

2019

## Strategies for Employee Retention in Nonprofit Organizations

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Gentri White

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Walden University  
2019

Abstract

Strategies for Employee Retention in Nonprofit Organizations

by

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MBA, Dominican University, 2011

BSC, DePaul University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2019

## Abstract

Low employee retention is one of the main challenges for managers and negatively impacts an organization's ability to survive and remain competitive. Using Herzberg's two-factor theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies nonprofit sector managers use to retain employees. The participants included 4 managers from 4 Illinois nonprofit organizations who implemented successful strategies for employee retention. Data were collected using semistructured, face-to-face interviews, company documents, and archival records. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, which revealed 3 themes: employee fit, workplace culture, and employee feedback. The implications for positive social change include the potential to benefit communities through improvements in unemployment rates and decreased levels of stress on families. The results of this study may also benefit employees of nonprofit organizations through better work environments and encouragement of employee engagement.

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## Dedication

My successful completion of this doctorate program is dedicated to my family. My grandmother was a prominent figure in my life. I dedicate my strength to her and know that she has been with me throughout this journey. Completing this journey would not have been possible without the continued support of my mother, father, and brother. Sacrificing time spent and enduring a moody, sleep-deprived daughter/sister must not have been pleasant. To all my loved ones, thank you for being there.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Teresa Jepma for her time, guidance, and support in completing my doctoral study. Dr. Jepma has served as my mentor since I began the doctoral study process and has been a guiding light throughout. I truly appreciate your assistance and patience. I would also like to thank the rest of my committee members, Dr. Jordan and Dr. Knight. Your feedback and guidance strengthened my skills as a writer. Thank you all.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Losing employees poses a significant business problem for an organization (Sahi & Mahajan, 2014). Costs for losing an employee include the cost associated with recruiting and training a new employee, which can range between 50%–60% of the employee's salary (Michael, Prince, & Chacko, 2016). With this in mind, tighter budgets and less financial flexibility mean that nonprofit organizations cannot sustain the expenses associated with loss of productivity and performance due to retention issues (Selden & Sowa, 2015). As such, managers are responsible for maintaining a strong workforce and must engage in attracting, training, motivating, and retaining employees (Dumoulin, 2017). Managers of nonprofit organizations striving to retain their employees face the challenge of meeting the needs of employees while competing with private sector industries offering more consistent and higher salaries (Weisberg & Dent, 2016).

### **Background of the Problem**

Employee retention is one of the main challenges for managers and affects an organization's ability to survive and remain competitive (Joo, Hahn, & Peterson, 2015). Nonprofit organizations are especially vulnerable to the costs associated with losing employees, as these organizations tend to be small scale and labor intensive (Kang, Huh, Cho, & Auh, 2015). Many workers entering the nonprofit sector do so out of a desire to perform mission-driven and meaningful work (Johnson & Ng, 2016). But competition from the for-profit sector for these workers has increased the need for managers of nonprofit organizations to address the issues of adequate pay and benefits to retain their

employees (Mitchell & Calabrese, 2018; Stater, K. & Stater, M., 2018). However, some managers of nonprofit organizations lack the strategies needed to retain their employees, which may lead to increased costs and loss of institutional knowledge in nonprofit organizations. Thus, it is important for organizations to determine the reasons why employees decide to stay or leave the organization (Long, Yong, & Chuen, 2016).

### **Problem Statement**

Nonprofit organizations struggle to retain employees, which impacts organizational effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity (Kang et al., 2015). Only 31% of employees within the nonprofit sector have indicated that they would remain at their current workplace if offered a different job elsewhere at the same rate of pay (Selander & Ruuskanen, 2016). The general business problem is that the inability to retain employees may lead to increased costs and loss of institutional knowledge in nonprofit organizations. The specific business problem is that some managers of nonprofit organizations lack strategies to retain employees.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore successful strategies that managers of nonprofit organizations use to retain employees. The target population was managers in four Illinois nonprofit organizations who have implemented successful strategies for employee retention. The implications for positive social change included the potential to retain employees and positively impact employment stability. The findings of this study can be used to increase employment stability and may lead to

less stress on employees at work and at home. Decreases in employee stress may lead to social impacts such as increases in innovation and more positive working environments.

### **Nature of the Study**

I considered three research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed.

Researchers use qualitative methods to conduct exploratory and descriptive analyses (Gerring, 2017). Qualitative researchers engage with participants and provide participants with the opportunity to identify and explore important issues related to a phenomenon (Kozleski, 2017). The qualitative method was best suited for this study to engage with participants for a better understanding of participants' experiences related to employee retention. In contrast, quantitative researchers use closed-ended questions to gather data for testing statistical hypotheses about variables relationships or differences (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015), which did not fit the purpose of this study. Using mixed methods includes a combination of qualitative and quantitative elements (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). Thus, the use of mixed methods was not appropriate for this study because I did not test hypotheses, which is the quantitative portion of a mixed-method study.

I considered three qualitative research designs: case study, phenomenology, and ethnography. Researchers use case studies to conduct in-depth explorations into complex and specific phenomena (Yin, 2018). A case study design was best suited for this study to conduct an in-depth exploration of the complex issue of employee retention within nonprofit organizations. Conversely, the phenomenological design involves exploring a phenomenon viewed through the lens of participants' lived experiences (Matua, 2015),

which did not suit this study because I was not exploring the lived experiences of participants. Further, researchers use ethnography to develop a detailed understanding of a culture through immersion and long-term observation (Reich, 2015). However, conducting a long-term observation of cultures did not fit the purpose of the study.

### **Research Question**

What strategies do nonprofit sector managers use to retain employees?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What reasons do your employees give for leaving the organization?
2. What strategies do you use for employee retention?
3. What challenges do you experience when implementing retention strategies?
4. How do you address the barriers to implementing strategies for employee retention?
5. How do employees respond to retention strategies?
6. How do you measure the effectiveness of retention strategies?
7. What additional information would you like to share regarding this topic?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) developed the motivation-hygiene theory, also referred to as the two-factor theory. Motivation-hygiene theory suggests that an employee's level of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is produced by different work factors, which can determine an employee's intent to leave or stay in a current position (Herzberg, 1974). The key concepts of the theory include motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are factors affecting job satisfaction such as achievement, recognition

for achievement, the work itself, responsibility, and growth (Herzberg, 1987). Hygiene factors affect job dissatisfaction and include coworkers, supervision, salary, status, and company policy and administration (Grigaliunas & Herzberg, 1971). Motivation-hygiene theory is used in studying the factors affecting employee job satisfaction and impacting employee retention (Herzberg, 1974). Therefore, motivation-hygiene theory was expected to align with this study because motivators are factors that may impact an employer's ability to retain its employees.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Employee retention:* Employee retention is the process utilized to keep employees with an organization (Deeba, Usmani, Akhtar, Zahra, & Rasool, 2015).

*Hygiene factors:* Hygiene factors are extrinsic work factors that relate to the context of the employment and can lead to job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1974).

*Job engagement:* Job engagement is the concept used to measure employee well-being (Tanskanen, Taipale, & Anttila, 2016).

*Job satisfaction:* Job satisfaction includes positive feelings relating to an employee's profession and stemming from experience, expectation, and available options (Hulsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013).

*Motivator factors:* Motivation factors are intrinsic work factors that relate to the content of employment and can lead to job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1974).

*Organizational commitment:* Organizational commitment refers to an employee's desire to stay with an organization and support the values and goals of the organization (Posey, Roberts, & Lowry, 2015).

*Turnover:* Turnover is the voluntary resignation of employees from their current position (Selander & Ruuskanen, 2016).

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

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are unverified facts taken to be true (Schoenung & Dikova, 2016). In conducting this study, I assumed that semistructured interviews would provide an adequate opportunity to identify themes related to successful employee retention strategies. A second assumption was that the population of nonprofit sector managers selected for participation in this study would be appropriate to explore and identify these themes. The assumption was also made that participants would provide truthful and accurate responses to interview questions.

#### **Limitations**

Study limitations presented by the researcher represent critical information needed to understand the weaknesses of a study (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). Limitations of the research in this study included participant quantity. The limited number of individuals participating in the study may have limited the transferability of the study to the general population. Participation in the study was limited to managers of nonprofit organizations; nonmanagement employees were not included.

