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Leadership Strategies to Retain Key Employees

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MBA, City University of Seattle, 2009

BA, The Evergreen State College, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Retention of key employees protects a firm’s investment in its human resources. Employee retention is an issue in the insurance sector, particularly among sales employees. The purpose of this descriptive study was to explore leadership strategies used by insurance sales managers to retain key employees. Herzberg’s dual factor theory and Adams’s equity theory were used to explore insurance sales managers’ insights into leadership strategies. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 15 insurance sales managers in southern California to elicit the strategies they used to maintain their key salespeople. Data were analyzed using the modified Van Kaam method. Seven themes emerged from data analysis: coach/mentorship, management style, unmet job expectations, pay, cost to the company, personal growth/realization of goals, and work environment. The findings from this study might contribute to positive change by providing company managers with strategies to retain key employees through improved stakeholder engagement, longevity of workers in their communities, and enhanced corporate social responsibility encouraging companies to support local communities.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study and my enthusiasm for lifelong learning to my mother, Alice F. Stafford. She continuously advocated for education throughout our family and in her community. I would also like to dedicate this document to all of my teachers, past and present, who encouraged me to continue learning and stressed to me that the moment you stop learning; you stop growing intellectually. I would also like to make special mention of all of my friends and family who encouraged me to continue this project when I felt overwhelmed. I would like to give special thanks to Mr. Howard L. Zeiger, Reynaldo Villareal, and Dr. Dennis J. Siebenaler. They believed in my abilities and encouraged me to see this project thorough completion. Additionally, I would like to thank all the insurance sales managers who participated in this study. Thank you for your dedication to the insurance industry and furthering research necessary to improve work-related issues. I would also like to thank Dr. Kathleen Barclay, who guided me through this entire process. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to your students. I would also like to thank anyone I might have missed and acknowledge those who have helped me throughout this significant undertaking.

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I would like to thank everyone who believed in me and inspired me to continue this journey. I would also like to thank all the adult learners at Walden University with whom I attended this program. Your quest for knowledge and desire to succeed continues to inspire me to be my personal best. I would again like to thank Dr. Kathleen Barclay, who worked closely with me on this study. I appreciate all your time and input into this project. I would also like to thank you for your continued support and, at times, tough love approach. I would also like to thank all my instructors at Walden University who did not allow their students to produce average work. I realize that you were teaching us not only to see a project though but also to survive in an ever-changing professional environment and to exceed the high expectations of our current and future employers. I sincerely appreciate your guidance, mentorship, and encouragement.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Managers in organizations agree that knowledge is the most critical means of sustaining a competitive advantage among rivals in the global economy (Larkin & Burgess, 2013). Larkin and Burgess (2013) also noted that employee retention positively influences the transfer of knowledge within firms. Human resource managers strive to attract and retain the best employees to maintain their organization's competitive advantage (Beynon, Jones, Pickernell, & Packham, 2015). Retention of key personnel is critical to the long-term success and profitability of organizations that cannot afford to lose valuable employees if they are to meet their growth objectives (Balakrishnan & Vijayalakshmi, 2014; Shore, 2013).

Retention of key employees helps leaders protect a firm's investment in human resources and may be more important than physical assets. In the United States, businesses may have to replace 70 million retiring workers over the next few decades (Oladapo, 2014). Oladapo (2014) also noted that for companies to remain competitive, management must develop reliable, long-term strategies to attract, hire, develop, and retain key employees. Strategies to retain key employees continues to be a problem so gaining knowledge of best practices is critical in planning how to keep good workers.

The purpose this study was to explore leadership strategies for retaining key employees.

Background of the Problem

In today's competitive global economy, people are the main resource responsible for their organization's success (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014). Companies must be willing to solicit feedback from their employees to improve productivity and employee retention (Rai & Singh, 2013). Unhappy employees can hurt their company's profitability by demonstrating withdrawal behaviors such as increased tardiness, absenteeism, and employee turnover (Shore, 2013). The dilemma of whether an employee stays or leaves a company could be due to communication barriers, a lack of confidence in the organization, or a lack of respect for management (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, Pemberton-Jones, & Enda, 2015). Cloutier at el. (2015) also noted a report by the Society for the Human Resource Management (SHRM) stated that 75% of employees are actively seeking employment. There is a need for researchers to continue to investigate the topic of employee retention to find additional solutions to resolve this business issue. In Addition, key employees are workers who managers trust to get the job done and are perceived to contribute to the success of their companies (Schlosser, 2015). Managers who implement healthy workplace practices not only reduce employee turnover but also enhance workers performance and commitment to their firms (Rathi & Lee, 2014). Retention of key employees is critical to organizations and can save companies time and money in retraining new employees (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2016). Therefore, this research may aid in gaining insight into this phenomenon.

Employee retention is an issue in the insurance sector, particularly among sales employees. The insurance industry is a very high impact and dynamic field for sales employees. The job of insurance sales agents includes many duties, including meeting high production sales quotas, dealing with customer-related issues, and managing a heavy workload of administrative work. Established sales agents must keep abreast of all these duties if they are to be successful. The increased demand of time, workload, and energy associated with being successful as an agent can cause insurance employees to become burned out (Frone & Tidwell, 2015). Study findings may provide managers of these agents with useful knowledge for addressing the problem of employee retention among their sales personnel.

Problem Statement

Manager interactions with workers can affect employee attitudes towards their firm (Rathi & Lee, 2017). The cost of recruiting, selecting, and training new employees can exceed 100% of the yearly salary of the position being filled (Al-Emadi, Schwaberland, & Wei, 2015). The general business problem is that dissatisfied key employees may resign from their positions, resulting in higher costs for organizations. The specific business problem is that some insurance managers lack leadership strategies to retain key employees.

Purpose Statement

The intent of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore leadership strategies used by insurance sales managers to keep key employees. I conducted the study in Southern California. Findings could contribute to positive social change by informing insurance sales managers of leadership strategies and best practices acquired by their colleagues to preserve their best workers. The retention of key employees may contribute to positive social change because managers may gain insights about leadership strategies that might save their organizations time and money in the cost of hiring and training new employees. Key employees could be encouraged to remain with their organizations, which could sustain or increase retention rates of workers in the community. In addition, the results of this study may add to the body of existing literature on the issues of employee retention, employee satisfaction, motivation, and leadership. Managers could be more supportive of their key employees' needs based on the findings and be more successful in retaining these employees. Study results may also help managers to reduce the harmful effects of withdrawal behaviors displayed by unhappy employees.

Nature of the Study

I selected the qualitative research method to gain an understanding of how insurance sales managers developed leadership strategies to retain their key employees. The qualitative research method provides an understanding of societal issues and serves the public through knowledge (Tracy, 2013). Tracy (2013) also noted that qualitative research offers awareness of social experiences of participants. I selected the qualitative research method over the quantitative research method because it allowed for exploration of personal experience into the phenomenon. Qualitative research aids the participants by honoring their strengths and insights and informing the reader of their experience (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). A quantitative research method was not selected for this study because I was not attempting to measure or correlate the research topic with another variable. As Hanley, Lennie, and West (2014) observed, a quantitative research method is appropriate when seeking to measure or correlate variables to assess their relationships. I also considered but opted against using a mixed-methods research approach. My rationale was that the use of mixed-methods methodology was not necessary to effectively answer research question about personal experiences

(Mclaughlin, Bush, & Zeeman, 2016). The use of the mixed methods methodology requires the use of both forms of data. My research question could be sufficiently answered using the qualitative method.

I used a qualitative descriptive design for this study. A descriptive design is an important research approach for gaining insight on important events (Kim, Sefcik, & Bradway, 2013). I did not select a phenomenology design because I was not focused on exploring the lived experiences of others. I opted against using a narrative design because I was not focused on providing an account of the life of an individual through a descriptive story. An ethnographic study could have been selected for this study. I opted against this design because I did not seek to study a culture sharing group. A grounded theory design was not chosen because I was not trying to form a theory. Last, I did not select a case-study design because I was not seeking to use narrative accounts of an event or individual to explain a problem. By using the descriptive design, I was able to afford interviewees the opportunity to share their personal insights about the study phenomenon. As Kim et al. (2013) noted, a qualitative descriptive design is adequate when the goal is a comprehensive description of insights of participants toward the study phenomenon.

Research Question

The central research question was, What leadership strategies are used by Southern California insurance sales managers to retain their key employees?

Interview Questions

I posed the following interview questions, which were based on the research question, to participants:

1. Why do you think retention of key insurance agents is important?
2. Why do you think insurance agents leave the organization?
3. How does your relationship with your key insurance agents help retain them?
4. What do you think are some incentives from the company that encourages your key sales agents to stay?
5. What are your thoughts about how career advancement opportunities help retain your key insurance agents?
6. What leadership strategies have you implemented to keep your top insurance salespeople?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion regarding strategies to retain key insurance sales agents?

Conceptual Framework

I used Herzberg's (1969) two-factor theory and Adams's (1965) equity theory as the basis for my research because both theories aided in exploring motivational factors needed for managers to retain key insurance sales agents. In formulating two-factor theory, Herzberg explored causes of job satisfaction and determined that it involved two factors: job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Herzberg found that satisfiers are related to the job and its incentives for performance. Intrinsic factors such as achievement, the work itself, and advancement are the most important factors for a lasting positive attitude, whereas extrinsic factors such as pay, awards, and incentives were not significant (Herzberg, 1969). Herzberg found achievement was frequently associated with long-term factors of work. Dissatisfiers are working conditions and work-related relationships

(Herzberb, 1969). Pay and job security are necessary to keep employees motivated and satisfied with their jobs (Herzberg, 1969). Herzberg's dual-factor theory is relevant to my study because if employees don't enjoy their jobs, they are not going to want to stay with the firms they are employed at. Also, if workers don't feel they are achieveing their career goals it could cause them to want to leave the organization.

I also used Adams's (1965) equity theory as a foundation for this study. Adams designed the theory as a general model that dealt with relationships of perceived job inputs and outcomes of employees in comparison to their coworkers. The theory implies that employees react when treated unfairly compared to other workers (Adams, 1965). Adam's theory was grounded on employees' inputs and organization outcomes based on the worker's job contributions and whether they were perceived as equal or unequal by the worker. Employee inputs are job experience, education, and effort put into the job (Adams, 1965). Outcomes are rewards, pay, or job advancement (Adams, 1965). Motivation arises when employees attempt to regain balance in equity (Adams, 1965). The greater employees feel they have been treated unfairly, the stronger their job dissatisfaction and need to restore balance (Adams, 1965). Inequity occurs when workers feel their job outcomes are less than their inputs compared to their coworkers (Adams, 1965). Equity theory is based on three assumptions: workers' beliefs about what are fair outcomes based on their job inputs, a comparison of outcomes to their coworkers, and how workers react when they believe they are treated unfairly (Adams, 1965). Adam's equity theory is also a critical theory used for my study. When employees feel they have not been treated fairly based on what they contributed to their jobs then they react by being late, absent, or resigning from their workplace. I used both theories as foundations for my research.

Operational Definitions

The following operational definitions ensure a mutual understanding of concepts presented in this study.

Employee voice: Employee voice is two-way communication between employees and management (Bashshur & Burak, 2015).

Extrinsic motivation: Extrinsic motivation is an external influencing variable such as pay (Miniotoite & Buciueniene, 2013).

Intrinsic motivation: Intrinsic motivation is the satisfaction of doing the job itself (Miniotoite & Buciueniene, 2013).

Psychological ownership (PO): Psychological ownership refers to employees' outlook towards their job, which affects their behavior and actions in the organization (Park, Song, Yoon, & Kim 2013).

Work volition: Work volition encompasses when employees believe they have more choices in their work lives (Duffy, Autin, & Bott, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Theoretical assumptions are beliefs upon which a research project is based (Roulston, 2014). The assumptions in this study were, as follows: (a) the participants would be willing to participate in the interviews during their free time, (b) the participants would answer the interview questions truthfully, (c) the participants would respond to the interview questions quickly, and (d) the completion rate for the seminstructured interviews would be 100%.

Limitations

Limitations are the possible complications of the study (Walker & Solvason, 2015). This study was limited by my use of the qualitative research method and an exploratory, descriptive research design. The first obstacle that could have restricted the research from being completed was there might not have been 15 participants willing to participate in the study. Fifteen participants did participate in the study, so this limitation was not an issue. The second problem could have been not being able to obtain adequately completed consent forms to conduct the study. However, this was not a concern in that participants completed the forms. The third drawback could have been that participants might have avoided providing truthful responses and thereby compromised the investigation. Conversely, I believe the participants responded truthfully to the interview questions. The last limitation was that the data collected from the study may not have produced sufficient information necessary to proceed with the research. However, the participants provided a vast amount of usable data that sufficiently supported my study.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries that limit the study (Walker & Solvason, 2015). This study was restricted to 15 insurance sales managers in Los Angeles, California because data saturation was achieved at that number. I recruited participants by contacting multiple organizations within the insurance industry and was able to find 15 participants who contributed to my study. The members who participated were a diverse group of people, ranging from young to middle aged, with a minimum of 2 years in an insurance sales manager's position. Finally, my inquiry was restricted to the research topic.

Significance of the Study

This research project was necessary because employee turnover has undesirable effects on organizations in terms of cost in training, loss of valuable skills, and company knowledge (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2016). As Kessler (2014) noted, employee retention is a critical issue in business; it constitutes a business problem which company leaders need to address by sponsoring research on the topic to improve employee retention. A employee satisfaction survey conducted by Strategic Human Resource Management, for example, revealed that relationships between supervisors and workers was the third factor influencing job satisfaction (Abraham, 2012). Job security ranked number one, and opportunities to use skills and abilities ranked as number two (Abraham, 2012). Performing new research could add to knowledge about worker retention by providing new insights on leadership strategies for retaining key employees; this study could, thus, raise managers' awareness of leadership strategies they can use to retain key employees. One strategy may be to foster more dedication to the organization among employees. Past study results indicate that employees who are dedicated to their organizations are more likely to stay with their firms (Stumpf, Tymon, Favorito, & Smith, 2013).

Building better relationships between employees and management and encouraging workers to stay in their organizations may also lead to positive social change. Study findings may help business owners in local communities to refine their leadership skills, aiding them in building better rapport with their employees thereby creating happier communities. Managers could use the results of this study to generate positive social change by encouraging corporations to write policies and implement programs that create happier work environments that leads to better work-life quality.in the community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Job satisfaction is the degree to which employees are satisfied with their employers, policies, the work environment, supervision and leadership, and the actual work, as well as other factors (Madan, 2017). Employee retention ensures that organizations have the right people with the necessary skills to implement and realize company business strategies (Ibidunni, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Salau, & Falola, 2015).

This review of the professional and academic literature provides an overview of background theories and current issues in employee retention, as well as other related topics that have evolved based on current research. The review contains peer-reviewed research articles about employee retention, job satisfaction, and motivation. The studies are organized by topic and sources obtained through academic libraries as well as websites and books. To complete this literature review, I used a variety of sources. The research databases used to find literature were ProQuest, EBSCO host, and SAGE. Of the 75 references in my literature review, approximately nine are older than 5 years.

