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Employee Retention Strategies in the Information Technology Industry

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Abstract

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by

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MS, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2012

BS, Northwestern State University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Productivity declines when employees voluntarily leave an organization. The purpose of this case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among their skilled information technology (IT) professionals in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Six business leaders were selected because they had implemented strategies to retain skilled IT professionals. Herzberg's 2-factor theory was the conceptual framework for this doctoral study. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and review of the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook. Data analysis consisted of assembling the data, organizing the data into codes, compiling the data into themes, and interpreting and disclosing information about the themes. Member checking and methodological triangulation increased the validity and reliability of the study. Three themes emerged from the study: engaging employees and building positive relationships, recognizing and rewarding employees for their contributions, and retaining employees is not related to compensation. Recommendations for action include designing or redesigning strategies to engage and recognize employees for their efforts and achievements. The findings from this study may contribute to social change by supporting business leaders' ability to provide high-quality, affordable services to customers and local communities due to higher retention of skilled employees and reduction of costs associated with employee turnover.

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Dedication

This page is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for giving me the strength and wisdom to push through this difficult journey. This page is also dedicated to my daughter, Karley, as proof that anything is possible if you are willing to go after it with all your heart and keep your faith in God.

Acknowledgments

I want to take this time to thank my family for their relentless support during this long journey. I would also like to thank my mentor, Dr. Tim Truitt for his expertise, guidance, and patience. I would also like to thank my second committee member, Dr. Sean Stanley, my URR, Dr. Neil Mathur, and Dr. Richard Snyder. Last but not least, I want to thank all my participants who contributed invaluable information to this study.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizations suffer when information technology (IT) professionals leave (James & Matthew, 2012). The quality of an organization's products and services decreases when IT professionals voluntarily leave (Abii, Ogula, & Rose, 2013). Therefore, business leaders must create effective strategies to retain their IT professionals (Mohlala, Goldman, & Goosen, 2012).

Background of the Problem

Many organizations are experiencing problems with retaining their IT professionals, leading to a high turnover rate in the IT industry (Armstrong, Nelms, Reimenschnieder, & Reid, 2012; Ford, Swayze, & Burley, 2013). This high turnover rate has a negative impact on an organization's competitive advantage and productivity because IT professionals take their advanced expertise away when they leave the organization (Smith, Stokes, & Wilson, 2014). The costs of hiring and training a new employee for a vacant position are also high (Sharma & Nambudiri, 2015). Replacing an IT professional can cost an organization between 90% and 200% of the former employee's yearly earnings (Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012). Many organizations have noticed the trend in high turnover rates among skilled IT professionals and have created strategies to keep their IT professionals employed with them (Mohlala et al., 2012).

Problem Statement

IT is one of the leading service sectors in the world, but it has the highest rate of turnover (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2014). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) projected many technology jobs to grow by 30.7% through 2026, meaning that IT professionals are less cautious about changing jobs. The general business problem is that when IT professionals leave their organization, the organization's productivity declines. The specific business problem is that some business leaders lack strategies to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. The population included business leaders from one organization located in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex who had strategies for retaining IT professionals. Information from this single case study may benefit customers and local communities because higher retention of skilled employees and reduction of costs associated with turnover may lead to the administration of high-quality, affordable services.

Nature of the Study

Goldberg and Allen (2015) asserted that qualitative researchers use open-ended questions to identify current or past events and issues. In contrast, quantitative researchers use closed-ended questions to test hypotheses (Claydon, 2015). Mixed methods involve researchers combining qualitative and quantitative designs to answer overarching research questions (Sparks, 2014). To explore the different strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization, I did not test hypotheses, which occurs in quantitative and mixed methods studies. Therefore, a qualitative research method best suited my intention to explore the central research question.

There are many qualitative research designs, but a single case design best suited my needs for exploring the retention strategies of business leaders. Researchers are allowed to ask the *how* or *what* questions needed to understand a precise or intricate phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The phenomenology design requires processing a large number of interviews; extended data analysis is also required to reach data saturation (Lauring, 2013; Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). The phenomenology design was not suitable for my study because I needed versatility to explore, interview, observe, and analyze the organization and the IT professionals. Researchers use ethnographic design when their focus is on concepts from specific cultural groups (Berthelsen & Frederiksen, 2014; Cagliuso, 2014). My intent was not to study cultural groups; therefore, the ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study. Potter (2013) defined narrative inquiry as involving emphasis on deductions from collected stories and group conversations. Because my research did not require an analysis of a full personal story, narrative inquiry was not suitable for this study.

Research Question

What strategies do business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization?

Interview Questions

1. What is your strategy for reducing the turnover rate among skilled IT professionals?

2. How effective is this retention strategy?
3. What causes IT professionals to leave the organization?
4. How do the IT professionals perceive their contributions within the organization?
5. How do you reward or recognize an IT professional for remarkable contributions to the organization?
6. What development and training plans do you have for IT professionals?
7. What lessons have you learned in trying to reduce the turnover rate among skilled IT professionals?
8. What additional information has proven beneficial for your ability to retain IT professionals?

Conceptual Framework

I chose the Herzberg two-factor theory to explore the issues that may affect turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman developed the two-factor theory in 1959. The two-factor theory consists of two sets of unrelated factors. The first set consists of motivators that cause job satisfaction in the workplace (Herzberg et al., 1959). The second set consists of hygiene factors that, when absent or deficient, contribute to the presence of employee dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivators are (a) recognition for completed work, (b) achievement, (c) advancement, (d) the job itself, (e) responsibility, and (f) growth (Herzberg et al., 1959). Hygiene factors are (a) interpersonal relationships, (b) company policy, (c) salary, (d) working conditions, and (e) security (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Employee satisfaction and employee dissatisfaction are influenced, respectively, by motivators and hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 1959). Employees are more likely to become satisfied when motivators are present and to be neutral when motivators are absent (Herzberg et al., 1959). Desirable hygiene factors do not lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction when present but leave employees in a neutral state (Herzberg et al., 1959). However, when undesirable hygiene factors are present, or positive factors are absent or deficient, employee dissatisfaction is also present (Herzberg et al., 1959). When the removal of undesirable hygiene factors takes place, individuals do not obtain satisfaction but return to a neutral state (Herzberg et al., 1959). Ambrose and Kulik (1999) asserted that the study of employee motivation using two-factor theory is still applicable and that research on motivation indicates its continuing relevance. The incorporation of Herzberg's two-factor theory into the conceptual framework of this study assisted in identifying and exploring strategies used by business leaders to improve the turnover rates among skilled IT professionals.

Operational Definitions

Information technology (IT) professional: An IT professional is someone who serves as a programmer or developer, technology specialist, network or systems analyst, administrator, or computer and information research scientist (Leidner, Moquin, & Riemenschneider, 2013).

Retention: Retention is keeping employees in a company (Butali et al., 2013).

Turnover: Turnover occurs when an employee completely separates from an organization through termination, discharge, resignation, or layoff (Özoğlu, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts considered to be true but not verifiable by a researcher; and these assumptions may influence the outcome of the research (Bohme, Childerhouse, Deakins, & Towill, 2012; Merriam, 2014). I assumed that the participants gave candid responses to the interview questions and answered truthfully. A second assumption was that the selected population of IT professionals in this study was appropriate for exploring themes involving the phenomena. The final assumption was that the interview questions applied to addressing the business problem.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses beyond the researcher's control that influence the understanding of research outcomes (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The limitations of this study pertained to the selection of the geographic location and the diversity of the interviewees. The choice of a Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex organization created a weakness in the diversity of opinions and perspectives compared to those of other geographic locations. Another limitation was that participants might not have felt comfortable sharing all relevant information needed to explore the research question, which may have led to limitations in coding and themes during the data analysis component of my single case study.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the factors or parameters excluded from a research study to narrow the bounds and scope of the research (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). The first delimitation was the fact the location of this study was in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. I aimed to narrow the scope of this study to one major location in Texas. The second delimitation was that I studied only one IT organization in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex because I wanted to conduct a single case study. Due to the large size of the organization, my final delimitation was that my sample included only business leaders within the organization who had first-hand knowledge related to the research topic.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

It is critical that business leaders identify and understand the reasons why IT professionals are leaving their organizations (James & Matthew, 2012). Understanding the various strategies that business leaders are practicing, as well as the success of these strategies, could provide insight into effective and the ineffective methods for (a) retaining skilled IT professionals (b) reducing costs associated with employee turnover, (c) safeguarding operational efficiency, and (d) sustaining competitiveness. The results of this study may also motivate business leaders to re-evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies to retain their current IT professionals, sustain profitability, and retain corporate knowledge.

Implications for Social Change

This study may contribute to social change by providing customers and local communities with high-quality, affordable services due to higher retention of skilled employees and reduction of costs associated with employee turnover. Business leaders may be compelled to design or redesign retention strategies aimed at fostering better understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of their employees to increase job satisfaction. Employee job satisfaction increases employee loyalty, leading to a more harmonious workplace, greater worker productivity, and reduced turnover costs for the company. These effects combine to strengthen the company's sustainability and stimulate growth, which promotes improved economic health for the company, its employees and their families, and the community at large.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. I used multiple peer-reviewed sources of academic research applicable to the research question. This literature review includes the topics of job satisfaction and motivators and job dissatisfaction and hygiene factors. I also address the study's conceptual foundation, conflicting theories, and my rationale for choosing Herzberg's two-factor theory over conflicting theories.

Strategy to Search the Literature

In the literature review, I describe theories and findings from past researchers' explorations regarding the retention of IT professionals. I used Walden University's library, Google Scholar, and Emerald to search for articles, books, and dissertations for information pertaining to reducing turnover among skilled IT professionals. Primary search terms included *IT professionals*, *turnover*, and *retention*. Secondary search terms included *Herzberg's two-factor theory*, *three-factor theory*, *job satisfaction, turnover,* *retention*, *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*, *job dissatisfaction*, *costs of employee turnover, work-life balance, Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics theory, training, development, reward, compensation, organization,* and *culture* (see Table 1).

Table 1

Synopsis of Sources in the Literature Review

Reference type	Total	Literature review sources 2014 and after	Literature review sources prior to 2014	%
Peer-reviewed journals	116	71	45	61.2%
Dissertations	4	3	1	2.2%
Books	3	1	2	0.7%
Total	123	75	48	60.9%

Conceptual Foundation

The conceptual framework for this study was Herzberg's two-factor theory. Herzberg and colleagues developed the two-factor theory after interviewing 203 Pittsburgh-area engineers and accountants (Herzberg et al., 1959). The engineers and accountants answered questions about their pleasure or displeasure with their current or previous job (Herzberg et al., 1959). After analyzing the data, Herzberg and colleagues identified factors on the job that influence satisfaction and another set of factors that influence dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). The two separate sets of factors are motivators and hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivators are (a) achievement, (b) recognition, (c) the work itself, (d) responsibility, and (e) advancement and growth

(Herzberg et al., 1959). The hygiene factors are (a) company policy, (b) supervision, (c) interpersonal relationships, (d) working conditions, and (e) salary (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Employee satisfaction and job performance are vital in organizations because they are two of the key indicators of productivity and profitability (Hee & Kamaludin, 2016). The traditional understanding is that if organizations improve unsatisfactory hygiene factors, employees become satisfied, and if organizations take away any one of the motivators, employees become dissatisfied (Hee & Kamaludin, 2016). However, Herzberg (1974) argued that employee satisfaction and employee dissatisfaction operate as a dual parallel continuum rather than being opposed on a single continuum. Even without the presence of motivating factors, job dissatisfaction does not necessarily occur (Herzberg, 1974). On the other hand, employees can consistently feel job satisfaction even when undesirable hygiene factors are present (Herzberg, 1974). Motivators provide long-term results regarding employee performance, and hygiene factors lead to short-term effects toward employee performance and job attitudes (Herzberg, 1974).

