate factors found within other sectors (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013; Jung & Yoon, 2014). Beyond the establishment of a clear relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Mohsin & Lengler, 2015; Vasquez, 2014; Yang, Wan, & Fu, 2012), many business leaders and researchers continue to look for ways to reduce employee turnover.

Problem Statement

Poor working environments are a primary cause of voluntary employee turnover within the fast food industry (Jung & Yoon, 2014; Ryan, King, & Finkelstein, 2015). Voluntary employee turnover adversely affects the productivity of a company, and a single entry-level employee leaving costs the company between 40% and 60% of that worker's annual salary (Palanski et al., 2014; Vasquez, 2014). The general business problem is the inability of business leaders to recognize poor working environments that lead to voluntary employee turnover, which will negatively affect an organization's operational costs, operational efficiency, and productivity. The specific business problem is some fast food restaurant business leaders lack strategies to establish an appealing work environment that reduces voluntary employee turnover.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that

reduces voluntary employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of business leaders within three fast food restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska. I selected participants based on their experience using strategies to establish an appealing work environment within the fast food restaurant industry that reduces employee turnover and willingness to participate. A deeper understanding of the particular context of the fast food restaurant working environment may allow business leaders to use strategies to improve working conditions for employees and reduce employee turnover. The implication for positive social change is that with more consistent employment and less work-related stress, there is increased potential for employees and their families to become more involved within their communities.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative methodology is the foundation of the social constructivist worldview. Qualitative researchers engage the world around them and seek to understand events within the context of their experiences (Cronin, McCarthy, Brennan, & McCarthy, 2014). Researchers use qualitative research methods to investigate the perceptions of individual actors (Parker, 2012). As perceptions form the basis of how and why events affect individuals' thoughts and actions within a situational context, researchers prefer qualitative over quantitative research methods to gain contextual understanding (Allen, Hancock, & Vardaman, 2014). Specifically, researchers have found qualitative exploration uniquely suited for the topic of employee turnover (Yang et al., 2012). In contrast, quantitative researchers use quantitative methods to find relationships and trends among variables to test theories or hypotheses but not to understand the how or why of a

circumstance (Hoare & Hoe, 2013). Additionally, some researchers use mixed methods that combine both qualitative and quantitative, but because of limited time and this study being an initial exploration with no identified or developed hypotheses to test (see Yin, 2014), a mixed method effort was not feasible. Therefore, a qualitative methodology was more appropriate for this study.

A multiple case study design was most suitable for this study because the purpose of this study was to explore strategies that fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces employee turnover. Researchers employ a case study design to explain the how and why of explicitly bounded events or phenomena (Boukas & Ziakas, 2013; Cronin et al., 2014). Researchers use multiple case studies to gain added analytic depth from exploring similar events within different contexts (Yin, 2014). Other qualitative designs include grounded theory, ethnographic, and phenomenological designs. Researchers use grounded theory designs to define or further characterize theories based on data analysis (McGinley, O'Neill, Damaske, & Mattila, 2014). Researchers use an ethnographic design to understand events within a cultural construct (Crandall et al., 2016). Researchers use a phenomenological design to understand participants' perceptions of a single event (Choe, Kang, & Park, 2015). The objective of this study was not theory refinement, nor was it following an event from a single cultural paradigm or multiple perspectives. In this study, I detailed the exploration of strategies that Omaha, Nebraska fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces employee turnover. Hence, a multiple case study was the most appropriate design for this study.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies restaurant business leaders use to provide an appealing work environment that reduces employee turnover. Therefore, the central research question for the foundation for this study was as follows:

What strategies do fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces voluntary employee turnover?

Interview Questions

1. In your experience, what types of work environment seem to have the most profound negative effect on employee turnover?
2. In your experience, what types of work environment appear to have the most profound positive impact on employee turnover?
3. What strategies do you use to reduce employee turnover?
4. What strategies are the most effective in reducing employee turnover?
5. What strategies have you used that are least effective in reducing employee turnover?
6. What strategies have you used to establish an appealing work environment?
7. What additional information about your experience in implementing strategies to improve the working environment, including challenges and measures of effectiveness, would you like to add that we have not covered?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was affective events theory (AET). Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) used AET to explain the significant impact that emotional

events at work have on an employee's perceived job satisfaction, performance, and turnover intention. Ryan et al. (2015) summarized AET as work events that cause affective reactions, influencing attitudes and behaviors toward work. As applied to this study, using AET as the conceptual framework would suggest that work experiences of Omaha, Nebraska fast food restaurant employees can shape their emotions and influence their decision to either remain at or quit their jobs.

Reich and Hershcovis (2015) found AET explained that emotions affect employee behaviors directly through actions and indirectly through attitudes. These effects can be positive or negative, which explains why some organizations have low turnover rates while others have high turnover rates (Ryan et al., 2015). Additionally, Reich and Hershcovis concluded that adverse events have more robust results than positive events, making a positive work environment more important when considering the costs of employee turnover.

Through this study, I explored strategies fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing working environment that reduces employee turnover. I used AET to guide the research design, data collection, and data analysis for this study. In practice, employers could focus a retention strategy developed through the AET paradigm on improving the perceived working environment for employees and reducing employee turnover. Application of AET within the context of the Omaha, Nebraska restaurant environment may help fast food restaurant leaders develop strategies for establishing an appealing work environment that reduces employee turnover.

Operational Definitions

I have provided the following operational definitions to make it easier for readers to distinguish between these terms and other similar terms:

Affective event: An occurrence that positively or negatively influences an individual's attitude or behavior (Ryan et al., 2015).

Appealing working environment: A workplace with positive employee perceptions of the overall climate or environment (Cheng, Yang, Wan, & Chu, 2013).

Fast food: Uniformly produced food that is conveniently available for people on the go (Karavardar, 2014).

Organizational culture: The behavioral norms of a working environment within an organization (Glisson, 2015).

Work climate: The overall employee perceptions of the total work environment (Hernandez, Stanley, & Miller, 2014).

Work environment: The physical surroundings, events, and interpersonal interactions that occur at a workplace (Glisson, 2015).

Work life conflict: The competing demands on time between work and nonwork interests, activities, and commitments (Skinner et al., 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

I verified as much as possible within this study; however, as a matter of practicality, I had to make some assumptions. Assumptions are believed to be true but are not verifiable (Yin, 2014). The first assumption within this study is that data gathered

through interviews were honest, accurate, and complete. The second assumption was that the interviews would be the best method to collect information on what strategies fast food business leaders use in establishing an appealing work environment to reduce employee turnover. While I planned to verify as much information as possible, practicality necessitated these assumptions.

Limitations

Limitations are items that do not allow the generalization of data or results (Mohr, Young, & Burgess, 2012). Within this study, I foresaw one item that would limit the generalization of results. This limitation was related to limiting the sampling pool of participants to fast food business leaders who employed successful strategies to establishing an appealing work environment to reduce employee turnover. Because this study involved a case study design, I purposely limited the participants to fast food business leaders who have established successful strategies to establish an appealing work environment to reduce employee turnover.

Delimitations

Delimitations are items that set the boundary of the study (Yin, 2014). The first delimitation is the limiting the sampling pool of fast food business leaders. The context of fast food is different from other working environments, limiting the generalization of results to other industries. The second delimitation is the geographic area. Omaha is in the Midwestern region of the United States, which has lower unemployment and employee turnover rates than the rest of the United States (BLS, 2017). Business leader

strategies that might work within this industry within this geographic area may not work in other industries or geographic locations.

Significance of the Study

Results of this study may contribute to the knowledge of employee turnover and aid in the development of strategies to reduce employee turnover. Insights into employee turnover will be most significant for organizations and individuals within a highly competitive and low-profit margin industry (Strohmeier, 2013). The specific industry of interest is the fast food service industry with annual turnover rates around 50%, more than double the national average (BLS, 2017). Restaurant owners attempt to gain a competitive advantage and profits through efficiency and volume (Alonso-Almeida, Bremser, & Llach, 2015). Employee turnover adversely affects efficiency and volume directly regarding training time, service capacity, and service quality (Subramony & Pugh, 2015). Similarly, remaining employees may have to confront additional adverse effects regarding higher workloads and varying schedules, potentially leading to additional stress. Any alleviation of pressure or stress in the work environment should be significant for this group. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations from this study could be relevant to business practice as they may enable business leaders to develop strategies to reduce employee turnover and its adverse effects. The implication for positive social change exists because more consistent employment and less work-related stress increase the potential for employees and their families to become more involved within their communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

I reviewed the academic literature to investigate what strategies business leaders could use to reduce employee turnover. A long-standing business problem, employee turnover became a research topic in the 1950s, with specific emphasis on the identification of antecedent factors beginning in the 1970s (Brayfield & Crockett, 1955; Mobley, 1977). More recently, Palanski et al. (2014) investigated relationships between particular leadership styles and employee turnover. Further, Vasquez (2014) argued that leadership, empowerment, and financial incentives would be powerful tools to reduce turnover. Palanski et al. found employee turnover more complex, establishing linkages between 17 individual and organizational factors and employee turnover intention. Skinner et al. (2014) found that work-life conflict also factors in the employee turnover discussion, but that work-life conflict changes over time. Long before the establishment of a clear relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention (Subramony & Pugh, 2015), Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) developed AET as a way to explain how events both positive and negative affect an employee's attitude and behavior towards work. Many business leaders and researchers are looking for ways to reduce employee turnover.

While all business leaders want to find ways to reduce voluntary employee turnover, fast food business leaders often face turnover rates at twice the national average (Karavardar, 2014). Surprisingly, I found much academic literature about employee turnover but significantly less academic literature specific to employee turnover within the fast food industry. For this doctoral study, I reviewed peer-reviewed journals, books,

and dissertations. To find pertinent articles, I used various combinations of the following search-words: *employee turnover, affective events, work events, fast food industry, working environment, employee quit, employee attitudes, employee retention, and affective environments*. I found many of these sources in ProQuest, ScienceDirect, and ABI/INFORM Global central databases. I have provided an illustration of literature and types of sources in Table 1, which shows the categories of peer reviewed, dissertations, seminal, and contemporary or other types of references.

Table 1

Synopsis of Sources in the Literature Review

Reference type	Total	Less than 5 years old (2013-2017)	More than 5 years old (pre-2013)
Research-based peer reviewed journals	80	75 (94%)	5 (6%)
Dissertations	0		
Seminal books	0		
Totals	80	75	5

Affective Events Theory

The conceptual framework for this study is AET, as developed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996). Ryan et al. (2015) summarized AET as work events that cause affective reactions influencing attitudes and behaviors toward work. As applied to this study, I posited that work environment experiences of Nebraska food service employees shape their emotions and influence employee decisions to either remain at or quit their jobs. In short, business leaders can develop strategies to reduce employee turnover by

using AET to affect employee work experiences and thereby improve working environments.

Through the AET paradigm, Reich and Hershcovis (2015) found that emotions affect employee behaviors directly through actions and indirectly through attitudes. These effects can be positive or negative, which explains why some organizations have low turnover rates while other similar organizations have high turnover rates (Ryan et al., 2015). Additionally, Reich and Hershcovis concluded that adverse events have more robust results than positive events, making a positive work environment that much more important when considering the costs of employee turnover. I used AET to guide the research design, data collection, and data analysis for this study. In practice, a business leader using AET to develop a strategy to reduce employee turnover would focus on improving the perceived working environment for employees, which in turn could reduce employee turnover.

For the study, AET provided a foundation for identifying factors that contribute to or reduce employee turnover. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) outlined intrinsic and extrinsic factors that business leaders could consider when using AET to develop strategies to reduce employee turnover (Lloyd, Boer, Keller, & Voelpel, 2015). Because AET includes consideration of all affective events in the workplace, including both positive and negative, business leaders can use AET to optimize the interpersonal side of business operations by increasing positive and reducing negative factors to create a positive working environment (Okeke, Onuorah, & Evbota, 2016).

Conceptual Framework Alternatives

When choosing a conceptual framework, I considered several potential theories. The main alternatives to AET were the evolved the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1969) and two factor theory (Herzberg, 1959). I carefully considered these theories because several leadership courses I had attended contained elements of each, and a large volume of applied business research includes either of these two theories.

Maslow (1969) described different parts of human nature with a hierarchy of needs that all humans possess. Basic needs, according to Maslow, include physiological, safety, sense of belonging, need for esteem, need for self-actualization, and need for transcendence of self. Maslow posited that these needs motivate individuals to behave in a variety of ways. Further, Sun, Gergen, Avila, and Green (2016) noted that many scholars have used these need categories as blueprints to study employee motivation. McPhail, Patiar, Herington, Creed, and Davidson (2015) also noted the use of those needs as the baseline for an employee job-satisfaction index. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory has been very useful for business leaders and researchers to understand employee job satisfaction.