Employee Retention

Employee retention is the voluntary process of organizations working to create an environment that engages employees and motivates them to stay with their firm for an extended period (Al-Emadi et al., 2015). Al-Emadi et al. conducted a review of the literature to determine factors that influenced employees to stay with their organizations in the public sector. The researchers explored and synthesized information on human resource practices and employee retention to determine which theories, issues, and strategies were useful in helping managers retain workers for their companies. Their literature review focused on defining employee retention, the importance of worker retention to firms, and the cost to companies associated with low retention rates and high turnover rates due to the cost to train new workers and hidden expenses affiliated with employee turnover. The findings of Al-Emadi et al. relates to my research topic because it discusses some factors that cause employees to leave the organization and how firms are affected when key people leave. The researchers offers suggestions of strategies that can help managers retain their workers.

Al-Emadi et al. (2015) also explored theories relevant to worker preservation and discussed four principles in their literature review. The four concepts were human capital theory (HCT), social exchange theory (SET), resource-based view (RBV), and the Price-Mueller causal model of turnover (Al-Emadi et al., 2015). HCT considers voluntary turnover an investment cost incurred in an earlier period to obtain returns over a longer period (Al-Emadi et al., 2015). A tenet of SET is that one employee’s behavior, influences other workers’ behaviors and relationships occur based on employee’s actions whereas, in the RBV, core skills that are critical to an organization's success and competitive advantage should be nurtured through internal processes, strategies, and practices, while skills of minimal value should be outsourced (Al-Emadi et al.). The Price-Mueller causal model of turnover is a model developed by Price and Mueller.

In their research, Al-Emadi et al. outlined the background of job satisfaction and intention to leave. Their model also incorporated organizational commitment as a mediator between job satisfaction and intent to stay with a company (Al-Emadi, 2015). The researchers explored employee retention in the public sector and explored effective ways to maintain employee retention. Their discoveries from reviewing of the literature revealed that it is possible to manage employee retention by having effective human resources management practices. Their study relates to my study because it is connected to the equity theory. Based on the equity theory employees attempt to restore balance of their inputs of the firm when they percieve they are being treated unfairly. (SET) is associated because one employee can influence another employee's actions if they think they are being treated unfairly.

Additionally, Maden, Ozcelik, and Karacay (2014) analyzed the role of future job expectations and value beliefs in employees' unmet job expectations. The researchers developed a model analyzing the outcomes of unmet job expectations of employees by evaluating how workers responded when their expectations of their job were not met (Maden et al., 2014). Maden et al. discussed the theoretical background of unmet job expectations, along with the outcomes of unmet job expectations such as low job satisfaction and higher turnover rates of workers. They identified three outcomes:

emotional exhaustion, decreased job satisfaction, and high employee turnover intentions. The results of their study showed that employees with positive future expectations had less emotional exhaustion than those who had no job expectations (Maden et al., 2014). In addition, workers with future employment plans had a higher turnover if their job expectations did not happen (Maden et al., 2014).

Presbitero, Roxas, and Chadee (2016) explored alternatives to human resources management practices to retain workers in business process outsourcing firms in the Philippines. Business process outsourcing firms (BPOs) are growing rapidly in developing countries leaving a shortage of technology workers and causing high turnover rates (Presbitero et al., 2016); high turnover rates have compromised the competitiveness of BPOs in the Philippines. Presbitero et al. used structural equation modeling and surveyed a sample of 258 participants. Their objective was to show that organization and employee fit has the potential to enhance human resources practices and increase employee retention. A good fit between firms and their employees is associated with higher retention rates. Presbitero et al. indicated that employee retention rates of BPOs in the United States were lower than in the Philippines. The low retention rates suggest there could be a clash in fit between organization policies and employee values.

The results of Presbitero et al.'s (2016) study indicated that good human resource management practices alone did not necessarily reduce employee retention. The researchers inferred that organizational leaders must look at compatibility between themselves and their employees as well as consider employee fit when designing human resource policies to address employee retention. Another finding was that the transfer of human resource systems from one country to another for multinational companies (MNC) could lead to difficulties in retaining employees if the agency's personnel policies did not align with employees' values (Presbitero, 2016). The researchers suggested that MNCs undergo some adaptation of human resources management practices to fit local values to be successful in retaining employees in developing countries.

Sheth (2016) examined ways that managers could obtain better employee retention rates, increased productivity, and more engaged employees. Sheth used the millennial population as the sample group in his article to determine how employers might achieve better results from this segment of workers. The researcher suggested that millennials were not motivated by money. Instead, they wanted to have work that was enjoyable to them, to make an impact in their careers, to give back to their communities, and to learn continuously from their jobs (Sheth et al., 2016). Sheth inferred that engagement happens by aligning individual goals with the company's objectives. He offered suggestions on how to attract workers, how to create an engaging culture, and how to maintain organizational culture as firms grew. The researcher concluded by giving suggestions on how to inspire, engage, and motivate employees to achieve higher employee retention and engagement.

The studies of Presbitero et al. (2016) and Sheth (2016) differed based on the factors each set of researchers sought to explore. However, both Presbitero et al. and Sheth addressed the variable of organizational culture. Sheth discussed how a company's culture along with human resource practices attracted millennials to organizations. Based on Sheth's research, the ability to create new resources outside of traditional human resources management packages makes a firm more attractive to millennials. In addressing organizational culture and employee fit, Presbitero et al. suggested that if companies in developing countries wanted to attract and retain key talent, they needed to ensure that the organization's goals matched the employee's goals. Both studies suggest that firms make adjustments and adapt new policies to attract and maintain employees by adding new resources outside of traditional human resources management practices.

Zhang et al. (2015) explored the effects of leadership styles on employee retention strategies and the effectiveness of post-merger and acquisition (MA) integration in the Chinese business context. Zhang et al. (2015) proposed that successful post-merger and acquisition integration depends on sound leadership practices by the organization. Their study contributed to the literature in several ways. First, the researchers investigated the leadership styles that were appropriate during the (MA) integration process in Chinese companies. Next, they explored talent retention strategies that were common in China. Last, they examined the underlying relationship between leadership style and talent retention in the (MA) integration process. The researchers used a snowball sampling technique to interview leaders of both the acquiring company and the acquired company.

Zhang et al. (2015) results showed that authoritative, coaching, task-focused, and relationship focused leadership styles were appropriate for accomplishing an effective post-merger acquisition integration in Chinese organizations. The strategies for retaining employees were based on the individual leadership styles. Authoritative leaders used communication, whereas, leaders that used a coaching style used an incentive structure to influence talent retention positively. Also, task-focused leaders used position and performance to retain key employees. In contrast to relationship-focused leaders who used the guanxi network, which suggest that firms should identify key and regulatory relationships, and then focus on individuals who should be retained to concentrate on keeping targeted relationships, communications, and incentives as a strategy for keeping their key employees.

Presbitero et al. (2016) and Zhang et al. (2015) studies both addressed retention of employees in countries outside of the United States. Presbitero explored the variable of employee fit and organizational culture in retention of employees in the Philippines. Whereas, Zhang addressed how leadership styles affected employee retention in business mergers and acquisitions integration in China. Both studies used different factors to explore employee retention. However, similar variables seemed to reoccur that affected employee retention those being leadership styles, employee fit, and organizational culture.

Guha and Chakrabarti (2016) steered an exploratory study that focused on developing a theoretical framework of factors that contributed to the retention of key employees in the information technology industry. The study used the variables that focused on the differential attitudes of employees work and life on their turnover intentions. The researchers examined past studies that related to voluntary turnover and involuntary turnover. The main focus was on the factors of voluntary turnover since managers had some control over voluntary turnover. The results of the study showed that high valued employees left organizations for various reasons, but a significant discovery was that higher turnover occurred among younger information technology workers due to higher salaries, better company branding, and improved opportunities for advancement. This study supports other studies that employees leave companies for better job opportunities.

Ibidunni et al. (2015) used a descriptive research design to explore how firms in the banking industry in Africa developed retention strategies for preservation of their existing employees. Ibidunni et al. (2015) used a sample of 185 participants and surveyed them regarding factors that contributed to their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions to stay with the organization.

The objectives of the study were to identify reasons that organizations fail to attract and retain workers and to improve services of the organization for better retention of employees. The researchers identified five factors that contributed to employee's intentions to remain with their companies. They were pay, promotions, working conditions, relationship with coworkers and superiors, and recognition.

The results of their study showed that pay had a positive impact on employee engagement and involvement. The results also revealed that promotion had a positive effect on employee commitment, suggesting that promotion be used as a stimulating factor in keeping employees. Their finding also disclosed that work environment and relationships with coworkers and superiors had a strong connection to job satisfaction and employee involvement. The researchers concluded that organizations would not be positioning themselves competitively if their Human resources departments did not consider these variables.

Ibidunni et al. (2015) identified five of the same variables advocated in the study of Herzberg (1969) two-factor theory. Herzberg proposed all five factors recognized in Ibidunni's study. The factors of pay, promotions, working conditions, relationship with coworkers and superiors, and recognition mentioned are critical to job satisfaction. Both studies linked mutual variables to job satisfaction and employee retention.

Employee Satisfaction

New and emerging methods in employee satisfaction contributes to existing ones. Mella & Gazzola (2016) analyzed the impact of Corporate social responsibility (CSR) on employee satisfaction. The researchers examined how companies starting CSR programs influenced employees through their own ethics. The results of the study showed that organizations that were committed to social and environmental issues had more productive and engaged employees. This supports that employee satisfaction is influenced by the organization's culture and it's commitment to its community. It infers that engaged employees stay with organizations where they are happy.

Jackson, Alberti, and Snipes (2014) conducted a study on the impact of gender on leadership style and employee job satisfaction. The researchers analyzed whether gender had an effect on employee's perceptions of leadership style and job satisfaction. They used literature from other studies to discuss the evolution of management and how women evolved in leadership roles. Jackson et al. also evaluated employee's attitudes towards their preferences for male or female supervisors. The researchers communicated that today's workforce is more receptive to female supervisors but overall, both genders still preferred male supervisors. The researchers also analyzed different leadership styles and mainly discussed Leader-member exchange (LMX). The study assessed an area of research that was minimal. This study is relevant because it evaluated how gender in management effected employee's perceptions of their happiness on their jobs.

Ruiz-Palomino, Saez-Martin, and Canas (2013) expanded a theory of pay satisfaction by demonstrating the effects of Job motivating Potential (JMP) and supervisor ethical leadership (SEL) in determining job satisfaction. They presented a model that aided in understanding pay satisfaction with (JMP) and (SEL). The researchers attempted to fill a gap in the literature by providing a rationale for supporting the role supervisors play in increasing pay. They discovered a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job characteristics.

Kasekende, Byarugaba, and Nakate (2013) led a study that explored the relationship between organizational service orientation and employee satisfaction and how they affected employee retention. The researchers used a sample of 346 teachers in Uganda. The research results indicated that organizational service orientation did have an effect on employee satisfaction. Employee satisfaction had a significant relationship with employee retention, and when employees were satisfied organizational service orientation to employee retention was not significant. The findings of this study supported that employee satisfaction and employee retention are linked.

Arogundade and Arogundade (2015) conducted a non-experimental quantitative study that surveyed 300 participants in Nigeria. They examined the influences of psychological employment empowerment on employee satisfaction. Psychological employee empowerment is workers meaningfulness, the competence of employees, their choices in work activities and its' impact on their job satisfaction. Their research findings indicated that an increase in employee empowerment led to greater satisfaction. The researchers' found there is intrinsic value in a job when employees feel empowered, and their careers have meaning.

Malik (2013) steered a study that examined the relationships between leader behavior and employee satisfaction. The researcher surveyed middle- and first-line managers by questionnaires using a random sampling technique. Malik's findings revealed that employees were satisfied with their jobs. The results also showed a positive correlation between employee job satisfaction and leadership behavior. Malik's findings indicated a link between management leadership of employees and worker satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a subjective evaluation of a worker's contentment with their work environment, supervisors, policies, and leadership (Madan, 2017). The following studies were significant to review. Kermani (2013) piloted a study to examine the linkage between job satisfaction, service quality, and customer satisfaction with a sample of 30 employees and 30 customers in an insurance company in Iran. Kermani's findings showed that employees did influence consumers' perceptions of the quality of transactions. His findings also revealed a positive correlation between the three factors. This research is relevant this because it supports that employees have impact on business practices and relations of an organization by the service they provide to customers while doing their jobs.

Lardner (2015) directed a study to determine how revising employee benefit systems for an organization affected employee engagement and retention. The organization Gemserv was used to determine how performance was linked to employee's long term growth and desire to stay with the organization. The company looked beyond pay incentives to determine how they could better encourage employee retention. The findings showed that 83% of participants valued Gemserv's benefits. It also encouraged employee engagement and resulted in longer retention of their employees.

Prottas (2013) guided research on the relationship between employee's perceptions of their manager's behavioral integrity (BI), stress, job engagement, turnover likelihood, and work to family conflict. Prottas' research focused on how job satisfaction affected these variables and workers' intention to stay with an organization. Prottas's results confirmed past studies that managers' leadership abilities do have an effect on employee retention.

Conversely, Madan (2017) steered a study that defined the concept of employee engagement differentiating it from the concept of employee satisfaction. The study also developed a link between employee engagement and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Madan analyzed and compared the differences between employee satisfaction and employee engagement. He further discussed the benefits of employee engagement to an organization and his research sought to prove there was a connection between employee engagement and Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. Madan's study supported a link between Maslow's hierarchy of needs and employee engagement. Reinforcing that all employees want to be appreciated and valued for their contributions to the organization.

Wu, Chen, and Chen (2017) directed a study that explored the effects of employee wellness on job satisfaction. The researchers surveyed employees in both for profit and non-profit firms in Taiwan. They found that improved employee physical and mental health resulted in benefits to the organization such as increased productivity, less cost to the organization due to illness, and positive employee outlooks on their jobs. The researchers also developed a framework relating to the benefits of employee wellness. The results of this study are being used by managers to help develop and improve employee wellness programs within their companies.

Coladonato and Manning (2017) investigated the role of effective leadership and Emotional intelligence (EI) on job satisfaction in the nursing industry. The researchers defined (EI) as the ability for leaders to accurately perceive, appraise, and express emotions. They stated the concept of (EI) goes further by the leader having the ability to feel empathy and stay calm in frustrating situations. Leaders that are effective in using (EI) can lead their workers and gain a competitive advantage over leaders who don't. Emotional intelligence has also been shown to help leaders retain their top employees, increase teamwork efforts, make better use of time, and use of resources. EI is considered a softer side of leadership and a leader's ability to use (EI) is linked to other studies that based their research on job satisfaction, leadership, and motivation.