#### **Delimitations**

Delimitations refer to the characteristics that provide boundaries for a study (Gutiérrez, Márquez, & Reficco, 2016). Participants of this study were managers of nonprofit organizations who have used successful strategies for employee retention. The



study results do not include data collection from for-profit organizations. Participants were only from one geographic area. The population of interviewees included participants within Illinois. Participants from other states were not part of the study. Data collection was limited to a selection of four nonprofit organizations.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The results of this study may be valuable to business, as the information can be used by nonprofit sector business managers to develop strategies for retaining talented employees. Retaining employees may impact an organization because key institutional knowledge may be lost with a departing employee. The use of motivators by nonprofit managers may be beneficial in devising successful strategies for employee retention. Implementation of such strategies may potentially lower turnover rates. The results of this study may also be used in business by providing a means for assessment of current retention strategies to determine which strategies may lead to reducing the cost associated with employee retention.

#### **Implications for Social Change**

The results of this study can be used to affect positive social change with information for increasing employee retention and reducing voluntary employee turnover. Increasing employee retention rates may contribute to labor market stabilization, which allows organizations to focus their limited resources on continuing to work with their communities. The ability to retain employees can also allow nonprofit organizations to focus their limited resources on the continued operation of the organization and the

provision of supportive services required to assist communities in need. Additionally, employees may realize reductions in stress at home and at work due to reductions in employee turnover and more stable employment.

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

The purpose of this study was to explore successful strategies that managers of nonprofit organizations use to retain employees. The Literature Review section has been organized to first provide a summary of the strategy used to search the literature. The literature search strategy involved books and peer-reviewed articles related to the topic of employee retention. I utilized multiple databases and search engines to identify relevant sources of literature: Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, ABI/INFORM Collection, and SAGE Journals. Search terms included *employee retention*, *job satisfaction*, *turnover*, *organization commitment*, and *nonprofit recruitment*. This study includes 177 references with 152 peer-reviewed references (85.8%). A total of 153 references (86.4%) had publication dates that are less than 5 years old (2015-2019).

The literature review is structured to provide a discussion on the conceptual framework for the study, employee retention, employee retention in nonprofit organizations, and successful strategies for employee retention. Discussion on the conceptual framework includes an introduction to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory and contains an in-depth analysis of the criticisms of the theory, supporting theories, and contrasting theories. I then provide a discussion on employee retention, retention within nonprofit organizations, organizational leadership, and organizational culture. What follows is a comprehensive analysis of the conceptual framework.

## **Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory**

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory was incorporated as the conceptual framework for this study. Herzberg et al. (1959) developed the motivation-hygiene theory, which is also referred to as the two-factor theory. Motivation-hygiene theory is characterized as a content theory of job satisfaction, suggesting that managers can identify employee needs through observation of employee behavior in the work environment (Fareed & Jan, 2016). Content theories, such as the motivation-hygiene theory, are utilized in addressing employee satisfaction by focusing on employee needs and the prioritization of needs based on individual employees (Fareed & Jan, 2016).

Motivation-hygiene theory suggests that an employee's level of job satisfaction is produced by different work factors, which can determine an employee's intent to leave or stay in a current position (Herzberg, 1974). The motivation-hygiene theory was the first theory in which it was argued that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are driven by different groups of influencers (Weisberg & Dent, 2016). The key concepts of the theory include motivators, such as recognition of achievement, growth, and responsibility (Herzberg, 1987), and hygiene factors, such as coworkers, supervision, salary, status, and company policy and administration (Grigaliunas & Herzberg, 1971).

Under the motivation-hygiene theory, it is also argued that individuals have a basic need to prevent discomfort as well as a need for psychological advancement (Lazaroiu, 2015). In the employment context, discomfort correlates with hygiene factors related to an employee's work environment (Lazaroiu, 2015). Managing hygiene factors is essential to avoiding a negative work environment and preventing employee

discomfort (Alfayad & Mohd Arif, 2017). But the management of hygiene factors to reduce employee discomfort will not impact an employee's need for psychological advancement or the level of employee satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959), which can be met through motivators such as recognition, purpose, and accountability (Lazaroiu, 2015). Motivators are necessary because they pertain to aspects of the nature of the employment itself and serve to provide employees with a sense of contentment (Alfayad & Mohd Arif, 2017). Although motivators can increase contentment and job satisfaction, the presence of motivators has not been shown to decrease levels of job dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Motivation-hygiene theory is used in studying the factors affecting employee job satisfaction and impacting employee retention (Herzberg, 1974). The studies conducted by Herzberg et al. (1959) have been replicated in over 200 cases. The continued replication of the theory provided for the ability to develop profiles for organizations assessed under the theory and the ability to use an organization's profile to identify issues involving employee motivation (Herzberg, 1974). In this study, motivation-hygiene theory allowed me to explore the strategies utilized by nonprofit organizations to retain employees.

**Support for Herzberg's theory.** Herzberg's two-factor theory has served as the theoretical framework for several studies exploring employee retention across various industries (Larkin, Brantley-Dias, & Lokey-Vega, 2016). For example, the two-factor theory was applied in exploring the factors motivating employees within the postal service sector and the effects on the quality of service provided (Pandža, Đeri, Galamboš,

& Galamboš, 2015). Woodworth (2016) also used the theory to explore the factors impacting intent-to-stay of adjunct clinical nurse faculty members, finding that employment must be built on a foundation of motivators and hygiene factors that support employee intent-to-stay. Herzberg's two-factor theory was also utilized to explore measures of job satisfaction and factors motivating hospital pharmacists (Slimane, 2017). Additionally, Larkin et al. (2016) applied the two-factor theory to the study of factors influencing turnover intention, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment of K-12 online instructors. Further, Weisberg and Dent (2016) explored the potential of using nonmonetary satisfiers to enhance the work of employees and increase job satisfaction and employee motivation, finding that nonprofit sector employees may be willing to trade monetary rewards for the opportunity to engage in decision making and problem-solving. The motivation-hygiene theory is a relevant framework for addressing employee satisfaction within nonprofit organizations, as the theory emphasizes the intrinsic contributors of the opportunity to achieve and the meaning of the work itself as important to employee motivation and job satisfaction (Weisberg & Dent, 2016).

The motivation-hygiene theory has also been tested for its applicability to the employment context of more modern times (Damij, Levnajic, Skrt, & Suklan, 2015). Though the theory does not account for changes in the employment sector after 1970, such as globalization and increased use and dependence of technology, it accounts for the factors that may affect employment. Traditional motivators such as salary and prestige are not the only factors important to employee motivation; employee motivation is influenced by a myriad of interdependent factors as opposed to the traditionally

emphasized factors of money and prestige (Damij et al., 2015). Therefore, the motivation-hygiene theory, or two-factor theory, can still be useful in exploring and understanding the factors that impact employee retention.

**Contrasting theories.** Maslow's hierarchy of needs and transformational leadership theory were reviewed prior to selecting Herzberg's two-factor theory as the conceptual framework for this study. Maslow's hierarchy of needs has also been utilized in the study of employee retention, motivation, and job satisfaction (Kianto, Vanhala, & Heilmann, 2016). Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that there are five levels of basic human needs guiding individual motivation. The bottom level of the hierarchy consists of psychological needs, including food, air, and shelter (Maslow, 1943). The next level consists of security needs, followed by social needs, esteem needs, and leading to the top level, self-actualization needs. Managers applying the theory can assist their employees in realizing the basic needs within the hierarchy (Upadhyaya, 2014). Employee realization of the basic needs can, in turn, lead to increases in organizational commitment (Ibidunni, Osibanjo, Adeniji, Salau, & Falola, 2016; Kianto et al., 2016). Still, the theory has received criticism for being too simplistic and individualistic (Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016). Additionally, the needs identified through the theory may not be universal (Upadhyaya, 2014). I did not select Maslow's hierarchy of needs because I was focused on the managers and the strategies used by managers to retain employees.