Herzberg (1959) focused on employee job-satisfaction and motivation to develop his two-factor theory. Herzberg posited that the lower level needs of physiological, safety, and social fall into the hygiene category and have to be present or employees will be dissatisfied. Meanwhile, higher needs fall into the motivator category and, if present, positively affect employee motivation levels (Herzberg, 1959). The identification of these two factors has proven very valuable to researchers and business leaders alike

(Holmberg, Sobis, & Carlström, 2016). McPhail et al. (2015) also noted that similar to the hierarchy of needs, the two-factor theory is often used to measure employee satisfaction and motivation.

Notwithstanding the utility of the hierarchy of needs and two-factor theories for researchers to better understand employee job satisfaction and motivation, I chose AET because I found it to be simpler and more practical for a business leader to use. The primary reason that I chose affective events over the other two theories for this research was practicality. Casciaro et al. (2015) noted that study of organizational dynamics to include employee turnover suffers from an either-or study approach, resulting in a lack of collaboration between psychologists and researchers from other disciplines. Strohmeier (2013) pointed out that advances in information technology allow for deeper analyses and obviate the need for starting with predetermined bins. The binning of data illustrates one of the problems with using either the two factor or hierarchy of needs theories as researchers focus on fitting data into the categories within each of those theories (Yusoff, Kian, & Idris, 2013). Further, business leaders need an inclusive and integrated approach to managing the complex contemporary business context (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015; Subramony & Pugh, 2015). Alternatively, AET encompasses events that either positively or negatively influence an employee's attitudes or behaviors toward work (Okeke et al., 2016).

The second reason I chose AET was simplicity. Lloyd et al. (2015) noted that similar to the hierarchy of needs and two-factor theories, AET includes both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. However, the use of AET is more simple and straightforward, as

business leaders simply need to consider how an event will affect the employee (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). As Yusoff et al. (2013) noted, other theories shoehorn events into predetermined bins that may not fit within the exact context of a situation. With AET, business leaders can simply identify events as they witness them and work to create positive working environments (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015).

Through this literature review, I found several themes relating to employee turnover that business leaders could use in combination with AET to develop a strategy to reduce employee turnover in the Omaha fast food industry. These main themes are interrelated and include (a) environment, (b) organizational culture, (c) leadership, (d) engagement, (e) respect, (f) supervisory behaviors, (g) organizational support, and (h) conflict. I have detailed each of these themes below.

Work Environment

The term *work environment* encompasses everything employees experience in the workplace. Work environment includes the physical surroundings, events, and interactions that occur at a place of work (Glisson, 2015). Okeke et al. (2016) noted that workplace relationships, pressures, injustices, and organizational culture and structure affect both negative and positive feelings among employees. Similarly, Amundsen and Martinsen (2014) identified leadership attitudes, the level of leadership-subordinate engagement, and policies as fundamental parts of the working environment that can elicit both positive and negative feelings. Respect is a necessary attribute within a healthy organization as it supports open and efficient communication concerning personal and

professional growth and fairness (Hernandez et al., 2014). In general, work environment includes everything that affects employee experiences within the workplace.

Because a working environment contains many variables, researchers and practitioners often use the term *work climate* to denote overall employee perceptions of the total work environment (Hernandez et al., 2014). A work climate is often simply either positive or negative (Cascio, 2015). More importantly, employees who have a favorable perception of the work environment or characterize the work climate as positive are less likely to leave (Barnes & Collier, 2013). Conversely, employees who have a negative perception of the work environment or characterize the work climate as negative are more likely to leave an organization (Jiménez, Dunkl, & Peißl, 2015). Employee perceptions of the working environment affect their decisions to stay at or leave a job.

Employees seemingly prefer a supportive working environment. Business leaders trying to reduce employee turnover could strive to build a positive working environment. A positive working environment expresses as a cyclical process that includes fairness, communication, and trust; as long as this cycle is working, employee turnover intentions are lower (Hernandez et al., 2014). Gohar, Bashir, Abrar, and Asghar (2015) concluded that distributive or equal justice has positive and significant effects on employee perceptions of a working environment. Clearly stated policies or regulations that business leaders administer equitably reinforce employee expectations of fairness (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Additionally, effective two-way communication is an essential part of a positive working environment. Specifically, Lloyd et al. (2015) found that supervisory

listening positively affects and reinforces employee perceptions of consideration, respect, justice, and trust. Employees often judge trust and respect as present or not present by observing organizational, procedural justice policy and practice (Hernandez et al., 2014). A business leader can use fairness, communication, and trust to build a supportive working environment that results in a positive climate and reduces employee turnover intentions (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015).

Many situations that negatively affect a working environment are also antecedents of increased employee turnover (Choe et al., 2015; Mohsin & Lengler, 2015). For example, bullying and incivility are often characteristics of a negative working environment (Qureshi, Rasli, & Zaman, 2014). Using a longitudinal study over 5 years to measure the effects of workplace bullying, Einarsen and Nielsen (2015) concluded that workplace bullying adds to other stresses already present in a working environment and, more importantly, found that bullying alone could tip the balance between a positive working environment and a negative one. Similarly, Qureshi et al. (2014) found that workplace bullying has a negative effect on a working climate and can even adversely affect employee health. Workplace bullying directly and negatively affects the workplace, resulting in adverse effects such as lower job satisfaction, reduced engagement, and higher employee turnover (Einarsen & Nielsen, 2015). While bullying is the extreme negative within a working environment, incivility also negatively affects employee perceptions of the workplace (Glisson, 2015). Jiménez et al. (2015) noted the primary difference between workplace incivilities and bullying is that bullying has a clear intent to harm. Further, Jiménez et al. characterized workplace incivility as interaction

with others that evidenced little to no regard for others and found a close correlation between incivility and high employee turnover. Kim and Barak (2015) noted negative human interactions consistently correlated with stressful work environments and high employee turnover intention. Bullying and incivility adversely affect a working environment and lead to higher employee turnover.

There are additional working environment challenges associated with the fast food industry. For instance, Ellingson, Tews, and Dachner (2016) described the typical fast food working environment as comprised of monotonous tasks often accompanied by acute labor shortages while facing a highly unpredictable customer demand. Further, Karavardar (2014) noted that fast food restaurants are designed to deliver food quickly, yet fluctuating labor availability can create a broad range of customer experiences. Fast food employees regularly face conditions that make it difficult to satisfy customers and often work for at or near minimum wage with little to no benefits and have limited advancement opportunities (Ellingson et al., 2016). Employees in other industries face pressures, but high unpredictability and competitiveness within the fast food working environment amplify pressures on employees.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a key consideration of the working environment. Organizational culture includes the behavioral norms of a working environment whereas climate measures employee perceptions of those standards and the affective events within the organization (Glisson, 2015). Organizational cultures can vary between the group and individual orientations based on functional, environmental, or mission needs (Williams &

Glisson, 2013). The key concern for organizational culture is not that one type of culture is best, just that the culture fits the organization, its environment, and employees (Glisson, 2015).

Williams and Glisson (2013) investigated whether group-oriented organizational culture was a moderator in the relationship between employee turnover and operational performance. Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, and Courtright (2015) noted the value of group engagement emerges through various affective and social processes within an organization. Williams and Glisson defined group-oriented organizational culture as one that emphasizes belongingness and participation and incorporates positive feedback and encouragement to employees about their work. The characteristics found in this type of culture enable employees to develop close working relationships and build trust, commitment, and loyalty within work centers (Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014; Williams & Glisson). Further, Ellinger et al. (2013) found evidence to support the adage that if a leader takes care of the people, the people will take care of the mission. Put more simply, Veisoh, Mohammadi, Pirzadian, and Sharafi (2014) noted that leadership would define the culture of an organization. A business leader builds a group oriented organizational culture by focusing on building teams to execute the task of the organization (Williams & Glisson, 2013). Within the context of AET, supportive relationships, trust, and loyalty lead to positive affective events that could positively affect working behaviors (Lloyd et al., 2015). Williams and Glisson concluded that a group-oriented culture could positively affect employee perceptions of the environment and reduce employee turnover.

The organization's mission provides another key cornerstone for building a healthy organizational culture. According to Ovidiu-Iliuta (2014), a clear mission with aligned tasks and goals often correlates to a successful organization with a healthy culture. The development of a mission corresponds to two functions of leadership as described by Keskes (2014): establishing direction with a clarified big picture and strategies, and aligning people by setting goals, seeking commitment, and building coalitions. A clear organizational mission provides individuals insight into why they are doing what they are doing. This insight accords individuals a sense of purpose and belonging (Williams & Glisson, 2013). As leadership communicates the mission with employees and demonstrates that their roles are valued, employees begin to feel they are a part of something larger than themselves, and they can commit to a common cause (George, 2015). Shared goals allow individuals to stop thinking of themselves as individuals within a group and begin to think of themselves as a member of a team (Brown, Thomas, & Bosselman, 2015). Finally, George concluded that the commonality that mission provides to an organization serves as a foundation for a healthy culture and allows for improved engagement and focused communication.

Choudhary, Akhtar, and Zaheer (2013) posited that standards are present within any culture, and consistent standards are vital for a healthy organizational culture. Standards represent the established norms of behavior. Established standards provide order and consistency within a culture, which Keskes (2014) classified as a function of management. Standards are included, however, as a leadership consideration because they encompass ethical frameworks governing leadership behavior and leadership

character traits such as integrity (Palanski, Cullen, Gentry, & Nichols, 2015). A critical outcome of leadership is that standards must be applied consistently (Choudhary et al., 2013). Otherwise, an organization can experience an ethical or legal dilemma. As described by Pierce and Snyder (2015), an ethical dilemma can cause negative organizational stress and lead to increased absenteeism or employee turnover. Increased absenteeism can result in reduced organizational productivity and increased employee turnover, which results in increased onboarding and training costs (Keskes, 2014). Both affect the bottom line of the organization. On the legal side, if standards are inconsistent, organization leadership can experience prosecution for violating equal opportunity or anti-discrimination laws. A legal dilemma can cause negative organizational stress with cost implications, but it could also result in legal fees, fines, and penalties. If business leaders apply consistent and established standards, those standards become part of the culture of the organization and, according to Kang, Gatling, and Kim (2015), help employees develop interdependent relationships and become self-policing in their behavior. Self-policing could reduce organizational costs regarding quality control and employee turnover. Standards are part of a healthy organizational culture.

Some business leaders may need to change the culture of an organization to improve the working environment. However, there are several specific concerns for an organizational culture that a business leader could consider. Glisson (2015) noted that any attempt to change organizational culture or climate should include five considerations. First, the change should be mission-driven not rule driven; the change should improve customer service or contribute to the well-being of clients (Glisson,

2015). Employees associate the mission of the organization with the purpose of their work (Park & Shaw, 2013). Second, any changes should be results oriented with measurable metrics that show how the customer or organization benefits (Glisson, 2015). Third, any changes should focus on improvement to customer service, not concentrate on improving the process (Glisson, 2015). Measurable results and positive changes appeal to employees' desire to reach goals and contribute to success (Gkorezis, 2015). Fourth, the changes should focus on entire workforce and networks, not on individuals (Glisson, 2015). Finally, Glisson (2015) insisted changes should be participative to include garnering all stakeholders' input into the policy and practice decision. Consistent with Williams and Glisson, each of the five considerations engages and includes employees into the change process and builds an inclusive organizational culture (Glisson, 2015). Business leaders can improve a working environment through changing the culture of an organization.

Leadership

If business leaders found promoting a positive or healthy organizational culture simple, very few businesses would encounter problems. Tiffan (2014) posited that the challenge for leaders is not limited to simply learning all of the approaches and theories about leadership and power, but to correctly understanding the context of a situation and applying the correct tools, or as Lian et al. (2014) described it, putting theory into practice. The following is a consideration of the relationship of leadership functions to the interdependent components of organizational culture to build a healthy working climate.

Leadership does not exist without effective communication (Tiffan, 2014). No matter the context, communication is at the center of any culture or civilization. Communication by definition is the sharing or transferring of ideas (Ellinger et al., 2013). Lian et al. (2014) described leadership as the process of influencing others to work towards a shared vision or goal. Within the context of leadership, no communication means no influence and hence no leadership (Ellinger et al., 2013). The importance of communication brings into account consideration of any potential barriers to communication that may exist. Examples of these barriers include cultural and language differences, or interpersonal conflicts caused by inappropriate power being used and leading to a misunderstanding (Lian et al., 2014). Fast food business leaders have direct experience with language differences as the food service industry is the largest employer of foreign born workers, with over 25% of the employees claiming a language other than English as their primary language (Madera, Dawson, Neal, & Busch, 2013). As meaningful communication will be the correct transmission and receipt of information, a leader must overcome any barrier to communication to establish a direction, and align, motivate or inspire people (Ellinger et al., 2013). Additionally, Zeitlin, Augsberger, Auerbach, and McGowan (2014) found that relationships have a high correlation to employee intentions regarding turnover, and clear lines of communication are paramount relative to retention. Within the context of an organization, Ellinger et al. (2013) asserted that meaningful interpersonal communication between leader and follower achieves a shared definition of the organization and, therefore, facilitates the development of organizational culture. According to Zeitlin et al., effective leadership communication not

only supports the development of culture but shapes the culture within an organization. Leaders need to communicate to influence employees to share an organizational mission, engage employees, and clarify standards (Keskes, 2014). Effective communication could help a business leader build trust, commitment, and esprit de corps among employees (Ellinger et al., 2013). Leaders can use effective communication to build a positive working environment.