Job satisfaction correlates to job content, and job dissatisfaction correlates to work context (Herzberg, 1974). Job content makes employees happy through (a) recognition, (b) achievement, and (c) career growth (Hee & Kamaludin, 2016). Achievement makes employees happy because it means that they are given opportunities within the organization (Herzberg et al., 1959). Employee recognition also increases job satisfaction when feedback evaluates an employee’s performance (Hee & Kamaludin, 2016). Advancement and growth refer to learning new things to enhance an employee’s competence (Herzberg et al., 1959). With proper and effective training, employees can grow and advance their careers (Herzberg et al., 1959). Job context is indirectly related to actual job performance but relates to factors under the control of companies such as (a) salary, (b) working conditions, and (c) security (Herzberg, 1974).

Previous research using Herzberg's two-factor theory. Myers and Weed (1967) used two-factor theory to conduct a case study on motivation with employees at Texas Instruments. The researchers confirmed Herzberg's two-factor theory by finding that objectionable extrinsic factors do not always cause motivation when remedied (Myers & Weed, 1967). Myers and Weed concluded that some factors have more potential for motivation than for dissatisfaction.

Knoop (1994) used the two-factor theory to test the correlation between what employees at secondary school systems value regarding their job and their dissatisfaction. The participants were 386 volunteers from secondary schools in a large Canadian city (Knoop, 1994). The participants responded to questions asking to what degree they experienced each of the following values on their job: (a) promotion, (b) compensation, (c) the work itself, and (d) interpersonal relationships with supervisors and coworkers. Knoop found that the participants' responses supported Herzberg's theory.

Researchers using Herzberg's theory have concluded that the concepts of motivators and hygiene factors are still applicable. Costello and Welch (2014) used the two-factor theory for the exploration of professor and student perspectives of adequate online class environments. Costello and Welch found key differences in the perceptions of faculty and their students on what represents effective online communities. When students were on their own, they did not focus on any motivating factors related to learning enhancement. Instead, the students focused on hygiene factors related to sustainability, such as structure, promptness, and an open environment. Costello and Welch added that there was a strong sense of disconnect between the faculty and the students regarding what represented a strong online community. Research findings included the suggestion for faculty to establish a strong sense of community, ensuring that both sustaining (hygiene) factors and learning enhancement (motivator) factors are present (Costello & Welch, 2014).

Wilson (2015) also used two-factor theory to identify factors that allied health professionals felt affected their satisfaction levels and inclination to vacate their positions at an organization. Wilson found that growth and hygiene factors correlated with inclinations to leave the organization. Kula and Guler (2014) employed Herzberg's two-factor theory to find out if and to what extent law enforcement supervisor support correlates with employee satisfaction. The study findings indicated that law enforcement employees believed that support coming from a supervisor has a substantial effect on their satisfaction (Kula & Guler, 2014). As supervisor support increased, employee job satisfaction increased (Kula & Guler, 2014).

Kultalahti and Viitala (2014) used two-factor theory to study what motivates millennials in the workplace. Kultalahti and Viitala found that millennials wrote more about intrinsic factors and less about extrinsic factors. In addition, Kultalahti and Viitala found several dichotomies between the factors that influence, respectively, satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The key factors for millennials regarding motivation at work were having an attractive, diverse, and flexible workplace that nurtures positive relationships with coworkers.

Rahim and Daud (2013) used two-factor theory to observe how rewards motivated employees at the University of Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA). Rahim and Daud found that rewards have a positive effect on motivation. Rahim and Daud suggested that high levels of motivation and a strong aptitude to offer better rewards led to improved employee performance. Growth and advancement are the key motivators for employee satisfaction (Saeed, Rizwan, & Sikander, 2014).

Studies that are more recent have further expanded upon Herzberg's two-factor theory by using a three-factor theory. Kano (1984) first formulated the idea of three independent factors that influence satisfaction in different ways. The three factors are (a) dissatisfiers, (b) satisfiers, and (c) hybrids (Lee, Back, & Chan, 2014). *Dissatisfiers* are the minimum elements that encourage dissatisfaction when not fulfilled but do not produce employee job satisfaction when carried out (Lee et al., 2014). *Satisfiers* increase employee job satisfaction but do not create job dissatisfaction if not present (Lee et al., 2014). *Hybrids* encourage satisfaction if present and dissatisfaction if not present (Chen, Lu, Gupta, & Xialon, 2014).

Lee, Back, and Chan (2014) used three-factor theory to investigate perceived quality of work-life need attributes of 178 workers in the lodging industry across the United States. The researchers determined that hybrids such as a good reward system and cooperative employees are important components of job satisfaction when present and job dissatisfaction when not present (Lee et al., 2014). Liu (2016) used three-factor theory to explore job satisfaction and total quality management (TQM) among land authority employees. Lui collected and analyzed data from 210 land authority employees in Taiwan. TQM positively influenced job satisfaction among the land authority employees when present and negatively influenced job satisfaction among the land authority employees when not present (Liu, 2016). Scholfield and Reeves (2015) also noted the significance of using hybrids to study satisfaction among British voters.

Comparative job satisfaction theories. Maslow (1943) asserted that people have five sets of needs that they must meet in a specific order: (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) love and belongingness, (d) self-esteem, and (d) self-actualization (Maslow, 1970). As an individual fulfills the lower level needs, the higher level needs become known (Maslow, 1970).

Maslow (1943) created the hierarchy of needs for psychological purposes, but Lee and Hanna (2015) asserted that researchers have used it in discussions about managing employees. Employees will only be motivated by the needs that match up with their current level (Lee & Hanna, 2015; Nurullah, 2014). The rudimentary survival needs such as breathing, homeostasis, water, and food make up an individual’s physiological needs (Maslow, 1943). Individuals move on to their safety needs once they meet their physiological needs (Maslow, 1943). Safety needs are family, health, employment, and security of body (Maslow, 1943). Love and belongingness needs occur when safety needs no longer motivate individuals (Maslow, 1970). Social needs are the feelings of love, affection, and friendship that individuals need in order to feel as though they belong to a group (Maslow, 1970; Rahman & Nurullah, 2014). Self-esteem needs arise when individuals meet their social needs (Maslow, 1943). Self-esteem represents the higher needs of humans and increases as an individual's self-confidence and prestige increase (Maslow, 1970; Rahman & Nurullah, 2014). After individuals become satisfied with their self-esteem needs, self-actualization needs emerge (Maslow, 1943). Self-actualization is the highest need, and it is where a person is motivated to turn his or her perception of self into reality (Maslow, 1943).

Job characteristics theory also conflicts with Herzberg's theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Job characteristics theory evaluates purposefulness of work, accountability for work outcomes, and knowledge of outcomes, while skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback are the fundamental characteristics (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Skills needed to perform a job determine *skill variety* (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). *Task identity* is the timeframe required for completion of a job, while the magnitude to which a job affects others is *task significance* (Hackman & Oldman, 1976). *Autonomy* is complete individual freedom to complete a job (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). *Feedback* supplies individuals with information and direction on their effectiveness in handling a job (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

When skill variety, task identity, and task significance are present, meaningfulness of work occurs (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). As autonomy over the characteristics of the job grows, responsibility of outcomes occurs (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Once a job has been completed and the employee receives feedback, knowledge of the results occurs (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Therefore, internally motivated employees will undergo positive attitude changes when they operate efficiently

(Hackman & Oldham, 1976). However, dissimilarities among employees may influence or alleviate the way in which they respond to a job (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Comparison of the strengths of each theory. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs focuses on what motivates people to fulfill certain needs. Business leaders can focus on those needs when they figure out what needs motivate their employees (Bebe, 2016). Identifying the needs of employees could help business leaders to lower their turnover rate.

Two divisions make up the hierarchy of needs: upper level needs and lower level needs (Hatfield, Turner, & Spiller, 2013). Lower level needs are safety and physiological needs, whereas upper level needs include social, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs (Hatfield et al., 2013). In their conceptual article on altruism and cynicism, Hatfield et al. (2013) concluded that higher level needs were motivators in the workplace. Job performance increased as the higher level needs of employees were fulfilled (Hatfield et al., 2013).

Ismail and El Nakkache (2014) used the hierarchy of needs to study motivation and satisfaction among Lebanese workers. Although extrinsic job factors were more important to employees around the country, intrinsic job factors were still vital in terms of job satisfaction (Ismail & El Nakkache, 2014). Ismail and El Nakkache's determined that the presence of growth factors has a positive relationship with employee motivation. According to Maslow (1943), individuals will begin seeking fulfilment of higher needs once their lower needs are satisfied. Ismail and Nakkache concluded that motivation is more dependent on growth factors than on objectionable hygiene factors.

Nain (2013) surveyed existing literature and argued that the hierarchy of needs has drawbacks. Nain asserted that there is no common hierarchy of needs for everyone because every individual behaves in a different manner. The hierarchy of needs is different for every individual because humans are complex and have a complex range of needs (Nain, 2013).

Al-Aufi and Khulood (2013) also asserted that humans are complex. Through their assessment of motivation among librarians in Oman, Al-Aufi and Khulood found that lower level needs among the librarians were satisfied except for security but that their higher-level needs were not adequately satisfied. Al-Aufi and Khulood concluded that although it is possible to satisfy all five needs identified by Maslow, motivation is an individual concern because each person has his or her own individual goals.

Job characteristics theory can help leaders identify what job characteristics should be improved, what job characteristics may motivate employees, and what core job dimensions work (Batchelor et al., 2014; Chaudhry, Maurice, & Haneefuddin, 2015; Lazaroiu, 2015). Bahreinizadeh and Qojehbeiglu (2013) applied job characteristics theory to find a relationship between the job characteristics and employee performance of 55 Islamic Azad University employees in Germi Branch. After collecting and analyzing data, Bahreinizadeh and Qojehbeiglu concluded that a positive relationship exists among job characteristics and employee performance.

Pentadreddy and Suganthi (2015) also used the job characteristics theory to examine how organizational commitment correlates to empowerment, management, and job characteristics. The researchers used 605 employees from various industries across the world were used to probe how leadership and empowerment impact job characteristics and affect employee commitment to the organization (Pentadreddy & Suganthi, 2015). Pentadreddy and Suganthi found the behavioral patterns of leaders and the psychological power given to employees enhanced job characteristics and their commitment to the organization. Jobs need enrichment, full of challenges and opportunities to utilize an employee's full variety of skills that are beneficial to the organization (Pentadreddy & Suganthi, 2015).