In contrast, Duffy, Autin, and Bott (2014) supervised a study that examined mediators of the link between work volition and job satisfaction. Work volition is employees having more freedom of choice on their jobs. The study used a sample of 280 men and women and used the Psychology of work framework (PWF) to determine the relationship between job satisfaction and person –work environment fit. PWF asserts that employees who have more choices in their jobs are happier workers than employees who do not. Duffy et al. (2014) found that employees with extra work choice were more satisfied than those who did not have work preference. Additionally, that freedom in work choices was a predictor of intrinsic meaning and work environment fit. The findings suggest that if employees have some input and growth opportunities they are more satisfied with their jobs. The study of Duffy, et al. supports that key workers must enjoy their jobs intrinsically and that manager communication with employees is key.

Park, Song, Yoon, and Kim (2013) directed a study that focused on the effect that relationship psychological ownership had on transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. Psychological ownership (PO) is an employee's feelings towards their job that affects their behavior and actions within the organization. The study used a sample of 248 Korean workers in the public sector. Park et al. (2013) study results supported that transformational leadership played a critical role in enhancing employee's psychological ownership and organizational citizenship behavior. Their findings further supported other studies that sound leadership contributes to employee's overall outlook on their company and worker's investment in the organization. This study validates that if employees do not feel secure in their jobs, they will seek other career opportunities. Also, that workers need to fit in their organizations and have good relationships with their supervisors and co-workers.

Fu and Deshpande (2013) piloted a quantitative study that examined the relationships between caring climate, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance of 476 employees working in an insurance company in China. The study used structural equation modeling to analyze their relationships. The results of the research revealed that a caring climate did have a direct impact on job satisfaction and job performance, and indirectly on organizational commitment. Vales (2014) led a quantitative study that examined the correlation between salaries, benefits, and work environment to job satisfaction of unionized workers in Hawaii. The investigator gathered data from websites such as U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, peer-reviewed articles, and an independent survey made up by the researcher. Vale found that salary and benefits did increase job satisfaction and that work environment did not affect job satisfaction. Vale noted that the employees might not have fully understood the meaning of work environment. Work environment is the physical place and social or psychological factors associated with the work sight. Vale's findings refute other studies mentioned earlier that found work environment contributes to job satisfaction.

Crowe (2016) compared two studies on ethical leadership The first study extended the literature on ethical leadership by examining idea resources and values by exploring relationships between leaders and their subordinates. The researcher evaluated the impact of equity sensitivity on follower's organizational commitment. In both studies the researcher found a positive relationship between ethical leadership, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and organizational identification. The results also supported the affects of ethical leadership and equity sensitivity on organizational commitment. This study extended the literature on ethical leadership and job satisfaction.

Motivational Studies

The following studies relate to the topic of employee motivation. These studies show the connection between employee satisfaction, motivation, and retention. They are representative of the current state of research on the topic of motivation. Hahm (2018) chaired a study that examined authentic leadership on creativity, psychological empowerment, and creativity in the e-commerce business. Hahm suggested in his research that e-commerce has advanced business by improving company's competitive advantage and offers a platform to increase employee's creativity. Hahm's literature review offered many definitions of authentic leadership and defines it as a process that draws both psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context which results in greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of the leaders and associates fostering positive self development. The results of the study showed that leaders should understand and practice authentic leadership to aid in encouraging creativity.

Baumann and Stieglitz (2014) led an exploratory study in an attempt to fill gaps in their understanding of reward incentives and employee motivation. The researchers sought to summarize various views on incentives for employee ideas and deliberated on how incentives affected an organization's search for ideas. The researchers presented two concepts, high-powered and low-powered incentives. High-powered incentives generated some good ideas, but no unique ideas and low-powered incentives provided a stream of good ideas and some excellent ideas. The researchers found that low-powered incentives were the best approach to induce a search for ideas within a company. Whereas, high-powered incentives came at an enormous price and yielded limited results for the organization. Their research findings inferred that incentives given to employees by the organization did not have to be expensive. An incentive could be recognizing employees for their hard work, contributions to the company, and their ideas.

Lavanya and Kalliath (2015) directed a study that examined the relationships between employee motivation, leadership styles, and organizational citizen behavior. The researchers surveyed 102 participants and 20 leaders. The objectives of the study were to determine if a difference existed between the relationships of employee motivation, leadership styles, and citizen organizational behavior based on age, tenure, and gender. Lavanya and Kalliath found that intrinsic work motivation and self-motivation had a clear connection with organizational citizenship behavior. They also specifically found a relationship between transactional leadership and organizational citizenship behavior and no relationship to organizational citizenship behavior based on age, tenure, or gender.

Riketta (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 16 studies on the relationship between job attitudes and employee performance. Riketta attempted to answer the question: Does job viewpoint increase job performance? The results of his analysis were consistent with other research findings that job outlook did increase performance. Riketta's research is significant because the research supported other past studies that workers' attitudes towards their jobs affected their performance. Riketta's meta-analysis supported other studies showing the connection that workers' perceptions of their jobs determine their job productivity and their intentions to stay with their organizations.

In contrast, Lester, Hvezda, Sullivan, and Plourde (1983) developed a questionnaire to measure responses to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory that tested his hypothesis on 166 undergraduate participants. The researchers surveyed the members of the study based on Maslow’s theory that satisfaction of needs and psychological health are connected. The correlation between the scores for the satisfaction of needs and beliefs in a locus of control supported Maslow’s hypothesis. The study confirmed Maslow’s assumptions that motivation is significant to an individual’s wellbeing and contributes to their psychological health. Similarly, Bridwell and Wahba (1973) reviewed scholarly literature and attempted to test parts of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory. Bridwell and Wahba contended there was little empirical evidence to support Maslow’s theory. A review of the literature showed that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory received little or no support from the available research findings. The researchers argued that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory was almost a non-testable theory. Bridwell and Wahba’s study contradicted the study of (Lester et al., 1983). Lester et al., (1983) found that Maslow’s hierarchy of need theory did contribute to workers motivation and psychological well-being. Whereas, Bridwell and Wahba’s researched and tested parts of Maslow’s theory and found it untestable.

Stead (1972) examined the application of Berlo’s communication process model as applied to behavioral theories of Maslow, Herzberg, and McGregor. Stead addressed lower and upper-level needs, needs-hierarchy model testing, and intrinsic-extrinsic needs. The researcher applied each of the models to Berlo’s communication process model. Stead concluded that Berlo’s communication theory could be applied to the behavioral theories of Maslow, Herzberg, and McGregor to explain human reactions. Conversely, Davis and Allen (1970) interviewed a sample of 700 bankers. The researchers conducted a study that explored Herzberg's methodology and questioned respondents about incidents at work when they felt emotions of high and low moments based on Herzberg's dual factor theory. The results of their study showed that high feelings outlasted when employees felt low. Their findings also indicated it was managers' duty to promote positive responses through providing a motivating climate within organizations. This study infers that managers can affect employee's motivation and that work environment plays a significant part of whether an employee feels invested in the organization. The researchers applied Herzberg's hierarchy of needs theory in both Stead (1972), and Davis and Allen (1970) studies. Davis and Allen's study tested Herzberg's theory methodology to determine how it applied to employee motivation, and Stead used Herzberg's theory to determine how to use it with Berlo's communication process model. Davis and Allen (1970) study supports that communication plays a critical role in the workplace. Stead's research also confirms other research that work environment contributes to worker retention.

Additionally, Chung (1969) proposed a Markov chain model that dealt with multivariate, and the probabilistic nature of the human needs system. Markov chain analysis is a method of analyzing a system of behavioral characteristics that involve multivariate, probabilistic, and dynamic elements. The proposed model offered a powerful tool to analyze Maslow's theory of needs. Chung's Markov chain model favored Maslow's theory of needs and Chung discussed it in his theoretical framework.

Markov inferred that Maslow's human needs theory be studied as a whole instead of each variable individually. Also, House and Widgor (1968) examined Herzberg's dual factor theory of job satisfaction and motivation in an attempt to assess its validity. The researchers interviewed a sample of 200 members and asked each participant to think of a time when they felt high emotions on their jobs and a time when they felt low emotions. House and Widgor's study results inferred that the two-factor theory was a simplification of relationships between motivation and satisfaction.

House and Widgor's study is similar to the study conducted by Bridwell and Wahba, who researched and tested Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. In both studies' the researchers challenged the theories of Herzberg and Maslow. House and Widgor challenged the soundness of Herzberg's theory based on lack of evidence to support his theory. Bridwell and Wahba also challenged the validity of Maslow's Needs Hierarchy theory for the same reason. The results of both studies were considered inconclusive and non-testable. These studies are representative of some of the research conducted on the topic of motivation.

Leadership Research

A leader is one who has the ability to encourage a group to move forward towards a vision and achieve the company's goal (Gandolf &Stone, 2016). Jasper (2018) wrote an article that discussed various types of leadership styles and how to build an adaptive leadership style that works to engage employees. The author gave examples of different leadership styles such as autocratic leadership style, coaching, coercive, democratic, and pacesetting leadership styles. The author proposed that different situations suggest different leadership styles and stated that effective leaders use many different leadership styles in various situations. The author advocated that leaders must be adaptable and willing to change their leadership style to fit the situation. The author further discussed attributes of a good leader and mentioned that leaders influence, motivates, and encourages workers. Leaders also have the overall vision of the organization in mind when making decisions. The article was informative and offered insight to managers seeking to develop their leadership styles. Jasper's research also suggest that leaders must be adaptable and able to change their leadership style in different environments.

Malaeb and Garavan (2013) conducted a quantitative study that investigated the relationships of talent and leadership development practices, affective commitment and intent to stay. The researchers obtained data from nine firms that implemented talent management for their main employees. The sample population consisted of 250 members, and the researchers analyzed leadership development practices and employee's commitment to intention to stay. The results of the study revealed a positive relationship between talent and leadership development practices. The researchers also showed that affective commitment mediated the relationship between leadership development practices and employee's intention to stay with a firm. This study advanced the theoretical understanding of the connection between talent and leadership development practices.

Monahan (2013) directed a quantitative study to understand and clarify the role of individual work values with the relationship of Leader-member exchange (LMX) on job satisfaction. The sample consisted of 122 American workers from various organizations across the United States. The researcher used multiple regression analysis to assess the impact of leader-member exchange on intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, and hierarchical regression analysis to determine self-enhancement and self-transcendence values. The results of their study showed that (LMX) had a direct impact on both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. The diminishing analysis revealed that self-transcendence significantly moderated extrinsic job satisfaction and (LMX) dimensions. Monahan's research findings concluded with a suggestion that managers realize they represent the organization and that their level of support provided to workers affects how their employees view the organization. Monahan's research on LMX supported earlier studies discussed on the topic of Leader-member exchange. The findings also confirmed that managers need to be supportive and act as a mentor to their key workers.

Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, and Labat (2015) examined key leadership behavior and the demands of high-stakes testing on teachers' intentions to stay in the teaching profession. The researchers used a mixed methods design to collect data from 212 public school teachers. Thibodeaux et al. (2015) explored the perceptions of the teachers to determine what factors helped them to remain in their profession. The researchers' found that education administrators placed more stress on teachers who taught state measured subjects than those who taught non-state measured subjects. Many of the teachers elected to stay in the teaching profession, but most of the teachers surveyed taught non-state determined subjects. Furthermore, the study results also found that high-stakes teachers left the profession due to state test pressure and being accountable for testing results of their students.

Ahn, Lee, and Yun (2016) conducted research that focused on exploring Leader's Core self evaluations (CSE) on ethical behavior and employee organizational citizenship behavior. The researcher's main focus was to determine whether leader's ethical behavior such as leading, compare (CSE) to ethical theories, The Social exchange theory (SET), and Self verification theory (SVT). The (SET) states that supervisors have critical exchanges with employees on a daily basis and that the relationship is based on social exchanges. The (SVT) theory says that self verifying leaders behave consistently to influence their workers. This study is positively associated with other studies because it connects employee satisfaction to leadership styles. The study also supports ethical behavior of the supervisor ensures that their employees will also behave ethically.

Employee Morale

Employee morale refers to how employees feel about their work environment. It is the degree that employees feel good about their job and work environment (Sabarirajan & Srivanidevi, 2014). The following studies focus on employee morale and are relevant to the research topic of retaining key employees. Sabarirajan & Srivanidevi (2014) steered a study that explored employee morale and quality of work life among employees. The researchers used a sample of 150 employees to determine how intrinsic motivation, work environment, employee satisfaction, and organizational commitment affected employee morale. Employee morale refers to how employees feel about their work environment and their commitment to their company. Sabarirajan & Srivanidevi (2014) examined each constraint and determined the results of the study were different based on the worker's type of employment. Permanent employees having higher morale than temporary employees. They also determined that employee morale had a positive correlation with intrinsic motivation, work environment, organizational commitment, and work pride. This study supports other studies in that high employee morale increased worker's intrinsic motivation and organizational commitment. Workers that have organizational citizenship and loves their job intrinsically stays with the company.

DeValk (2015) led a research study that focused on how businesses could deal with bad managers. The researcher focused the research on how bad management of employees affected employee morale, engagement, attitude, and production. DeValk 's study determined that bad management is a deal-breaker and 30% of workers surveyed stated they would leave if they had a bad manager. The results showed that unhappy employees opted to stay in their situation but was looking for their next career opportunity. DeValk identified some key strategies that HR managers could use to help improve the issue. This research supports other studies that link bad leadership styles to decreased employee morale and high employee turnover. DeValk's research supports other findings that workers leave when they encounter a manager who has a bad management style.

In contrast, Ogunfowora (2013) attempted to fill a gap in the literature by directing a study that examined abusive supervisor behavior on the attitudes of employees. Ogunfowora surveyed a sample of 297 workers in four non-profit organizations in Canada. His results showed that abusive supervision negatively affected the organization and the employee's perceptions of supervisor ethicality, leader satisfaction, or commitment to the company. However, abusive supervisor behavior was positively associated to the frequency that the workers engaged in counter-productive work behaviors. The results of the study supported employees will engage in withdrawal symptoms if they feel unsupported by their managers at work.

In addition, Oladapo (2013) identified and attempted to fill a gap in the literature by leading a study on workplace bullying. Oladapo pinpointed forms of harassment and conducted research on its effects on the target employee of bullying, witnesses, morale of the target employee and bystanders, and its negative financial implications for the firm. The study noted that workplace bullying occurred in various forms such as managers bullying their workers. Oladapo interviewed twenty-four self-selected managers. The results of the research revealed a relationship between workplace bullying and its effects on job satisfaction and employee productivity. Oladapo’s research findings reinforced the research results of Ogunforwora. Both investigations validating that interpersonal relationships between managers and workers contributes to employee morale and job satisfaction.

Williams, Campbell, and Denton (2013) explored the effects of workplace incivility in academia by high performing employees. Workplace incivility differs from other forms of deviant work behavior by two characteristics, moderate intensity and ambiguity with intent to harm others. The researchers interviewed 11 high performing managers. The results of the study indicated that workplace incivility by high performing employees resulted in a loss for everyone in the form of time, respect, and morale. This study suggests that workplace incivility could cause employee morale issues. In contrast, Fast, Burris, and Bartel (2014) directed two studies that examined the relationships of managers' abilities to seek input and manager's ability to encourage employee voice. The researchers hypothesized that low performing managers were less likely to solicit employee input from subordinate employees to compensate for their inability to do their jobs as managers. The researchers found their studies supported both ideas. This ends the discussion of studies on employee morale. I will now present studies on the topic of employee turnover.