Within the case of creating a positive working environment, leadership includes more than solely ordering a subordinate to do something. Specifically, Barrick et al. (2015) noted the importance of leadership on shaping shared employee perceptions of a positive working environment and influencing employee turnover. For instance, Keskes (2014) argued that proactive and positive leadership behaviors such as contingent rewards would be likely to elicit higher employee organizational commitment. Proactive and positive leadership behaviors are consistent with high employee engagement that Barnes and Collier (2013) characterized as having positive and fulfilling affective results. Further, Keskes asserted that transformational leadership might be an effective leadership style to build employee involvement because of the focus on employee development. Long and Perumal (2014) found that employees valued proactive leadership practices that reduced role ambiguity and enabled them to succeed. Some leadership behaviors could help business leaders to create a positive working environment.

Self-aware leadership is one behavior that could potentially help business leaders build a positive working environment. Amundsen and Martinsen (2014) explored the relationship between self-perception and the perceptions of others on leadership

effectiveness. When the leader and the follower perceive leadership effectiveness congruently, there is a net positive effect on the working environment (Subramony & Pugh, 2015). However, certain incongruent perceptions can be problematic for a working environment. Overestimation is when a leader's self-estimation is higher than employee perceptions, and underestimation is when a leader's self-estimation is lower than employee perceptions (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). Employees often associate overestimation with arrogance and relate it to negative affective events (Barnes & Collier, 2013). Accordingly, Amundsen and Martinsen found that underestimators or more humble leaders have the highest job satisfaction and lowest turnover intentions of subordinates, while the lowest job satisfaction and highest turnover intentions correlate highly with leader overestimation. While Amundsen and Martinsen cautioned that since they collected their data in Europe, and use of 360-degree feedback, which is more prevalent in the U.S., may reduce cases of overestimation, the implications are, that leaders should avoid overestimation. Amundsen and Martinsen concluded that leadership self-awareness is necessary for building a positive working environment.

Engagement

The component of engagement is also a key consideration in the building of a healthy working environment that reduces employee turnover. According to Ovidiu-Iliuta (2014), employees who feel involved are more likely to develop a higher level of organizational commitment and healthier organizational climate. Engagement is a critical leadership consideration in that leadership style, and which types of power a leader uses will define an employee's perception (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014). For instance,

Keskes (2014) characterized poor management as reclusive, which could lead to employees feeling excluded, whereas engagement is inclusive. Lack of engagement could result in an adverse effect on employee commitment that might lead to higher absenteeism and lower productivity (Liu & Wang, 2015). Engaging employees with an inappropriate type of power could also cause similar negative outcomes. Contrarily, Wang, Waldman, and Zhen (2014) found that higher employee engagement leads to a perception they share in the leadership process, which leads to higher commitment. Within Santos, Caetano, and Tavares's (2015) leadership functions framework, empowering subordinates is part of motivating, inspiring and energizing. Further, Keskes asserted that transformational leadership might be a more appropriate leadership style to build employee involvement because it develops a sense of team spirit. Chan and Mak (2014) noted that servant leadership also engages followers by helping them grow and succeed and putting their needs first. Engagement should be a major consideration of leadership as it is a fundamental component of a healthy organizational culture and will help instill cultural norms (Keskes, 2014).

Barnes and Collier (2013) characterized work engagement as a work-related state of mind that is positive and fulfilling. This characterization is very similar to the positive results of positive affective work events within AET. Despite a succinct characterization, Barnes and Collier noted the difficulty in fully understanding work engagement and how it works. To build a job engagement model, Barnes and Collier listed three essential components of work engagement. The first characteristic of work engagement is that it is a specific, observable, and measurable psychological state that a business leader can

operationalize (Barnes & Collier, 2013). The second characteristic is that work engagement is lasting and changeable (Barnes & Collier, 2013). Finally, the third characteristic of work engagement is that work engagement and employee engagement are entirely different things. Further, Barnes and Collier hypothesized that job satisfaction, affective commitment, and service climate are antecedents of work engagement. Service climate is the measurement of how encultured an organization is with customer service focus (Barnes & Collier, 2013). Affective commitment is how dedicated an employee is to the success of an organization (Barnes & Collier, 2013). While Barnes and Collier concluded that job satisfaction, affective commitment, and service climate each had some impact on work engagement arguably, the premise that those factors caused work engagement is still in doubt. For instance, work engagement could have just as easily had similar results as the causing factor for at least job satisfaction.

Respect

Evidence exists that respect could be a vital part of a positive working environment. Lloyd et al. (2015) identified respect as a key affective state that can influence an employee turnover intention. Respect is a necessary attribute within a positive working environment as it supports open and efficient communication concerning personal and professional growth, and fairness (Hernandez et al., 2014). Clarke and Mahadi (2015) noted that the term respect within social sciences denotes simply regarding others as valuable despite differences; however, operationalizing respect within a workplace is a complex undertaking. Employees often judge respect as

either present or not present within a working environment, and the presence of respect correlates to a positive working environment and lower turnover intention (Hernandez et al., 2014).

Respect could be a resultant attribute of a positive working environment. Clarke and Mahadi (2015) investigated the role of respect in the workplace and found that respect includes perceptions of organizational justice, fair rewards and recognition, adequate resourcing, employee empowerment, and organizational support. Further, Hernandez et al. (2014) found respect closely related to a supportive working environment as a process that includes fairness, communication, and trust. Actively listening to and acknowledging someone is an active component of respect (Clarke & Mahadi, 2015). Active listening could contribute to engaging leadership behavior (Palanski et al., 2014). Further, Clarke and Mahadi found that qualitative results indicated respect has five elements within a working environment: (a) organizational support, (b) fair salary and benefits, (c) equitable promotion potential, (d) adequate communication, and (e) appreciation or contingent rewards. These environmental factors could contribute to employee perceptions of respect within a workplace.

Respect comes in many forms. However, demonstration of a lack of respect includes employees feeling not listened to, not understood, or blamed for something outside of employee control (Clarke & Mahadi, 2015). An example of this is a fast food employee getting blamed for a longer than expected wait time in a fast food drive thru lane because of a labor shortage during a period of high customer demand (Ellingson et al., 2016). Drawing from AET, Lloyd et al. (2015) argued that employee's affective

reactions to their observations of whether or not a supervisor respected them would influence their decisions to stay or voluntarily turnover. Lloyd et al. noted that an employer gains many benefits from positive employee affect because it manifests into positive behaviors such as helping others and voluntary work. Each example of a lack of respect led to negative affective events as employees felt devalued, both as individuals and within their organization (Clarke & Mahadi, 2015). Additionally, Lloyd et al. warned that adverse effects could manifest into negative workplace behaviors beyond turnover including withdrawal, theft, sabotage, and even workplace violence. While employees perceive each sub-theme related to respect, employees often relate more than one sub-theme when discussing a lack of respect; this fact stresses the importance of respect within an organization (Clarke & Mahadi, 2015). Finally, Clarke and Mahadi (2015) concluded that respect could be the single largest factor within the employee turnover decision-making process.

Supervisory Behaviors

Supervisory behaviors affect employee reaction throughout the work environment. For instance, a direct supervisor often oversees the acculturation process for new hires within the workplace. Tang, Liu, Oh, and Weitz (2014) explored the process of socializing new employees and found positive effects. Organizational socialization is the process of indoctrinating a newcomer into the social, attitudinal, and behavioral norms of an organization (Tang et al., 2014). The primary benefit of organizational socialization is establishing role clarity for new employees (Tang et al., 2014). Kim and Barak (2015) argued that role stress includes the cumulative total of role overload, role conflict, and

role ambiguity meaning that organizational socialization efforts reduce stress for new employees. Additionally, Tang et al. found that role clarity directly contributes to reduced turnover intention among new hires. Positive supervisory behaviors such as socialization help establish a positive working environment and reduce employee turnover intention (Tang et al., 2014).

Drawing from AET, Lloyd et al. (2015) argued that employee's affective reactions to their observations of whether or not a supervisor actively listened influenced employee decisions to stay or voluntarily turnover. Lloyd et al. stated that supervisors that effectively listen are more likely to elicit positive behaviors from employees. Employees view supervisors that listen effectively as more open, interested, and supportive than those who do not (Lloyd et al., 2015). Effective listening is the cornerstone of employee support and engagement (Lloyd et al., 2015). The positive affective reactions from effective listening are cumulative meaning listening has to be constant to gain long lasting effects (Lloyd et al., 2015). On the contrary, not listening to employees may elicit adverse effect over the short term and if often repeated will likely lead to negative employee behaviors to include withdrawal, sabotage, and turnover (Lloyd et al., 2015). Lloyd et al. noted that an employer gains many benefits from employee positive effect as it manifests into positive behaviors such as helping others and voluntary work. Contrarily, Lloyd et al. warned that adverse consequences could manifest into negative workplace behaviors including withdrawal, theft, sabotage, and even workplace violence. Lloyd et al. concluded that effective supervisory listening could

build a positive and dynamic working environment for employees whereas the lack of supervisory listening can establish a poor working environment.

Business leaders should increase positive behaviors and reduce negative to build a positive working environment (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). Palanski et al. (2014) studied the effects of ethical leadership and abusive supervision on organizational climate. Hernandez et al. (2014) described a positive working environment as a process that includes fairness, communication, and trust; as such employees would expect ethical leadership. Accordingly, Palanski et al. found that while ethical leadership has a positive effect on employee intentions and behaviors, employees expect ethical leadership and as such its positive effects are not as strong as the adverse effects of abusive supervision. Further Palanski et al. asserted that abusive supervision acts as a shock to an employee and a direct relationship existed between abusive supervision and job search behavior. More specifically, Palanski et al. found that abusive supervision acts directly on both job satisfaction (negatively) and job search behaviors (positively) whereas ethical leadership acts directly only on job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with AET in that negative affective events often have stronger effects than positive (Ryan et al., 2015). Reich and Hershcovis (2015) concluded that when trying to develop a positive working environment, business leaders should consider that negative events affect behaviors more strongly than positive.

Evidence exists that abusive supervisory behavior could potentially destroy any efforts to build a positive workplace environment. Vogel and Mitchell (2015) and Lian et al. (2014) explored the negative effects of abusive supervision. Abusive supervision is an

employee perception of a supervisor that engages in hostile verbal or nonverbal behavior towards the employee (Lian et al., 2014). Vogel and Mitchell correlated abusive supervision with diminished employee self-esteem, increased turnover intention, or affected employees using coping mechanisms. The coping mechanisms included withdrawal or antisocial behavior with coworkers (Vogel & Mitchell, 2015; Volmer, 2015). Additionally, Lian et al. found that the more power a supervisor has, the less likely a direct response by an abused employee. However, the employee is very likely to leave the organization to escape the abusive supervisor or use other coping mechanisms (Lian et al., 2014). Within the paradigm of affective events, this perception of abusive behavior directly leads to employees desiring to leave the situation as soon as possible to avoid a direct response or behave negatively towards others (Lian et al., 2014). Abusive leadership can be more detrimental to a working environment than simply losing a single employee.

Business leaders might be able to increase positive behaviors and reduce negative to build a positive working environment. Palanski et al. (2014) studied the effects of ethical leadership and abusive supervision on organizational climate. Hernandez et al. (2014) described a positive working environment as a process that includes fairness, communication, and trust; as such employees would expect ethical leadership. Accordingly, Palanski et al. found that while ethical leadership has a positive effect on employee intentions and behaviors, employees expect ethical leadership and as such its positive effects are not as strong as the adverse effects of abusive supervision. Further Palanski et al. asserted that abusive supervision acts as a shock to an employee and a

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On a positive note, supervisory behavior could help in the establishment of a positive working environment. Kang et al. (2015) investigated the effects of supervisory support and found that supervisory support increased organizational commitment and

reduced turnover intention among frontline hospitality employees. Similar to positive affective events within AET, Kang et al. argued that a key advantage of social exchange theory would be the apparent positive effect of supervisory support on employee attitudes. Further, Kang et al. suggested that how employees felt towards their supervisors often correlates to their level of organizational commitment and that employees often associate opportunity and success with positive affective events. This finding is also similar to AET in that affective events will influence employee intentions or behaviors towards work (Ryan et al., 2015). Kang et al. noted that supportive supervisory behavior could strengthen the culture of an organization. Supervisory behaviors have potential to affect the working environment of an organization.