There has also been previous research conducted where researchers have found no indications to prove job characteristics influence job satisfaction. Mukul, Rayhan, Hoque, and Islam (2013) used Hackman and Oldham's job characteristic theory to explore employee motivation among 100 participants in the garments industry across Bangladesh. Mukul et al. found that the garment industry workers' skills, talents, and potentialities showed signs of neglect due to the lack of job rotation among the workers. Mukul et al. failed to find a noteworthy relationship among job characteristics and employee satisfaction.

Lee-Ross (2002) also used the job characteristics theory to investigate Australian public and private sector hospital chefs' motivation levels. After collecting and analyzing data from 16 chefs at seven hospitals in Australia, Lee-Ross concluded that in theory, the variables shown in the job characteristics model had a specific relationship with one another, regarding job motivation among the chefs. However, the relationship between internal work motivation and other variables was less convincing and needed further examination to explain the outcome (Lee-Ross, 2002).

Reasons not to choose the comparative theories and models. I did not choose Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics theory or Maslow's hierarchy of needs as my conceptual foundation because both theories have unique aspects that differ from my focus of addressing the central research question. Maslow's hierarchy of needs largely focuses on individual needs. Satisfaction must be reached with lower level needs before advancement to upper level needs (Maslow, 1943). The job characteristics theory also focuses on individual needs because it emphasizes behavioral outcomes resulting from psychological states influenced by the core job characteristics (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Although researchers discussed the same topics regarding satisfaction using both theories, the constructs for the hierarchy of needs and the job characteristics theory are different from the two-factor theory. The intent of my research is to examine and determine the factors that encourage employee satisfaction as well as employee dissatisfaction among IT professionals. Therefore, the two-factor theory is most suitable for my research.

Job satisfaction and motivators. Fiorillo and Nappo (2014) defined job satisfaction as the degree of fit between the features of a job and employee expectations. According to Tansel and Gazioglu (2014), higher job satisfaction is possibly due to improvements in the pleasing aspects of the job. Gupta and Gokhale (2013) investigated the results of worker job and organization fit on satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and turnover intentions among Indian newspaper employees. Gupta and Gokhale collected data from 150 employees at four different newspaper companies around India. They found that employee job and organization fit have a strong positive relationship with organization commitment (Gupta & Gokhale, 2013). Overall, turnover intentions decreased as job satisfaction increased (Gupta & Gokhale, 2013).

Researchers trace turnover intentions back to job satisfaction (Diestel, Wegge, & Schmidt, 2014). Therefore, job satisfaction can be both a predictor and a means to prevent voluntary employee turnover (Nubuo, 2014). Dasgupta, Saur, and Singh (2014) investigated how managerial communication skills influenced employees' feelings and behaviors. Dasgupta et al., collected and analyzed data from 101 employees in three manufacturing firms in India. From their results, Dasgupta et al., concluded that a collaborative approach from managers improved employee performance and lessened their desire to quit the organization. Overwork, lack of flexible arrangements, and humiliation were the main causes of employee absenteeism (Dasgupta et al., 2014). Tziner, Ben-David, Oren, and Sharoni (2014) investigated the correlation between job centrality, turnover intentions, and satisfaction among 125 public workers. Tziner et al. concluded that managers should be attentive to the correlations between satisfaction and centrality and intentions to leave the organization. The interplay between those three factors could yield turnover intentions and lead up to actual turnover, which is why managers should create ways to improve work centrality and job satisfaction (Tziner et al., 2014).

Wong and Li (2015) investigated a sample size of 268 Chinese hotel employees regarding unethical managerial behavior. Wong and Li developed three factors of unethical managerial conduct: (a) unprincipled employee handling, (b) broken promises and unjust treatment of employees, and (c) inequity and inconsiderate employee treatment. Unethical treatment of employees positively correlated to overall satisfaction among the hotel employees, leading to the conclusion that hotel managers should develop a positive image among their staff to improve job satisfaction (Wong & Li, 2015).

Yang (2014) also explored how ethical leadership influences job satisfaction among a group of recent college alumni in Taiwan. Yang found that ethical leadership is a critical factor in job satisfaction among employees. Leaders should establish a code of ethics for their organization that does not conflict with their employees' beliefs (Yang, 2014). This code of ethics should include the following motivating factors (a) achievement, (b) recognition, (c) work-itself, (d) responsibility, and (e) advancement and growth (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Achievement. Achievement is a primary factor in job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959; Kang, Gatling, & Kim, 2015). Ghosh et al. (2015) asserted that achievement originates through training and development. Investigators have shown that development and training have a positive impact on organizational performance (Bin Atan, Raghavan, & Nik Mahmood, 2015).

Bin Atan et al. (2015) define training and development as learning how to complete a task properly to become successful on the job. The endurance of any business lies in its ability to train its employees to enhance performance and increase competitive advantage (Falola, Osibanjo, & Ojo, 2014). The enhanced performance and increased competitive advantage makes training and developing employees a critical component to an organization's profitability (Cloutier et al., 2015).

Organizations decrease turnover intentions and increase organizational commitment by training and developing their employees (Livitchi et al., 2015). An employee develops a winning attitude when trained properly (Cloutier et al., 2015). Business leaders who engage in the development and training of their employees boost those employees' (a) job satisfaction, (b) motivation, and (c) job commitment (Ameeq-ui-Ameeq & Harif, 2013). Employees consider the amount of training they received when deciding if they want to continue their employment with the organization (Kenneth, 2013). Adequate training and developing decreases an employee's turnover intentions (Cloutier et al., 2015).

Many business leaders choose to equip their employees through development processes and training (Kenneth, 2013). Training employees produces valuable assets for any organization because people are the key strategic resource of organizations (Livitchi et al. 2015; Sawitri & Muis, 2014). The knowledge and skills of an organization's human resources have become important to its performance competitiveness (Ubeda-Garcia, Marco-Lajara, Sabater-Sempere, & Garcia-Lillo, 2013). By developing and training employees, businesses receive a competitive advantage in their respective markets (Goswami, 2014).

However, adequate training and development does not always mean that employees are satisfied (Smith, Stokes, Wilson, & Smith, 2013). Kenneth (2013) noted that some businesses have different views on the development and training of employees regarding employee retention. Some business leaders believe that an employee would leave the organization, despite having adequate development and training (Kenneth, 2013).

Recognition. Recognition is a nonmonetary reward an employee receives for an outstanding performance (Erturk, 2014). Recognition and rewards correlates reduces turnover intentions (Buble, Juras, & Matic, 2014). According to Salie & Schlechter (2012), rewards for excellent job performance are (a) tailored to individual needs, (b) intrinsic and extrinsic, (c) reflective of the organization's culture, (d) aligned with the organization's goals, and (e) distinguishable between improved performance and reward by the recipients. According to Goswami (2014), the recognition and reward must be adequate for the given effort by the employee. Successful reward and recognition programs reduce employee turnover and increase employee motivation (Salie & Schlechter, 2012).

Employee treatment has a significant impact on turnover (Johnson, 2014). Salie and Schlechter (2012) found during their investigation of a rewards and recognition program in South Africa that participants believed that excellent performance leads to rewards. However, the participants were not confident in their organization's reward and recognition program (Salie & Schlechter, 2012). This could mean that many rewards and recognition programs practiced by business leaders are flawed. Therefore, business leaders should focus on the needs of employees and recognize their efforts to retain them (Erturk, 2014). Reward and recognition programs are important, but work-life balance is equally important to employees.

Work itself. Work content measures the level of autonomy, creativity, and tasks, and can significantly predict job satisfaction (Onyebuenyi, 2016). Lopes, Lagoa, and Calapez (2014) asserted that freedom at work mitigates the adverse effects of work pressure on job satisfaction. Keller and Semmer (2013) conducted a longitudinal study of 6,000 young school graduates' cohorts in Switzerland. They concluded that job control is a reliable forecaster of job satisfaction (Keller & Semmer, 2013). With less autonomy on the job, employees accomplish more tasks (Onyebuenyi, 2016).

Bysted (2013) used a sample of 294 employees in a Danish financial firm to examine how the moderating effects of job satisfaction and mental involvement increase the effectiveness of innovative work behavior. Job autonomy enhances innovative work behavior and the internal environment for innovation (Bysted, 2013). Leaders must enrich work to create fulfillment on the job (Onyebuenyi, 2016).

An important part of motivation is job design because intrinsic rewards emerge from performing the job (Rayburn, 2014). Job enrichment increases an employee's sense of responsibility and satisfaction, while also offering an opportunity for achievement (Onyebuenyi, 2016). Akhtar, Hussain, Ali, and Salaman (2015) surveyed 150 employees at the different banks in Pakistan to find a relationship between motivation and job design. They concluded that job design has a positive influence on employee motivation (Akhtar et al., 2015). The practical implication of this result is that business leaders design tasks that stimulate their employees to use their knowledge when fulfilling their duties (Akhtar et al., 2015).

Hashim and Wok (2014) examined the challenges of disabled workers among 195 employers, 206 co-workers, and 384 employees with disabilities in Malaysia (Hashim & Wok, 2014). Employers and co-workers felt as though their organization provides an encouraging and comfortable workplace with sensible adjustments for disabled workers (Hashim & Wok, 2014). The practical implication is that job design, as well as organizational climate and a comfortable work environment motivates people with and without disabilities (Hashim & Wok, 2014). Business leaders should design jobs that stimulate long-term career experiences to increase job satisfaction (Onyebuenyi, 2016).

Responsibility. Organizational leaders should trust and empower their workers to perform their job with competence (Bebe, 2016). Empowerment is an important element of responsibility (Herzberg et al., 1959). It is a process that includes all employees, from high-level management to the lowest rank of the organization (Sherafati & Mohammadi, 2014). Employees appreciate empowerment because it is an important factor in their development (Yassine-Diab, Monnier, & Lavinal, 2014). Empowering employees increases their motivation and improves their performance because they are gaining knowledge and skills (Sherafati & Mohammadi, 2014; Yassine-Diab et al., 2014). Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013) argued that empowering employees gives them a chance to display their innovative thinking, which could lead to improved business processes but empowerment programs without innovative approaches are ineffective. When employees feel empowered, their turnover intentions decrease (Ndubisi, Capel, & Ndubisi, 2015).

Advancement. Advancement is another job satisfaction factor that motivates employees (Herzberg et al., 1959). Noor, Khan, and Naseem (2015) investigated how growth and advancement influence job satisfaction. The study included 94 faculty members from private and public-sector universities in the Khyber Paktunkhwa Province of Pakistan (Noor et al., 2015). Noor et al. found that job promotion and job advancement both have a positive relationship with satisfaction.

Adreniran, Bhattacharya, and Shrivastava (2015) identified factors that influence career advancement among internationally educated nurses. The participants included a combination of 200 U.S. educated and internationally educated nurses across the country (Adreniran et al., 2015). A healthy work environment, commitment to advancement in the profession, and availability of external support all influence career advancement (Adreniran et al., 2015). If both sets of nurses felt that those three factors met their approval, they were committed to their organization (Adreniran et al., 2015). These findings suggest that career advancement leads to lower turnover rates and higher job satisfaction.

Job dissatisfaction and hygiene factors. Herzberg (1959) mentioned the phenomenon of employee dissatisfaction in the two-factor theory. Job dissatisfaction occurs when employees lack adequate pay, job security, career development, and other important job-related factors (Rahman, 2014). When employees perceive they can longer bear the extent of unsatisfactory hygiene factors, voluntary turnover is inevitable (Hofaidhllaoui & Chhinzer, 2014).