Employee Turnover

Employee turnover refers to people who leave an organization for various reasons (Smith & Macko, 2014). Smith and Macko also noted that employee turnover creates difficulties for organizations by creating challenges recruiting quality employees, increased employee withdrawal behaviors, and cost of retraining new workers. The articles below are relevant to the proposed research topic. Sajjad, Ghazanfar, and Ramzan (2013) directed a quantitative study on the impact of motivation on employee turnover in the banking sector of Pakistan. The study used regression and correlation analysis to analyze data collected from a sample of 106 banks. Their research results revealed that motivation had a significant effect on employee turnover. Their study contributed to the existing literature on employee motivation and its impact on employee turnover.

Smith and Macko (2014) steered a study that explored the relationship between employee engagement and employee turnover. Research was conducted using one of the United Kingdom's major retail store's employees as the sample population. The store the researchers selected had high employee turnover. This study is significant because if a causal link was identified then a specific focus of action could be developed by human resource professionals looking to reduce employee turnover. The study found the role that managers played were an important part in employee engagement and turnover. Finding that if employees felt their managers communicated effectively and made their workers feel supported then turnover would be reduced. This study aligns with the study of Sajjad et al. (2013) because managers can affect employee's motivation based on their effectiveness as managers. This study is linked to other employee retention studies confirming that workers exit firms when they don't feel supported by their managers.

Leeder (2014) wrote an article that addressed the benefits of playing games to encourage employee teambuilding. The author discussed how incorporating game time could increase employee morale and help workers achieve the organization's vision. Topics of the article include the theory of play which included how playing games could be transformative to employees and encourage productivity and creativity, how to create a play culture, and recommendations for managers who are seeking to start a play culture. Leeder's article and recommendations on playing games illustrate that managers need to be creative when thinking about how to engage their employees.

Shore (2013) conducted a study that explored employee retention in a large firm in South Korea. The study investigated whether western employee preservation strategies could improve employee retention in eastern culture. Shore conducted a review of the literature to provide insight into factors that contributed to employee retention and interviewed 60 senior level managers on best practices. The findings of the study determined that culture mediated factors that affected retention rates. Dusek, Ruppel, Yurova, and Clarke (2014) piloted an exploratory study that investigated antecedents to employee turnover, service organization, and tested a model that examined other variables commonly related to employee turnover in the hotel industry. The researchers surveyed a sample population of 63 employees in the United States. Their findings showed that negative attitudes of employees towards their jobs contributed to their turnover intentions. Also, the results found that service orientation had a direct relationship with employee turnover.

Albattat and Som (2013) directed a study that examined past literature on employee turnover. The purpose of the research was to provide an overview of causes of job dissatisfaction and reasons employees quit their current jobs and considered other career opportunities. The researchers reviewed the literature on work environment, tourism, employee satisfaction, and turnover intention. The study used The Mobley Model as a foundation model to conduct the study. The Mobley Model explains seven stages of employee dissatisfaction and employee turnover. The findings of the investigation supported The Mobley Model. This study supported other studies that work environment, perceived workplace injustices, and low salaries contributed to employee's intentions to leave their jobs. These studies represent current inquiries conducted in the area of employee turnover.

Absenteeism

Absenteeism is defined as failure to appear at work or the willful evasion of work (Magee, Gordon, Robinson, Caputi, & Oades, 2016). The following studies are some of the current research being conducted on absenteeism. Olive and Cangemi (2015) guided research on workplace bullying and explored how high-level leaders can create an environment that promotes workplace bullying. The researchers discussed the characteristics of workplace bullies, the impacts of bullying on employees, their co-workers, and the organization. Some of the effects that workplace bullying has on organizations are low employee morale, high absenteeism, and high turnover rates. The researchers' concluded by discussing methods that could be implemented to eliminate workplace bullying. This research topic was relevant to my study because workplace bullying contributes to an unpleasant work environment.

Lee, Wang, & Weststar (2015) directed a study that examined the effects of work hour congruence on employee satisfaction and absenteeism. Work hour congruence is defined as the match between the number of hours an employee wants to work and the number of hours the workers actually work. Work congruence gives employees input in the preference of the number of hours they want to work. Lee, et al. (2015) conducted a longitudinal study by surveying Canadian workers about their work hour preferences. The results of their study showed positive work outcomes when work hour preferences were met. This study is connected to both theories used in my study. Herzberg's two factor theory which found that workers are satisfied when their needs are met and Adam's equity theory which states that employees respond by restoring balance when they perceive unfairness. This research infers that if employees think their work hours are not fair, withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism could occur.

Soane, Shantz, Alfes, Truss, Rees, and Gatenb (2013) conducted research to present a model that explained the association of meaningfulness of work, employee engagement, and well-being to employee absenteeism. The study surveyed a sample of

625 employees and made three contributions to the body of literature. First, the researchers developed an integrated model of truancy. Second, they proposed setting employee commitment to the laws of antecedents and consequences. Last, the researchers tested the model and expanded prior models of engagement. Their research findings showed that commitment mediated the relationship between meaningfulness and absence and that well-being strengthened the relationship between meaningfulness and engagement.

Yamada, Sawada, and Luo (2013) conducted research to determine why truancy rates were lower for public health workers in Lao than in five other developing countries in Southeast Asia. Yamada et al. (2013) attempted to fill a gap in the existing literature by applying a methodology consistent with past studies. The researchers compared a new data set of truancy from Lao Public expenditure tracking survey to the other five developing countries. Their findings showed that the absence rate was low due to the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of the employees.

Magee et al. (2016) directed a study that analyzed absenteeism in association to workplace bullying. Workplace bullying can be defined as prolonged direct or indirect exposure to negative or unreasonable behavior by other workers. Direct bullying is obviously overt behaviors such as intimidation or humiliation and indirect is more subtle in nature such as ignoring, gossiping, or undermining actions. There are many factors that contribute to absenteeism. However, the researcher’s focused on how workplace bullying affected absenteeism. Their objective for the study was to use a person centered approach and develop subcategories of workplace bullying to determine if distinct experiences of workplace bullying predicted absenteeism. Magee et al. (2016) revealed that five categories of workplace violence existed. The results of the study also showed that workplace bullying was associated with absenteeism in some situations but not all of the five categories. This study supports other studies conducted on absenteeism that if employees don't feel supported in their work environment they could use absenteeism as a way of solving the problem. This study relates to my study because direct or indirect workplace bullying could be a reason why key employees leave.

Ternan, Dollard, and Lamontagne (2013) piloted a study that examined the economic effect of how workplace depression due to job strain and bullying of employees, affected the organization. Ternan et al. (2013) used a longitudinal survey over a one-year period on a population of 1,326 participants. The scholars found that job strain and bullying affected productivity due to depression and cost estimated at eight billion dollars annually.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is focused on developing employee commitment to an organization and aligning their energy, values, and drive to organizational goals and increased performance (Holland, Cooper, & Sheehan, 2016). The following studies relate to the topic of employee engagement. Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra (2014) piloted a study that explored the role organizational communication played in employee engagement. Their exploratory study interviewed six public relations executives. Mishra et al. (2014) discovered that communication between managers and workers affected employee engagement. Their findings emphasized the importance of face-to-face communication. This study relates to my research because managers' ability to communicate effectively with their employees is a critical factor in worker retention. Communication means speaking and listening to your workers.

Fachrunnisa, Adhiatma, and Mutamimah (2014) conducted a study that explored the role of engagement between managers and employees to enhance job performance and job satisfaction in Indonesia. The objective of their study was to build and test a conceptual model that integrated spiritual leadership theory, job satisfaction, and job performance. The researchers also wanted their investigation to contribute to the existing literature on leadership and creativity engagement. The researchers surveyed 82 workers selected by their corporate office, and their results were consistent with past studies that showed a high correlation between spiritual leadership and wellbeing of employees. The researchers suggested that organizations focus on creating work environments that fostered cultures of engaged employees.

Holland, Cooper, & Sheehan (2017) conducted research and hypothesized that supervisor support and employee voice encouraged engaged workers and created trust among their supervisors and senior management. The researchers collected data through online surveys from nurses in Australia. The study's findings supported their hypothesis that good supervisor support and work environment was reciprocated by employees being more engaged. This study is connected to the equity theory showing that employees are engaged with their organizations when they feel they are valued and treated fairly. The researchers also suggests that supervisors are the first point of contact for employees in organizations and can influence employee's attitudes of the company. This research supports other studies in my literature review.

Deery, Iverson, Buttigieg, and Zatzick (2013) examined Union citizenship as a form of voice and studied its effects on absenteeism. Data was collected from 367 unionized bank branches in Australia and investigated the experiences and outcomes of union citizenship behavior. The researchers suggested that union citizenship behavior acts as a voice mechanism for unionized workers in the workplace. Employees who were dissatisfied could address their grievances through their unions. The researchers presented an explanatory model that supported that union citizenship acts as a form of voice and reduces employee absenteeism and increases employee retention. The researchers' results stressed that employee voice in the workplace was important and contributed to a supportive work environment.

Based on the research contained in this literature review and the findings of these studies, one variable many studies strongly supported was that manager's management style played a crucial role in how employees perceived their jobs and their intention to stay with an organization. This variable was identified in multiple subsections of this literature review. The results of the studies assessed implied that managers who showed support and cared about their employee's well-being had more engaged workers and staff who were committed to their organizations.

Another idea that emerged from this literature review was that work environment and work conditions on the job also contributed to workers' desires to remain with a company. Many studies inferred that if working conditions were not good at an organization, then employees did not feel vested in the company and sought other job opportunities. Another concept that emerged was the interpersonal relationships and quality of exchanges between managers and their workers. Most of the studies in this literature review found a strong connection to employee’s attitudes towards their jobs based on their relationships with their managers and coworkers.

The last factor that surfaced from the studies was the importance of effective communication between managers and their employees. The researchers whose studies were reviewed suggested that managers who communicated with their employees, showed support for their workers, and encouraged a supportive work environment where employees were able to talk with their managers about job-related issues that increased workers’ satisfaction. The research from this literature review suggested that effective communication gave employees a voice and encouraged employee retention.

Transition

In the Foundation for the Study, the research topic and some background on the phenomena were discussed, offering both the problem and purpose statements. The nature of the study along with the research and interview questions were provided. The conceptual framework, the possible assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were deliberated. I presented the study’s significance, its contribution to business practice, and its implications for social change. Finally, the professional and academic literature was reviewed.

In section two, I restate the purpose statement and reflect on the role of the researcher, the study of participants, and the research methodology and design. I thought about the population and sampling of participants, ethical issues to consider, data collection and organization techniques, and data analysis. I conclude section two by discussing reliability and validity in terms of confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability.

In section three, I include an overview of the study, provide a presentation of findings, discuss the applications to professional business practice, and reflect on the implications for social change. I then consider a set of recommendations for action and suggestions for future studies in the area of retaining key employees. I conclude by providing a summary and conclusion for the entire study.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I discuss the procedures I used to complete this study. Some of the main topics discussed are the role of the researcher, the participants, and the population. Also, I discuss the research method, research design, the sample population, and the ethical guidelines. I outline the data collection instruments and techniques used. Finally, I present data analysis techniques and the reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

In this qualitative descriptive study, I explored leadership strategies used by insurance sales managers to retain key employees. I collected data by interviewing insurance sales managers in Los Angeles, California. Employee retention was the central theme of this study. This study contributes to positive social change by enlightening business professionals of successful managers' insights on leadership strategies used to retain key employees. This investigation was necessary because retention of key employees is required to maintain company knowledge and trade expertise if organizations are to remain competitive in today's global economy (Agarwal & Metha, 2014). This study adds to the existing literature on the topics of employee retention, employee satisfaction, employee motivation, and leadership. This research may encourage managers to be supportive of their employees' needs and aid managers in retaining valuable workers.

Role of the Researcher

I invited potential participants to take part in this study in person, by e-mail, or by phone. In recruiting these individuals, I took precautions to ensure their safety and confidentiality. I respected their decision whether to participate in this study. Researchers encourage competent communication skills and demonstrate respect for their participants (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Researchers who break confidence not only make it difficult to continue research but cause participants not to trust social scientists (Isreal, 2015). The sensitivity of confidentiality and privacy issues aids in moving interviews and research along positively (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). Therefore, I ensured that The participants felt comfortable in contributing to this study.

A full disclosure relates to the ethical principle of respect for others (Brooks, Riele, & Maguire, 2016). I provided full disclosure to participants about this study to ensure they were aware of any possible consequences that might occur during or after the interviews. While recruiting participants, researchers should be honest in describing the research including the time and scope of activities required for the study (Ritter et al., 2013). Researchers are accountable for how they conduct their investigations and how their findings are represented (Roulston, 2014). I ascertained that participants were informed about the study and respected their decision if they decided not to participate.

Interview locations are good if they are accessible, quiet, and private (Tracy, 2013). I conducted face-to-face interviews with participants in a safe environment, free from distractions, and away from their work setting. An interview location should be free from any distractions (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016), in addition to being comfortable and having comfortable seating (Clow & James, 2014). I asked participants to silence their cell phones. A recording device was set up in advance for the interviews. I transcribed the responses verbatim into my password-encrypted computer if a participant chose not to be recorded.

My connection to the selected research topic of employee retention involves my experience in business as a company owner, manager, and employee. Working in all these capacities has shown me the importance of having engaged employees and encouraging positive attitudes in the workplace. My experiences with employee retention prompted me to undertake a research project based on the topic. I had no affiliation with the participants of this project or any experiences within the geographic area.

The Belmont Report is a statement of fundamental human subject principles issued by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects (Tracy, 2013). The Belmont Report set forth guidelines for research involving human subjects (Rienecke-Flynn & Goldsmith, 2013). In conducting my study, I followed the instructions and ethical protocols of the report. The Belmont Report specifies three principles for ethical research: respect for people, beneficence, and justice (Brooks, Riele, & Maguire, 2014). So, I followed the principles and guidelines of The Belmont Report.

As part of the research process, researchers should reflect on how the research will benefit them (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Researchers must be aware of their biases and role in all aspects of research and understand that doing so is an ethical responsibility (Ravitch& Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). Data collected from the participants of the interviews were free from personal biases and analyzed based on their feedback. Every effort was made to ensure the data collected from the participants were not affected from my personal biases.

The interview process is effective when it produces comfortable interactions that encourage honest and engaging dialogue (Tracy, 2013). I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews with the participants. In-depth interviews offer the researcher a chance to probe the thoughts of the members being interviewed (Clow & James, 2014). Researchers should conduct interviews in ways that encourage interviewees to give their insights into the phenomenon (Roulston, 2014). The use of semistructured, face-to-face interviews was appropriate for this study because they provided understanding of the phenomenon being explored by the participant. The interview technique provides a rich knowledge of the participant's experiences of the event (Roulston, 2014). Roulston (2014) also noted that the interview technique is the most commonly used method for qualitative research. Therefore, face-to-face interviews were appropriate for my study.