Transformational leadership theory was also considered as a conceptual framework for this study. Transformational leadership theory was first introduced in 1978 by James MacGregor Burns (Ma & Jiang, 2018). Bernard M. Bass later built upon

the theory in 1985 (Andersen, 2018). Transformational leadership theory has also been utilized by several researchers in the study of workplace motivation and organizational commitment (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The theory indicates that leadership is a process by which leaders and followers engage with one another to increase motivation, exceed goals, and influence needs and values (Eliophotou-Menon & Ioannou, 2016; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Four components associated with transformational leadership include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Transformational leadership can increase organizational effectiveness and requires that leaders not only react to ever-changing environments but also encourage change and take risks, as needed (Eliophotou-Menon & Ioannou, 2016).

Although utilized across varying disciplines, the transformational leadership theory has received criticism from several researchers regarding the construct validity of the underlying components of the theory (Alatawi, 2017). Researchers have argued that the components are not distinctly delimited and are not unique to the theory of transformational leadership (Alatawi, 2017). Thus, the understanding and application of the concept of organizational effectiveness among researchers are inconsistent. Little evidence has been presented to substantiate the claim that transformational leadership theory causes organizational effectiveness when its definition involves goal attainments and objective measurements (Andersen, 2015). Further, in applying transformational leadership theory, the transformational leader's focus is on the conversion of followers to higher levels of attainment, with little emphasis on affecting followers to increase productivity and organizational effectiveness (Andersen, 2015). As such,

transformational leadership theory was not selected as the conceptual framework for this study.

### **Employee Retention**

Employee retention can be described as a method by which policies and procedures are developed and implemented to address employee needs and increase commitment to the organization (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Researchers exploring employee retention have generally focused on identifying organizational practices contributing to employee retention (Coetzee & Stoltz, 2015). Managers responsible for maintaining a strong workforce must engage in attracting, training, motivating, and retaining employees (Dumoulin, 2017). The goal is to benefit from the skills the employee gains from the organization's investment in training and experience (Qazi, Khalid, & Shafique, 2015). The ability of managers to communicate with and recognize employees is essential to retaining employees (Mandhanya, 2015). Notably, employee retention is one of the main challenges for managers (Joo et al., 2015). Thus, it is important for organizations to determine the reasons why employees decide to stay with or leave an organization (Long et al., 2016).

Losing employees poses a significant business problem for an organization (Sahi & Mahajan, 2014). Organizations experiencing high turnover will suffer from both direct and indirect costs (Boon & Biron, 2016). Among the costs charged to an organization for losing an employee is the cost associated with recruiting and training a new employee, which can range between 50%–60% of the employee's salary (Michael et al., 2016). In addition to the monetary costs associated with losing an employee, organizations must



overcome the cost of disruption to the work environment and client/customer relationships (Bandura & Lyons, 2014). The loss of more experienced employees can also mean the loss of institutional knowledge (Selden & Sowa, 2015). The longer an employee remains with an organization the more experience that employee gains, making the employee more valuable to the organization (Ansari & Bijalwan, 2017). Not retaining experienced workers can negatively impact the organization's ability to accumulate expertise and can lower organizational productivity (Kang et al., 2015). New employees are likely to make errors that result in the need for coworkers to take on additional duties until training is complete, and new employees may not provide the level of customer service seen by more experienced employees (Bandura & Lyons, 2014). The inability of an organization to retain its employees can also lead to a decrease in employee morale and may impact the organization's business reputation (Kang et al., 2015).

The inability to retain employees can be especially disadvantageous for nonprofit organizations due to the effect on organizational effectiveness associated with the loss of employees (Kang et al., 2015). Nonprofit organizations operate in uncertain environments in terms of sources of funding and expected service levels (Weisberg & Dent, 2016). Nonprofit organizations are vulnerable to the costs of losing employees because they are smaller in scale and rely on labor (Kang et al., 2015). Tighter budgets and less financial flexibility mean nonprofits cannot sustain the expenses associated with loss of productivity and performance due to retention issues (Selden & Sowa, 2015).

Organizations that cannot retain their employees are also losing critical resources (Qazi et al., 2015). For example, nonprofit organizations are dependent on human resources, which serves as the main asset for these organizations (Austen & Zacny, 2015). Nonprofit organizations also rely on the services of volunteers and employees willing to accept small stipends (Bittschi, Pennerstorfer, & Schneider, 2015). Of particular importance, the variances between public and private sector employment contexts affect employee satisfaction and intention to stay with an organization (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Public sector employment can be comprised of inflexible workplace policies, complacency, and risk aversion (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Managers of nonprofit organizations face the challenge of meeting the intrinsic and extrinsic needs of employees while competing with private sector industries offering more consistent and higher salaries (Weisberg & Dent, 2016). For instance, employees within nonprofit organizations face a high risk of discouragement because of work environment factors such as difficulty achieving goals, disparities in salaries, and the increasing compliance requirements for nonprofit organizations (Weisberg & Dent, 2016).

Employee retention rates within organizations can also vary by age group due to the differences in requirements and expectations of these groups (Russell, 2016). Each age group can present a unique set of challenges for managers seeking to retain employees (Russell, 2016). Therefore, developing generational knowledge is important for managers and can allow for a better understanding of and respect for the uniqueness of employees (Fishman, 2016). Development of generational knowledge can also assist managers in tailoring employee retention efforts. For instance, younger employees are

more likely to change employment than older employees (“Winning the Talent War,” 2015). Retention of the millennial generation, born between 1980 and 2000, requires organizations to provide security, stability, and growth opportunities (Russell, 2016). Generation X employees, born between 1961 and 1981, require managers to provide new experiences to remain motivated (Fishman, 2016). Additionally, retention rates will vary depending upon the current career level of employees (X. Lee, Yang, & Li, 2017). A manager’s ability to understand and adapt to the challenges presented by employees of all ages is key to the retention of these employees (Russell, 2016).

Further, employee retention is influenced by motivational and maintenance factors. Motivational factors can include employee recognition and organizational support, whereas maintenance factors can include employee compensation and workload (Benge, Harder, & Goodwin, 2015). Maintenance factors, such as compensation and reward systems, are the traditional means by which employee retention and satisfaction are managed (Sankar, 2015). Researchers have found that an employee’s likeliness to remain with an organization is dependent on the compensation package and incentives provided by the organization (Michael et al., 2016). Employees who are dissatisfied with the organization’s compensation package are likely to leave the organization (Sankar, 2015). Researchers have argued that, although compensation is an important aspect of employee retention, compensation may not be the most important factor affecting employee intention to stay (N. J. Thomas, Brown, & Thomas, 2017).

Reward systems can include salary, promotions, and bonuses (Sankar, 2015). For nonprofit organizations, development of a reward system consisting of nonmonetary

rewards, such as time off, can serve as a means to alleviate the organization's inability to provide increased compensation and raises (Selden & Sowa, 2015). Effectively managed reward systems can assist the organization in achieving goals and retaining productive employees (Sankar, 2015). An organization's reward policies should distinguish rewarding high performers to aid in the retention of high performing employees (Qazi et al., 2015). Notwithstanding, the problem of employee retention cannot be solved simply through such extrinsic incentives (Sahi & Mahajan, 2014).

**Employee satisfaction.** Job satisfaction is a strong indicator of an employee's desire to remain or leave an organization (Bandura & Lyons, 2014). Employee job satisfaction characterizes the mix of feelings employees have towards their work (Sankar, 2015). Employees experiencing higher levels of job satisfaction are less likely to leave their current position (Bandura & Lyons, 2014). Employee satisfaction is important for organizations as the level of an employee's job satisfaction can provide indicators of the employee's views and emotional state (Alfayad & Mohd Arif, 2017). The level of an employee's job satisfaction is also representative of how well an organization meets the employee's needs and desires (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017).

Job satisfaction is important to employee fulfillment and is dependent upon a combination of internal motivators, such as significance and challenge, and external motivators, such as wages (Slimane, 2017). Motivation derived from external factors is characterized as controlled motivation (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017). Intrinsically derived motivation is characterized as autonomous motivation (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017). The influence of internal and external factors can lead to either loyalty and commitment or

absenteeism and turnover (Slimane, 2017). Strengthening the autonomous motivation of employees will improve work effort and increase productivity among employees (Martin, 2018).