Organizational Support

Organizational support includes the various policies, processes, and facilities with which an employee comes in contact. Policies include human resource rules; pay setting, training, and development programs. Jehanzeb, Hamid, and Rasheed (2015) argued that within the fast food industry organizational support and especially training are critical ingredients to positive employee behaviors. Similar to other themes, policies, processes, and facilities can affect positive or negative feelings for employees. For instance, Robyn et al. (2014) found pay to be a potentially negative factor within a workplace environment, especially if it is not correct. If business leaders perform organizational support activities properly, they can help a business leader build a positive working environment.

Tailored organizational policies can help a business leader establish a positive working environment. For instance, human resources policies that consider a variety of work-life interaction can positively affect employee attitudes. Skinner et al. (2014) used a qualitative descriptive analysis to investigate the effect of work-life interaction on employee turnover intentions. Skinner et al. found not only the need for policies and practices within the workplace that recognize the need for work-life balance but also that work-life balance needs change over time. Employees in one career stage may not desire the same policies as employees in other career stages. For example, Skinner et al. found early-career employees without dependents are not concerned with childcare whereas older employees with children or dependents may be concerned with policies reducing conflict between work and parenting. Further, Skinner et al. found that early career individuals were very protective of their personal lives and less likely to allow work to dominate their lives while employees within the family formation and young children stage of their careers often faced challenges due to financial and time demands. Skinner et al. found that mid-career employees often are willing to work longer hours but not varying or overnight shifts whereas near-retirement workers appeared to desire more flexible and even part time hours. Skinner et al. concluded that organizational work-life policies should extend beyond traditional child-care consideration because work-life balance concerns span across all stages of a career. Within the fast food industry, work life balance is a key consideration because of the widely varying business hours (Bufquin, DiPietro, Orłowski, & Partlow, 2017). Skinner et al. argued that policies

supporting a positive work environment would address: flexibility, work hours and scheduling, work intensity, dependent/child care, organizational culture and paid leave.

In addition to work-life balance, wages are part of the work environment. Despite finding that higher minimum wage standards reduced employee turnover for teenage workers, Gittings and Schmutte (2015) concluded that for other employees, wages were only part of the turnover equation. These findings were consistent with other research efforts indicating wage impact on turnover intention varies widely according to many contexts including organizational factors, and local labor markets (Gittings & Schmutte, 2015). Similarly, Ellingson et al. (2016) also noted that within the fast food industry, where employees often earn minimum or near minimum wage, low wages were only a partial explanation of the high turnover rates. Specifically looking at vulnerable groups of employees including youth, fixed term contract employees and staff taking parental leave, Sgobbi (2015) found that wage policy had varying effects. For instance, employer policy that defined wage level, structure, and growth had mixed results about how employees reacted (Sgobbi, 2015). These findings are significant as an explicit wage policy that tells employees rules about wage scales and growth over time provides a more stable and predictable work environment for the employee. However, Long and Perumal (2014) used expectancy theory to explain that employee motivation depended on the attractiveness and probability of rewards and argued that pay could be a major motivation for employees since it provided them a tangible reward and a source of livelihood.

Beyond salary, Long and Perumal (2014) noted the importance of training in the workplace as training reduces role stress as well as turnover intentions. Additionally,

Beynon, Jones, Pickernell, and Packham (2015) concluded that formalized learning by doing is a form of employee empowerment that instills employee loyalty and reduces employee turnover intention. Not surprisingly, Jehanzeb et al. (2015) asserted that training is often the single most impactful form of organizational support that a fast food business leader can provide to employees. Further, Jeon et al. (2015) evaluated the efficacy of formalized workplace leadership training designed to improve leadership behaviors and operational effectiveness. Specifically measuring staff perceptions of working environment, employee turnover intention, and turnover rates, Jeon et al. found that six months after implementation, employee perception of manager support significantly improved. Formal and dedicated training provide organizational leaders the opportunity to implement the organizational strategy, reduce role ambiguity, and stress (Long & Perumal, 2014).

Besides pay and training, Long and Perumal (2014) also concluded that both career development and employee relations affect employee turnover intention. Most notably, Long and Perumal found performance management to have the strongest positive effect to reduce turnover intention meaning that employees valued effective performance management practices that reduced role ambiguity and enabled them to succeed. Barrick et al. (2015) evaluated the usefulness of motivating work design, human resource management practices, and leadership on shaping shared employee perceptions and influencing employee turnover. Barrick et al. contrasted the practice of individual engagement with a shared sense of engagement that emerges through various affective and social processes within an organization. Park and Shaw (2013) found that group-

oriented organizations were more able to adapt and perform well. Further, Randel, Dean, Ehrhart, Chung, and Shore (2016) argued that policy changes should include employee input whenever possible as inclusion positively affects employee behaviors and increases the likelihood of policy acceptance. Barrick et al. explained that shared engagement is present as individual members interact with each other exchanging information about expectations and rewards within the organization.

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

Kim and Barak (2015) provided excellent definitions of leader-member exchange (LMX), perceived organizational support (POS), and role stress that all fit within AET as each of them measure either an affective event or the attitudes that result from an affective event. Kim and Barak investigated the relationship between role stress and employee turnover intention through the paradigms of leader-member exchange and perceived organizational support (POS). Kim and Barak defined perceived organizational support as the employee's perception of organizational behavior to reinforce that employee's value to the organization. Kim and Barak defined leader-member exchange as the perceived relationship exchange between employee and supervisor. For instance, LMX would include the measurement of clarity of an employee's standing with a supervisor (Kim & Barak, 2015). Kim and Barak noted a consistent correlation between stressful work environments and high employee turnover intention. Kim and Barak argued that role stress included the cumulative total of role overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity. Role overload is a lack of sufficient resources to meet expectations (Kim & Barak, 2015). Role conflict is when employees and employers have different

perceptions of standards and expectations of the job (Kim & Barak, 2015). Role ambiguity is a lack of clarity related to role expectations (Kim & Barak, 2015).

Conflict

Ohly and Schmitt (2015) observed that a conflict is an affective event that occurs many ways within a workplace. There are four types of conflict within a working environment. Role conflict is when employee's and employer's perceptions of standards and expectations of the job are different (Kim & Barak, 2015). Work-life conflict is when demands of job and life are incompatible (Skinner et al., 2014). Social conflict is a disagreement or dislike between two or more people (Basak & Govender, 2015). Ethical conflict occurs when an employer or customer places a demand on an employee that is incongruent with an employee's moral convictions (Pierce & Snyder, 2015). A business leader trying to develop a positive working environment should be aware of signs of conflict, effects of conflict, how to minimize conflict, and alleviating the consequences.

Employees like to succeed. Specifically, employees are likely to reflect more favorably on events when they performed well than when they failed (Ohly & Schmitt, 2015). In the case of role conflict, employees often fail to meet standards and expectations because they focus their efforts towards the wrong task, or perform tasks to the wrong specifications (Kim & Barak, 2015). Katsikea, Theodosiou, and Morgan (2014) found that role conflict and ambiguity adversely affect a work climate because employees do not appreciate failure or being in a position to fail. Supervisors can use communication to clarify expectations, reduce ambiguity, and put employees in a position to succeed (Ellinger et al., 2013). Keeping in mind the often cultural and

language barriers within the fast food industry, Madera et al. (2013) suggested that business leaders use visual aids to communicate policies or conduct training. Additionally, Katsikea et al. concluded formalized training, and explicit standards reduce role conflict and ambiguity. Barrick et al. (2015) summarized these practices as shared employee engagement and explained that an engagement cycle continues beyond supervisor and employee as individual employees interact with each other exchanging information about expectations and rewards within the organization. Ohly and Schmitt (2015) concluded that employees are less likely to leave successful situations.

Direnzo, Greenhaus, and Weer (2015) characterized work-life conflict as an employee's feeling that results from not being effective or satisfied in roles that are important to them. Employees often experience situations where demands of life and work compete. For instance, Skinner et al. (2014) identified categories of work-life conflict including event interruption, scheduling, and dependent or child-care. Additionally, with the growing prevalence of cellular phones, a source of conflict can arise from frequent telephone calls from work that interrupt family events (Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015). After interviewing 105 people across four stages in their professional lives, Skinner et al. found that employee's concerns for work-life-conflict change over time; what employees perceive as conflict varies as they are in different phases of their career or family lives. The changing nature of work-life conflict presents a challenge to business leaders trying to minimize the adverse effects resulting from employees not being effective in roles that are important to them.

Social conflicts are negative affective events that affect more than simply a workplace (Volmer, 2015). Using AET as a conceptual framework, Volmer (2015) investigated the short-term effects that social conflicts with supervisors had on employees. Jiménez et al. (2015) specifically investigated the effects of workplace incivility on employee turnover intentions. Characterizing workplace incivility as the absence of regard for others during interactions, Jiménez et al. found that rude or discourteous behavior within the workplace negatively affected the working environment. Specifically, Robinson, Wang, and Kiewitz (2014) concluded that incivility could directly influence an employee's decision to leave a workplace. Further, Volmer found that social conflicts at work also adversely affected employee home life to include sleep problems and moodiness. Additionally, Volmer explained the spillover effect of supervisor conflict to home life as people are motivated to gain positive evaluations from others, and uncivil behavior can be similar to role conflict. Alternatively, Volmer concluded that high perceptions of procedural justice within a workplace moderated the effects of workplace conflict outside of work. In other words, high procedural justice might reduce adverse effects of social conflicts (Volmer, 2015). A supervisor should look to reduce incivility to reduce employee turnover (Jiménez et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2014; Volmer, 2015).

Ethical conflict is another serious type of negative affective event within the workplace. Pierce and Snyder (2015) addressed the importance of ethical congruence between employee and organization about turnover and value to the organization. When a customer or supervisor places unethical demands on an ethical employee, the employee

will face negative affect and be more likely to leave the organization (Pierce & Snyder, 2015). There is a unique and important correlation between employee and organizational ethical congruence about affective events (Pierce & Snyder, 2015). An ethical employee that refuses to comply with unethical demands not only does not feel valued by the organization but also does not feel effective in their organizational role (Direnzo et al., 2015). Specifically, when an employee faced ethical demands incongruent with their ethical beliefs the employee will experience a negative affective event and be highly likely to leave the organization (Pierce & Snyder, 2015).

Transition

Section 1 was an introduction to the problem of employee turnover. Employee turnover adversely affects business productivity and profitability. A single employee quit may cost a company between 40% and 400% percent of that worker's annual salary in lost productivity, rehiring, and training costs (Palanski et al., 2014; Vasquez, 2014). While researchers have noted the complexity of employee turnover and found linkages between 17 factors and employee turnover intention (Palanski et al., 2014), business leaders are more concerned with the practice of reducing employee turnover and increasing the profitability of their companies. To further these efforts, Ryan et al. (2015) identified poor working conditions as the primary cause of voluntary employee turnover.

Business leaders can develop strategies to reduce employee turnover by positively affecting employee work experiences and thereby improve working environments. Specifically, with AET, business leaders can simply identify events as they witness them and work to create a positive working environment (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). The

literature review revealed that to affect a working environment positively, a business leader needs to understand the components of the working environment which include organizational culture, leadership, engagement, respect, supervisory behaviors, organizational support, and conflict. By positively affecting each of these components, a business leader can create a positive working environment and reduce employee turnover.

The rest of this paper included details on the research process, findings, and recommendations on how a business leader could implement a strategy to create a positive working to reduce employee turnover. Section 2 included the specific steps I used to complete this research. These steps included the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, participants, the research design and method, population and sampling, ethical research considerations, data collection instruments and techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis. I detailed each of these steps within Section 2. Finally, Section 2 included an explanation of how these steps all contribute to the reliability and validity of this research. Section 3 detailed findings and recommendations on how a fast food business leader could create a positive working environment that leads to reduced employee turnover and how that could potentially contribute to positive social change.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I detail the steps for this qualitative multiple case study. The goal of this research was to provide business leaders insight into how other business leaders have implemented a strategy to improve working environments and reduce employee turnover. To do that reliably, I followed a protocol as outlined in the steps below. These steps included detailing my role as the primary researcher with the responsibility to investigate reliably and thoroughly the strategies that business leaders use to provide a positive working environment and reduce employee turnover. The first step in this process was ensuring that I recognized and removed any potential bias and abided by ethical research standards. The second step was to make sure that I collected enough accurate data by choosing business leaders with experience in implementing a strategy to improve working environments. The final group of steps was to make sure that I had explicitly outlined the methodology and design adequately for another researcher to replicate the results of this research given the same or similar context in a reliable manner.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces voluntary employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of business leaders within three fast food restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska. I selected participants based on their experience within the fast food restaurant industry using strategies to establish an appealing work environment that reduces employee turnover and willingness

to participate. A deeper understanding of the particular context of the fast food restaurant working environment may allow business leaders to use strategies to improve working conditions for employees and reduce employee turnover. The implication for positive social change is that with more consistent employment and less work-related stress, the potential for employees and their families to become more involved within their communities increases.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the primary researcher during the data collection process of this qualitative multiple case study was to serve as the primary data collection instrument. Activities of a primary data collection instrument consist of gathering, analyzing, and reporting of data specifically relevant to the research question and identifying any potential bias (Cronin et al., 2014). Further, Yin (2014) noted that a researcher is primarily responsible for the collection, analysis, reporting, and bias control from case study research. For the collection of data, I used semistructured interviews with an interview protocol (see Appendix A). Jacob and Furgerson (2012) noted the importance of using an interview protocol to maintain alignment of the interview with the research question and prepare participants to provide better data. Use of an interview protocol can assist in the collection and organization of data and enable easier analysis (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016; Yin, 2014).