Previous research findings have shown voluntary turnover to be the result of job dissatisfaction (Rahman, 2014). Heponiemi, Kouvonen,Virtanen, Vanska, and Elovainio (2014) investigated the correlations between violent workplaces and harassment with turnover inclinations and job satisfaction among 1,515 Finnish physicians aged 25-63. After analyzing data collected from their participants, Heponiemi et al. found that physicians are more inclined to leave their organization when their workplace is violent. Heponiemi et al. concluded that workplace violence increases job dissatisfaction and leads to increased turnover. Hur (2013) examined data regarding voluntary turnover in municipal police departments across 464 municipalities across the United States and concluded that low job satisfaction resulted in a higher voluntary turnover.

Other research findings have shown that a lack of job satisfaction decreases performance. During an examination of voluntary turnover in municipal police departments, Hur (2013) noted that intentional turnover has an adverse effect on crime control performance compared to unintentional turnover, which had little effect on crime control performance. Mofoluwake and Oluremi (2013) investigated job satisfaction and organizational stress and their effects on employee behavior among 225 randomly selected employees at a petroleum corporation in Nigeria. Job satisfaction and performance decreased as stressed increased. Mofoluwake and Oluremi concluded that employee satisfaction and organizational stress are forecasters for employee behavior. Therefore, business leaders must address the hygiene factors that increase turnover intentions and decrease job performance (Gordon & Roger, 2013). Those factors are (a) company policy, (b) interpersonal relationships, (c) supervision, (d) compensation, and (e) working conditions (Herzberg, 1959).

Company policy. Unal (2013) asserted that company policy is an important component of dissatisfaction. Company policies are the guidelines set forth by management that give employees information on what is expected of them for them to succeed within the organization (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). The manager should communicate the company policy to their employees so both parties can have a productive relationship (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

Ineffective company policies have increased the turnover rate among employees (Sarwar, Hameed, & Aftab, 2013). Jyothi and Ravindran (2012) investigated the correlation between job satisfaction and human resource policies. The sample included 264 IT employees from 13 different companies in India (Jyothi & Ravindran, 2012). Jyothi and Ravindran found that some human resource policies had a direct relationship with job satisfaction (Jyothi & Ravindran, 2012). Similarly, Oh and Park (2014) examined the correlations between emotional fatigue, organizational dedication, inclination to leave, and the aspects of job satisfaction. A sample of 929 financial, insurance, and real estate personnel across the U.S. participated in the study (Oh & Park, 2014). Oh and Park concluded that emotional exhaustion has a direct relationship with company policy and company policies have a significant impact on job satisfaction. Therefore, business leaders should modify company policies to prevent emotional exhaustion and lower their employees’ turnover intentions (Oh & Park, 2014).

Supervision. Employment is a relationship between employee and employer (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). The relationship has interconnections between both parties through an informal contract, which is a psychological contract, where the employee and employer have perceived assumptions and expectations about each other (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). The basis of this informal contract is that employees use their skills, effort, and knowledge to receive compensation from the employer (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Therefore, the employment relationship has intrinsic value because of the development and application of company processes, policies, and procedures (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). In this regard, a positive relationship flourishes when both parties express their needs (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

However, poor leadership causes frustration among employees and forces them to lose enthusiasm about going to work (Lee and Jensen, 2014). The average employee turnover rate for all industries is 23%, but the IT industry is higher with 31% (Mazareanu, 2012). Several reasons for this difference in the turnover rates could be a dissatisfaction related to skilled IT professionals, regarding leadership, such as: (a) weak leadership within the organization, (b) the lack of clear objectives of the companies, and (c) the lack of general communication and management knowledge of managers who went to technical schools (Mazareanu, 2012). These factors could lead to conflicts between management and staff and usually end with severed contractual agreements between management and employee (Mazareanu, 2012). The solution that Mazareanu offers is in the creation of employee-oriented management. Employee-oriented management applies to different strategies of maintaining key staff within the organization such as (a) salary policies, (b) policies for the harmony of salary conditions, (c) training, learning, and knowledge policies, (d) policies for reorganization of performing activities, (e) equalization policies between employees and management, and (f) an open management style.

Management influences the turnover intentions of IT professionals (Holmes, 2006). Leaders should work harder to gain an understanding of how valuable IT professionals are to the organization (Holmes, 2006). Holmes (2006) noted that a participant in his study believed that management should observe their company's philosophy on leadership and decide if their actions align with that philosophy.

Interpersonal relationships. Ghosh et al. (2015) argued that employees have higher-levels of satisfaction when they maintain good relationships with their coworkers. Guinot, Chiva, and Roca-Puig (2014) investigated interpersonal trust, stress, and satisfaction at work from 6,407 Spanish employees through a survey carried out by the Spanish Ministry of Labor and Immigration. Job satisfaction increased with higher levels of interpersonal trust (Guinot et al., 2014). The implication is that when organizations cultivate a work environment of trust, they will also have strategies in place to improve satisfaction and lower turnover rates (Guinot et al., 2014).

Findings from other studies have supported the link between interpersonal relationships with coworkers and job satisfaction. Tai and Chuang (2014) examined the relationship between job satisfaction among public and private university staff in Taiwan. Five-point Liker-type scales measured the respondents' answers regarding job satisfaction (Tai & Chuang, 2014). Overall, the university staff was most satisfied with their interpersonal relationships and self-worth, which increased their job satisfaction (Tai & Chuang, 2014).

A mixed methods design was used by Moor, Leahy, Sublett, and Lanig (2013) to study the effect of nurse-to-nurse relationships on the work environment. The sample size included 82 registered nurses in southwestern Ohio (Moor et al., 2013). Many nurses considered changing professions due to poor nurse-to-nurse relationships (Moor et al., 2013). This result proves that interpersonal relationships are important when business leaders want to decrease their employees' turnover intentions.

Working conditions. Employees need a safe and healthy work environment because it is important to their success (Leip & Stinchcomb, 2013). Organizations can use their safe and healthy working conditions to improve employee job performance (Matz, Wells, Minor, & Angel, 2013). Turnover intentions decrease as working conditions are improved (Yang, Liu, Huang, & Zhu, 2013).

Turnover increases, however, when employees feel stressed within their work environment, which can happen when they receive more tasks and have less time to spend on other commitments outside of the work environment (Leip & Stinchcomb, 2013). Employees need a work-life balance to decrease stress within the work environment. Work-life balance is how individuals balance employment and other life responsibilities and commitments (Gatrell, Burnett, Cooper, & Sparrow, 2013).

Work-life balance is used as a strategy some companies to retain key professionals (Thomas, 2015). Gordon (2014) conducted a multiple case study of 17 small Canadian information technology firms. Gordon noted that the implementation of the work-life balance strategy might be different among (a) rigid firms, (b) flexible firms, and (c) contradictory firms but the initial idea of work-life balance includes giving employees the opportunity to work flexible schedules. However, some business leaders have a hard time maintaining productivity, while promoting flexible working hours (Gordon, 2014).

Difficulties in finding a suitable work-life balance are due to time and strain, and role-based conflicts leading to implications for job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Goswami, 2014). Careers in IT require professionals to have 24-hour availability, thus creating a constant conflict between work and family responsibilities (James, 2014). Many IT professionals will take a cut in pay to work flexible hours (Goswami, 2014). Although there are mixed views on how effective work-life balance strategies are in retaining employees, implementing work-life balance strategies increases job satisfaction (Goswami, 2014).

Compensation. Compensation is a highly-recommended strategy for retaining employees (Aa & Berkel, 2014). Many U.S. organizations have a pay-for-performance strategy to promote employee retention (Madison, Schmidt, & Volpp, 2014). Compensation is also directly correlated to retention which impacts business processes (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative that businesses design their compensation systems correctly (Madison et al., 2014).

An organization’s decisions about compensation have vital implications (Aa & Berkel, 2014). One implication is that it used to retain IT professionals through bonuses and benefits (Aa & Berkel, 2014; Thomas, 2015). Employees receive pay raises based on how well they perform their job (Gerhart & Fang, 2014; Gupta & Shaw, 2014). When employees feel as though they are not compensated well for their job duties and performance, their turnover intentions increase (Barnes et al., 2012). According to Gupta and Shaw (2014), organizations that pay lofty salaries to their employees experience higher employee retention rates than organizations that do not pay their employees the minimum or below minimum salary. Holmes (2006) recommended that organizations compensate their IT professionals according to their job performance for reducing their turnover rates. However, IT professionals are motivated by more than a large salary (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). Many IT professionals are motivated by retention strategies focused on recognition for an outstanding performance or training and development (Abii et al., 2013).

IT Workforce and Skilled IT Professionals

The growth of the IT workforce drives an increase in globalization and a business's quest for a competitive advantage (Mohlala et al., 2012). In today's global market, the success of businesses depends on their speed, adaptability, and innovation (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2014). Therefore, organizations demand skilled IT professionals who can transform their business (El-Maamiry, 2014). However, Ryan and Harden (2014) noted that attracting, developing, and retaining skilled IT professionals are critical issues for organizations. Business leaders require IT professionals to have a high level of education due to their unique characteristics from other types of professionals (El-Maamiry, 2014). According to Guha and Chakrabarti (2014), skilled IT professionals are indispensable and considered assets because they help their organization achieve and maintain a competitive advantage.

Turnover in the IT industry. Jain (2013) asserted that all industries have trouble retaining employees. However, employee turnover in the IT industry is becoming a major international problem (James & Matthews, 2012). It is now critical for business leaders to create and sustain effective strategies aimed at employee retention (Mohlala et al., 2012).

***Costs of employee turnover*.** Voluntary employee turnover is very costly for companies (Kessler, 2014). Replacing an IT professional can cost an organization between 50% to 100% of the annual salary of the vacancy (Bryant & Allen, 2013). The total costs of replacing an IT professional include: (a) administrative costs, (b) advertising, (c) psychological exams, (d) interviews and screening, (e) training new employees, (f) public relations, and (e) increases in employment insurance (Jain, 2013). Organizations also suffer intangible losses when an employee leaves an organization such as lower productivity or increased supervision of new employees (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014).

Employee turnover also disrupts business operations (Thomas, 2015). Coombs (2009) investigated IT professional retention in the United Kingdom and argued that IT professionals that leave the organization take vital knowledge and experience with them. James and Mathew (2012) investigated IT employee turnover in India and found that the loss of employees creates a loss of organizational production. Projects may fail due to IT professionals voluntarily leaving the organization (Kappelman et al., 2013). Diedericks and Rothmann (2014) investigated the relationship between (a) flourishing, (b) individual, and (c) organizational outcomes, where they found the turnover of key IT professionals negatively affects the organization's effectiveness. Turnover among skilled IT professionals is costly and demands the attention of business leaders (James & Mathew, 2012).