Although maintenance factors, such as wages, are an important aspect of job satisfaction, prior research suggests that overall job satisfaction has a higher level of influence on employee retention as compared to mere satisfaction with wages (Cronley & Kim, 2017). Maintenance or hygiene factors influence employee satisfaction only in the short-term (Slimane, 2017). Organizations should be mindful that such external factors are required to avoid employment dissatisfaction but alone will not lead to long-term employee satisfaction (Slimane, 2017).

Long-term job satisfaction is more heavily influenced by internal, or motivational factors focusing on employee job performance and driving employees towards achieving their best performance (Slimane, 2017). Within the nonprofit sector, employees are initially drawn to the occupation based on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations (Kang et al., 2015). Yet, nonprofit employees generally exhibit lower levels of job satisfaction in terms of extrinsic motivation such as wages, fringe benefits, and job security as compared to employees working outside of the nonprofit sector (Kang et al., 2015).

Job satisfaction can be improved through a managerial focus not only on contextual aspects of the employment but also on the psychological aspects (Caricati et al., 2014). An important aspect of employee satisfaction is the ability of the employee to grow professionally while in his/her current position through lifelong learning

opportunities (Shimp, 2017). A lack of promotion or employee job control may result in a diminishment of an employee's intrinsic motivation to perform and grow within the organization (Rastogi, Pati, Krishnan, & Krishnan, 2018). Organizations providing training and development opportunities are more likely to have employees that feel valued and are more likely to retain employees (Selden & Sowa, 2015). Nonprofits face the challenge of leveraging scarce resources to provide such training opportunities (Selden & Sowa, 2015). The perceived lack of promotional opportunities is among the top reasons employees decide to leave an organization (Bandura & Lyons, 2014).

Employee satisfaction is also affected by the work environment (George, 2015). Negative experiences related to the work environment and the job itself can cause an employee's overall level of job satisfaction to decrease (Acikgoz, Canan Sumer, & Sumer, 2016). Unfavorable working conditions can lead to reduced employee contributions and thoughts of leaving the organization (S. Kim & Fernandez, 2017). In developing a work environment conducive to employee satisfaction and retention managerial focus should be on ensuring the availability of sufficient resources to perform the work and allowing employees a degree of flexibility (George, 2015). Employee engagement has been found to decrease when employees perceive the work environment to be threatening, unfair, ambiguous, or risky (Qazi et al., 2015). Work environments consisting of adequate levels of supervisor support, organizational support, and good peer relationships will promote higher levels of employee engagement and retention (Kundu & Lata, 2017). Ultimately, the work environment will deliver either a positive or negative indication to the employee as to whether the employee is a fit for the

organization (Langer, Feeney, & Lee, 2019).

The level of employee engagement will contribute to the overall job satisfaction of the employee (Bandura & Lyons, 2014). Employee engagement can be described as the level of commitment and emotional bonding an employee has to his or her work, the organization, and the organization's values and beliefs (Jindal, Shaikh, & Shashank, 2017). The level of work engagement experienced by employees will also impact job satisfaction. Work engagement refers to the psychological state an employee maintains towards his/her work (W. Kim et al., 2017). Fully engaged employees do not work solely to serve self-interests but are motivated to work towards the established organizational objectives (Jindal et al., 2017). Employees who are fully engaged within the organization generally exhibit high levels of productivity and performance and are retained by their organizations at higher rates than employees shown to be disengaged (Jindal et al., 2017).

Disengagement has been found to contribute to low employee satisfaction (Bandura & Lyons, 2014). Disengaged employees generally exhibit lower levels of productivity, increased levels of stress and insecurity, and are less loyal to the organization (Jindal et al., 2017). Employee disengagement can cause negative impacts on an employee's well-being, lowering levels of happiness and increasing levels of depression (Rastogi et al., 2018). Indeed, an employee's decision to leave the organization is often a symptom of employee disengagement (Jindal et al., 2017). Employee disengagement is generally the product of a loss of organizationally determined job resources (Rastogi et al., 2018). Employee perceptions of a loss in support from coworkers, supervisors, and the organization can result in the employee's

decision to disengage to prevent additional loss (Rastogi et al., 2018). Likewise, disengagement may also be brought on by a lack of understanding of how the employee contributes to the organization's objectives (Bandura & Lyons, 2014). An additional cause of disengagement includes the employee's belief that professional goals are unattainable while employed with the organization (Bandura & Lyons, 2014).

**Employee fit.** Employee fit is an important factor influencing employee retention. The level of employee engagement and job satisfaction can serve as an indicator of how well the employee's expectations of the organization align with actual rewards (Sankar, 2015). Employee fit is generally discussed in terms of person-organization fit and person-job fit. Person-organization fit refers to the compatibility between employees and the organization (Han, Chiang, McConville, & Chiang, 2015). Person-job fit refers to the alignment between an employee's abilities and the specific requirements and functions of tasks and assignments (Han et al., 2015). The components of demands-abilities fit, and needs-supplies fit encompass the person-job fit category (Boon & Biron, 2016). Demands-abilities fit can be described as the extent to which the requirements of the job align with an employee's abilities, level of skill, and knowledgebase (Boon & Biron, 2016). Needs-supplies fit is described as the extent to which an employee's goals, values, preferences, interests, and desires align with the supplies provided by the employment (Boon & Biron, 2016). Employees having high levels of person-organization fit and person-job fit will experience greater job satisfaction (Liu, Tang, & Yang, 2015).

Hiring the wrong person for a position can be harmful to both the employee and



the organization (Allen, Dugan, Popa, & Tarasi, 2017). Employment alignment refers to the conformity of employee abilities and work-related resources to the demands of the employee and the organization (Fu, Yang, & Chu, 2014). Understanding the importance of alignment between an employee, the organization, and job functions, many managers invest large amounts of resources to determine an employee's abilities to best align the employee's tasks with those abilities (Younge & Marx, 2016). Misalignment of an employee's abilities and assigned tasks can be costly to an organization as productivity declines upon the employee's realization that the position is not the right fit (Frankel, 2016). Misalignment can also lead to an employee's increased intention to leave an organization (Allen et al., 2017).

Characteristics of a strong person-organization fit include superior communication and frequent sharing of information between employees and leadership (Boon & Biron, 2016). Employees perceiving a sense of value recognition and a high level of comfort when communicating with a superior experience higher levels of satisfaction than employees lacking such a connection to the organization and its leadership (S. Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). A strong fit between an employee and the organization provides the employee with the perception that the organization possesses similar values to the employee (Han et al., 2015). Employees who perceive their values as in alignment with those of the organization are more likely to behave positively and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals (Han et al., 2015). The extent to which management supports the individual values of the employee can impact the attitudes and behaviors of employees within the organization (Langer et al., 2019). When

employee values are in alignment with those of the organization cooperation amongst coworkers will be positively impacted (Park, Oh, & Lee, 2018). For instance, high levels of person-organization fit and person-job fit also increase the likelihood of the employee identifying with the organization (Straatmann, Königschulte, Hatstrup, & Hamborg, 2017). An employee's sense of need fulfillment can be positively impacted by the alignment of organizational and employee values (Boon & Biron, 2016). Intrinsic work dispositions among employees have been shown to improve as clear and open communication is fostered between employees and leaders within the organization (S. Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). As the fit between employee-job and employee-organization improves, the likelihood of mutually beneficial exchanges increases, leading to increased employee satisfaction and organizational commitment (Straatmann et al., 2017). The increases in positive social exchange resulting from high person-organization fit and person-job fit also translates into greater needs fulfillment and higher needs satisfaction for the employee (Straatmann et al., 2017). Conversely, low levels of person-job fit lead to unmet needs and feelings of frustration and disappointment among the employee (Liu et al., 2015).

Job complexity should also be considered in a manager's determinations as to employee alignment. Complexity within an employment position adds to enrichment and serves as intrinsic motivation for the employee (Slimane, 2017). Complexity and challenges associated with the position will also lead to enhancement in an employee's motivation to perform (Rastogi et al., 2018). In a knowledge-worker environment, job complexity can motivate employees to remain in their current position and serves as an

important predictor of employee turnover (Joo et al., 2015). Job complexity should align with the abilities of the employee, such that employees exhibiting a high level of ability should be assigned greater levels of responsibility (Slimane, 2017). In particular, to increase employee retention, organizations can broadly define the scope of employment, which can provide opportunities to add complexity and challenge the employee (Frankel, 2016). On the other hand, organizations that cannot provide the complexity needed to meet an employee's abilities should reassess the alignment between the position and the employee selected to fill the position (Slimane, 2017).