Participants

The recruitment of participants is critical to the success of a study because participants have their experience to offer on the phenomenon being studied (Emmel, 2013). I invited 15 insurance sales managers to participate in the interview process. I selected participants because they had relevant information about the problem (Layden, 2013). The eligibility criterion for selection of participants was their experience as insurance sales managers and that they had managed employees for a minimum of two years.

The investigator should attempt to gain access to participants in exchange for communication between both to feel comfortable discussing their idea research scenario (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). Negotiating access in each situation is a unique and continual process even for the most experienced researcher (Tracy, 2013). I gained access to participants by recruiting interested participants through e-mails and by contacting insurance companies' human resources departments to discuss my study. I did not use any specific organization to recruit participants, so a letter of cooperation or a data agreement was not needed. Prospective participants should be told about the research and have the ability to opt out (Newington & Metcalfe, 2014).

The recruitment of participants began once Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee evaluated my proposal, after which I reached out to prospective participants and had those who were interested in participating sign the appropriate consent forms. I established a working relationship with the participants by adequately explaining the study and encouraging them to participate. I gave a brief overview of the research, its scope, relevant information, and goals to each participant. Respectful and nondeceptive treatment of subjects contributes to participants gaining voice and becoming empowered through research (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). The researcher should not engage in procedures that restrict prospective participants' freedom of consent from the study (Ritter, Kim, Morgan, & Carlson, 2013). I informed the participants they could opt out of the study voluntarily at any time.

I selected experienced insurance sales managers for this study to ensure that participants' insights aligned with my research question, which was, What leadership strategies do insurance sales managers use to retain their key employees? The selected managers met the criteria for participant selection that included having key employees whom they have successfully managed and kept.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Qualitative research can help to empower participants by aiding them in telling their stories and giving them strength (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Qualitative researchers are interested in people's interpretations of their experiences and events (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). I selected the qualitative research method for this study to help understand the participant's perspective on the research topic. Qualitative research provides valuable insight to the investigator (Clow & James, 2014). The qualitative research method was selected over the quantitative research methods because it provided insight into participants' experiences on the research phenomenon. Therefore, the qualitative method was sufficient to answer my research question.

The quantitative approach aids in representing large samples of communities, assume cause and effect relationships among constructs and confirm or disconfirm theoretical hypothesis (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Researchers use quantitative methods to survey or observe people, whereas, in qualitative research, the investigator analyzes data collected from interviews (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2017). Researchers use different types of quantitative data to investigate research problems from a social domains perspective (Layder, 2013). A quantitative method was not selected because this study did not seek to correlate or establish a relationship between two variables, form a hypothesis, or theory.

The main reason a researcher uses mixed methods methodology is to confirm their research benefits from both approaches in the same project (Morse & Maddox, 2014). However, mixed methods research is an approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods and involves philosophical assumptions (Layder, 2013). Using both qualitative and quantitative methods can help develop insight into different phenomena not understood by using either method (Vankatesh, Brown & Bala, 2013). This study aimed to explore the perceptions of an insurance manager's leadership strategies to retain key employees. A mixed methods approach was not appropriate for this study because the research question could be efficiently answered using the qualitative method and could provide new insight into the research topic. Therefore, a mixed methods approach was not appropriate for this study.

Research Design

Descriptive studies give importance to in depth summaries of data that is unique to the phenomenon experienced by a group (Kim, Sefcik, & Bradway, 2016). Kim, Sefcik, and Bradway also noted that descriptive design is an acceptable and viable design. I used a descriptive research design for my study. Researchers use a descriptive design to discover rich details and interpret them (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013).

The descriptive design was chosen over other research designs because although phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography methods are also qualitative designs their outcomes may not produce adequate answers to the research question. I did not use a Narrative design because this study did not seek to chronicle the life of a person through a descriptive story. Narrative researchers describe an individual's storied lives and write about their experiences (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016).

I could have used an ethnographic design. Ethnographic researchers describe and interpret culture-sharing groups and assume that understanding the phenomenon requires being at the research site over an extended period (Jones, 2014). However, my research topic focused on leadership strategies to retain key employees and did not involve being at a research site for an extended period. Therefore, an ethnographic design was not selected.

Grounded theory design employs inductive processes that use data to form theories or compare data (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). The grounded theory design was not appropriate for this study because I was not attempting to create a theory.

A case study design was not selected because it used the narrative of an individual or event to explain the problem (Tracy, 2013). A descriptive design was most appropriate for this study because it described and articulated the participant's insights gained into the research phenomenon. The result of the qualitative descriptive design is it produces straightforward answers to the research question (Vaismoradi, 2013).

Sampling reflects the specific details of the phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). O'Reilly & Parker also noted that data saturation is the point when data collected from the interviews yields no new information. Saturated data provides replication of categories of data that verify and ensures comprehension and completeness (Elo et al., 2014).

There are no guidelines, tests of adequacy, or formulas in selecting a sample size to ensure data saturation in qualitative studies (Emmel, 2013). Based on readings the determination of sample size and the Walden requirement for the qualitative interview process, 15 was an appropriate number of participants to ensure data saturation. Therefore, I invited 15 participants to interview on the research topic. I provided data saturation by questioning a proper amount of participants until no new data produced.

Population and Sampling

The sample size is the core concern of researchers to ensure the success of their project (O’Reilly & Parker, 2014). In qualitative studies, the researcher collects vast amounts of data from a smaller sample group (Emmel, 2013). The sample size for my research consisted of 15 participants. The sample size was appropriate for this study because sample sizes are smaller in qualitative studies due to the massive amounts of data collected. Sample size selection in qualitative studies differs from that of quantitative studies because the purpose is not to count opinions of people but instead explore the range and differences in point of views.

The explanation of the research justifies the sample size (Emmel, 2014). My sample size was chosen based on the recommendations of selected readings on the topic of a sample size of qualitative studies and Walden University DBA student requirements. In qualitative research, researchers measure sample size by the depth of data collected and should consist of participants who represent the research topic (O’Reilly & Parker, 2013 p. 193). Therefore, 15 participants were adequate to gather the data needed for my study.

Purposeful sampling is a typical sampling strategy used for groups of members involved in studies on a particular topic. Purposeful sampling provides context-rich and detailed accounts of specific populations and locations (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). I used a purposeful sampling technique for this study. Purposeful sampling explores, tests, and refines emerging ideas (Rapley 2014). Sampling involves the criteria used for selecting the sample of people, their observations, and documents that you used to collect data for your project (Layder, 2013).

The population selected for this study met the following criteria. The members lived and worked in the Los Angeles, California area. I recruited the participants from a diverse group of insurance sales managers. The general age range for the volunteers of my study were 28 to 50 years of age. The supervisors chosen had at least two years of work experience in the insurance industry as a sales manager. I selected these criteria because the participants should have gained enough work experience to respond to the interview questions. The purposive selection process makes sense when the sample is small, and the researcher has chosen to eliminate certain items to ensure they meet the criteria elements (Ornstein, 2013). I gathered volunteers from large insurance companies by contacting their human resources departments' representatives about distributing flyers for my study.

The type of study conducted determines the sample size (Emmel, 2014). Qualitative researchers should be pragmatic and flexible in their approach to sampling (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). O'Reilly and Parker also noted that appropriate sample size sufficiently answers a research question. I ensured data saturation by interviewing the proper number of participants until there was no new data.

Ethical Research

Walden University requires all willing participants to sign an informed consent form before participating in any study. Informed consent means the researcher provides adequate knowledge of the study to the participants (Brooks, Riele, & Maguire, 2014). Potential participants will be informed so they can determine whether to participate in the study. Informed consent implies that the subjects know and understand the benefits and risks of the study (Reinecke-Flynn & Goldsmith, 2013). The researcher provides an understanding of the nature, purpose, and consequences of the study to the members (Israel, 2015). The participants have the right to withdraw from the study verbally, in writing, by phone or e-mail telling me they are not interested in participating in the study or want to remove their responses. I will document withdrawals from the study in my research journal.

Ethical research focuses on protecting individuals, communities, and environments (Israel, 2015). I did not offer incentives to members who participated in this study. Centralizing collaboration between the researcher and the members is essential in engaging in ethical research (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). Therefore, I ensured confidentiality by eliminating the participant's names or any other critical identifying information from the study. A code system was set up to protect the member's identities. A participant file system was set up on a password-encrypted computer and participants were assigned a code P for the participant and a number 1 through 15. I will store the files in the main folder marked employee retention study. Research agreements along and any other identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet for 5 years. The final draft of this doctoral manuscript includes the Walden IRB approval number (see Appendix).

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument as the researcher of this study. Semistructured interviews were the instrument used for my qualitative descriptive research. Inspected the interview protocol for validity of concepts, relevance to participants, and capacity to provide a rich description. (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). (See Appendix). In-depth interviews are conversations that have structure and purpose (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews provide a rich understanding of the human experience (Roulston, 2014). The interview questions are available in the appendix.

Face to face, interviews were suitable for this research project because the detailed information gathered from the participants related to my research topic. What leadership strategies are used by insurance sales managers to retain their key employees? I collected responses to the open-ended questions asked during the interviews. As a researcher, I documented, evaluated, and analyzed the subjects' answers to ensure validity and reliability from the data collected.

Validity refers to whether the results of this study are consistent with phenomenon and reliability implies if the study was repeated would it produce the same results (Blunch, 2017). The process for accessing reliability and validity involves obtaining responses from participants and interpreting a descriptive analysis of their findings. Data collection instruments selected are determined by the type of evaluation and the nature of its outcomes (Stuart, Maynard, & Rouncefield, 2017). Validity will depend on the adequacy of sound sampling and saturation of the data (Elo et al., 2014). I entered the members' responses into Nvivo 11, a software program I used to analyze data from the interviews. After I transcribed the information, conducted member checks, and their transcripts verified.

Data Collection Technique

I purposefully selected the sample population for this study. The interviewer should generate information that aligns with their research purposes (Roulston, 2014). Purposeful selection involves selecting members who meet the criteria of the research and are knowledgeable about the phenomenon (Elo et al., 2014). People and their experiences are resources for qualitative studies because they offer rich perspectives on the event (Rapley, 2014).

I recorded members' responses during the interview process. If a member decided not to record, I asked if they were willing to conduct an unrecorded interview and I transcribed the information into my research journal. The main goal of qualitative interviews is to gain insight into how participants make sense of their experiences in relation to the phenomenon (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). The interview process requires the interviewer to have a direct dialogue with the participants to find out what they are thinking, why they feel that way, and how they feel about what is being done. (Layder, 2013). The advantage of conducting interviews with the participants is that interviews are adaptable and can allow the interviewer to follow up on the provided responses (Walker & Slovason, 2015). The participants were asked open-ended questions based on the research question. I recorded and transcribed the members' responses to the interview questions and inputted the data into Nvivo 11.

The advantage of collecting data using the interview technique was the interviewees got to tell their experiences in their own words. Another advantage was a structured set of open-ended interview questions were asked of each individual and allowed the participants to elaborate on their perceptions of the questions asked. Disadvantages of the data collection process included difficulty in arranging times to meet with members to conduct their interviews. Another possible drawback to collecting data was scheduling conflicts which hindered coordinating participants. Last, there were non-related external distractions at the location selected to conduct the interviews that could have disturbed the process of getting the responses needed to carry out the study.

A pilot study was conducted for this research project before the actual interviewing of participants took place. Three to five insurance colleagues were recruited from an insurance company in Los Angeles, California. The participants were asked the interview questions and their responses collected. This process will allow me to determine any possible problems with the interview questions, protocol, or the interview process in advance of the actual study. After completing the semistructured interviews, member checks occurred. Transcript reviews occurred after the interview information had been transcribed by the researcher and was presented to the participants to ensure their interpretation of the data was accurate. I asked the participants to verify that the data are their correct responses to the interview questions.

Data Organization Technique

Personal data is information that could affect the members' privacy or cause embarrassment, or harm (Ritter, Kim, Morgan, & Carlson, 2013). I did not disclose the identity and personal information of my participants. I omitted names and other pertinent information from the interviews. A participant coding system was implemented and recorded in my research log to ensure the members' confidentiality.

Maintaining a journal has been a reliable research method for many years (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett & Bottrell, 2015). Research journals can deepen the thinking and reflection of qualitative researchers (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). I started and retained a research journal to record any thoughts about my study or emerging ideas. Qualitative researchers typically keep a journal to document how they moved forward in their projects to gain their conclusions (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

I organized the research data in a manner that best represents it (Sandelowski, 2000). The research data was stored in folders on a password-encrypted computer to ensure that it was not misplaced, lost, or altered. The main folder was labeled employee retention study and subsequent interview folders with collected data were labeled P1 through P20. IRBs routinely requires that sensitive information is stored on password-encrypted computers or in locking file cabinets (Frank et al., 2013). All data relating to this study is being kept in a secure location and locked in a file cabinet for five years.

Data Analysis

The modified Van Kaam method of analysis is one of many methods used to analyze the transcribed interviews of participants. The modified Van Kaam method of analysis uses each member's complete transcript to list every expression relevant to finding common concepts related to the research topic (Moustakas, 1994). I used the modified Van Kaam method of analysis to group data from each participant's interview transcripts to determine familiar data connected to my research topic.

Next, I reduced and eliminated any unrelated data. Unrelated, or vague expressions from responses should be removed to aid in determining the principal ideas of the study (Moustakas, 1994). I tested the remaining expressions based on the following requirement. Is the grouped data critical to the experience or sufficient for understanding the phenomenon? I extracted and clustered the data based on themes and gave them a themed label. The inductive reasoning process was used to identify themes from the raw data.

The researcher read and analyzed member transcripts to determine the primary data collected from the interviews (Collins, 2015). Collins also noted that verification of concepts obtained from clustering data might be used in checking the themes against the complete participants' transcript. The themes were checked against the member's transcript to verify the data collected was connected to the core themes of my study.

The researcher usually transcribes the data gathered from the interviews (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2014). The data should be gathered, recorded, and evaluated by the same researcher to ensure the accuracy of the information (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014). I collected, transcribed, and analyzed the clustered information.

Computer-aided qualitative data analysis software can be helpful in organizing, sorting, and managing large data sets (Jones, 2014). Nvivo 11 is a software program used to analyze and understand the data collected (Bazeley &Jackson, 2013). I examined the data gathered using Nvivo 11. Nvivo 11 offers a variety of visualization features to help the researcher in analyzing data (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2016). Nvivo 11 assisted me in determining any themes that emerged from my raw data. Bazeley and Jackson also noted the benefit of using Nvivo software is it supports the analyst in making use of multiple strategies concurrently.

Coding refers to attaching data with meaningful labels (Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2016). Coding in qualitative research, in its purest form, is a way of tagging text with codes and indexing it to facilitate later retrieval (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The coded data were clustered to determine the essential ideas of the study. I categorized the main ideas into larger hierarchical codes. Hierarchical codes serve as conceptual bins for new claims (Tracy, 2013). The critical themes were correlated to existing literature and further studies conducted? Based on the central themes that resulted from the obtained data, I determined how the main ideas are connected to the past and current literature and linked to my conceptual framework.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

The essence of reliability and validity is the trustworthiness of a study (Walker & Slovason, 2015). Reliability refers to the extent to which the instrument used is free from measurement error (Blunch, 2017). Blunch also noted that reliability in qualitative studies refers to the reassurance that researchers are investigating the same issue or working with the same data set to derive the same results.