***Retention of IT professionals*.** As world economies rebound from the recent recession, turnover among skilled IT professionals is increasing (James, 2014). Therefore, business leaders must strive to maintain positive relationships with their employees (Milman & Dickson, 2014). Specifically, business leaders should begin finding ways to retain their current IT professionals instead of focusing on obtaining new IT professionals (Thomas, 2015). It could take up to three months before a newly hired employee becomes fully adapted to daily procedures and becomes an asset to the organization (Milman & Dickson, 2014). The workload and demands of existing staff members increases as business leaders work to replace former employees (Milman & Dickson, 2014). Therefore, it is important for business leaders to understand why their employees stay with the organization because it can become a useful asset towards building better retention strategies (Milman & Dickson, 2014).

Previous research on turnover in the IT industry has focused on employee satisfaction (Milman & Dickson, 2014). Von Hagel and Miller (2011) explored the perceptions and lived experiences of 20 IT professionals at a small defense contracting organization in Fort Meade, Maryland. After analyzing the interview responses, Von Hagel and Miller noted that 20% of their participants mentioned that a verbal fight with management led to their decision to leave the organization. They also found that 30% of their participants believed their organization did not value or respect their contributions to the team (Von Hagel & Miller, 2011). Most of the participants stated that the quality of the company politics and employer-employee relationships needed improving (Von Hagel & Miller, 2011). Von Hagel and Miller noted that improving these two areas would have prevented those participants from leaving the organization.

Overall, employee satisfaction is the deciding factor in determining whether employees decide to stay or leave their organization (Milman & Dickson, 2014). However, a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective for handling employee turnover. Several factors lead to turnover intentions such as (a) negative interpersonal relationships, (b) no room for growth, (c) a conflicting work-life balance, and (d) workplace stress (Gialuiss & Coetzer, 2013). There are also several factors that decrease turnover intentions such as (a) flexibility, (b) positive interpersonal relationships, (c) challenging job duties, (d) promotion opportunities or (e) an attractive workplace (Holmes, 2006).

Organizational culture. Organizational culture relates to an employee's personality because it is a unifying and hidden theme giving individuals meaning, direction, and mobilization, helping the employee define what is important to the organization (Dodek et al., 2012). Employees connect with the organization easier and faster when culture is understood (Taylor, 2014; Thomas, 2015). However, employee performance declines and turnover intention increases when the organization's culture is not understood (Campbell & Gortiz, 2014; Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014; Warren, Gaspar, Laufer, 2014). Therefore, business leaders must identify and understand how culture affects their employees and find ways to increase employee satisfaction and decrease turnover intentions (Fisher, 2014). According to King and Demarie (2014), factors to improve organizational culture include (a) figuring out what is important to the organization, (b) selecting the right individuals for the organization's cultural fit, and (c) continuing to apply culture to retention and promotion strategies (King & Demarie, 2014).

Organizational leaders control culture and its employees; therefore, it must remain a top priority for business leaders (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014; King & Demarie, 2014). Business leaders should present their values to their employees through actions and decision-making to reinforce organizational culture (King & Demarie, 2014) because it can impact productivity and profitability (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). When an organization's culture is in harmony, things run smoothly, but when an organization's culture fails, dysfunction is sure to follow (King & Demarie, 2014).

Transition

Section 1 was the foundation of the study. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the central research question: What strategies do business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization? Herzberg's two-factor theory was the conceptual framework for this study. I gave a thorough analysis of previous research on these theories as well as instances that lead to high turnover rates among skilled IT professionals. Section 2 consists of detailed information on the project, such as the role of the researcher and the ethical precautions related to the study. The discussion in this section will focus on the population and participants of the study, as well as the justification for the research method and design.

Section 2 concludes with how I collected, organized, and analyzed the data. Section 3 is a presentation of (a) the findings, (b) the applicability of the findings to professional practice in the IT industry, (c) a review of the areas of the study that might need further examination, and (d) a summary of the final reflections on the research process.

Section 2: The Project

This qualitative case study concerns strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. I collected data from IT professionals through semistructured interviews and from corporate documents including policies, procedures, and personnel handbooks. Understanding retention strategies that business leaders have successfully used to retain IT professionals could prove to be useful for the entire IT industry.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. The population included business leaders from one organization located in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex who had strategies for retaining IT professionals. Information from this single case study may benefit customers and local communities because higher retention of skilled employees and reduction of costs associated with turnover may lead to administering high-quality, affordable services.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative researchers are primary data-collecting instruments (Pezalla, Pettigres, & Miller-Day, 2012). Because it was not easy to get the participants' views without interacting with them, I served as the data collection instrument for this qualitative study. My responsibilities in this qualitative case study included (a) defining data collection methods, (b) collecting and analyzing data, and (c) presenting results and recommendations in an organized and objective framework.

Participants must be treated with impartiality (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Therefore, I complied with the ethical guidelines established in the Belmont Report to protect human participants' rights. The three basic ethical requirements written in the Belmont Report are (a) demonstrating respect for people, (b) receiving and documenting informed consent, and (c) respecting privacy/confidentiality (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Although my research involved human participants, no physical contact took place. To ensure that all participants knew their rights, I supplied each of them with a consent form to help them make an informed decision about their participation in my study. By signing the consent form, the participants agreed to contribute to my research. The use of consent forms is mandatory to respect human participants and reduce any risks for participants (Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, & Khodyakov, 2015; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The consent form is an ethical and regulatory requirement in research (Grady, 2015).

The topic of this study is familiar and of interest to me because I have been an IT professional since 2007. I have held many different jobs within the IT industry and have received a master's degree in information systems management. However, I did not let my profession as an IT professional or my degree interfere with my research. Researchers use an epoché technique to set aside personal feelings and discourage researcher bias from influencing interviews and research (Moustakas, 1994). I reduced errors and potential bias by collecting trustworthy data from individuals who had knowledge and strategies pertaining to my research topic, with whom I had no type of association at all. I did not use my own opinions, beliefs, or experiences as an IT professional to make conclusions about my research.

Another step I took to mitigate bias was following my interview protocol (see Appendix A). Interview protocols include (a) acquiring permission before beginning data collection; (b) recognizing the steps to take before, during, and after each interview; and (c) creating interview questions to gain information (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). An interview protocol aids in mitigating the risk of introducing personal bias because researchers must adhere to the interview questions and prompt only when clarification is needed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). It is impossible for researchers to remove all bias from their research, but it is important that they remain aware of the personal prejudices that might influence participant responses and data analysis (Malone, Nicholl, & Tracey, 2014).

Participants

It is important for researchers to select participants who are relevant to their research topic (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013). Therefore, I selected business leaders who had appropriate qualifications related to the research topic. To meet eligibility criteria for participation in this study, an individual needed to be a (a) chief information officer (CIO), (b) systems director, (c) vice president of security, (d) director of information services, or (e) director of program management working in the organization located in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

The selection of participants aligned with the research question because the business leaders tracked employee turnover for at least 2 years and had strategies to increase employee retention. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) identified a 31% employee annual separation rate from the IT industry during 2013. I selected the research site because it reported an annual separation rate of 10% during fiscal year 2017 and 11% during the current fiscal year, 2018.

To gain access to the participants in this study, I first obtained written permission from the organization. Researchers must obtain written permission before conducting research (Bogaert et al., 2015; Nightingale, Sinha, & Swallow, 2014; Ryan et al., 2015). After I received written permission from the organization to conduct my research, I obtained the targeted participants’ work e-mail accounts from the human resource department. I made initial contact with the targeted participants by sending them an invitation to participate in my research. Once interested participants e-mailed me back, I followed up with them to begin building a working relationship with them.

One strategy that I used to build working relationships with the participants involved honesty and straightforwardness about the reasons for the research and my intentions during the data collection phase. Engendering trust is one way of building a working relationship (Valentine, Nam, Hollingsworth, & Hall, 2014). Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013) noted that the relationship between researcher and participants is critical to the success of research. Therefore, my follow up e-mail to the interested participants included the informed consent form, as well as a copy of the interview protocol (see Appendix A). The informed consent form contained an introduction and the details of my research. Individuals who participated in the study signed the informed consent form before research began. Participants were required to sign the informed consent form before the data collection process began (Barenfeld et al., 2015; Madrigal et al., 2014). After receiving signed informed consent forms, I followed up with the participants via e-mail to offer further explanations or to answer any questions about my research to enhance the working relationship.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are the three types of research methods. Participants can explain their perceptions of complex processes or realities with the qualitative research method (Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, & Cieza, 2012; Thomas, 2015). Researchers are allowed to collect open-ended, emerging data and use this information to develop themes among participants with the qualitative method (Campbell, 2014; Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, & Green, 2012). Regarding the overreaching research question, I used the qualitative research method to explore the perceptions of IT professionals.

The quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study because quantitative data collection techniques differ from those involved in the qualitative research method (Barnham, 2012). The quantitative research method requires the researcher to use precise and objective measurements to gather numerical and statistical data (Campbell, 2014). This research method is better suited to validate a hypothesis (Hoare & Hoe, 2013) than to analyze data from open-ended interview questions.

Mixed methods research did not meet the needs of my study. Wisdom et al. (2012) and Reynolds (2013) suggested that the mixed methods approach is only appropriate when one research method is needed to inform or explain the other research method. I did not need quantitative data to support my qualitative data; therefore, I did not use a mixed methods approach. The goal of my research was to understand strategies used by business leaders to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization.

Research Design

The case study design was most suitable for my study because I used semistructured interviews to ask open-ended questions and probe deeper into the phenomena experienced by the participants. Case study is the best method used by researchers when asking *how* or *what* questions (Yin, 2014). A case study design was also suitable for my study because I was able to use the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook, along with the participants' responses, to gain a richer understanding of the strategies used by business leaders to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. Moll (2012) asserted that researchers are enabled to gain a thorough comprehension of complex processes through case studies. Campbell (2014) suggested that case studies allow participants to tell their story. According to Moll, case studies provide an opportunity for researchers to explore the issues and get close to participants in their natural settings.

The phenomenological research design is appropriate when the focus is on the lived experiences of individuals (Campbell, 2014). This research design is best used to describe lived experiences instead of explaining them (Tirgari, 2012). Phenomenology is time consuming because researchers must interview a minimum of 20 participants (Bevan, 2014).

An ethnographic design is appropriate for determining cultural characteristics such as practices, values, and assumptions (Azevedo & Ferreira, 2013). Campbell (2014) asserted that ethnographies allow researchers to collect data through observation of members of a cultural group in their natural setting over time. Researchers must conduct field investigations by immersing themselves in a study's cultural environment to understand the significance of certain activities (Azevedo & Ferreira, 2013). An ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study because my intent was not to understand concepts from specific cultural groups.

The narrative design involves the telling and analysis of stories, autobiographies, art, and field notes to create themes for comparison, giving meaning to words (Jhatial, Mangi, & Ghurmo, 2012; Scutt & Hobson, 2013). This design was not suitable for my research because I did not collect data through stories, autobiographies, art, or field notes. I collected data using open-ended questions. Researchers collect data through open-ended questions to gain an in-depth understanding of a research problem (Yin, 2014).