Adaptability of workloads to meet the resources and abilities of employees has also been shown to positively affect retention (George, 2015). Organizations that can effectively align an employee's goals with the strategic goals of the organization will experience higher levels of employee motivation, employee satisfaction, and decreases in turnover intentions (S. Kim & Park, 2014). A proper fit between an organization and its employees provides employees with greater psychological support and allows for opportunities to network with coworkers and receive mentorship by leaders within the organization (Afsar & Badir, 2016). When an employee's values are not a good fit for the organization, differing norms and perspectives can lead to challenges in communication between the employee, co-workers, and management and can potentially cause decreased levels of employee satisfaction within the organization (Park et al., 2018). Important predictors of employee satisfaction include the climate of the work environment and the level of an employee's commitment to his/her chosen profession (Caricati et al., 2014). Alignment between the values of the employee and those of the

organization is likely to result in higher levels of work quality and employee commitment to the organization (Halbesleben & Tolbert, 2014).

### **Organizational Commitment**

Another strong indicator of an employee's intention to remain with an organization is the level of an employee's commitment to the organization (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Organizational commitment is associated with employee behavior, attitudes, and norms (Sahi & Mahajan, 2014). Organizational commitment represents an employee's state of mind with respect to the employee's relationship with the organization (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Employee commitment to the organization is needed in order for the organization to continue growing (Moon & Choi, 2017). Organizational commitment has been shown to have a positive effect on employee retention (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Job satisfaction serves as a key component in building organizational commitment and increasing employee retention (Slimane, 2017). Organizations lacking employee commitment and suffering poor levels of employee satisfaction face costly implications (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Approaches to developing organizational commitment will vary by employee as each individual may have his/her own career goals and may assign different values to intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Moon & Choi, 2017). In general, unreliable organizations and those failing to provide adequate challenges and meaningful tasks for employees will see declines in levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Mandhanya, 2015).

Prior research in the area of organizational commitment has identified three main types of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative (Moon &

Choi, 2017). Each type of organizational commitment represents a mindset impacting an employee's desire to remain with the organization (Xu & Payne, 2018). For instance, affective commitment involves the psychological bonding of the employee to the organization (Shen, 2017). Employees experiencing affective commitment develop an emotional attachment to the organization and identify with the organization (Halbesleben & Tolbert, 2014). High levels of affective commitment among employees indicate an intent to remain with the organization long-term (Krajcsák, 2018). Hence, these employees will remain with the organization because they desire to do so (Borhani, Jalali, Abbaszadeh, & Haghdoost, 2014). Employees with high levels of affective commitment will commit to the organization as a result of personality characteristics, such as an employee's values (Xu & Payne, 2018).

Continuance commitment represents the employee's need to stay with the organization based on the opportunity costs of leaving the organization (Shen, 2017). Continuance commitment is the result of economic decision making and considers employee investment of resources such as time, money, and effort (Mercurio, 2015). Perceptions regarding the availability of alternative employment also impact the employee's decision making (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017). Employee considerations of the negative costs are the main driver for retention under continuance commitment (Halbesleben & Tolbert, 2014). Although such considerations may result in short-term retention, the employee's having high levels of continuance commitment will consistently be seeking out alternative employment opportunities (Krajcsák, 2018). These employees can be retained long-term through extrinsic motivators involving

monetary compensation (Krajcsák, 2018).

Normative commitment arises from established norms, which dictate employee reciprocity to the organization (Shen, 2017). Employees may strive to maintain equitable relationships with employers and are likely to reciprocate fair treatment by the organization in the form of loyalty and commitment to the organization (Halbesleben & Tolbert, 2014). Employees experiencing normative commitment remain with the organization out of a sense of duty and debt repayment (Borhani et al., 2014). These employees feel obligated to remain with the organization (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017).

Employees lacking affective commitment while possessing high levels of either normative or continuance commitment exhibit an exchange-based commitment profile (Xu & Payne, 2018). Exchange-based profiles represent a less internalized commitment to the organization compared to values-based commitment profiles characterized by high levels of affective commitment (Xu & Payne, 2018). In addition to organizational commitment, two equally important factors affecting employee retention include organizational leadership and organizational culture (George, 2015).

### **Organizational Leadership**

Leadership styles and behaviors within the organization can have a significant impact on developing organizational commitment and avoiding costs associated with employee turnover (Player, Youngs, Perrone, & Grogan, 2017; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Leadership is the means by which key assets within an organization are effectively and efficiently utilized (Fiaz, Su, Ikram, & Saqib, 2017). Leadership is described as an influencing force employed to motivate individuals towards achieving

organizational goals (Zuned, 2017). A leadership style refers to the norms of behavior exhibited by an individual seeking to influence others (Pawirosumarto, Sarjana, & Gunawan, 2017). Behaviors exhibited by a leader can have an impact on organizational outcomes as well as employee outcomes, behaviors, and attitudes (Popli & Rizvi, 2016).

Effective leaders can effectuate wanted changes in employee behaviors, goals, and beliefs while developing an employee's self-esteem (Y. H. Lee, Woo, & Kim, 2017). As such, effective leaders can increase motivation among employees by increasing the opportunity to interact with leaders within the organization (Long et al., 2016). Leaders generally possess high levels of determination and can seek to impose expectations on the organization and its employees (Abdullah, Shamsuddin, & Wahab, 2015). Leadership within nonprofit organizations tends to include higher levels of flexibility, in terms of establishment of organizational goals, than that found in for-profit organizations (Hamann & Foster, 2014). This increased flexibility provides leaders with the ability to justifiably implement various courses of action in seeking to attain organizational goals (Hamann & Foster, 2014). Leadership within any organization is determined by a variety of factors as well as the situational context (Zuned, 2017). Managerial influence over employees is derived from the power or authority of management (Ugurluoglu, Aldogan, Turgut, & Ozatkan, 2018). Generally, leadership approaches will fall into one of five categories: democratic, authoritative, coercive, transactional, or transformational (Zuned, 2017).

The democratic approach to leadership is also referred to as the participative approach (Rahbi, Khalid, & Khan, 2017). A democratic approach to leadership will

focus on encouraging employee involvement and participation in decision making (Mohiuddin, 2017). To illustrate, under a democratic leadership style, decisions are made after group discussion and by majority rule (Richter, 2018). Democratic leaders invest time in understanding employees and work to maintain a high level of employee morale (Zuned, 2017). The democratic approach functions to empower employees and can be effective; albeit, this approach may lead to failure in situations where time is short and clearly defined roles are required (Rahbi et al., 2017).

Authoritative leaders seek to motivate employees to foster a shared vision (Zuned, 2017). With the authoritarian style, this is accomplished through the establishment of rules, regulations, demands, and punishments (Rahbi et al., 2017). Specifically, leaders and employees communicate utilizing a top-down approach with little encouragement of employee feedback (S. Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). Authoritative leaders assign tasks and make decisions unilaterally (Rahbi et al., 2017). The authoritarian style of leadership is used to establish and maintain control over subordinates (S. Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). Although the authoritative style can be beneficial in situations where time is of the essence, the long-term use of this leadership approach can negatively impact employee individuality and creativity (Rahbi et al., 2017).

A coercive approach to leadership will focus on aspects related to cost-cutting within the organization (Zuned, 2017). Coercive leaders are generally tasked with making difficult decisions within the organization (Zuned, 2017). Leaders selecting a transactional approach consider the task rather than the employee (Long et al., 2016). Transactional leaders are authoritative and orient themselves towards the achievement of



goals and objectives (Zuned, 2017). Employees performing well under a transactional leader may be rewarded in the form of promotions, recognition, or monetary rewards, while poor performers may be penalized (Yasir, Imran, Irshad, Mohamad, & Khan, 2016).

Transformational leaders encourage employee commitment to the organization by serving as role models promoting organizational goals (Abdullah et al., 2015).