Dependability refers to the stability of data over time and under different conditions (Elo et al., 2014). I ensured the dependability of this qualitative descriptive study by conducting post interview member checks. The responses gathered during the interviews are the participants' interpretation of their responses to the interview questions (Stuart, Maynard, & Rouncefield, 2017). Reflecting on the relationship between members and the researcher will allow the reader to understand the authenticity of the research (Walker & Slovason, 2015). I performed member checks after the data was transcribed to verify the participants' responses were what they communicated as replies to the interview questions.

Validity

Validity is the process used to check the accuracy of the research conducted. Validity in qualitative research refers to whether the researcher can affirm what they attempted to measure (Blunch, 2017). I verified the validity of my study by the data collected from the semistructured interviews. The research data collected from this study was limited to the research topic. Therefore, the semistructured interviews were adequate to obtain the appropriate information.

Creditability refers to confidence in how well the data addresses the intended focus of the research (Elo et al., 2014). Creditability was ensured by collecting data from members using the same set of interview questions and afterward recapping each interview question with the members to confirm that the data collected was their version of the responses given during the interviews.

Nvivo 11 software provides the researcher with a set of tools that assist in analyzing qualitative data (Brazeley & Jackson, 2014). I transcribed the data and input it into Nvivo 11. I examined, evaluated, and checked the consistency of the data confirmed. Creditability is achieved when the data from the interviews correlate. The data was verified for accuracy by checking codes formulated during data analysis with the member's transcripts. Saturated data in emerging themes ensures replication in categories that verifies and provides comprehension and completeness (Elo et al., 2014). Creditability of my study was achieved when data from the interviews were saturated and had related themes.

Transferability allows the readers of this study to make connections between the findings presented in this study to discoveries of other studies (Tracy, 2013). Future investigators could use my conclusions as a basis for conducting other related research in other occupational industries on employee retention based on the results of this study. Managers could associate with my research findings and find some reference for employee retention and implementing leadership strategies to establish better relationships with their key employees.

Qualitative researchers do not seek objectivity; however, their findings should be able to be confirmed (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). The confirmability of this study are the themes of the research topic that emerged during data analysis. The results amassed from the members may perhaps represent the attitudes of the general workforce and could be confirmable by other researchers.

In qualitative research, the objective is to have transferability, therefore, the sample size is critical (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Selection of sample size is essential for ensuring creditability content (Elo et al., 2014). I provided data saturation from the data collected by selecting an appropriate sample size for this study. Choosing the correct sample size increased the chances for data saturation. There were no strict criteria for selecting a sample size (Layder, 2013). Therefore, a sample of 15 participants was appropriate for this study because they provided enough variance in information to achieve data saturation.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather data from insurance sales managers regarding leadership strategies to retain key employees. In Section two, I discussed the role of the researcher and the procedures of the study. I also reviewed the process for recruitment of participants for this study. I considered the population and sampling methods of this project, and the defense of the sample size was provided. I elaborated on the research method and research design for this project. The ethical research procedures this study followed and I concluded with a discussion of the data collection, data organization, data analysis techniques, and the reliability and validity of this study. I discussed study applications for social change and an overview of research conducted.

In Section 3, I address the findings of this study and implications for social change and action. This section ends with my perspectives for applications to professional practice this undertaking may have, along with recommendations for further study, reflections, and conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The intent of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore leadership strategies used by insurance sales managers to retain key employees. I collected data from 15 insurance sales managers in Los Angeles, California, through the use of semistructured interviews. The findings revealed strategies used by successful insurance sales managers to retain their key agents. Analysis of the interviews with participants produced seven major themes. The themes that emerged were (a) coach/mentorship, (b) management style, (c) unmet job expectations, (d) pay/recognition, (e) cost to the company, (f) personal growth/realization of goals, and (g) work environment. This section includes an introduction with a restatement of the purpose of this study, followed by a presentation of the findings, a discussion of the study's application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action. I will end Section 3 with my reflections and a conclusion

Presentation of the Findings

The primary research question was, What leadership strategies do insurance sales managers use to retain their key employees? I identified some strategies used by insurance sales managers to retain their essential agents by interviewing managers on strategies they used. Interview questions were developed based on the research question. I designed the interview questions to give participants the opportunity to offer their perspectives on strategies they used to retain their key employees. I purposefully designed each question to elicit responses on different aspects of strategies managers used to retain their key sales agents. I used semistructured interview questions to ask participants several specific questions; the questions were usually open-ended and could be followed up with probing questions. The data were coded, evaluated, and ranked based on the occurrence of key words for each interview question.

In the following subsection, I provide details on the participants' responses to each interview question. The seven themes that emerged are presented in this subsection; the themes were based on responses to each interview question. Table 1 represents the number and percentage of participant responses for each theme.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of Responses by Theme

Themes	*n*	% response occurrences
Coach/Mentorship	14	93.3%
Management Style	11	73.3%
Unmet Job Expectations	10	67%
Pay and Recognition	10	67%
Cost to Company	9	60%
Personal Growth/Realization of Goals	8	53.3%
Work Environment	7	46.6%

Note. The themes are listed from highest percentage to lowest.

Theme 1: Coaching/Mentorship

The sixth interview question was, "What leadership strategies have you implemented to keep your top insurance sales people?" The manager participants gave good responses to this question; the words that were most frequently coded were acting as a *coach and mentor* to their employees. Participant 15 mentioned truly being a team leader and setting expectations for your workers. Participant 10 stated, "We are cheerleaders for everybody." Participant 2 offered two leadership strategies: leading by example and setting an example of the types of things expected of your employees. Participants 1, 3, and 4 all replied with the strategies of encouraging their employees by their management style and acting as a mentor to them. Effective talent management is essential for keeping up with the high demands placed in today's global economy (Anyaebosi, 2015). Key workers today are looking for other incentives instead of compensation. Managers who coach and mentor their employees illustrate they are truly concerned about developing their key employees longterm.

The theme that emerged based on interview responses was providing c*oaching and mentorship* to employees by ensuring that managers communicate effectively with them. A majority of the interviewees mentioned the phrase leading by example or ensuring that employees felt valued. Positive organizational behavior looks at workplaces as more than vehicles to maximize owner's wealth but rather as situations that help workers to realize their goals and be more fulfilled (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). Insurance sales managers mentioned in their interviews that acting as a coach and mentor to their employees benefited their organizations in the forms of longer employee retention and reduced employee withdrawal behaviors. Ethical leaders are crucial to establishing an ethical environment in their companies, according to Ahn et al. (2018).

The results of this study confirm findings in other studies in my literature review and extends literature on the topic. Coaching and mentorship, for example, is linked to both the conceptual framework and the literature presented in my literature review. Davis and Allen (1970) conducted a study that was based on Herzberg's (1969) dual-factor theory in which he interviewed 700 bankers on a time when they felt positive about their jobs and an incident when they felt negative. The findings showed that managers were encouraged to create a climate where employees were highly motivated. Davis and Allen's study supports the responses many of the sales managers in this study gave that responded managers who are successful in retaining their key employees act as mentors and coach their employees.

Additionally, Lee at el. (2015) conducted a study on workplace congruence on employee satisfaction and absenteeism. The researchers found that employees were more receptive to managers who tried to meet their needs. The findings of my study are supported by other studies in my literature review. The results of this study also extend the existing literature by adding new findings on employee retention. Table 2 includes participant responses for Interview Question 6.

Table 2

Participant Response Chart for Interview Question 6

Participants	Responses
1	I reinforce their value to me and the organization and on how much I depend on them for the company to succeed.
2	I ensure the employees understand the mission of the organization and help them to effectively develop a game plan.
3	If managers truly care about the growth of their people they will act as a coach and mentor to them.
4	I always try to lead my employees by setting an example of the type of employee I expect.
5	I let my employees know what I expect from them. I try to listen to my employees and help them if they have any problems.
6	I have a good work rapport with them. Having my employees feel valued in their opinions and ideas.
7	I am in the trenches with them, so I don't ask them to do anything that I wouldn't do.
8	Letting them know about opportunities that are available to them and where

	they can go.
9	What benefits them, benefits me. What benefits you benefits them so as long as we stay in business, there's a job for us all.
10	I want my employees to be their own leaders. We are cheerleaders for everybody.
11	I mostly just show them my whole system of success.
12	The number one thing I come across is communication.
13	I ensure employees have clear and defined duties, so they know what is expected of them.
14	Leadership strategies that I have implemented are good work environment, listening to my employees, and building their trust.
15	Truly being a team captain and a team leader rather than a boss.

Seven participant responses (46.7%) related to mentorship and seven (46.7%) to coaching while one response (6.6%) related to communication.

Theme 2: Management Style

The third interview question asked was, How does your relationship with your key insurance agent help to retain them? This interview question explored how insurance sales managers perceived their relationships with their key agents helped to retain them. The most frequently coded response to this question was that management style played a role in retaining key employees. According to a survey conducted in 2014 the top reason why employees left the organization was treatment by their manager (Anyaebosi, 2015).

The second theme that surfaced from interview question 3 was *management style*. Eight interview participants referenced the manger's management style as a response to the third interview question. Participant 13 stated I would say number one would probably be management style. Participant 2 replied agents need to know their manager supports them with the job they're doing. Participant 3 responded my relationship with my key employees is very critical because I depend on them to help meet company goals.

Participant 4 responded treating employees fair and with respect. Listening to them and communicating often. Participant 11 stated my management style is mentorship.

Managers are representatives of the company that employees have to interact with on a daily basis. Workers determine whether managers are someone they can trust and confide in. Participant 6 stated I always try to ensure I explain all aspects of the job to my agents. If managers supervise under an autocratic leadership style, then workers tend to be less likely to trust them and won't communicate. Management style is important to retention, though some managers elect negative behaviors such as fear and intimidation (Anyaebosi, 2015). Millennials and new workers entering the job market are seeking jobs with managers who manage with a participative management style. The participative management style includes both managers and employees working together to solve workplace issues. Having a management style that is beneficial to the organization and the employees is necessary in today's business environment and benefits to the organization could be increased employee commitment and better working relationships between employees and their managers.

Responses from participants of this study mentioned *management style* as a theme for retaining their key employees. Many of the managers interviewed stated that using a democratic approach and involving their key employees in the decision-making process was essential in making them feel they were working as a team. Duffy et al. (2014) found that employees with extra work choice were more satisfied than those who did not have work preference. Additionally, that freedom in work choices was a predictor of intrinsic meaning and work environment fit.

A manager's management style is also linked to Herzberg's dual-factor theory because Herzberg discussed interpersonal relationships with coworkers as a need for job satisfaction and interpersonal relationships also was a theme identified in his study. Employees need to have good relationships with their managers and coworkers in order to perform well on their jobs. Adams equity theory is connected with a manager's management style because if employees are doing a good job for their manager and it is not acknowledged the employee could feel they are putting in more effort than they are receiving back from their manager and began to withdraw from the company. The participants' responses are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Response Chart for Interview Question 3

Participants	Responses to interview Question 3
1	Building a credible and trusting relationship with your agents.
2	Agents need to know managers support them in the job they are doing.
3	I always try to be honest and fair with my employees
4	Treating employees fair and with respect, I have an open door policy
5	It is necessary to build trust and communicate with employees to have a good relationship
6	I explain all aspects of this job to my agents. Mutual communication helps to understand what each person wants.
7	I try and keep it on a personal basis almost like a family atmosphere.
8	Having employees understand the big picture and providing good service.
9	Having a supportive and positive work environment.
10	It all about the communication and listening to each other.
11	It depends on the manager. My management style is mentorship.
12	The number one thing I think is important is communication.
13	My opinion. Number one would be management style.
14	A good work environment is necessary.
15	I feel that building trust is necessary to having an effective relationship.

Percentage Results for theme 2: Management Style

Participant Response Results	Percentage
11 Participants responses = Management Style	73.3%
2 Participants responses = Communication	13.3%
2 Participants responses = Work environment	13.3%
Total Response Results	99.9%

Theme 3: Unmet Job Expectations

Participants were asked in interview question 2, “Why do you think insurance agents leave the organization? I asked this question to explore why participants thought key insurance agents left the organization. The most frequently coded reply related to unmet expectations of the job, refering to employees having some goal expectations of a job but becoming dissatisfied when their expectations are too difficult to obtain or not achieved. Participants 1,2, 3,4,6, 8, 9, 11, 14, and 15 replied that insurance sales agents had unmet expectations of the insurance industry and their jobs as insurance agents. Participant 1 and 15 responded that insurance agents had a lot of freedom to manage their schedules but didn’t understand they had to be proactive in ensuring they met deadlines and sales quotas.

Participant 2 talked about the difficulty of employees transitioning from being W-2 employee positions to 1099 independent contractors. Member 2 stated many employees don’t understand difference between the two and become disillusioned with the industry when they find out they have to manage their own tax with holdings. Participants 6, 7, 8 had similar comments about difficulty in dealing with customer service issues and changes in company policies which caused increased workloads. Participants 11, 12, and 13, responded that participants underestimated how difficult it would be to work as insurance agents based on the competition, making sales quota, meeting customer appointment demands, and the administrative duties that are associated with the industry.

The third theme that emerged was *unmet expectations of the job*, of the 15 participants interviewed, 10 managers stated in their interviews that agents had some preconceived expectations of the job but became dissatisfied when they determined that achieving their objectives would be difficult. Employees hold lower levels of loyalty to organizations or switch jobs when their expectations of the job are unmet (Maden, Ozcelik, & Karacay, 2014). Maden, Ozcelik, & Karacay also noted unmet job expectations occur when there is a discrepancy in what the employee actually faces on the job versus what they initially expected. Participant 1 answered, “ agents leave because they become disillusioned after they discovered what they expected the job to be was actually more difficult then they perceived.” Participant 15 responded “agents underestimated the challenges and skills needed to survive in the insurance industry.” Participant 2 stated “Insurance agents leave organizations because they didn’t understand what it takes to stay in the industry.” Participant 6 replied “Insurance agents leave because they are unhappy about some aspect of the job.” Participant 8 replied “A lot of people have different perceptions about insurance. They think it’s service, but they also have to make sales quotas.” Participant 11 “They have unrealistic expectations of what the job will be like.” Participant 12 commented “Employees get consumed with the constant requests they get from customers and become overwhelmed.” These examples support that employees have certain preconceived expectations of jobs and will leave if they determine that their job expectations are not being met.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of other studies conducted in my literature review. Maden et al. (2014) conducted a study on employees' intent to stay with a company when their job expectations were not realized. Presbitero et al. (2016) also conducted a study to determine how organizations could use alternative human resource practices to ensure employee fit within firms. These studies substantiate that employees will resign if they perceive jobs as not being what they expected and if they are not the proper fit. In the Insurance industry it is often easier for managers to show how good life will be once you have an established firm and not inform agents of some of the difficulties associated with creating a successful firm. Managers might consider educating their agents of every aspect of the job.