Dworkin (2012) asserted that data saturation is evident with five to 50 participants in qualitative studies. Researchers achieve data saturation when additional interviews and coding do not produce any new information or new themes (Anyan, 2013). Therefore, I added additional interviewees to my initial set of participants until no new data, themes, or codes emerged to achieve data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of a purposeful sample of business leaders from an organization in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Purposive sampling allows for a sample based on a researcher's knowledge of the population (Granot, Brashear, & Motta, 2012). Purposive sampling is the best selection method for qualitative studies (Suen, Huang, & Lee, 2014) because researchers use the process to solicit participation from selected individuals (Koch, Niesz, & McCarthy, 2014). Purposive sampling is most appropriate when researchers are interested in individuals who have the most useful knowledge pertaining to their topic (Elo et al., 2014). Participants who met eligibility criteria for the study had the role of (a) CIO, (b) systems director, (c) vice president of security, (d) director of information services, or (e) director of program management. These participants were selected because they had extensive knowledge and experience of retention strategies aimed at retaining IT professionals.

A sample size as small as three participants is acceptable (Yin, 2014). However, Hershkovitz and Forkosh-Baruch (2013) argued that researchers can reach data saturation with any sample size. I reached data saturation with the first three participants but continued interviewing all five of my participants.

I assured participants of their right to decline involvement with the research with no questions asked or explanations required. The solicitation occurred by contacting individuals via their e-mail address on company records, requesting participation in the study and addressing any preliminary concerns. An e-mail introduced the study and contained the consent form. I asked the solicited participants if they were willing to participate in the study. The solicited individuals who chose to participate in the study (a) read the entire consent form, (b) signed it, and (c) e-mailed or delivered it back to me.

I verified the data on the consent form before setting up the face-to-face interviews at an agreed-upon location within the organization. I advised the participants before the interview started that their name and employer's name would remain confidential. The face-to-face interviews took approximately 60 minutes for each participant. I recorded all interviews and took notes. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participants for their time and their participation in the study.

Ethical Research

I obtained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data. IRB approval ensured that this proposal met ethical protection guidelines. The IRB approval number for my proposal is 01-23-18-0413398.

Once I received IRB approval, the participants were e-mailed the informed consent form. The consent form included in-depth information describing this study. If the participants agreed to the study, they signed the form electronically by replying *I agree*. I advised participants that they could willingly withdraw from the study at any time by informing me that they were no longer interested in participating in the study. There were no consequences for withdrawing from the study. The participants received a summary of the results as an incentive once the chief academic officer (CAO) signed off on my study. I exhibited impartiality at all times with the participants throughout the entire data collection phase of my research. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) was used during the interview process to keep the interviews on track and in order. Schofield

(2014) noted that researchers establish ethical safeguards and guidelines regarding the requirement for the participants' voluntary consent. Participants' names and the organization name will be kept confidential for concerns over privacy and ethics. Pseudonyms such as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 have been used to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the organization throughout the entire research process. Researchers are responsible for protecting participants and strengthening the validity of the results of their research (Eide & Showalter, 2012).

All collected data from the interviews and the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook will be safely stored (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012) for 5 years on an encrypted USB drive and locked in a safe to protect the participants and the organization. I will destroy the encrypted USB drive once the 5-year limit has passed by deleting all of the information on the USB drive and then burning the USB drive to make it unusable. Any paper copies of documents will be shredded.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection process in qualitative research involves direct interactions with individuals (Petty, Thompson, & Stew, 2012). Wahyuni (2012) asserted that qualitative studies facilitate the sharing of participants' lived experiences regarding a phenomenon. Therefore, I was the main data collection instrument and used semistructured interviews and an analysis of the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. These types of interviews are efficient at collecting data when participants need to describe their experiences (Rubin &

Rubin, 2012). Rowley (2012) noted that the use of semistructured interviews ensures an accurate evaluation of the participants. My semistructured interviews followed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) with a list of eight interview questions (see Appendix B) for each participant to answer. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) noted that preparatory protocols for interviews involve (a) acquiring permission before beginning data collection; (b) recognizing the steps to take before, during, and after each interview; and (c) creating interview questions to gain information.

After an analzing the interviews and the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook, I conducted member checking by taking my interpretations back to the interviewees to obtain validation and ensure accuracy. Researchers achieve member checking once study participants approve of the researcher's interpretations of their answers from the semistructured interviews (Hudson, Newman, & Hester, 2014). I enhanced upon member checking by observing the uniformity of the participants' responses and used methodological triangulation of the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook to confirm themes and minimize bias; ensuring the reliability and validity of my research. Koelsch (2013) asserted that reviewing themes and the accuracy of the findings is a means to achieve research dependability.

Data Collection Technique

Case studies require researchers to collect data from multiple sources (Yin, 2014). Rowley (2012) asserted that interviews should follow an interview protocol. Therefore, I employed semistructured interviews that followed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) and enhanced those interviews with data collected from the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook related to employee retention strategies. After gaining IRB approval and retrieving a list of the contact information for potential participants, I sent them an e-mail explaining my research proposal. Once those individuals agreed to become participants, I sent and explained to them the informed consent form. I also answered any questions they had. Once I received the signed informed consent form, interviews I scheduled interviews at a time and location that we agreed upon. The semistructured interviews lasted no longer than 1 hour.

According to Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, and Peng (2014) the main advantage of using the face-to-face interview is flexibility and control while conducting detailed interviews with the participants to obtain additional information. If a participant did not fully understand one or more of the questions, I restated the question for better clarity for the participant. A disadvantage of using semistructured interviews is that participant responses may lack truthfulness and completeness (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinney). Additionally, responses to the open-ended interview questions can become complex during analysis and comparison (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinney, 2012).

According to Koelsch (2013), researchers should use member checking to confirm the accuracy of a participant's comments. Member checking is the process of taking ideas back to the participants for confirmation and gathering more information to elaborate on the research findings (Harvey, 2014). The benefit of conducting member checking is to provide the researcher with a chance to confirm the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the findings, which helps to enhance the credibility of the study

(Harper & Cole, 2012). The member checking process allowed me to verify the participants' responses and gather any additional information.

Data Organization Technique

According to Anyan (2013), implementing appropriate organization techniques maintains the integrity of transcribed recorded interviews, audio-recorded copies of interviews, and backup copies of the recorded interviews as part of the storage process. Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013) asserted researchers achieve confidentiality by assigning generic codes to each participant. I used alphanumeric codes to disguise the participants' identities. The letter P (Participant) preceded those numbers and ranged between 1 and 5. I also obtained authorization to audiotape the interviews through the signed consent form before each interview began. Davis (2013) transcribed interviews in a Microsoft Office Word document and then uploaded the raw data to NVivo. I uploaded the transcribed audiotaped interviews to NVivo. Researchers must keep transcribed interviews and written records for a period of five years (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Therefore, destruction of electronic data copies of collected data will occur after five years by (a) file deletion, (b) shredding written notes, and (c) erasing of the encrypted USB drive.

Data Analysis

Yu, Abdullah, and Saat (2014) asserted that data analysis involves preparing and organizing data for analysis and identifying themes. Yin (2014) stated that using more than one data source enhances the depth of the study, while also reducing bias. Therefore, I used methodological triangulation to review and analyze the interviews and the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook. Methodological triangulation is used by researchers to collect and utilize data from multiple sources (Foster, Hays, & Alter, 2013; Walsh, 2013). Methodological triangulation helped me identify and highlight any retention strategies described by the participants during the semistructured interviews and shown in the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook.

The literature, methodology, and results of the study are all connected through the conceptual framework (Borrego, Foster, & Froyd, 2014). Therefore, I analyzed the data from the lens of Herzberg's two-factor theory. By examining retention strategies from the perspective of Herzberg's two-factor theory, I conducted a comparison analysis to interpret the meaning of the collected data and validate the collected data through member checking.

Once the data was validated, I organized the collected data into categories identified through the literature review. The initial categories pertaining to employee retention strategies used to highlight business leaders' retention strategies are (a) incentives, (b) employee development, (c) promotion, (d) work-life balance, and (e) management. The data was then exported into NVivo to match themes that emerged from the semistructured interviews to those within the literature review and conceptual framework. Researchers use NVivo software to find themes ensure consistency with coding during data analysis (Hjeltnes et al., 2015). I also collected data from the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook. Researchers gather company documents to use in methodological triangulation (Banerjee, 2014; Dhalla & Oliver, 2013).

For consistency purposes, I paid close attention to themes that emerged from the interview transcripts. Researchers process and analyze key themes to address the purpose of their research (Bedwell et al., 2015). I continued examining and categorizing themes simultaneously; while also analyzing interview responses and the organization’s policies, procedures, and personnel handbook until the data reached saturation. Researchers achieve data saturation when no new themes emerge (Oberoi, Jiwa, McManus, & Hodder, 2015).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Researchers must preserve accurate findings and consistent documentation of their steps and procedures (Yin, 2014). Grossoehme (2014) suggested that researchers demonstrate reliability by documenting their research procedures in a research journal. According to Ardhendu (2014), researchers should document their steps and procedures to show reliability and to enable other researchers to replicate the study. Therefore, I documented every step and procedure of the data collection process and data analysis to ensure reliability.

Yilmaz (2014) asserted that dependability is equivalent to reliability. Researchers achieve dependability when another researcher agrees with the audit trails at each stage of the research process (Cope, 2014; Elo et al., 2014). I provided a detailed description of the steps and processes used to collect and analyze data to accommodate research replication.

Validity

Researchers should not rely only on their intuition when conducting research; they must explicitly demonstrate the validity of their work (Goffin, Raja, Claes, Szwejczewski, & Martinez, 2012). Researchers can verify the participants' responses to help ensure validity (Yin, 2014). Member checking was used to validate the participants' responses. Member checking is the process of taking ideas back to the participants for confirmation and gathering more information to elaborate on the research findings (Harvey, 2014).

I also triangulated the participants' responses to the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook to reduce bias. Yin (2014) asserted that researchers should use logic models as an evaluative tool for understanding complex phenomena when analyzing data in case studies. Goffin et al. (2012) suggested multiple sources of data increase internal validity. Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012) noted that triangulation increases the understanding of the phenomenon and improves the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Researchers refer to validity in qualitative research in many ways including the term *credibility* (Harper & Cole, 2012). Credibility refers to the truth of the participants' responses as interpreted and presented by the researcher (Munn, Porritt, Lockwood, Aromataris, & Pearson, 2014). Researchers should demonstrate engagement, methods of observation, and audit trails to support credibility (Cope, 2014). I encouraged each participant to give their honest answers to each interview question and explain answers that needed more elaboration.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) defined *transferability* as ways that conducted research is helpful to others with related research questions. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) asserted that transferability refers to the extent that the results from one study are applicable to another study. Donatelli and Lee (2013) noted that transferability requires consistency in the study procedures. I documented and described my research process to explore the research question; however, other researchers must decide the degree of transferability of my work.

Confirmability is the extent that the results of the study are a product of the research and not the researcher's bias (Cope, 2014; Elo et al., 2014). I demonstrated confirmability by describing how I established the conclusions and interpretations and what the findings are from the data. I used *reflexivity* to disclose my personal experiences and biases that could influence my study. Lohle and Terrell (2014) defined reflexivity as continual analysis of the researcher's effect on the development and construction of knowledge.