Transformational leaders tend to provide employees with increased levels of responsibility and challenge as well as greater opportunities to provide input in decision making (Abdullah et al., 2015). Individualized consideration towards followers increases the employee's sense of loyalty and trust towards leaders and allows for the development of stronger ties to the organization (Waldman, Carter, & Hom, 2015). The development of such ties and the transformational leader's ability to calm the concerns of employees can counteract dissatisfaction among employees and can have a positive effect on employee intentions to remain with the organization (Waldman et al., 2015).

Transformational leaders are also capable of affecting culture change within the organization through realignment of organizational goals with a new vision for the organization (Abdullah et al., 2015). The transformational approach is generally employed as the most effective approach to manage change processes within an organization (Yasir et al., 2016).

Although each approach to leadership carries its own strengths and weaknesses, adhering to one approach may put the leader at a disadvantage (Zuned, 2017). Leaders within an organization have the ability to determine how they will interact with and

influence employees to best accomplish tasks and goals (S. Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). Effective leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of each approach to leadership (Ugurluoglu et al., 2018). Utilizing a combination of approaches may be best to ensure that the organization is operating effectively and performing at a high level (Zuned, 2017).

Motivation of employees is crucial to generating and implementing innovative ideas that lead to organizational success (Rahbi et al., 2017). Motivation also serves as a key component in retaining employees and improving employee performance (Krajcsák, 2018). Employee motivation can be influenced intrinsically or extrinsically (Jensen & Bro, 2018). Employees can be extrinsically motivated by external consequences such as rewards and recognition (Jensen & Bro, 2018). Leadership attempts to motivate employees may be more successful when undertaken at an individualistic level and aligned with the needs of each employee (Rahbi et al., 2017). Establishing a positive attitude can also assist leaders in motivating employees facing complex issues and/or tasks (Rahbi et al., 2017). Managers within nonprofit organizations generally have higher expectations for employees (Hamann & Foster, 2014). Employee self-motivation within nonprofit organizations tends to be high and as such, nonprofit employees tend to exert greater amounts of effort in executing job functions (Hamann & Foster, 2014).

The leadership of an organization can lead to inspiration among employees or disenchantment (Fiaz et al., 2017). Organizations rely on managers and supervisors to motivate, engage, and retain employees (Rathi & Lee, 2017). In many cases, employees leave the organization due to their relationship with managers and leadership approaches

(N. J. Thomas et al., 2017). Managers who value employee contributions and seek to enhance employee well-being are more likely to provide employees with the resources and opportunities needed to satisfy an employee's basic needs in the workplace (Rathi & Lee, 2017). Managers can increase employee job satisfaction through behaviors and practices that promote empowerment and self-determination (S. Kim & Fernandez, 2017).

Not all employees leaving an organization do so due to the relationship with management (N. J. Thomas et al., 2017). In instances where management is not the cause of an employee's decision to leave, the cause is generally due to departmental or company-wide issues that lead the employee to want to leave the organization as a whole (N. J. Thomas et al., 2017). Although altering the departmental or company-wide issues that comprise an organization's culture takes time, managers can serve as the primary catalysts for such changes (Abdullah et al., 2015). Leaders within the organization serve as the core of the organization's culture (Hurst & Hurst, 2016).

### **Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture can be defined as the long-standing values that have been implemented into the day-to-day activities of the organization to drive the motivation and performance of employees (Majid, Basri, Nopita, & Fahlevi, 2016). Culture is unique within each organization and can be identified, analyzed, and attributed to a variety of organizational outputs (Whelan, 2016). Organizational culture is integral to attracting and maintaining talent within the organization (Saadat & Eskandari, 2016).

Organizational culture can be said to drive organizational commitment (Abdullah et al., 2015). Researchers have found that as organizational culture improves organizational commitment increases (Abdullah et al., 2015; Mitić, Vukonjanski, Terek, Gligorović, & Zorić, 2016). Culture can affect the overall success of the organization as well as impact the success of employees (Jablonowski, 2017). Employees experiencing stressful work environments may have a negative impact on the work experience of other employees within the same environment (Diebig, Poethke, & Rowold, 2017). The culture of an organization has also been found to have a significant effect on the performance of an employee (Kontoghiorghes, 2016).

The culture of an organization includes the tangible aspects of the work environment as well as the interactions between employees (Rahbi et al., 2017). The size of the organization, structure, ideologies, and hierarchy of authority all contribute to the behavioral expectations within the organization (Cronley & Kim, 2017). The cultural dynamics created by these elements form the system of operations within the organization and play a critical role in the promotion of innovation, communication, feedback, and learning (Rahbi et al., 2017).

Generally, organizational cultures can be categorized as either prepared, unprepared, or contra-prepared (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). Organizational cultures within the prepared category have the ability to rapidly adapt to change (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). Organizational culture is said to be strong when the culture reflects the goals and values of management and is shared by a majority of employees (Whelan, 2016). Thus, prepared organizational cultures can maintain high performing organizations due to the

alignment between the organization's values, vision, and mission, which is understood and adopted by employees (Hurst & Hurst, 2016).

Prepared organizational cultures generally have strong leadership with skills and behaviors supporting the organizational culture (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). The performance of an organization can be positively affected by the alignment between the beliefs of leadership and actual practices within the organization (Gochhayat, Girl, & Suar, 2017). A culture can be made stronger with widespread employee involvement in the procedures, customs, and practices of the organization (Gochhayat et al., 2017). Prepared organizations building strong cultures may also experience increased levels of organizational effectiveness (Gochhayat et al., 2017).

Organizational cultures categorized as unprepared are reluctant to accept and adapt to change (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). Unprepared organizational cultures operate without a clear understanding of the organization's values and vision (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). Leadership within unprepared organizational cultures may require the development of skills, yet, skill growth within the organization is not emphasized (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). Employees within unprepared cultures generally focus on their individual tasks and actively seek out better employment opportunities resulting in moderate turnover rates for these organizations having an unprepared culture (Hurst & Hurst, 2016).

Cultures falling within the contra-prepared category may experience great difficulty when faced with the need to adapt to change (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). These organizational cultures focus on simply surviving through maintaining low costs (Hurst

& Hurst, 2016). Employees within contra-prepared cultures will be withdrawn and generally have a distrust of management resulting in poor employee-manager relationships (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). Increasing trust among employees requires continuous support and input from leadership (Yasir et al., 2016). Decreasing withdrawal behavior and increasing organization-oriented behavior is crucial to the development of positive relationships between an organization and its employees (Halbesleben & Tolbert, 2014). Contra-prepared organizational cultures generate high levels of employee stress and burnout (Hurst & Hurst, 2016).

Adaptability within an organization can contribute to the organization's likelihood of success (Costanza, Blacksmith, Coats, Severt, & DeCostanza, 2016). Organizational cultures having the ability to guide employee behavior and implement processes responsive to changes within the business environment may experience greater flexibility (Costanza et al., 2016). Furthermore, how effective an organization is at recruitment and retention can be determined by how well the organization adapts to changes within the business environment (Kontoghiorghes, 2016).

Ethical organizational cultures play a significant role in the overall recruitment and retention of employees (Kontoghiorghes, 2016). Ethical cultures inspire trust-based work environments and allow organizations to develop policies and procedures that are empowering and inspire employee involvement (Kontoghiorghes, 2016). Building trust within an organization is important for several reasons. To begin with, trust among employees within the organization is important to the development of employee cooperation (Halbesleben & Tolbert, 2014). Further, trust leads to improved business

processes and increases in employee commitment (Slimane, 2017). Finally, the development of trust has been shown to positively affect the overall success of an organization (Slimane, 2017).

Organizations seeking to increase employee retention should realize the role and importance of organizational culture and work to develop a culture that fosters motivation and commitment (Austen & Zacny, 2015; Saadat & Eskandari, 2016; Shimp, 2017). Organizational culture is driven by the needs and expectations of employees (Rahbi et al., 2017). Managers must fulfill their roles as leaders and work to gain an understanding of employee needs and expectations (Rahbi et al., 2017). Managers should also strive to build a culture reflective of the values sought in employees and attractive to high performing employees (Kontoghiorghes, 2016). Attention to and incorporation of employee viewpoints can serve to strengthen the resiliency and sustainability of a change in organizational culture (Price & Whiteley, 2014). Organizational cultures that foster collaboration, cohesiveness, participation, and support are more likely to increase the level of an employee's commitment to the organization (Abdullah et al., 2015).