Theme 3, unmet expectations of the job are related to Herzberg's dual-factor theory and Adam's Equity theory because unsatisfied or unfulfilled needs is one of the topics that surfaced from Herzberg's study. Additionally, this also applies to Adams equity theory based on whether employees perceive they are being treated fairly and if they should act to restore balance. Table 4 displays participant responses to interview question 2.

Table 4

Participant Response Chart for Interview Question 2

Participants	Responses to Interview Question 2
1	They had expectations that didn't pan out.
2	They leave because they don't understand what's involved to stay in this industry.
3	It could be they see no opportunity for growth.
4	Employees don't have the support need and not aligned with company goals.
5	Agents leave because they feel unappreciated.

6	Agents leave because they don't realize how hard the insurance industry is.
7	I think dissatisfaction with the industry or company.
8	They don't understand that it's not only service but sales and quotas have to be met.
9	I think because of high and lows of the business. The uncertainty of it.
10	Management style of management is number one reason.
11	They have unrealistic expectations of what it's going to be like.
12	I think people get overwhelmed with the workload and constant request.
13	There is a lot of competition which makes it hard to find sales for agents.
14	The agent is bored and there is no growth opportunities so they leave..
15	They under estimated the skills it takes to be in the industry.

Percentage Results for theme 3: Unmet Job Expectations

Participant Response Results	Percentage
10 Participants =Unmet job expectations	67%
1 Participant = No personal growth	6.6%
1 Participant = Organization fit	6.6%
1 Participant = Work Load	6.6%
1 Participant = Management style	6.6%
1 Participant = Competition	6.6%
Total Response Results	100%

Theme 4: Pay

Interview question 4 was. What do you think are some incentives from the company that encourage your key sales agent to stay? The question was formed to determine some incentives from the company that might encourage participants to stay with the organization. Ten of the interviewees responded with pay. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14 all responded that pay from the company was an incentive used by their companies to retain key workers.

Pay was coded as the most frequent of responses to interview question four. Ten participants responded with pay in some form. Pay being used as one method of acknowledging a person for a job well done. Recognition including things such as time off, trips, vacations, or other non monetary perks were also mentioned to show appreciation. Pay is a determinant for retention of key agents however with globalization of the economy the future work force is looking at other forms of incentives from companies. Today's young workforce is looking to be engaged and rewarded in more innovative and effective ways (Lardner, 2015).

Participant 10 stated that compensation helps to retain key workers. Participant 1 discussed the longer you stay with an organization the more income you make in the form of bonuses and residual income. Participant 11 referenced incentives at the local, district, and regional levels. Participant 2 stated having bonuses and a good pay structure helps employees stay. Participant 6 replied that having incentives such as pay and bonuses aided in retention. These responses are examples of answers given that back the emergence of theme 4.

Theme 4 *Pay* is supported by several studies. Ruiz-Palomino, Saez-Martin, and Canas (2013) developed a theory of pay satisfaction by demonstrating the effects of Job motivating potential (JMP) and Supervisor ethical leadership (SEL) in determining job satisfaction. They presented a model that aided in understanding pay satisfaction. Paying employees at a competitive rate and ensuring they were recognized when they did a good job was shown to increase employee motivation and their intentions to remain at the workplace.

Theme 4. Pay was identified in Herzberg's study. Employee's need for competitive pay and recognition was stated as being important for employees to feel satisfied in their careers. Theme 4 was supported by the responses received from interview question 4. Similarly, in Adams equity theory employees need to have competitive pay and recognition from their managers based on fair and impartial treatment for all workers doing the same job. Both Herzberg's Dual theory and Adams Equity theory are both linked to the results of this study. Table 5 indicates participant responses to Interview Question 4.

Table 5

Participant Response Chart for Interview Question 4

Participants	Responses
1	There are financial incentives. The longer you stay with the company the larger your renewal and residual income is.
2	Having a good pay structure and employees being paid well for their work
3	Creating a friendly fun environment and having pay incentives.
4	Incentives from the company would be company benefits and reputation of the company.
5	The company provides competitive pay and incentives such as bonuses and trips.
6	Incentives include bonuses, pay, and time off.
7	I try to get them gift certificates and cards.
8	Compensate them for the efforts they are putting in.
9	If you're a close knit group it shows to customers.
10	Compensation always helps as you well know.
11	There's all types of incentives local, district, and regional.
12	I think you should be lenient with time off.
13	Companies should have good compensation such as salary and commission.
14	Good pay, bonuses, and recognition are important to let employees know they are doing a good job.
15	Freedom and flexibility with schedules and financial incentives and benefits.

Percentage Results for theme 4: Pay

Participant Response Results	Percentage
10 Participants responses = Pay	67%

2 Participants responses = Recognition	13.3%
2 Participants responses = time off/autonomy	13.3%
1 Participant response = company benefits	6.7%
Total Response Results	100

Theme 5: Cost to Company

The first interview question asked to participants was, “Why do you think retention of key insurance agents is important?” The purpose of question 1 was to gage an understanding of participant’s perceptions of why they thought key insurance sales people left the organization. Employee turnover poses a major challenge for organizations due to loss of staff and cost associated with recruiting, rehiring, and training new workers (Smith & Macko, 2014). The responses of many of the participants interviewed to question 1, was *cost to the company.* Other key words that emerged were customer retention stated by participants 14, 9, and 10. Work environment stated by participants 12 and 15, and retaining company knowledge stated by participants 2.

Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 13 all discussed the importance of the cost associated with hiring new employees. Long-term organizational success depends on the recruitment, development, reward, and retention of the right people (Mandhanya, 2015). Participant 4 replied, “managers can’t be effective if they are constantly training employees and the cost associated with hiring new workers at current market rates.” Participant 5 responded that when employees leave, it costs the company money due to hiring expense.

Participant 6 stated that companies lose money in the cost of training new personnel for the job. Participant 7 stated “Financially, it’s cheaper to retain key employees." Participant 8 emphasized the amounts of lost time, energy, and money that goes into replacing key workers. Participant 11 mentioned that money is lost by the organization through advertising, interviewing, hiring, and licensing new agents. These participants responses all referenced financial loss to the company. Employee turnover has been a focus for organizational researchers due to the high cost associated with recruitment and selection to replace workers who have left the organization (Huffman, Casper, & Payne, 2014). The results show that companies lose money through the loss of key workers if strategies are not put in place to prevent employees from leaving.

Studies and research in this literature review supports that companies lose money when key employees leave. Human resource departments (HRD) are not productive for organizations if they can't retain employees and decrease cost associated with employee turnover (Subhash & Gahlawat, 2015).

A large number of sales managers replied that it was important to retain their key employees because of the expense the company would incur at losing experienced workers and also expense connected to rehiring replacement workers. Benefits to the company are decreased cost of recruiting, rehiring, and retraining new workers, increased development of essential workers through training, retention of company knowledge, and more efficient industry practices. These are some of the benefits a company could receive based on developing better leadership strategies to retain their key employees. Abraham (2012) suggested that if organizations wanted to retain employees, they needed to engage them.

Theme 5 c*ost to the company* connects to Herzberg's Dual-Factor theory based on the results of my study. Theme 5 emerged from data collected from interview question 1. Herzberg describes dissatisfiers as work-related relationships and working conditions. The cost of retaining employees for an organization could result from work-related relationship issues and working conditions. Multiple factors could cause a worker to determine whether to resign. Employees who are not happy with their jobs cost firms money. Employees who are not happy create expenses to the company through absenteeism, low morale, decreased productivity, or other job related withdrawal behaviors.

Adams Equity theory is linked and supports theme 5 because if employees believe they have invested more energy into a firm by working extra hours or some other input and they are not receiving positive benefits back, it could result in unhappy employees trying to restore the balance based on what they perceive they have invested in the company.

The results for development of theme 5 are supported by other studies. In a study conducted by Abraham (2012), the researcher found that not engaging employees could result in cost to the company. Shown in Table 6 are participants' responses and percentage results for Interview Question 1.

Table 6

Participants	Responses to Interview Question 1
1	A key employee is a product of a lot of resources, The organization has invested in them.
2	Retention of insurance agents is important because of company knowledge and practices.
3	Retention of employees is important because of cost of hiring and training.

4	You can’t be productive if your constantly training employees.
5	Cost the company money due to recruitment, training, and hiring cost.
6	Company loses money in the cost of training employees to do a job.
7	Its cheaper for the company to keep an employee than replace one.
8	There a lot of effort, energy, money, and resources that is being spent for training.
9	It better to keep the same employees in order to keep customers.
10	Its important because we develop relationships with our customers.
11	There’s a lot of cost that goes into advertising, interviewing, and licensing.
12	It is important to create synergy in your office.
13	It’s important to grow your business by keeping the same employees.
14	Keeping the same employees ensures growth of your business and referral business.
15	Continuity of policies and procedures and atmosphere of office.

Percentage results for theme 5: Cost to company

Participant Response Results	Percentage
9 Participants responses = Cost to company	60%
3 Participants responses = Customer Retention	20%
2 Participants responses = Work environment	13%
1 Participant response = Company knowledge	7%
Total Response Results	100%

Theme 6: Personal Growth and Realization of Goals

For interview question 5, I asked “What are your thoughts about how career advancement opportunities help to retain your key insurance agents?” This interview question was formed to explore the participant’s perspectives on how they thought career advancement opportunities influenced key worker’s intentions to stay with the firm. The keywords that emerged in the 15 interviews conducted were continued *personal growth* and employees *realizing their career goals*. A significant amount of the participants in the interviews gave the following replies. Participant 1, responded, “high achievers leave out of frustration because someone put a ceiling on their advancement goals.” Participant

2 mentioned it was important for members to feel they have a future with their organization. Interviewee 15 commented, "I tell everyone who walks in the door, I am not going to put a limit on your advancement."

Theme 6 was personal growth and realization of career goals. Adding a wider range of non-financial rewards are a strategy being used by organizations to differentiate themselves and recruit the best talent (Schlechter, Thompson, & Bussin, 2015). Every employee has long-term goals to advance in their job and wants to realize their personal career goals. Based on the responses to interview question 5, many of the interviewees felt there was a connection between employees staying with their organization based on key employees perceived ability to grow with the company. A majority of managers felt that if employees did not feel they were able to excel thorough advancement within the firm, then they would not remain with the company. Pay is the most accessible form of remuneration. therefore, organizations are looking for new ways to attract members (Schlechter, Thompson, & Bussin, 2015). Participant 3 stated, "employees want to grow in the company and usually start out with good intentions." Interviewee 12 commented, "employees do better when they know they have options on the job." Participant 13 expressed, "employees should feel there's growth potential and managers should communicate it to them." These responses support the emergence of theme six personal career growth and realization of goals.

Many studies in my literature review connect personal growth and realization of goals. Sajjad, Ghazanfar, and Ramzan (2013) surveyed employee motivation and employee intent to stay. Their study showed that managers were critical for ensuring employees felt supported in their jobs. The managers interviewed in the survey confirmed that helping their employees to reach their career goals was vital in whether employees stayed with their firm.

Theme 6 relates to Herzberg's dual-factor theory and the Adams equity theory. Herzberg determined that employees' personal growth and realizing their goals were significant for workers to feel fulfilled on the job. Participant's responses to the interview questions supported theme 6. Theme 6 is also directly related to Herzberg's study, employees' need for support from their managers and co-workers. If workers don't feel supported by their managers and co-workers, then they leave. Table 7 displays the participants' responses to Interview Question 5.

Table 7

Participant Responses for Interview Question 5: Personal Growth/Realization of Goals

Participants	Responses to Interview Question 5
1	High achievers leave out of frustration because someone put a limit on them and it was below their aspirational level.
2	I think its important to have a future with the firm.
3	Workers start out with the best intentions and want to grow in their careers.
4	Advancement opportunities should be available if employees want them.
5	It is important that managers communicate with their employees to find out what they want from the company as far as career advancement.
6	Advancement opportunities encourage employees to stay because its something for them to strive towards.
7	The company is very big on advancement and education. It will hopefully fulfill their dreams.
8	If they are goal oriented people and understand advancement they can grow with the business.
9	It's a big plus where you feel you can move up in the company and you're just not stuck in that one position.
10	As long as agents are licensed and can sale that's going to be their advancement.
11	Know what the objectives of your agents are.

12	As humans we always want to do better no matter what job we're in.
13	Ensure that employees have a clear understanding of what the career advancements are.
14	It gives employees something to aspire for and helps them decide to stay.
15	I tell everyone who walks in the door, I am never going to put a ceiling on their career.

Percentage Results of Participants Responses for Theme 6: Personal Growth/ Realization of Goals.

Participant Response Results	Percentage
8 Participants responses = Personal Growth	53.3%
7 Realization of Goals	46.7%
Total Response Results	100%

Theme 7: Work Environment

Interview question seven. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion regarding leadership strategies to retain key insurance sales agents? This question was formed to determine any other thoughts insurance sale managers interviewed might have on retention strategies they used to keep their top insurance agents. The keywords that surfaced most frequently was work environment. Many of the insurance sales managers discussed keeping their work environment professional but also making it fun for their workers. Marino noted that a work environment is composed of many factors including cultural and psychological and helps to determine whether a person will feel a part of the company or not (Marino, 2015).

The last theme identified based on the coding of the interviews was creating a good *work environment* for employees. The interviewees stated that keeping the work environment professional but also fun was critical in keeping employees engaged and wanting to stay with the firm. Insurance is an industry that is not perceived as a fun work environment, so managers should strive to make the atmosphere creative and fun to work. Theme 7, work environment developed from analyzing the data from the interviews are related to the literature. Al-Emadi et al. (2015) discussed that creating a work environment that engages employees, encourages creativity, and ensures workers want to stay.

Managers could create an atmosphere that is professional, fun, and full of synergy. The work environment is affected by the physical goods and services supplied to employees in addition to pay (Marino, 2015). Participants 15 responded, " I think keeping the environment fun is important." Member 1 stated "try to be different and what might be an incentive for one may not be for another." interviewee 10 stated, "It's kind of like a small family, we are very close, but on the same hand it's a business and we do run a business." Keeping the work environment professional but creating a atmosphere of fun, friendly, and cohesiveness is vital in retaining key agents.

The results of this study and the emergence of this theme confirm other studies in my literature review. Mandhanya (2015) explored the relationship between the work environment and employee retention and found that work environment had a positive relationship with employee retention affecting employee's decision to stay with the organization. Albattat & Som (2013) examined why employees resigned from their jobs and found that the work environment contributed to employees leaving. Creating a professional work environment is essential to the success of the organization. Employees are empowered to share their ideas for improving company systems and efficiency if they have a good work environment. Past researchers' results are supported by Theme 7.

Table 8 shows the responses to Interview Question 7.