Data saturation increases the credibility of the findings through confirmation of the identified themes (Wahyuni, 2012). Researchers achieve data saturation when there is not any new emerging data (Houghton et al., 2013). Therefore, interviews continued until no new themes emerge.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 comprised of the purpose of my proposal, my role as the researcher, and my rationale for using a qualitative single case study. This section also includes the participants I selected, my rationale for choosing those participants, a discussion on my plan to protect their information, and an explanation of reliability and validity, regarding my proposal. Section 3 will begin with an introduction to the purpose of my study and will conclude with the results, as well as my recommendations. The findings from the study will contribute to the extensive knowledge of turnover among skilled IT professionals.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. I retrieved data on this topic by conducting semistructured interviews with business leaders from a health organization located in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. The organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook were also used to retrieve data on the topic.

Most of the interviews took place in the participants' offices. However, I conducted three of the interviews in the organization's conference room and one through a video conference call. I asked each participant eight questions (see Appendix B) to acquire knowledge on the strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. I analyzed my interpretations of each participant's answers to the interview questions (approved by each participant through member checking), along with my interview notes, audiotapes of the interviews, and the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook to search for themes as well as ensure reliability and validity. After careful data analysis, I determined that the strategies that the business leaders used to retain their IT professionals were engaging their employees and building positive relationships, recognizing and rewarding their employees for all of their contributions (no matter how big or small), and not focusing too much on high salaries because compensation was not as important to their IT professionals as once believed.

Presentation of the Findings

I employed a qualitative case single study to explore the overarching research question. Yin (2014) viewed case study as a way of examining events in numerous settings. Semistructured interviews were used to investigate how the business leaders at one health organization reduced turnover and increased retention. The overarching research question of this study was the following: What strategies do business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization? Each participant had a pseudonym ranging from P1 to P6. Their answers to my eight interview questions offered insight into the strategies that business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. Three themes emerged through data analysis and reviewing the organization’s policies, procedures, and personnel handbook. These themes were (a) engaging employees and building positive relationships, (b) recognizing and rewarding employees for all of their contributions, and (c) compensation does not retain employees.

Strategies associated with engaging employees and building positive professional relationships for the retention of skilled IT professionals involved connecting with and understanding IT professionals. The business leaders at the health organization employed strategies to ensure that the right person was in the right role. Some employees might not have been in the right roles; in such cases, leaders moved the employees to different roles where many employees had become successful in changing roles. Moreover, the business leaders treated mistakes as learning opportunities to ensure that employees did not continue to fail. They wanted their IT professionals to know that it was not a problem if they failed once or twice because this built character, but they did want to ensure that those failures did not continue to happen. Everyone makes mistakes at some point in his or her career. Depending on the severity of the mistake, it may not be ideal to fire the employee. The business leaders believed in getting to the cause of a mistake and giving the IT professional a chance to fix the mistake or learn what to do next time that the problem occurred.

Connecting with employees on a personal level is a big deal at the organization. The business leaders strove to relate to their IT professionals and not make them feel as though they were inferior to them. Relating to the IT professionals and showing that they had been in their position at one point or another in their careers created a feeling of vulnerability. The business leaders' willingness to be vulnerable and open at times made it easy for them to get to know their IT professionals and show that they cared not only about them, but also about their well-being. The business leaders refrained from knowing every single detail of their IT professionals' personal lives unless employees chose to share that information; relating on a personal level could be as simple as asking how an employee or his or her spouse was doing, or what an employee's interests were outside the workplace.

As important as it is to relate to IT professionals on a personal level, it is more important to understand IT professionals' strengths and weaknesses. Understanding IT professionals' strengths and weaknesses helps a business leader figure out how to unlock all employees' full potential and help them use their strengths. By doing this, business leaders can place team members around an employee who are strong in the areas where that employee is experiencing weaknesses. This method not only builds an effective and efficient team, but also helps employees get stronger in areas where they are weak because they are gaining knowledge in those weak areas while continuing to showcase their strengths.

Creating an open line of communication and involving IT professionals in the decision-making processes builds loyalty and increases productivity. More importantly, this strategy builds trust between employee and employer, making the employer-employee relationship stronger. The business leaders found that their IT professionals were more satisfied with the work environment because they felt as though their comments, questions, and concerns were all taken into consideration to find the best possible outcome for everyone.

I used Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory for this study to uncover the strategies that business leaders use to retain skilled IT professionals within their organization. Herzberg's two-factor theory involves two separate factors that either motivate employees or lead to their dissatisfaction within the workplace. The motivating factors (motivators) are (a) achievement, (b) recognition, (c) the work itself, (d) responsibility, and (e) advancement and growth (Herzberg et al., 1959). The hygiene factors are (a) company policy, (b) supervision, (c) interpersonal relationships, (d) working conditions, and (e) salary (Herzberg et al., 1959). The participants' responses supported Herzberg's motivators and hygiene factors. The first theme that emerged was engaging employees and building positive relationships.

Theme 1: Engaging Employees and Building Positive Relationships

Business leaders play a significant role in the success of their organization. They must work to build positive workplaces to retain their employees. Radda, Majidadi, and Akanno (2015) asserted that leaders must provide employees with an engaging work environment for them to find meaningful work. According to Griffin, Bryant, and Koerber (2015), leadership styles impact engagement. Each participant practiced some form of engagement technique with their employees. Many believed it to be one of the reasons their retention was high, if not the main reason. All participants stressed how important it is for leaders to support their IT professionals. P1 shared, “I like to keep people informed and make sure they have a target to shoot for.” P2 shared, “It’s the way you develop your leadership style, therefore, wanting to be your employees’ friend and needing to be their boss.” P3, P5, and P6 believed that the number one reason that skilled IT professionals leave their organization is bad bosses. Participant 3 shared,

> I hope none of our employees are leaving because of bad bosses because that is a missed opportunity for both parties. It’s a missed opportunity because management may be able to move that employee to another area where that employee can be successful, and we miss out on retaining a skilled IT professional that is crucial to our daily business processes. The relationship between an employee is of vital importance. Many factors lead to someone leaving a company. And the boss/employee relationship is the key variable for helping to manage those factors.

Participant 5 shared, “Employer-employee relationships are the biggest cause of turnover because, without a good relationship, it leads to dissatisfaction among the employees.” Participant 6 shared,

> The number one reason people leave their job is their boss. If you have a boss that does not respect you, that does not allow you to grow, does not appreciate you, then more than likely, you will begin to look around for another job. I think people use compensation on their exit interviews as an excuse, but I believe it is because people do not like to say that my boss is a jerk. One thing that I like to do is get a group of our top performers together and get their input on our top 10 problems and figure out how to improve on them. I like to get people engaged and turn things around and say, “You’re right about this problem, how do you want to fix it? If there is something that is bugging you, then tell me what we need to do to improve it.” Having disgruntled employees is sometimes good because they help you identify problems and possibly fix problems.

There is a relationship that exists between open communication and job performance. The participants believed that regular communication and feedback built a trusting relationship between employer and employee. This relationship helps IT professionals express the difficulties they experience in performing their job duties or in the workplace environment in general and gives business leaders a chance to offer advice and guidance. On many occasions, business leaders want to hear what problems are occurring in the workplace, and instead of offering their advice and guidance, they want to listen to what solutions their IT professionals have. If the business leaders view the employee's solution to solve the workplace problem as a great idea, then their plan is implemented to solve the problem. This strategy helps IT professionals get involved in decision-making processes. Business leaders love this strategy because those IT professionals are the individuals who work closely with the problem that concerns them, and their solutions to the problem are, in many cases, better than what the business leader has.

The research collected in the literature review presented effective strategies to increase retention through open communications, regular feedback, and supportive employer-employee relationships. Mishra (2015) asserted that business leaders play an important role in delivering messages and engaging employees. Lee and Jensen (2014) concluded that leaders directly impact organizations. Chen et al. (2015) found that leaders are a determining factor in whether an employee wants to leave an organization and that leaders' style of leadership directly influences job satisfaction.

A positive employer-employee relationship establishes employee engagement while increasing employee performance (Carasco-Saul, Kim, & Kim, 2015). Creating a strong, engaging employer-employee relationship helps employees feel as though they are contributing members of the team (Cho & Song, 2017). Enhanced communication between management and workers improves organization-wide relationships and creates a supportive workplace (Panagiotakopoulos, 2014). Each participant interview continued to mention the importance of having management out in the field, keeping the communication lines open and supporting and associating with their employees.

The implementation of engagement strategies by each participant aligned with Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959). Supervision is a hygiene factor that leaders must focus on if they want to reduce job dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Each participant saw the employer-employee relationship as an important factor in keeping employees satisfied and increasing their performance, and as a great overall retention strategy.

Theme 2: Recognizing and Rewarding Employees for All of Their Contributions

One of the key motivators is recognizing and rewarding employees to show that the organization is grateful for their contributions. Employees want to be recognized and rewarded for their efforts and achievements, even with as simple a gesture as a handshake or pat on the back with the words "good job." Incentives and rewards are great, and employees should receive them under the right conditions. Recognized and rewarded employees are satisfied employees. All participants believed that recognition played a role in retaining their employees and may have played a role in the decision for some employees to leave due to not being recognized enough. Therefore, all participants have implemented strategies in recognizing their employees for even the smallest of achievements when employees go above and beyond their basic job duties. Those strategies included but were not limited to handshakes, gift cards, thank you cards, lottery tickets, spot bonuses (Innergize Points), Service Excellence Awards (SEA), recognition in newsletters (internally and externally), and All-Star Awards. P2 shared,

> I do a lot of thank you cards. The feedback I get is that people enjoy it because it's a piece of my time. I reward people for going above and beyond, doing more

> than just their job. That's when I use things like the Innergize Points, SEA Awards, or thank you cards. I also try to get out on the field and remember the employee and their contributions so that I can look them in the eye, shake their hand, and tell them "good job." I acknowledge first and appreciate second.

P4 shared,

> It depends on the person. There are monetary rewards or a promotion. Then you have different settings where you can acknowledge an individual such as in front of your team or a larger audience. Sometimes it's good to take them out to dinner to develop that one-on-one connection.

P5 shared,

> Around holidays I try to make an extra effort to give our staff gift cards or lottery cards. We also try to celebrate with a larger audience to highlight their achievements. At the end of the day, I think people seek that type of recognition because its validating.

P6 shared,

> There are the simple things like cash rewards. But we have several different reward programs here. People crave recognition. They want recognition for their contributions. Once a month we'll bring in individuals who have finished projects or have made remarkable contributions to our leadership meetings and ask them questions. We also have our monthly All-Star Award. We have a monthly newsletter where we recognize individuals and their contributions. I like to send my employees Global or Innergize Points. Those points can be cashed in at the

> employee's convenience. Every contribution made, we try to publicize it to let them know that we see you.

Leaders should implement strategies to recognize their employees to increase employee retention and improve employee performance (Kim & Park, 2014). According to Kaliannan, Abraham, and Ponnusamy (2016), strategic and efficient motivators indicated an improvement in an employee's motivation, integrity, and performance. Bakar, Mohamad, and Sharmeela-Banu (2015) also concluded that recognizing employees is an effective strategy for motivating and retaining employees. For example, P3 shared,

> We try to acknowledge people through the things I mentioned earlier and being a human being with them, which includes encouraging them every step of the way while they're working on projects, shaking their hand, and telling them good job.