### **Transition**

In Section 1, I provided an overview of the foundation for this study. Included in the overview are an introduction to the background on the problem, the problem statement, a purpose statement, and the nature of the problem. In the problem statement, I identified the general and specific business problem that is the focus of this study. In the purpose statement, I outline the reasons for conducting the study and what I intend to accomplish in conducting this study. The nature of the study contains a brief discussion

of the research method and design selected for this study. Following the nature of the study, I presented the central research question and interview questions. In Section 1, I also introduced the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, as well as the significance of the study. I conclude Section 1 with an in-depth review of the professional and academic literature.

Section 2 opens with a restatement of the purpose statement. Following the purpose statement, I introduce the role of the researcher, participants, the research method, research design, and population and sampling. A discussion on ethical research is presented along with a discussion on the selected data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity of the study. In Section 3, I present the findings of this study and discuss the application to professional practice as well as the implications for social change. Section 3 contains recommendations for action and further research. I also discuss reflections on my experience in completing this study and provide a concluding statement.



## Section 2: The Project

Section 2 contains an introduction to the role of the researcher, participants, the research method, research design, and population and sampling. A discussion on ethical research is also presented along with a discussion on the selected data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity of the study.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore successful strategies that nonprofit organizations' managers use to retain employees. The target population was managers in four Illinois nonprofit organizations who have implemented successful strategies for employee retention. The implications for positive social change included the potential to retain employees and impact employment stability. The findings of this study can be used to increase employment stability and may lead to less stress on employees at work and at home. Decreases in employee stress may lead to social impacts such as increases in innovation and more positive working environments.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative studies, the researcher conducting the study is the research instrument (Cope, 2015; Orange, 2016). The research process began with data collection; as the researcher, my role was to identify, gather, and organize data. Semistructured interviews were used to gather data for this study. Qualitative researchers use semistructured interviews when seeking to be in a close-up role during the data collection process (Davis, 2014). During data collection, I maintained complete focus on the

viewpoints of the study participants by accepting the information provided to me, without alteration, and by following an established interview protocol.

I also critically examined how personal biases may have impacted the data collection process. To mitigate bias, no organizations with which I am affiliated were selected to participate in this study. No prior relationship existed between me and the research topic, participants, or the research area. I was not employed by any of the nonprofit organizations identified for participation in this study and did not have any personal relationship with study participants. Participants were identified through nonprofit organization websites and contacted by e-mail and/or telephone to request their participation in this study.

As the researcher, I also followed the ethical guidelines and principles established in The Belmont Report. The Belmont Report established a foundation for defining a process to conduct research and highlights the principles of justice, respect for persons, and beneficence (Adams & Miles, 2013). The researcher's role related to ethics and The Belmont Report include ensuring that potential participants have complete and accurate information to make informed decisions (Miracle, 2016). This includes providing information to the study participants prior to their participation regarding any potential harm or adverse events that may occur during or after the study (Miracle, 2016). The researcher's role also includes maintaining the confidentiality of the study participants (Miracle, 2016). Additionally, the researcher must ensure that participants are treated fairly and equitably and that no undue influence impacts the decision-making of study participants (Miracle, 2016; Yip, Han, & Sng, 2016). In complying with these principles,

I ensured that participants were provided with accurate and timely information to allow for informed decision-making. I maintained the confidentiality of study participants and treated participants fairly and equitably.

Researchers conducting qualitative studies must also mitigate researcher bias (Cope, 2015). The personal views and beliefs of the researcher can impact the data collection process, the participants, and the interpretation of the data (Orange, 2016). I mitigated bias in the present study through an interview protocol, data saturation, and member checking. I utilized an interview protocol to guide the interview process by asking each participant the same set of interview questions in the same consistent manner. Researchers utilize an interview protocol to provide a systematic framework for obtaining interview data required to address the research question (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

### **Participants**

The focus of this multiple case study was on how managers implement strategies for employee retention in nonprofit organizations. Participant selection is central to any study, and it is important to define the operational focus and identify participants that are an appropriate fit for the study (Gül & Vuran, 2015; Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). In addition, participants of case studies must have sufficient knowledge to answer the research question (Heywood, Brown, Arrowsmith, & Poppleston, 2015). The eligibility criteria for the participants included nonprofit organization managers who had successful strategies for employee retention in Illinois. Once eligible participants were identified, they were invited to voluntarily participate in semistructured interviews.

Social and professional networking sites including Facebook and LinkedIn were used to identify potential partner organizations that would likely have employees meeting the inclusion criteria. Using Facebook in social science research has the major benefit of a large number of users (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). I planned to gain access to the potential partner organizations through e-mail addresses and telephone numbers obtained from social and professional networking sites and websites of nonprofit organizations registered and located in the state of Illinois. Potential partner organizations were sent an e-mail introducing myself, the research intent, and a copy of the letter of cooperation. Once organizational approval was obtained, I invited managers to voluntarily participate in face-to-face, semistructured interviews. Potential participants were sent an e-mail introducing myself with a copy of the consent form describing the study.

I established working relationships with participants by building trust and describing the interview process. I provided informed consent forms detailing the requirements for participation, information about the study, and notice that withdrawal from the study may occur at any time. Interviews were conducted in locations convenient to the participants.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

Three research methods were considered for this study: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. The qualitative research method was selected to explore strategies nonprofit sector managers use to retain employees. The qualitative method is used by researchers

to explore and explain a phenomenon through inquiry and nonnumerical data (Bristowe, Selman, & Murtagh, 2015). In contrast, the quantitative method is used by researchers seeking to understand the relationship between a set of variables (Florczak, 2017). Mixed-methods research integrates qualitative and quantitative methods (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Mixed-methods research also requires a considerable amount of resources such as researcher knowledge of both qualitative and quantitative methods, additional time, and funding (McKim, 2015). Therefore, I selected a qualitative method, which fits with the purpose of the study because I did not intend to utilize statistical data or examine relationships between variables.

### **Research Design**

I considered three qualitative research designs: case study, phenomenology, and ethnography. I selected a multiple case study design for this study. A case study design is used by researchers to conduct fieldwork and observe behaviors in an authentic context (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2017). A case study design was best suited for this study because I observed strategies used by nonprofit managers in their natural settings. Conversely, researchers use a phenomenological design to better understand a phenomenon through the lived experience of the study participant (Kalaldeh, Shosha, Saiah, & Salameh, 2018), which did not suit the purpose of this study. Additionally, I did not choose the ethnography research design because it is used when a researcher seeks to become immersed into the world of study participants to observe behavior used in the participant's daily lives (Constantinou, Georgiou, & Perdikogianni, 2017; Krase, 2018), which was not the focus of this study.

Data saturation impacts research quality and is achieved when all information needed to answer the research question is obtained with no new themes or issues emerging (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017; Lowe, Norris, Farris, & Babbage, 2018). Data saturation can be reached by many methods including through interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I ensured data saturation by interviewing participants until the research question had been answered and no new themes emerged.

### **Population and Sampling**

Qualitative research requires sampling methods that result in small, information-rich samples (Serra, Psarra, & O'Brien, 2018). Purposeful sampling was used to select participants for this study. Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to make well-informed selections of specific cases that increase the likelihood of observing the phenomenon being explored (Duan, Bhaumik, Palinkas, & Hoagwood, 2015; Serra et al., 2018). There are 16 types of purposeful sampling designs. Researchers can use the designs to either broaden the range of differences or narrow the range to pinpoint similarities of cases selected for observation (Palinkas et al., 2015). I used criterion-i sampling with questionnaires designed to identify cases for further exploration. Criterion-i sampling is used by researchers to identify cases meeting a predetermined set of criteria (Palinkas et al., 2015).