I have not worked in the fast food industry; however, I have worked with different organizations that had either positive or negative working environments and noted different employee attitudes and behaviors. Employees often reflect their working

environment through their attitudes in the form of words and behaviors (Allen et al., 2014). I relied on data provided by participants to understand the context of the working environment within the fast food industry. Further, Roulston and Shelton (2015) noted the need for identification and understanding of any potential bias before setting forth on research to add to reliability. In the case of this study, the conceptual framework and literature review contain information on how negative working environments adversely affect employee attitudes and behaviors towards work, so I do not believe that this belief had any effect on the results of this study.

As the primary researcher, I adhered to the Belmont Report Protocol by employing an ethical strategy of doing no harm and providing full disclosure to participants. Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, and Khodyakov (2015) noted the need for ethics within research and identified doing no harm and full disclosure as key components of ethical research. This strategy included measures taken to provide full disclosure to participants and providing confidentiality throughout both the data collection and analysis processes. I collected data ethically by recruiting only participants willing to sign a consent form that outlined both the research intent and steps taken to ensure confidentiality through the process. Additionally, Yin (2014) stressed the importance of informed consent. I provided participants with a copy of the interview protocol so they were fully prepared to provide their consent and were ready to participate.

Participants

The population for this research study was fast food business leaders in Omaha, Nebraska. From the population, eligibility criteria for participation were those who had

experience employing strategies to provide a positive working environment to reduce employee turnover. Yin (2014) noted the best source of data for case study research is often from those with experience that will allow them to answer the research question. Further, Robinson (2014) noted interviews are an excellent method to detail experiences, whereas Roulston and Shelton (2015) affirmed that interviewing an expert helps to capture and pass on knowledge. A researcher can gather richer data in less time by focusing on the correct population and adhering to eligibility criteria for participants.

To gain access to participants, I used acquaintance references and then provided potential participants with a copy of the prospectus to build trust with potential participants. Browne and McBride (2015) noted the importance of developing trust with potential participants in sociology research and that references could accelerate the establishment of trust. Once participants decided to participate, I made myself available to them for any questions they may have had. Cunliffe and Alcadipani (2016) argued that while immersion is best, absent full immersion, researchers should accommodate participants as best they can. Since I did not have a working relationship with any of the potential participants, I had to accommodate their schedules and be responsive to them for any possible questions they may have had. During the entire collection, analysis, and reporting process that included member checking and data verification, I was in contact with and available to participants via telephone, email, and in person. Yin (2014) noted researcher availability to participants is an important factor within case studies because it provides clearer lines of communication and reduces ambiguity. Fusch and Ness (2015) also noted that researcher availability during data collection aids the analytic process.

Because I used acquaintance personal references to enlist participants, I needed to make sure that I was responsive to participants so that I could maintain positive references.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

I used a qualitative research method for this study. Yang et al. (2012) found qualitative exploration uniquely suited for the topic of employee turnover because it affords the researcher the means to capture the full context of an event or experience. Additionally, as perceptions form the basis of how and why events affect individuals' thoughts and actions within a situational context, Allen et al. (2014) argued that researchers gain a deeper and broader understanding of a specific event or experience through qualitative research methods. Further, Yin (2014) noted that qualitative research affords a researcher the ability to gain a holistic understanding of an experience with a smaller sample size. In contrast, quantitative researchers use quantitative methods to find relationships and trends among variables to test theories or hypotheses but not to understand the how or why of a circumstance (Hoare & Hoe, 2013). Additionally, some researchers use mixed methods that combine both qualitative and quantitative, but because of limited time and this study being an initial exploration with no identified or developed hypotheses to test, a mixed method effort was not feasible (see Yin, 2014). Therefore, a qualitative methodology was more appropriate to detail the exploration of strategies that Omaha Nebraska fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces employee turnover.

Research Design

A multiple case study design was most appropriate for this study because the purpose of this study was to explore strategies that fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces employee turnover. Researchers employ a case study design to explain the how and why of explicitly bounded events or phenomena (Boukas & Ziakas, 2013). Researchers also employ a case study design to observe a particular event and to develop findings to describe how and why (Cronin et al., 2014). Moreover, researchers use multiple case studies to gain added analytic depth from exploring similar events within different contexts (Yin, 2014). As this study was an initial exploration of strategies, a multiple case study was uniquely suited for exploratory research.

I considered several other qualitative designs including grounded theory, ethnographic, and phenomenological designs but found multiple case study design most appropriate. Researchers use grounded theory designs to define or further characterize theories based on data analysis (McGinley et al., 2014). Researchers use an ethnographic design to understand events within a cultural construct (Crandall et al., 2016). Researchers use a phenomenological design to understand participants' perceptions of a single event (Choe et al., 2015). The objective of this study was not theory refinement, nor following an event from a single cultural paradigm or multiple perspectives. In this study, I detailed the exploration of strategies Omaha Nebraska fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces employee turnover. Hence, a multiple case study was the most appropriate design.

A multiple case study design also provides researchers other advantages over different designs. For instance, the primary data collection method for this study was semistructured case study interviews. Bernard (2013) noted that the number of interviews a qualitative researcher needed to reach data saturation could vary widely; however, Fusch and Ness (2015) pointed out that reaching data saturation within a case study is often straightforward because case study parameters are explicit. In this case, I conducted semistructured interviews consisting of open-ended questions aligned with my research question with experienced participants from varying organizations. The different organizations enabled a diverse amount of data. The participant experience level and question alignment with the research question provided depth of data. I considered data saturation reached when no new data were forthcoming from interviews and no new coding or themes arose during analysis. Fusch and Ness noted no new data, no new coding, and no new themes as conditions often denoting data saturation within qualitative research. The specific nature of how to reach data saturation also was a factor in deciding to proceed with a multiple case study design.

Population and Sampling

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies Omaha, Nebraska fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces voluntary employee turnover. The population for this multiple case study was fast food business leaders who have developed strategies to create a positive working environment to reduce employee turnover within three different fast food companies in the Omaha, Nebraska metropolitan area.

The population of this study consisted of business leaders within three Omaha fast food companies who have developed strategies to create a positive working environment and reduce employee turnover. I used a purposeful sampling technique to ensure that participants have the requisite experience to answer the research question. Purposeful sampling is a means to reach data saturation and focus on the research question by including only those participants within a population with the requisite knowledge and experience to address the research question (Robinson, 2014). Similarly, Palinkas et al. (2015) noted that purposeful sampling streamlines data collection and analysis efforts by removing extraneous data not specifically related to the research question and focuses on data rich sources. Yin (2014) also noted that the focused data collection afforded by purposeful sampling helps researchers achieve data saturation more quickly than random sampling. To be more efficient and effective in reaching data saturation, I chose to use purposeful sampling for this study.

Yin (2014) noted that focused data collection could help a researcher answer a research question more quickly. I interviewed nine fast food business leaders at three businesses who were knowledgeable and had experience in implementing strategies to create a positive working environment that reduces employee turnover. These nine participants included three shift leaders, three managers, and three owners. Bernard (2013) noted the importance of gaining access to the right number of participants, although that could be lower if the participants were well equipped to answer the research question. Robinson (2014) noted the reduced number of interview participants as one of the advantages of purposeful sampling, while Fusch and Ness (2015) pointed out that a

case study also expedites data collection requirements because of specific parameters and research questions. I was as efficient as possible in answering the research question.

A limited number of participants is efficient, but the number of participants also has to be effective in achieving data saturation. For an interview to be effective, participants need to be knowledgeable and experienced as noted above. Another key element to being efficient and effective in collecting data during an interview is the setting. I allowed the participants a choice of location. In each case, the location was private, had a table and at least two chairs, and had at least one available electrical outlet for recording devices. Yin (2014) noted that an interview setting should be comfortable for the participant and discrete to maintain data integrity. Brubacher, Poole, and Dickinson (2015) also asserted that an interview venue should facilitate clear and discrete communication without interruptions. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted an interview location should facilitate accurate data recording and collection, as it aids in data processing.

Ethical Research

Researchers have a responsibility to maintain ethical standards, especially when working with human subjects (Bromley et al., 2015). A major ethical standard for researchers is to ensure that participants can provide informed consent. Beyond meeting ethical standards, the informed consent process can also develop trust and cooperation between participant and researcher and improve the quality of the research (Yin, 2014). As part of any study, the researcher has an ethical responsibility to provide participants enough information to make an informed decision to participate or not (Bromley et al., 2015). I provided an informed consent form to all participants before collecting any data.

I sent them a copy of the informed consent form via email when scheduling the interview and provided a paper copy at the interview appointment before beginning the interview. Participants annotated their informed consent by signing and dating a copy of the informed consent form and returning it to the researcher. Part of the institutional review board (IRB) process includes documented informed consent that the researcher has provided participants specific information about the nature of the study, potential risks, rewards, and incentives, and steps taken to protect participants (Walden University, 2017). I received my IRB approval number 04-27-17-0540554 before collecting any data.

I did not conduct any data collection for this study until after receiving IRB approval. After IRB approval and before beginning interviews, I ensured that each participant had signed an informed consent form, was aware that participation was voluntary, and understood that they could withdraw at any time through notification of their desire in any form. I also gained their consent for recording the interview and informed them that I would also be taking notes during the interview. Following the interview protocol (see Appendix A), I then informed them of the purpose of the study and the flow of the interview. These procedures are critical to the research process. Oetzel et al. (2015) stressed the importance of having review board approval before proceeding with any data collection. Bromley et al. (2015) noted the importance of protecting individual rights and that a review committee is necessary for protecting participant rights. Finally, Walden University (2017) specifically warned that any data collection before review board approval is a violation that could result in dismissal from a doctoral program.

As outlined in the informed consent form, participation in this study was voluntary with no compensation incentive, and a participant could withdraw at any time for any reason simply by notifying me via telephone or email. Lestari, Kotani, and Kakinaka, (2015) asserted that voluntary participation leads to more robust data collection and accurate results. Cridland, Jones, Caputi, and Magee (2015) noted that voluntary research builds trust with the participants and leads to better research. Finally, Yin (2015) pointed out the practicality of having volunteer participants, as it is impossible to compel participation. The process for a participant to withdraw from the study was simply contacting me in any way and communicating a desire to withdraw from participation. There was no penalty for withdrawal.

Further, I took multiple steps to protect participant rights and afford them confidentiality. Bromley et al. (2015) noted the importance of taking extra steps to protect participant rights. Oetzel et al. (2015) pointed out that part of protecting participants is maintaining their anonymity. Cridland et al. (2015) asserted that researchers should take all steps to protect participants and maintain their trust as this protection helps build trust for future research efforts. To these ends, I used alpha-numeric pseudonyms to identify participants and companies to provide anonymity to participants. For instance, each participant is numbered one through nine and identified as P and their corresponding number (e.g., P1, P2, P3, etc.) and each organization is numbered one through three and identified as O and the corresponding number (O1, O2, and O3). Finally, I used technological and physical means to protect participants' identities. These technical means include secure data storage including passwords,

encryption protocols, and pseudonyms. Physical means includes locked within a secure container for 5 years after which I will destroy the data. For further security, I kept a single printed list with the alpha-numeric coding and names in a locked container. Finally, I removed all specifically identifying characteristics from data and presented only aggregate data for results.

Data Collection Instruments

For this study, I was the primary data collection instrument. Yin (2014) noted that the researcher is always the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research because the researcher observes, receives, handles, views, and interprets all data collected within a case study. Further, Allen et al. (2014) asserted that the individual researcher is the primary data collection instrument for qualitative research regardless of data collection technique. Finally, Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that the researcher exercises so much control over the data collection process that the researcher is the primary data collection instrument. While I was the primary data collection instrument, I used recorded semistructured face-to-face interviews and organization documentation that fast food business leaders provided as data sources.

I used recorded face-to-face semistructured interviews as outlined in the interview protocol (see Appendix A) as a primary means to collect study data. Madigank, Joyce, and Clarke (2015) noted that semistructured interviews afford the opportunity to include depth of inquiry and gather a breadth of data. Bernard (2013) pointed out that semistructured interviews help researchers focus but also gather additional data for more robust context. Finally, McIvor (2016) noted the ease with which researchers can use

semistructured interview data to triangulate with other data sources such as the review of organizational documents. I used an examination of organizational documents as a secondary data source. I was also fortunate enough to have the opportunity to interview three business leaders at each of the three organizations which also helped with triangulation. The ability to triangulate interview data with organization documents, such as policies, procedures, and personnel manuals provided by participants is critical to case study research (Boukas & Ziakas, 2013; Yang et al., 2012). Researchers record interviews to capture more accurately the full context and rich detail of participants' experiences (Bernard, 2013). I used the semistructured interview protocol as outlined in Appendix A because this technique afforded the opportunity for reliable collection and validation of data and ease in triangulation with other data sources such as document review.