Table 8

Participant Response Chart for Interview Question 7

Participants	Responses
1	We have continued to look for the answer. What might be an incentive for one might not be an incentive of another.
2	Managers should help employees understand the plan of the company and have good work ethics.
3	The work environment should be friendly and encourage employees to do their best.
4	Know the competition, offer support to your employees, and be able to draw a line in the sand if they need coaching.
5	Ensure that employees feel appreciated and communicate with them.
6	Employees should feel valued and let them know how important they are to the company.
7	For me, I've got the best results keeping it on a personal basis.
8	Participant didn't provide any other response for this question.
9	Just keeping the work environment fun but at the same time letting them know you're the boss.
10	It's kind of like a small family, we are very close, but on the same hand it's a business and we do run a business.
11	Encourage managers to attend educational seminars and trainings.
12	Keeping employees happy is important because if you don't have that it's not a pleasant work environment.
13	Ensure that the employee's views and the company's views are a good fit.
14	No other comments from this participant.
15	Keeping the work environment fun is important.

Percentage Response Chart: Theme 7: Work Environment

Participant Response Results	Percentage
7 Participants = Work Environment	46.6%
3 Participant = Management Style	20%
2 Participant = No Response for interview question 7	13.3%
1 Participant =Goals of the Company	6.6%
1 Participant = Organization Fit	6.6%
1 Participant = Communication	6.6%
Total Response Results	99.7%

The seven themes materialized based on responses to interviews questions collected from 15 insurance sales managers. The themes are relevant to the conceptual framework presented in this study and the studies in my literature review. The themes developed from this study are validated by other literature by past researchers. The following conceptual map illustrates leadership strategies to retain key employees.

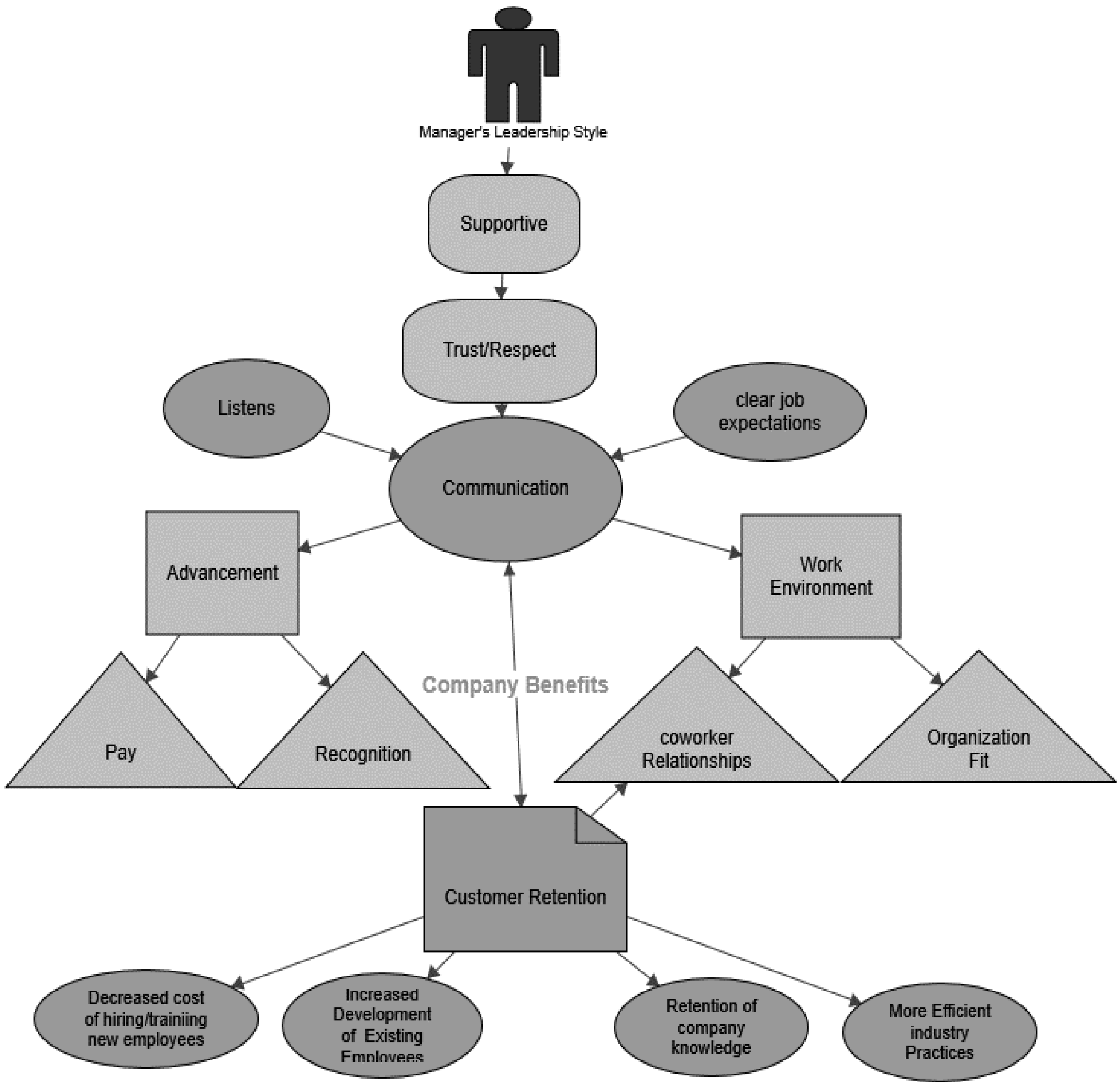

*Figure 1***.** Conceptual map of leadership strategies to retain key employees.

Retention starts with managers who build support with their employees creating trust and respect. Managers also communicate effectively with their employees by listening and ensuring workers have clear expectations of their jobs. Supervisors communicate pay and advancement opportunities and recognize a job well done. Leaders create a professional work environment of fun, open communication, and creativity. Managers are leaders in ensuring good co-worker relationships and aligning employee's attitudes towards the organization with the company's culture and values. Benefits to the company are Customer retention, decreased the cost of recruiting, reduced hiring and training cost of new employees, increased development of existing employees, retention of company knowledge, and increased efficiency in industry practices.

Applications to Professional Practice

This study's findings may contribute to improved business practice by bringing a better understanding of some effective methods used by successful insurance sales managers to retain their key sales agents. Existing and new sales managers could use the findings of this study as a reference to better interact with their key salespeople and reduce the cost to the company of recruiting, hiring, and retraining replacement employees. A significant expense that most organizations are facing is the cost of labor in the form of employees who are highly qualified, innovative, and competitive for the long run success of the company (Agrawal & Sajid, 2017).

Organizational leaders could use the findings of this study to write policies and create effective management strategies that empower workers and encourage critical employees to stay with the company. Job satisfaction and turnover intention are associated with turnover intentions of employees (Agrawal & Sajid, 2017). Organizational leaders could improve job satisfaction and turnover intention of their workers by developing procedures to ensure their critical workers consider themselves vested in the firm as central stakeholders.

The results of this study could be used to improve awareness in Business college courses on leadership strategies used by managers to keep their essential workers. College students majoring in business could use the findings of this study to comprehend better strategies that increase their success in retaining key personnel. Future managers who are aware of some of the factors that cause employees to leave might help them in developing leadership styles that inspire their employees and promotes job satisfaction.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study might contribute to social change by enlightening existing and new sales managers of strategies they can use to retain their essential workers. Improving management strategies would benefit the community by maintaining critical employees at local organizations. Educating managers on procedures they can use to reduce employee retention cost, ensure their employees meet their job expectations, refine their management styles, create a fun work environment, and encourage personal growth. Thereby evoking social change by investing in local workers and ensuring economic growth for the community through retaining key employees.

Enlightened managers may provide better support to the community by encouraging feedback and helping to resolve workplace issues and retaining workers. The district could benefit by having dedicated workers with high organizational and civic citizenship, increased productivity, improved customer service, and workers invested in their community.

Social change might also be created by ensuring that organizations create a good atmosphere for their workers and society making everyone feel they are united. Encouraging economic growth and decreasing cost associated with employee retention by investing in local employees benefits the organization and the community.

Informed managers might also refine their management styles to be more accessible for their employees and help them meet their job expectations by providing guidance and mentorship. Acting as a coach and mentor to employees could benefit their families through job promotions, more involvement in the community, and better work-life balance. This study could also create positive social change by encouraging organizations to be more involved with strategies they can implement to improve Corporate Social Responsibility within the area they reside.

Recommendations for Action

Top executives in organizations might take into consideration the culture they create in their companies. All employees in the organization must feel they fit, and this can be achieved by creating synergy in the work environment, communicating company values, and ensuring trust and respect in interpersonal relationships within the firm. Managers could ensure they are engaging their key agents by communicating openly with them. Communicating with employees will ensure that managers are aware of any situations in the worker’s life that might be a warning of intent to leave the organization.

Managers might also ensure they are empathetic to their employee's problems when they are aware of them. Their compassion could create an atmosphere of trust.

The findings of this study could be converted into workshop materials to train existing and new managers on leadership strategies. Managers can learn what other successful managers are doing to retain their key people. The training would give managers the information necessary to develop an action plan to determine how to improve their leadership styles. The data from my study could also be used to help organization leaders create awareness about effective leadership strategies. Managers are usually the first point of contact that employees interact with.

The results could also be used in university business course materials to encourage the new generation of business leaders and managers to consider how they can improve and refine their leadership skills. Professional development conventions where insurance sales leaders gather to discuss work-related management strategies could use the results of my study. This study could be published as an article for distribution to insurance sales managers. Also, professional seminars and training classes on leadership strategies for retention of key employees and leadership development for existing and new managers and marketed to larger insurance companies.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future researchers may seek to explore further leadership strategies sales managers use to retain their employees. The participants used in this study represented insurance sales managers who owned and operated their own insurance companies and their perceptions of how they kept their key employees. Researchers could explore leadership strategies used to maintain critical workers in other industries. Managers could learn best practices used by other successful managers to work on reducing the problem of employee retention.

A possible limitation before conducting the study was not finding enough participants to take part in the study. However, finding participants that fit the study criteria was not a problem. The information collected for this study was sufficient to be analyzed and coded into themes. Further research could be conducted on *leadership, retention,* or *management* related issues and be appropriately evaluated based on the data collected. Another limitation was participants not giving proper responses or misrepresenting the truth. I believed there was no misrepresentation of the facts while conducting interviews for this study. The participants interviewed were truthful about what they felt was working for them as insurance sales managers.

Reflections

I started the doctoral study process with personal bias about leadership strategies that insurance sales managers used to retain their key employees. Mainly, that managers didn't care about the people they managed but just wanted to meet company sales quotas and get their work done. This bias led me to believe that most managers were like that. My experiences working in the insurance industry as an insurance agent and seeing many insurance agents enter this sector and then abruptly resign, made me wonder how managers retained their key people. I also wondered what strategies if any did successful managers use. Conducting this study enlightened me and made me evaluate my leadership style and qualities as a manager.

The research process was driven by designing a study based on a business-related problem and then investigating it thoroughly. In my research, I read many studies and articles on the practice of management, leadership style, employee engagement, and other sections that are represented in my literature review. I discovered that successful managers don't lead by being a boss but act as a mentor to their employees. Successful managers coach and mentor their employees to determine how they can best help them.

This research project has answered many of my questions and changed my perspective on how effective managers interact with their employees. Based on the findings of this study. It is clear that managers play an essential role in how successful their agents are in the field. My interviews with the participants of my research gave me insight into what successful managers are doing to retain critical people they consider as important in the success of their organizations. Based on my findings I believe the leadership style of the manager, their ability to communicate effectively with their employees, and making workers feel valued are critical for ensuring that employees stay with the company.

Conclusion

The focus of my study was to explore leadership strategies used by insurance sales managers to retain their key employees. The literature in my review and interviews conducted confirmed that effective leadership strategies can help to retain key employees. Both also presented difficulties in developing and executing an action plan of strategies used to retain key employees. Discussing different approaches to keep key personnel seems easy but could present challenges when implementing. Longevity of employees staying with the company must start with top executives and dispersed throughout the organization. Leaders of the organization create the overall vision and values. Therefore, encouraging a culture that promotes teamwork and a supportive atmosphere is vital. Managers are the first point of contact for many employees. Managers must be responsible for ensuring their key people understand the vision and goals of the company but also create an open environment for communication, respect, and trust for their employees. They should also promote a work environment that empowers their employees to reach their career goals within the organization. In closing, enabling your employees to meet their job expectations by coaching and mentorship, building relationships of respect and trust through open communication, and creating a good work environment are strategies proven to keep your key employees happy and focused on improving the company's competitive advantage.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

The following are interview questions formed based on the research question.

1. Why do you think retention of key insurance agents are important?
2. Why do you think insurance agents leave the organization?
3. How does your relationship with your key insurance agents help retain them?
4. What do you think are some incentives from the company that encourage your key Sales agents to stay?
5. What are your thoughts about how career advancement opportunities help retain your key insurance agents?
6. What leadership strategies have you implemented to keep your top insurance salespeople?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion regarding strategies to retain key insurance sales agents?

Interview Protocol

What I will do	**What I will say- Script**
Introduce the interview and set the stage. Conduct recorded face-to-face semistructured interviews with open-ended questions.	Hi. I am Keith Stafford, a student researcher from Walden University conducting an interview with _________. On leadership strategies insurance sales managers use to retain key employees.
• Watch for non-verbal cues. • Paraphrase as needed. • Ask follow up probing questions to get more in-depth.	**Interview Questions** 1. Why do you think retention of key insurance agents are important? 2. Why do you think insurance agents leave the organization? 3. How does your relationship with your key insurance agents help retain them? 4. What do you think are some incentives from the company that encourage your key Sales agents to stay? 5. What are your thoughts about how career advancement opportunities help retain your key insurance agents? 6. What leadership strategies have

	you implemented to keep your top insurance salespeople? 7. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion regarding strategies to retain key insurance sales agents?
Wrap up the interview. Thanking the participants.	This concludes the interview with participant #; I would like to thank them, for their time and participation in this study.
Arrange to schedule for a member check. Set date and time for member check. Check the analyzed data with participant to ensure validity of information shared by participant during the interview.	Participant number, when is a good time to contact you with the analyzed information so we can check to ensure my interpretation of the information you shared is correct?
Provide a copy of the analyzed interpreted information to the participant Ask probing questions related to findings that you may have found—**note the information must be related so I am probing and adhering to the IRB approval**. Have participant check analyzed information for accuracy.	Participant # here is a copy of your transcribed and analyzed information based on your responses to the interview questions. Please review each individual question to ensure that I accurately understood your responses. –**Have participant check analyzed data to ensure accuracy.**
Once the member check has been conducted, ask if my interpretation is true to what the participant shared.	Communicate via e-mail to confirm with participant that information is true.
	Interview Questions and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed.
	Interview Questions and Synthesis • Talk about why retention of key Employees is important. • Discuss your rapport with your key employee or employees. • Deliberate on the reason or reasons you think key insurance agents leave the

	organization. • Expound on how you think self-motivation or internal factors vs. external factors such as pay, recognition, etc. Affects key employees' decision to stay with an organization. • Talk about how opportunities for career advancement affects retention of key employees. • Discuss any leadership strategies that you have implemented to retain your key employees.