Recognition is among Herzberg's (1959) intrinsic factors. Herzberg argued that intrinsic values motivate employees more than extrinsic ones do. All participants realized recognition as being an effective strategy. P5 believed that recognition gives employees a sense of validation. All participants understood that appropriate rewards and recognition were key to improving employee retention. Therefore, recognizing and rewarding an employee supports Herzberg's two-factor theory. Recognizing and rewarding employees for their efforts and achievements is an effective strategy for motivating and retaining employees.

Theme 3: Compensation Does Not Retain Employees

The final theme that emerged was the idea that compensation does not retain employees. Compensation is significant because it is one of the main reasons that people work. According to Muthusi-Nzyokia (2016), compensation includes all of the benefits that employees receive from their organization to perform certain job duties. Compensation helps employees provide for their families and take care of their needs and wants.

During my data analysis, all participants believed adequate compensation was important, and their employees were paid well with benefits. However, they all reiterated that their organization is non-profit. The fact that the organization is non-profit directly tied into with the organization's handbook regarding information about their compensation for their role within the organization, benefits, healthcare, life insurance, and their 401k plan. I did not review the compensation package of the employees but the organization's personnel handbook, policies, and procedures, along with the participants' responses provided enough information regarding the structure of the organization's compensation packages. Although the organization is non-profit, some of the participants asserted that employees are offered a competitive compensation package that includes an hourly wage for team members and a salary for management. The compensation packages for both team members and management, includes retirement options, bonuses, and paid time off. P6 stated, "Our employees should expect fair market wages for their jobs with access to benefits, but if they are looking for over-the-top wages, then this organization is not a good fit for them.” P2 and P4 held the same feelings regarding money is not the main motivator. P4 shared:

> Most of us are not here for a paycheck; we are here because we want to do something that is bigger than ourselves. Remembering that helps overall in what to do to help control the turnover rate. I also believe connection is the key to retaining employees.

P6 shared,

> The market compensation data is nice to have because we can show people the market rate for their position and compare that to what I’m paying them. I have also learned that at the end of the day, money is not the main motivator for most individuals.

These findings conflict with those from a recent study of 200 faculty members in public universities in Pakistan. Bibi et al. (2017) concluded that compensation, as well as advancement, had a positive relationship on employee retention. Sarkar (2018) performed an extensive literature review on compensation and turnover and linked compensation as evolving from a traditional motivator to an effective retention strategy. A positive relationship exists between job satisfaction, commitment, and a competitive compensation package during Saleh’s (2017) study. A competitive compensation package increased employees’ commitment and decreased their turnover intentions (Saleh, 2017).

Herzberg (1974) argued that employees can consistently feel job satisfaction even when undesirable hygiene factors are present. The perspectives of the participants are that they are paying their employees fair wages including benefits. This perspective aligns with Herzberg's two-factor theory because even though some employees may feel their compensation is undesirable or not at the market rate, they are still satisfied because they are working to helping others, not receive a paycheck. Everyone could always use more money, but the overall objective of the leaders and employees at the health organization is to improve the lives of others.

Applications to Professional Practice

The results of this study are significant to professional business practices in several ways. In a general business organization, satisfaction enhances productivity (Ismail et al., 2015). The findings of this study revealed business leaders within one health services organization created strategies aimed at engaging and recognizing their employees for a job well done, no matter how small that achievement may be. IT professionals value engagement from leadership and recognition more than compensation. These retention strategies influence those skilled IT professionals' commitment to the organization. Business leaders could use the findings to establish engaging strategies that focus on a positive employer-employee relationship. They may also use this study to create strategies that focus on recognizing their employees for their efforts and achievements (no matter how big or small) to retain their skilled professionals.

Implications for Social Change

The results of the study may contribute to positive social change as business leaders develop strategies aimed at increasing employee retention through engagement to build better relationships with IT professionals so that customers and the local community can have positive experiences with the organization. A satisfied IT professional provides quality service for the organization's customers, as well as the local community. Harhara, Kumar, and Hussain (2015) asserted that acknowledging the effect leaders have on their employees' desire to leave the organization is critical. Recognizing and rewarding IT professionals for all their contributions proves the organization appreciates that employee, which motivates that IT professional to continue being productive and making efforts to increase positive customer and local community experiences.

Further implications from this study include cost-savings associated with lower employee turnover. Those cost-savings can be passed on to the customers and the local community through lower rates for the services the organization provides. The customers can use their savings to invest the extra income back into their communities by shopping at or supporting local businesses. This investment back into the local communities helps those communities continue to thrive and grow.

The following retention strategies used by the business leaders at the health organization include engaging employees and building positive relationships, recognizing employees for all their contributions, and compensation does not retain employees. The last strategy proves that compensation is not as important to employees as once believed through the literature. Compensation plays a role in retention, but the IT professionals at the health organization intrinsic values were more important to them than the extrinsic values. These strategies aid business leaders in retaining their skilled IT professionals, keeping costs low, as well as supporting the organization's vision. By adopting these strategies, business leaders in the IT industry, as well as other industries may be able to improve the work experiences and work environment for their employees. This will lead to better experiences for their customers and local communities. Business leaders can also help their organizations reduce costs associated with turnover and pass those savings on to their customers and local communities.

Recommendations for Action

Business leaders in any industry can use the results of this study to design or re-design effective strategies to reduce employee turnover in their organization. The strategies used by the business leaders in this study could help organizations lower their turnover rate, while simultaneously boosting productivity and profitability. The information shared by the participants could help organizations succeed by retaining their skilled employees and lower the costs associated with turnover. The savings from reducing the costs associated with turnover could be put toward growing the organization, perhaps into new markets and undertaking new ventures.

Increasing employees' compensation is a consideration, but the results of this study showed that compensation does not necessarily increase satisfaction. Business leaders experiencing high turnover could use the results of this study with tracking pertinent information regarding their employees and use that information to set up engaging activities, such as supervisory training classes, monthly meetings, weekly newsletters, or visibility to help reduce turnover. Retaining skilled professionals keeps their valuable knowledge and experience within the organization, which could help that organization gain or maintain a competitive advantage.

My recommendation is that business leaders analyze the results of this study and implement the strategies that apply to their organization. I will distribute this study as a 2-page summary of the findings to the organization as well as my colleagues and other business leaders. This study will also be made available through the ProQuest/UMI database for anyone seeking knowledge on effective retention strategies. I will also consider opportunities in environments such as conferences or training classes to share my research and inform individuals on effective retention strategies.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies business leaders use to reduce turnover among skilled IT professionals within their organization. The results of this study extend to the current literature regarding the retention of IT professionals but overall, it extends to any literature regarding any employee, not just an IT professional. However, the results of this study are only from the perspectives of business leaders from one health organization in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Therefore, the factors that create job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction will not be the same across other organizations and industries. To further extend the current literature, in-depth studies should be conducted to find out if these same strategies work in for-profit organizations. I would also recommend investigating compensation in more detail to see how the perspective changes in different industries.

Although I explored different strategies business leaders use to decrease turnover and used Herzberg’s two-factor theory to identify motivators and hygiene factors, turnover is a difficult problem to solve. This is especially true when research is looking only through the lens of business leaders. Future research should examine intrinsic and extrinsic values through the perspective of the employees to see what they value most and what forces them to leave their organization. I also recommend future researchers explore different organizations, regions of the country, or different countries to find out how other business leaders reduce turnover. Exploring different avenues regarding retention and turnover might help business leaders gain a better understanding of the things that are important to their employees and add to the growing body of knowledge.

Reflections

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Doctoral Study process was very challenging but very rewarding at the same time. Before working on my doctoral study, I believed individuals in the I.T. industry leave their organizations due to being underpaid and working long hours. With myself being an IT professional, I was biased in the beginning because I felt as though I had my study figured out due to my personal feelings regarding the I.T. Industry. However, after meeting with my participants, I learned that engagement and recognition are the things employees want the most. Compensation is still a factor, but individuals seek more than just a paycheck. One of my participants mentioned that he thinks people under 35 are always chasing a paycheck and may never realize that it is great to make money, but there is so much more to life than a paycheck. Overall, I have learned to look at the bigger picture and understand how each of the intricate parts of the puzzle work and connect back to the bigger picture. I will use what I have learned regarding the retention of I.T. professionals and use these strategies moving forward in my career path.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The results of my study proved that business leaders can retain their employees through engaging employees and building positive relationships and recognizing and rewarding their employees for all their contributions. Compensation is minor regarding retention strategies. Most employees seek more than a paycheck; they seek a positive employer-employee relationship and recognition for their efforts and achievements. Based on the experiences of the participants in this study, business leaders should support and engage their employees and celebrate the smallest of victories to reduce turnover. By implementing these strategies, business leaders can increase productivity and commitment to the organization. Depending on the organization, it may take some time and analytics but implementing these strategies will have a great return on investment.

Reducing employee turnover is critical for organizations in today's competitive market. The main reason is to reduce the high costs associated with employee turnover. The next reason is that productivity and efficiency decrease when organizations have a high turnover rate.

Successful organizations all have one thing in common, and that is implementing strategies aimed at making their employees happy. When employees are happy, they deliver excellent customer service. Excellent customer service creates a loyal customer base, which also leads to new customers. A loyal customer base and an increase in new customers drive an increase in revenue for the organization. But the only way an organization can increase their financial resources is to start with implementing strategies aimed at retaining their employees through engagement and recognition.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. I will greet the participant and reintroduce myself.
2. I will then go over the consent form to make sure the participant has read over it and know that their rights as a participant. If requested, a hard copy will be furnished for them.
3. I will ensure the participant is ready and will begin audiotaping the interview, acknowledging the pseudonym given to the participant as well as the time and location.
4. I will begin asking the participant the eight interview questions, giving them time to answer, and ask any follow-up questions.
5. Once the interview is completed, I will set up a time to conduct member checking.
6. After the time and location for member checking has been confirmed, I will let the participant know that their time was appreciated.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What is your strategy for reducing the turnover rate among skilled IT professionals?
2. How effective is this retention strategy?
3. What causes IT professionals to leave the organization?
4. How do the IT professionals perceive their contributions within the organization?
5. How do you reward or recognize an IT professional for remarkable contributions to the organization?
6. What development and training plans do you have for IT professionals?
7. What lessons have you learned in trying to reduce the turnover rate among skilled IT professionals?
8. What additional information has proven beneficial for your ability to retain IT professionals?

Appendix C: Consent and Document Release Form

Dear [ENTER NAME AND TITLE AT THE ORGANIZATION]:

After reviewing the research proposal of Corey Nicholas Harris entitled, Employee Retention Strategies in the I.T. Industry, he is granted permission to conduct his research at [ENTER ORGANIZATION'S NAME]. I give him authorization to interview business leaders within the organization and conduct follow-up interviews to ensure reliability and validity. Corey will also be allowed to access the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook. It is understood that participation is at the discretion of the employees.

Upon signing this form, I will compile a list of all business leaders, the organization's policies, procedures, and personnel handbook, and any historical data related to employee retention. All collected data will remain confidential and will be destroyed after five years. I am aware that I can withdraw my organization from this study if any changes.

This letter serves to inform all parties that I have the authorization to grant permission to Corey Nicholas Harris to conduct his research at this organization upon Walden University's IRB approval.

Sincerely,

[ENTER NAME]
[TITLE AT THE ORGANIZATION]