I used participant provided organizational documents that included policies, procedures, and personnel manuals as secondary data sources. Boukas and Ziakas (2013) noted the importance of using published policies, procedures, and manuals because they provide researchers both corroboration with interview data and additional context. Additionally, Yin (2014) noted that manuals and other publications within a case are necessary for triangulation as well as checking congruity of data.

Reliability and validity are essential within case study research (Yin, 2014). I recorded interviews to increase reliability and validity of data collection. After transcription, I scheduled time for the participants to review the transcript for accuracy. Anyan (2013) identified transcript review as a key element of data validation within

qualitative research. Yin (2015) specifically noted transcript review as a means to maintain the accuracy of collected interview data and the importance of data accuracy to the reliability and validity of the research. I informed participants of the intent to perform transcript review and member checking to improve reliability and validity of this investigation.

I completed each transcript within 3 to 5 business days following the interview, after which I emailed the transcript to participants for their review. I informed participants of the importance of reviewing transcripts for accuracy and asked them if they would prefer to complete the transcript review via email or to schedule an appointment in person. The participants had a choice to consider the transcript by email by simply noting anything within the transcript that they felt was incorrect and their desired change. If participants desired to discuss the transcript review, I was available to them via telephone or in person. If participants desired an in-person discussion, I scheduled an appointment with them at a location similar to the interview.

After transcript review and initial data analysis, I performed member checking with each participant to ensure that analysis adequately captured each participant's experiences. Fusch and Ness (2015) found member checking to be an essential method to increase reliability and validity within qualitative research. Palinkas et al. (2015) noted that data validation, reliable data collection processes, and robust analytic efforts focused on the research question provide a sound basis for reliability and validity of qualitative research. The recording, transcript review, and member checking helped ensure reliability and validity of this research project.

I performed member checking like transcript review. I performed initial analysis and provided each participant a copy of the thematic clusters via email. I then scheduled a time either in person or via telephone to discuss the data analysis to ensure that participants were confident that I adequately considered their input and confirmed that information, while also potentially gathering additional insights.

Data Collection Technique

I used audio recorded semistructured face-to-face interviews with participant⁷ reviewed transcripts and member checking as a primary technique to collect study data. In addition to interviews, I also examined organizational documents to collect specifically related case study data. These organizational documents included any records the participant organizations were willing to share that relate to their strategies to create an appealing working environment, employee turnover or employee retention.

The flow of the interview included asking questions, participants answering the questions, and then I voiced my understanding of their answer to each question. The participants then had the opportunity to validate that understanding of their answer or clarify if necessary. Yin (2015) noted that validating data at each phase of the data collection is an excellent means to capture reliable data. Fusch and Ness (2015) further noted that a data collection process that is rigorous provides the densest and cleanest data. By conducting the interview in this manner, streamlined other processes and enable data saturation.

After the interview, I informed the participants that I would use the recording to produce a transcript of the interview and schedule a time for them to review the transcript

for accuracy via email. I also informed them that after the transcript and transcript review are complete, I would use the information contained in the transcript and reviewed documents to formulate themes. I then used member checking to gain their feedback on these themes to ensure accuracy. Yin (2014) asserted that collecting accurate data is critical to qualitative research. Further, McIvor (2016) noted that any data that is not correct would contaminate any results. Madigank et al. (2015) stated more bluntly that there could not be triangulation without accurate data since at least one of the angles would not exist. This step is critical for reliability and credibility of this research.

There are many advantages to a semistructured interview process that includes transcript review and member checking. Semistructured interviews afford the opportunity for both depth and breadth of inquiry (Bernard, 2013), easy triangulation with other data sources (McIvor, 2016), denser data collection, and more timely data saturation (Madigank et al., 2015). Transcript review also ensures the accuracy and validity of the data collected by an interview (Fusch & Ness, 2015) while member checking reinforces the accuracy and validity of data analysis (Palinkas et al., 2015). Robinson (2014) noted that member checking provides excellent feedback to a researcher that they have captured the essence of the phenomena. Contrarily, interview protocols that include transcript review and member checking require more time from participants that could present a disadvantage (Anyan, 2013). Yin (2014) also noted that case study researchers face a challenge when doing interviews as they have to balance following the line of inquiry while not asking questions in a biased manner. The advantages to this method significantly outweigh the disadvantages as accurate data is essential for reliability and

validity. Therefore, I used semistructured interviews with transcript validation and member checking for this study.

Similar to advantages and disadvantages of a semistructured interview with transcript validation and member checking, there are also pros and cons to using document review. The first advantage to an examination of documents is that it could help reduce the amount of time that participants will need to provide to a researcher. Yin (2015) noted that readily available information could provide a researcher lots of context with minimal inconvenience to the participant. Additionally, document review also affords a researcher the opportunity to verify interview data and triangulate with interviews and other cases (McIvor, 2016). The potential disadvantages to using document review within this study included the possibility of generalized data or data aggregated with other offices outside of the Omaha metro area or something else that may limit its use in the study. Fortunately, I was able to review organizational documentation that was specific to those locations. The added benefit for data triangulation that document review afforded was worth the extra effort.

Data Organization Technique

I organized all collected data in a manner to facilitate ease of use and security. Research generates many types of data. I generated data that included raw materials such as interview audio recordings and transcripts, and archival documents as well as working materials such as notes, thematic analyses, and reflective journals containing comparisons of themes related to the conceptual framework identified during the literature review and data analysis. McIvor (2016) identified a journal as an excellent means to compare and

correlate analytic efforts during different phases of research. Bernard (2013) noted that many computer software programs exist to aid researchers in the organization, security, storage, and analysis of research data. The primary method for cataloging collected and analyzed data was using a Microsoft Excel database to list file names, dates of collection, and type of data or working papers. In addition to the Microsoft Excel database, I used NVivo software for additional organization and analysis of collected data. I maintained these databases and associated data files within a USB drive and keep backup copies on my computer. Morse (2015) noted that data organization techniques that allow a researcher to access and revisit raw data improve the overall reliability of the study. Additionally, Yin (2014) asserted that within case studies, databases are one method to maintain data collected in an organized manner so that the researcher can revisit the data if warranted.

For security, I stored the USB drive in a locked safe and use password protection for backup files on my computer. McKee (2013) insisted that it was necessary to keep research data secure and available for 5 years. Morse (2015) specified that securing, maintaining data for 5 years allows a researcher the ability to revisit raw data if necessary, and this practice can improve the overall reliability of the study. Further, Yazan (2015) argued that a researcher can improve the reliability of a study by maintaining data in an organized manner that facilitates availability and analysis. I will maintain all data and files in this manner for 5 years, after which I will destroy the USB drive and erase all backup files.

Data Analysis

Once I organized the data, I used triangulation as the primary analytic method. As this study was a multiple case study, I used methodological triangulation, as it allowed the opportunity to compare findings from multiple cases and data sources. Elo et al. (2014) asserted that the primary purpose of the analysis was to answer the research question. I developed my analytic strategy to answer the primary research question for this study: What strategies do fast food business leaders use to establish a positive working environment that reduces employee turnover? Each case of this multiple case study had unique contexts specific and independent of the others. Denzin (2012) identified four types of triangulation available to qualitative researchers but noted that methodological triangulation allows a researcher to compare findings from multiple data sources that have independent contexts. Yin (2014) identified triangulation as comparing different data sources to understand events better. The primary analytic method for this study was a methodological triangulation of data collected during interviews and archival document review.

To maintain validity and reliability, I used a strict analytic process. Qualitative research generates some analytic subjectivity that necessitates clear processes to maintain validity and reliability (Morse, 2015). Yin (2014) listed compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding as five steps for data analysis. I compiled the data as outlined in the data organization section by organizing all of the data collected from interviews and archival document reviews and developing a database. I used data coding to organize the collected data for easy ingestion into databases and analytic

software tools. For disassembling, I used NVivo to organize collected data into similar coding groups and identify themes. For reassembling, I grouped and compared theme clusters and then identified these clusters with themes that correlated with themes identified during literature review. Finally, I used the results of these processes to prepare narratives and groupings for conclusions and compared them to research published after the literature review. Strict adherence to these analytic steps coupled with member checking processes outlined within data collection contributed to strengthening the validity and reliability of this study. Morse (2015) noted that member checking coupled with strict analytic protocols help validity and reliability of research. I strictly adhered to the processes I have outlined to increase reliability and validity of this study.

Reliability and Validity

Correct information can be beneficial while incorrect information can be extremely harmful. In consideration of future readers and other researchers, I took several steps to ensure that any information resulting from this research is useful. Yin (2014) noted that while quantitative research is straightforward to measure regarding accuracy, qualitative research is more subjective. This subjectivity necessitates a researcher to pay specific attention to reliability and validity when conducting qualitative research.

Reliability

Reliability is a fundamental component of any research. Reliability within quantitative research relates directly to the replicability of results (Hoare & Hoe, 2013). Morse (2015) noted, however, that for qualitative research, dependability is the measure of reliability. Dependability is the ability for qualitative researchers to get similar results

when doing a similar study with a similar research question (Choe et al., 2015). I used precise protocols to increase the dependability of this study.

During all phases of this study, I used techniques to maintain dependability. First, I conducted all interviews following the interview protocol (Appendix A). By having a specific guideline for each interview, I minimized variation and increased the dependability of this data collection procedure. A guideline enhances the reliability of a research effort (Morse, 2015). I also recorded and transcribed interviews, and performed participant transcript validation to ensure the accuracy of those transcripts. Anyan (2013) identified transcript checking as a key element of data validation within qualitative research. Yin (2015) specifically noted transcript review as a means to maintain the accuracy of collected interview data and the importance of data accuracy to the reliability and validity of the research. After transcript review, the final method I used to maintain dependability of this study was member checking. I arranged with each of the participants the opportunity for them to consider and critique the thematic analysis either via email or in person to make sure that I understood their experiences correctly. I also afforded them the opportunity to offer new information during member checking sessions. Member checking is the review of themes with participants to ensure that a researcher has accurately captured their perception of an event (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Morse (2015) noted that member checking is a key analytic process that allows a researcher to produce dependable results. Yazan (2015) also asserted that member checking provides a researcher an excellent check within the analytic process that a researcher can use to

reach accurate conclusions. I followed the methods outlined above to minimize variation and increase the dependability of this study.

Validity

Validity directly relates to how accurately a study captures actuality (Morse, 2015). For this qualitative research study, validity comprised of credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Credibility specifically implies that something is believable from the perspective of a participant in an event (Yin, 2014). Morse (2015) noted that transferability relates to the relatability of the results to another context. Confirmability is simply that another researcher could corroborate the results (Morse, 2015). To increase validity within this study, I used multiple measures to address each of those attributes.

The strategy to increase the credibility of this study was to use member checking at several stages of data collection and analysis. Robinson (2014) noted that researchers use member checking as a method to gain feedback that they have captured the essence of the phenomena. Similarly, Fusch and Ness (2015) found that member checking is the most direct action to ensure that a researcher is accurately capturing a participant's perceptions of an event. I used transcript review to verify the accuracy of raw data collected by the interview and verification of the transcription. Similarly, I used member checking to have participants examine the thematic analysis to verify that analytic efforts were credible from their perspective.

The strategy for transferability within this study was to achieve data saturation and correlate general themes from the conceptual framework that were evident from

specific data collection efforts. I used methods that ensured data saturation to increase the likelihood of breadth and depth of data collection. Data saturation ensured that I captured all information available about a phenomenon. After data saturation, this practice included using extracts from interviews that specifically related to themes identified during the review of literature for the conceptual framework. Palinkas et al. (2015) noted the correlation of themes and actual events provide a solid foundation for the validity of qualitative research. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) noted that correlations often directly relate to the transferability of research to other contexts. Finally, Morse (2015) concluded that conceptual themes often exist in many different places. Strictly following protocols for data gathering, semistructured interviews, member checking, and triangulation was my strategy to increase transferability of this study.

The plan for confirmability for this study included those strategies already outlined for ensuring credibility and transferability because confirmability depends on credibility and transferability. Yin (2015) noted that one strategy to increase validity is to dedicate oneself to formal and explicit procedures when doing research. Beyond those steps already outlined, I kept a reflective journal to increase confirmability. Houghton et al. (2013) suggested that a reflective journal allows a researcher to document an entire research effort. Additionally, Morse (2015) noted that a reflective journal provides an opportunity for a second researcher to review procedures and analysis within a study. The strategy I used to increase confirmability was to maintain credibility, transferability, and keep a reflective journal.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included a detailed explanation of the methodology and design of this study. The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that business leaders use to create a positive working environment that reduces employee turnover. To investigate the strategies that business leaders use to create a positive working environment that reduces employee turnover, I chose a qualitative multiple case study. The population for the study included fast food business leaders who have experience implementing a strategy to establish appealing working environments. Yin (2014) asserted the best source of data for case study research is from those with relevant experience. My role as the researcher put me in a position to be the primary data collector and analyst. By following strict ethical guidelines and structured techniques, I provided reliable and valid insights into strategies to improve working environments for fast food restaurant workers and reduce employee turnover. These steps should help other business leaders develop improved strategies to establish an appealing working environment and put them into practice. Section 3 will include detailed findings and recommendations on how a fast food business leader could improve working environments.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces voluntary employee turnover. These data came from fast food business leader interviews and review of company documentation from within three fast food businesses in Omaha, Nebraska. The average voluntary employee turnover within these units was less than 20% over the past 18 months, while the national average voluntary employee turnover for fast food establishments is nearly 50% (BLS, 2017). The findings indicated that these fast food business leaders used strategies that aligned their behaviors and policies with three interdependent themes, fairness, communication, and trust, to establish an appealing work environment that reduced voluntary employee turnover. Within Section 3, I present a detailed description of the findings, including how business leaders could use the findings and how findings might lead to social change, recommend actions for business practitioners and researchers, reflect on the process, and present conclusions.

Presentation of the Findings

I collected multiple data sets to answer the research question: What strategies do fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces voluntary employee turnover? Data collection efforts included semistructured interviews with three fast food business leaders and review of business documentation to include policies and records of each of three different organizations in the greater Omaha metro area. The semistructured interviews took place at locations of participants choosing

where participants would feel free to answer honestly. The longest duration of any single initial interview was just under 1 hour. I transcribed each interview verbatim and provided each participant the opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy. After transcript review, I analyzed and coded each transcript. I also analyzed and coded all organizational documentation into themes and then uploaded each into NVivo 10 for Windows to identify common themes and codings across all data sources. Once all data were coded, I performed member checking interviews with each participant by providing each a summarized transcript of their interview organized by thematic headings and asked for their input on the analysis and follow on questions. Colquitt and Zipay (2015) posited that business leaders could use a cycle of fairness, communication, and trust to build a positive working climate. The results of this study were very similar in that the three themes to emerge from all cases were fairness, communication, and trust.

Theme 1: Fairness

Fairness is essential to creating a positive working environment. Fairness was evident throughout the organizational documentation. Similarly, each participant explicitly mentioned fairness multiple times while describing his or her strategy to establish a positive working environment. The theme of fairness reached across multiple leadership behaviors, business activities, and organizational documents as shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Frequency of Fairness

Fairness relative to:	References in interviews	References in documentation	% participants and organizations
Interpersonal treatment	21	19	100%
Regulation	18	21	100%
Wages	15	10	100%

Fair treatment of employees is a cornerstone strategy to creating a positive working environment. When managers treat employees fairly, they are practicing effective management and helping to shape positive employee perceptions of the organization. Fair treatment of employees was a policy in all organizations with explicit instructions and examples in management and supervisory handbooks. Further, several participants directly associated fair interpersonal treatment with a more pleasant working environment. Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), and Participant 9 (P9) noted that fairly treating employees makes their job easier and more enjoyable. Participant 5 (P5) and Participant (P8) pointed out that fair treatment is a basic expectation and that consistently equitable treatment of employees alleviates at least one worry for staff and benefits the organization as a whole. P8 noted a basic expectation of fairness within the workplace. Ellingson et al. (2016) characterized a fast food working environment as hectic and highly unpredictable. Participants indicated a belief that fair treatment of employees helps employees develop and maintain positive attitudes and behaviors

towards their jobs despite the hectic and highly unpredictable nature of the fast food industry. The participants and organizations appear to be putting AET into practice by using their strategy of fair treatment to minimize negative affective events and maximize positive affective events. Ryan et al. (2015) specifically noted that a manager could use AET to influence employee attitudes and behaviors towards work positively. The general sentiment amongst participants relative to their strategy of fairness is that the fair treatment of employees appears to make the working environment more pleasant and less worrisome, which has distinct business advantages.

In addition to fair interpersonal treatment, fast food restaurant business leaders use a fairness strategy for effective workplace regulation to establish a positive working environment. Several participants indicated they designed business rules with employee success in mind. At first, those statements surprised me as most of the regulations and operating policies were restrictive and noted explicitly prohibited behaviors. However, after further examination, policy documents available to employees also contained eligibility criteria for advancements and recognition programs. Both organizational documents and participants indicated that the fairness strategy guided business policy development so that policies not only included the necessary boundaries but also included recognition, awards, and advancement criteria. The fairness strategies within explicitly stated business policies mean that these organizations hold all employees to the same standards, exclude any perception of favoritism, and provide employees the opportunity to excel within the working environment. These fairness strategies are consistent with AET because participants use fair business policies as a strategy to reduce or avoid

possible adverse affective events while creating opportunities for employees to realize positive affective events. These fast food business leaders have developed reasonable workplace regulations to set behavioral and performance expectations within their organizations. Moreover, participants' fairness strategies include equal opportunities for their employees to excel and advance, which reinforces perceptions of equal justice and opportunity within the workplace environment.

Fairness extends beyond the organizational borders and into the local area specifically within the context of wages. Participant 7 (P7) indicated that fairness extends beyond the organization in that if employees believe another organization to be fairer, it would present a problem to the organization. Specifically, most of the participants noted pay as an important consideration of fairness. Competitive pay is a major consideration within Omaha, as the labor market is tight with an unemployment rate of near 3% (BLS, 2017). All organizations used U.S. Department of Labor data on prevailing wages or local wage determinations to offer competitive wages for their employees. Participant 3 (P3) characterized the situation as a choice to either pay a good employee what they are worth or lose them. P3 further clarified that while it is impossible to pay more than other organizations, equitable pay and a better working environment should contribute to keeping valued employees. Similarly, Gittings and Schmutte (2015) concluded that wage impact on turnover intention varies widely according to many contexts, including organizational factors and local labor markets. P9 summarized the connection between wages and fairness as a reassurance to employees of fair treatment in general. Equitable wages reinforce the perceptions of fairness within the working environment.

Consistent with AET, fairness appears to be the necessary foundation for building a positive working environment. Jiménez et al. (2015) warned that the absence of fairness within the workplace could create negative affective events and detriment a working environment. These fast food business leaders have used fairness as a foundational strategy on which to create positive affective events and build a positive working environment. Within each case, there was evidence provided by participants and within organizational documents that business leaders considered fairness regarding interpersonal relations, policy, and practice. A business leader reinforces fairness within the workplace by providing employees equal opportunities to succeed (Lloyd et al., 2015). Further, Kang et al. (2105) noted that employees often associate opportunity and success as positive affective events. Provision of explicit guidelines provides opportunities for employees to realize positive affective events within the organization and develop a positive working environment.

Each of the fast food business leader participants reflected on fairness and acknowledged that fairness was a cornerstone of their strategies to establish an appealing working environment that reduced employee turnover. Participants used the strategy of fairness as a guiding principle to shape interpersonal treatment, workplace expectation, advancement opportunity, and wage setting. While fairness was prevalent within each of these efforts, the participants also noted communication as an important strategy to establish an appealing work environment.

Theme 2: Communication

Communication is at the center of any culture or organization. Within the context of the fast food industry where the environment can be hectic and unpredictable, communication is also a tool that fast food business leaders can use to make connections and establish a positive or appealing working environment. Communication includes many of the basics of establishing expectations and setting norms but goes beyond that within the context to create an appealing working environment. Keskes (2014) noted that business leaders must communicate to influence employees to share an organizational mission, engage employees, and clarify standards. The importance of communication was evident throughout organizational documentation and handbooks within each organization. Similarly, participants and reviewed documents within this study indicated that fast food business leaders use an effective communication strategy to establish an appealing working environment within the activities of training, employee engagement, and corrective actions (Table 3).

Table 3

Frequency of Communication

Communication relative to:	References in interviews	References in documentation	% participants and organizations
Training	19	32	100%
Employee engagement	17	19	100%
Corrective actions	11	8	100%

Fast food business leaders use training as part of their communication strategy to establish a positive working environment. In each case, organizational training handbooks contained instructions that explicitly called for two-way communication during training sessions. Participants noted that training afforded them an opportunity to establish effective two-way communication. P7 identified training as both a means to communicate performance expectations to employees and an opportunity for employees to communicate they feel comfortable doing the job. One training handbook outlined a process where the trainee would explain in his or her own words the task and its importance to the trainer, then review his or her performance of the task, and then a supervisor would ask the trainee if they thought they could improve the task process itself. Moreover, participants identified training as an opportunity to communicate to their employees that they were going to help them succeed. Further, P3 identified training as a way to help employees become comfortable and capable of doing their jobs. Long and Perumal (2014) identified the importance of training in the workplace as training reduces role stress.

Relative to AET, effective training minimizes negative affective events that could arise because of role stress; however, many of the participants took the opportunity to use training for establishing positive affective events within the working environment. For instance, several participants indicated that training was also an opportunity to demonstrate to employees that they were there to support the employees. Similarly, Jehanzeb et al. (2015) concluded that training is often the single most impactful form of organizational support that a fast food business leader can provide to employees. Beynon

et al. (2015) further concluded that training is a form of employee empowerment. Fast food business leaders can use training as part of their communication strategy to establish organizational support and employee empowerment when trying to develop an appealing working environment as both illicit positive affective events.

Similar to training, employee engagement provides another opportunity for fast food business leaders to use communication to establish a positive working environment for their employees. All participants indicated that they try to build a supportive team mentality within their workplace and that listening to employees was critical to these efforts. Clarke and Mahadi (2015) noted that listening to others and taking them seriously is a sign of respect while Palanski et al. (2014) associated active listening with engaging leadership behaviors. All participants indicated that they needed to engage employees to get to know them, and most indicated that listening to employees was an important part of that engagement. Supervisory handbooks at two organizations specifically noted that engagement included listening and that listening was critical to know employees and their needs. Beyond getting to know their employees, the participants also took steps to build a group dynamic where fellow employees would help each other. P3, P5, and P6 noted encouragement of shift swapping if an employee event arose after posting the schedule. Several other participants and policy documents available to employees from all organizations indicated similar practices, especially when supporting what employees considered significant life events. Lloyd et al. (2015) found that supervisory listening accompanied with appropriate action positively affects and reinforces employee perceptions of consideration, respect, justice, and trust and are consistent with AET. The

participants and readily available policy documents indicated the use of a communication strategy to engage employees effectively in establishing a positive working environment.

Supporting employee needs is an obvious way to implement a communication strategy and establish an appealing working environment to employees. However, another opportunity identified to communicate a positive working environment was corrective actions. All participants noted that the process of properly communicating corrective actions was important and sometimes complicated. As an example, participants noted that while training they want to balance correcting employee task behavior while building employee confidence. Each of the participants pointed out that corrective actions in training were always supporting the individual employee within the context of the task. As corroboration, I found that training manuals listed encouragement as a primary means for corrective training actions. However, in the case of other behavioral issues, participants noted a shift in approach, as they have to balance respect for an individual with caring for the group. All participants noted that organizational justice is critical but necessitates a balance between respecting the person and taking care of the team. P7 explained, “There is always a desire to praise in public and dress down in private, but if it is a zero tolerance issue then that balance will always shift in favor of the group.” Further P1, P3, P5, P6, and P8 indicated that mild infractions are the most challenging to balance between the needs of the individual and the group while the more serious infractions are easier because their actions will favor the team. Notably, each organization provided policy documents to employees that explicitly identified behaviors that would result in immediate termination. Many of the immediate termination behaviors posed a risk to

other employees or customers. P7 clarified, “Bullying is a zero tolerance behavior because it can destroy so much so fast, if someone is bullying, the only corrective action is their removal.” Einarsen and Nielsen (2015) also concluded that bullying alone could tip the balance between a positive working environment and a negative one. Corrective actions within the context of AET serve multiple purposes that contribute to positive affective events. For instance, during training fast food business leaders focused on building the individuals success on a task and for mild behavioral infractions, they show respect and caring for the person by admonishing in private. In the case of a zero tolerance correction, business leaders are demonstrating to the entire organization that each employee is an important part of the team with explicit policies available to all employees. These fast food business leaders use corrective actions as a communication opportunity to create positive affective events and remove negative affective events in their efforts to establish a positive working environment.

While participants and organizational policies identified fairness as a foundation to their efforts to establish an appealing working environment, each of the fast food business leader participants reflected on communication as a means to build connections. Specifically, those communication efforts encompassed training and indoctrination, employee engagement, and corrective actions. Training and indoctrination help employees to be productive and comfortable within the working environment (Beynon et al., 2015). Employee engagement helps supervisors balance the needs of employees with needs of the organization and develop a sense of community (Skinner et al., 2014). Supervisors then use corrective actions to connect community standards of respect for

individuals with cultural expectations (Keskes, 2014). Given the importance that participants identified with fairness and communication, it was not surprising that the last theme identified was trust.

Theme 3: Trust

Scholars often identify trust as a critical part of a positive working environment. Trust is often a result of other actions rather than something a supervisor can simply create. In fact, Hernandez et al. (2014) identified a positive working environment as a cyclical process that includes fairness, communication, and trust. Participant interviews and review of organizational documentation within this research study indicated that fast food business leaders within these three organizations use fairness and communication to build an appealing working environment that contains trust. Participants use trust primarily as a feedback mechanism for their fairness and communications strategies.

Several of the participants indicated that they measure trust regarding how comfortable an employee is willing to communicate openly with them. Specifically, P2 concluded, “if they are afraid to tell me, then they do not trust me.” While the lack of willingness to share bad news may indicate a lack of trust, an employee that trusts the leadership of the organization will be very quick to deliver bad news when necessary. For instance, P1 noted, “We had one employee that made a major mistake but was quick to tell us, and we were able to fix most of the problem.” Further, all participants indicated that an environment where employees would talk frankly and openly was indicative of employee trust. Many of the participants associate a higher willingness of employees to

deliver bad news directly with a greater degree of confidence in their fair treatment of employees.

Similarly, participants use training processes outlined in training manuals to build and measure trust within the working environment. While training is task specific, the focus is on the success and comfort of the employee performing the task. P8 noted, “as more trust is developed, many of the employees will start to critique their performances.” Several participants indicated that it was fulfilling to see new employees develop a sense of trust that made them comfortable enough to point out their weaknesses to their supervisors. Participants also noted that if the training process was a positive experience for the employee, then that sense of trust continues with employees willing to self-critique their performance.

Beyond training, participants also noted using performance management processes to measure trust with employees. When providing feedback to employees on their performance, participants observe how employees receive their feedback and the amount and type of discussion. Each organization has documented performance management systems that call for regular communications or feedback sessions that either the supervisor or employee could initiate. For instance, P1, P2, and P8 opined that if an employee was proactively asking for improvement advice, it was because the employee trusted the supervisor and associated that opinion with helping them to succeed. An employee proactively seeking feedback from a supervisor is exhibiting behavior that demonstrates trust (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015). Conversely, P1 noted, “A hotly debated performance report often illustrates a lack of trust.” The way an employee

receives and reacts to their performance evaluation, helps participants measure trust within the working environment. That trust results from participants' fairness and communication strategies. Within the context of AET, participants using trust as a feedback mechanism is quite logical. Affective events will influence employee attitudes and behaviors towards work (Ryan et al., 2015). Specifically, Jehanzeb et al. (2015) concluded that within the fast food industry, trust developed through organizational activities is a result of realizing positive affective events within a workplace. Further, employees often judge several aspects of an organization based on the presence or lack of trust (Hernandez et al., 2014). Logically, business leaders using strategies to establish an appealing working environment would use a feedback mechanism that aligns with employee perceptions that would measure the efficacy of strategies. Trust is an excellent measure of employee perceptions of fairness and communication.

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces voluntary employee turnover. I purposely limited the participants to fast food business leaders within three Omaha fast food organizations who have created successful strategies to establish an appealing work environment to reduce employee turnover. The results of this study indicate that these successful fast food business leaders use strategies of fairness, communication, and trust to establish appealing working environments. The findings from this study could add to enhancing business practices within the fast food industry in that business leaders could use strategies guided by the themes of fairness,

communication, and trust to align their organizational activities resulting in a positive working environment despite the normally hectic context found within the fast food industry.

The findings from this study align with the conceptual framework of AET and review of the literature regarding positive working environments. Lloyd et al. (2015) concluded that fairness, communication, and trust set the standards for positive affective events necessary for employees to realize positive attitudes and behaviors towards work. Specifically, Hernandez et al. (2014) prescribed a constant cycle of fairness, communication, and trust for the establishment of a favorable working environment. Fairness and communication are interdependent and mutually supporting while trust is a resultant product of effectively instituting fairness and communication within business activities. Those instances are extremely consistent with when Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) concluded that managers who communicated boundaries and equitably administered those standards reinforced employee perceptions of trust within a working environment. Consistent with the context of AET, an employer treating an employee with fairness results in a positive affective event despite the hectic fast food working environment (Ryan et al., 2015). The results of this study were highly consistent with the reviewed literature and the conceptual framework.

Business practitioners could use strategies of fairness, communication, and trust within their activities. As evidenced by this study, fairness and communication are very effective in guiding the development, administration, and practice of human resource policies. Gohar et al. (2015) also identified the importance of fairness, communication,

and trust within the equitable administration of human resources activities, and Okeke et al. (2016) identified fairness, communication, and trust as important guidelines for supervisory activities within the positive working environment. Business practitioners could use strategies incorporating fairness, communication, and trust for many of their business practices in general but would likely realize the most benefit by using such strategies specifically to guide development, implementation, and administration of human resource policies, organizational justice, and supervisory behaviors.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study that fast food business leaders use strategies of fairness, communication, and trust to establish appealing working environment could have potential relevance for a positive social change. The implication for positive social change exists because more consistent employment and less work-related stress resulting from appealing working environments increase the potential for employees and their families to have more economic security and become more involved within their communities. Further, Barrick et al. (2015) noted that values within an organizational working environment shape individual employee behaviors through various affective and social processes that extend beyond work. Liden et al. (2014) found that work environments often enculturate employees. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) also noted that different working environments lead to different affective states that will affect different attitudes and behaviors inside and outside of the workplace. The presence of fairness, communication, and trust within a workplace where employees spend a significant percentage of their waking hours could help employees bring those themes into their

families and communities. The specific implications for positive social change resulting from enculturation of fairness, communication, and trust could result in employees using these three traits to develop stronger family structures, improved interpersonal relations, and strengthen local communities.

Recommendations for Action

The findings of this study are unique to the context of fast food business leaders incorporating strategies of fairness, communication, and trust into their efforts to establish an appealing working environment that reduced voluntary employee turnover. These findings support the premise that in practice, a business leader using AET to develop a strategy to reduce employee turnover would focus on improving employee perceptions of the working environment, which in turn would reduce employee turnover. Okeke et al. (2016) noted that a business leader could use AET to develop strategies to optimize the human side of business. Hernandez et al. (2014) identified a cycle of fairness, communication, and trust as one associated with a positive working environment that would lead to significantly reduced employee turnover. Similarly, within the context of AET, employees associate fairness, communications, and trust within their workplace with positive affective events and then reflect those conditions positively through their attitudes and behaviors towards work (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The findings from this study could prove helpful to existing fast food restaurant owners, managers, shift leaders, and future fast food business leaders in their efforts to establish an appealing working environment that reduces employee turnover. These findings could also assist

other business leaders in developing similar strategies consistent with AET to create an appealing working environment that reduces employee turnover.

I recommend fast food business leaders specifically and small business owners in general review the findings of this study and consider if using AET to develop strategies could be useful within the context of their organizations. Fast food business leaders could use the results of this study and principles of AET to establish strategies that include fairness, communications, and trust throughout their operations to create a positive working environment. Business leaders could implement integrated and interdependent strategies of fairness, communication, and trust through supervisory, human resource, and employee development efforts to improve employee perceptions of the working environment and reduce employee turnover. In other words, a strategy consistent with AET would prescribe a process in which business leaders take care of the employees and the employees take care of the organization.

I will disseminate the findings from this research through various methods. First, I will provide participants their choice of a copy of the study or an executive summary or both. The study will also be published and available through the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database for academia and others. Additionally, I will seek opportunities to present findings from this study in business related forums and conferences. Specifically, I will inform the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce of this study, and offer them an executive summary and present the results at any of their events if they would like.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies fast food restaurant business leaders use to establish an appealing work environment that reduces voluntary employee turnover. Within the fast food industry, poor working environments are a primary cause of voluntary employee turnover (Jung & Yoon, 2014; Ryan et al., 2015). My findings extend the existing research on the need for fast food business leader strategies to establish an appealing work environment that reduces employee turnover. Specifically, my conclusions are very similar to others in that Okeke et al. (2016) concluded that business leaders could use AET to optimize the human side of operations and Hernandez et al. (2014) found that fairness, communication, and trust are necessary for employees to perceive a positive working environment.

Recommendations for further research include extending beyond my primary limitations of fast food business leaders within Omaha. I would recommend including a broader geographical scope and broaden into other service industries. Future researchers could also consider researching into how reduced employee turnover costs could improve both food quality and profitability within the industry. Additionally, further research could add to the scholarly understanding of strategies used to create positive working environments that reduce employee turnover within the fast food or service industry.

Reflections

The process of completing a Doctoral of Business Administration doctoral study was very personal and challenging. On a professional level, I wanted to complete a terminal degree that I would be able to use practically without having to change

occupations. On a personal level, a terminal degree did not mean that I knew everything about a subject, only that I would gain the tools necessary to identify a problem, lay out a logical method to research that problem, and then analyze varying approaches and apply a solution that could pass academic and practical rigor. This process was challenging in that it pushed me to be more circumspect and look at alternative approaches rather than the most expedient fix to a problem. Sometimes the most expedient fix is not the most enduring or sustainable.

Conclusion

Fast food business leaders like other business leaders face many risks. Employee turnover is a risk that can adversely affect any organization, but fast food organizations also face keen competition, lower profit margins, and many risks that exacerbate the effects of employee turnover. Within the fast food industry, voluntary employee turnover rates are twice that of the national average, above 50% (BLS, 2017). To maintain an advantage over competitors and reduce risks, a business owner needs to retain quality employees (Strohmeier, 2013). Data analysis indicated that the way to retain quality employees could be as simple as taking care of the employees by using strategies of fairness, communication, and trust. The results of their efforts would support this indication as each of the organizations has a turnover rate of less 20%, less than half than that found within the industry and less than half of the national average for all sectors. Study participants have incorporated an integrated strategy of fairness, communication, and trust to optimize the human side of their businesses. Participants are taking care of

their employees, and in return, their employees are taking care of business and significantly reducing at least one of the many of the risks to the organization.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

This purpose of this interview is to explore Omaha fast food business leader strategies to create a positive working environment to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Participants for this interview include fast food business leaders in the Omaha Metro Area. I asked each participant the same set of questions using the protocol outlined below:

1. I will introduce myself to participants as a doctoral student at Walden University and give a brief overview of the purpose of the research and time required for the interview.
2. I will then present a copy of the consent form for the participants to read and sign before any interview starting if the participant has not signed the form prior. The participants will be encouraged by the researcher to ask any questions or seek any desired clarifications and reminded that participation is voluntary and they may withdraw at any time.
3. I will bring two copies of consent form and give one copy of the signed inform consent forms to the participant.
4. The participants will be reminded that the interview will be audio recorded and the recorder will be started and the specific date and time will be recorded.
5. I will commence the interview by asking the questions and recording answers in the same sequence as noted on the research instrument. Estimated time required for the interview is 1 hour but more time could be required.

6. To conclude, I will thank the participant, stop the audio recording and arrange at the end a timeline for transcript review and a follow up with the participant for member checking.

Introduction, Interview, and Follow up

Thank you for your participation. I am James Forrest and am a doctoral student at Walden University. The purpose of this interview is to explore strategies that fast food business leaders use to create a positive working environment to reduce voluntary employee turnover. I will ask each participant the same set of questions. Additionally, I will ask follow-up questions to probe and obtain in-depth answers. The anticipated time of this interview is 1 hour not to exceed 2 hours. I would like your permission to record this interview so that I can accurately document the information you provide. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or stop the interview, please let me know.

At this time I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to continue this interview. You will receive one copy, and I will keep the other under lock and key, separate from your reported responses.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any concerns before we begin? At the end of the interview, we will make arrangements for transcript review. I will provide you with a copy of the transcript of this interview either via email or hard copy and allow you the

opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy. You can provide corrections to the transcript either in person or via email. Additionally, after I have done an initial analysis of all of the data, I would like to give you the opportunity for member checking. Member checking is a useful tool that gives you the opportunity to make sure that I am accurately capturing the themes of your experience. We can do member checking via telephone or in person. If there are no other questions, then with your permission we will begin.

After Each Question

After each question, I will provide a synthesized paraphrase of the participant's answer and ask: Did I miss anything and is there anything else you would like to add?

Interview Questions

1. In your experience, what types of work environment seem to have the most profound negative effect on employee turnover?
2. In your experience, what types of work environment appear to have the most profound positive impact on employee turnover?
3. What strategies do you use to reduce employee turnover?
4. What strategies are the most effective in reducing employee turnover?
5. What strategies have you used that are least effective in reducing employee turnover?
6. What strategies have you used to establish an appealing work environment?
7. What additional information about your experience in implementing strategies to improve the working environment, including challenges and measures of effectiveness would you like to add that we have not covered?