In qualitative research, no true standards have been outlined for the assessment of sample size (Constantinou et al., 2017; Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). The common principle followed by qualitative researchers regarding sample size is that the sample should be large enough to provide clarity to the issues being explored (Malterud

et al., 2016). For multiple case studies, two to three cases have been recommended to serve as a true representation of the phenomenon being explored (Yin, 2014). Small sample sizes producing rich descriptions reduces the need to explore additional cases (Malterud et al., 2016). For this study, I selected one manager from each organization for a total of three cases, though one additional participant was identified and interviewed to reach data saturation. Data saturation is reached when no new information adding to answering the interview questions is received (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Malterud et al., 2016; Sykes, Verma, & Hancock, 2018).

Participants were limited to a specific organization type within a specified geographic location. To further narrow the population of study participants to appropriate managers experienced with employee retention, selection criteria included 5 years of experience managing a nonprofit organization. Eligible participants were required to have experience and be knowledgeable regarding the phenomenon being explored (Patton, 2015). Interviews with participants should be held in-person, in appropriate settings convenient to the participant (Nusbaum, Douglas, Damus, Paasche-Orlow, & Estrella-Luna, 2017). Thus, face-to-face interviews were held at a time and location convenient to the study participants.

### **Ethical Research**

Informed consent is required when conducting research with human participants (Perrault & Nazione, 2016). The informed consent process began with the approval of the study proposal by the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once approval was received, consent forms were sent to potential participants. A standard practice among

researchers engaging in the consent process is to demonstrate that participants have been provided information regarding the purpose of the study and the participant's role by obtaining participant signatures on printed forms (Tauri, 2017). Effective informed consent requires that the researcher communicate both the risks and benefits of participation in the study prior to obtaining consent (Nusbaum et al., 2017; Perrault & Keating, 2018). Failure to adequately convey this information can lead to ethical concerns with the informed consent process (Nusbaum et al., 2017).

Additional information that should be provided to potential participants includes a description of the data that will be collected, the purpose of collecting the data, how the data may be used, procedures for safeguarding the data, and who will be handling and held responsible for the data (Custers, 2016). Informed consent forms provided to potential participants included a description of the study, my name, and role with Walden University, the purpose of the study, and information related to the potential risks and benefits of the study. Measures used to assure that the ethical protection of participants is adequate were covered in the consent form. Participants were asked to sign consent forms by replying to an e-mail communication with the statement "I consent."

To ensure participant confidentiality, identifying information related to study participants and their organizations was withheld. In qualitative research, anonymity may not be complete, as the researcher is privy to the identity of participants (Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri, 2016). However, confidentiality can be preserved through codes that remove gender and other identifying information of the study participants (Petrova et al., 2016). To preserve the confidentiality of individuals participating in this study, codes



such as P1, P2, and P3 were used to identify participants. The confidentiality of participants was also protected through the secure storage of data collected for a period of 5 years. Secure storage included a locked file cabinet as well as a password-protected electronic file.

Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty. Withdrawal procedures for this study included verbal notice through face-to-face or telephonic communications and written notice in the form of an e-mail communication or written letter sent through the U.S. Postal Service. Data collection began upon receipt of IRB approval (approval no. 04-17-19-0581870) and completed consent forms. Monetary incentives can be useful in increasing the number of research participants (B. Kelly, Margolis, McCormack, LeBaron, & Chowdhury, 2017). A determination as to whether such incentives is ethical should be based on considerations such as the study type, level of risk involved, and time commitment required (B. Kelly et al., 2017). Prior research has not conclusively determined an amount at which monetary incentives are sufficient to increase participation rates (B. Kelly et al., 2017). However, for this study, I did not offer or provide any incentives to research participants.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The researcher conducting a qualitative study is the research instrument (Cope, 2015; Orange, 2016); thus, I was the primary data collection instrument in this study. Qualitative data collection instruments also include interviews, observation, review of documents and artifacts, and focus groups (Jiggins-Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Semistructured interviews and document collection were used as secondary data

collection methods for this study. Qualitative interviews are used to identify and describe issues involving economic or political concerns (Dowling, Lloyd, & Suchet-Pearson, 2016). Interviews also allow the researcher to gain an understanding of the experiences and interpretations of study participants (Dowling et al., 2016). The interview format can range from unstructured to structured, with semistructured interviews striking a balance between the two (Doll, 2018). Researchers use semistructured interviews to explore different themes and lines of questioning without adherence to scripted questions generally associated with structured interviews (Read, 2018). Semistructured interviews were chosen as a data collection instrument to provide flexibility in the interview process and the ability to pursue follow-up inquiries if needed. Additionally, an interview protocol was utilized for this study (see Appendix).

Reliability and validity are important aspects of any study (Cypress, 2017). Generally, reliability and validity are discussed in terms of quantitative studies, while rigor and trustworthiness are used to discuss qualitative studies (Cypress, 2017; Noble & Smith, 2015). However, the concepts of reliability and validity can be applied to both quantitative and qualitative research (Cypress, 2017). For this study, member checking and transcript review were used to enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the data collection process.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. A typed copy of the interview was provided to the participant. Each participant was provided the opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy and completeness as well as to make revisions or additions. Verbatim transcriptions of interview recordings can increase the trustworthiness of data

collected (Nusbaum et al., 2017). Equally important, member checking enhances credibility by allowing study participants to review and validate the summaries of the data collected and themes that may have arisen during the interview process (Cope, 2015).

The reliability of a study can be increased through the consistent use of procedures with all participants (Jiggins-Colorafi & Evans, 2016). To enhance the reliability of this study, interview questions remained consistent for all study participants. An interview protocol ensured the uniformity of the interview process for each study participant. The interview protocol is outlined in the Appendix and is described in the next section.

### **Data Collection Technique**

In this study, I explored strategies nonprofit sector managers use to retain employees. The use of archival records, interviews, and related documentation is acceptable for qualitative research (Britten, Garside, Pope, Frost, & Cooper, 2017; Morrison, Clement, Nestel, & Brown, 2016). Data for this study were collected through semistructured, face-to-face interviews, company documents, and archival records. Generally, interviews used to collect data are conducted in face-to-face settings to allow for the use of visual aids and the building of rapport with study participants (Block & Erskin, 2012; Yin, 2014).

The advantages of semistructured interviews include the ability of the researcher to review data for emerging themes and accuracy of participant descriptions (Noble & Smith, 2015). Documents and archival records aid in triangulating the data collected

(Turner et al., 2017). However, the use of qualitative methods can sometimes become costly and time consuming for the researcher (Gillespie, Dietz & Lockey, 2014). Moreover, a disadvantage associated with interviews includes the potential for bias on the part of the interviewee, which could result in skewed interview responses (Yin, 2014).

I did not conduct a pilot study after IRB approval. An interview protocol guided the interview process and is located in the Appendix. Potential participants were accessed through telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. No compensation was provided for participation in this study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with selected participants. Interviews were held at a time and location convenient to the participant. Participants were asked to dedicate approximately 45 minutes of their time for the interview. Prior to beginning interviews, I provided participants with an overview of the study and a signed consent form indicating that they agree to participate in the study. Interviews were audio-recorded. Before the audio recording began, participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was asked the same seven open-ended interview questions. Follow-up questions were asked as needed. I ended each interview with a summary of the member checking process and the scheduling of a follow-up interview if needed.

In addition to the interviews, I requested documents and archival records related to employee retention and turnover within selected organizations. Researchers conducting qualitative studies can sometimes obtain inaccurate impressions or misconstrue data provided by a study participant (Read, 2018). Member checking was completed to minimize the potential for misunderstanding the data interpretation. I

transcribed interviews verbatim and provided a typed summary to the interview participant for verification as to completeness and accuracy of impressions. I used the participant approved summaries to identify themes in the data collected.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Qualitative researchers should have a means of organizing and storing data collected for a study. Data collected during the research process should be secured (Sutton & Austin, 2015). All data collected for this study was securely stored on a password-encrypted flash drive. The flash drive will remain stored in a locked file cabinet located in my home office for 5 years. After 5 years, all data will be destroyed through the shredding of papers collected and wiping the data on the flash drive. Researchers must also ensure data collected remains confidential (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015). The confidentiality of the data collected in this study was maintained. I organized the data and identified participants in this study by a code, such as P1, P2, and P3. Using codes to identify research participants can assist in maintaining participant confidentiality (Petrova et al., 2016).

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is the process by which researchers review and study the data collected through various collection methods (Chowdhury, 2015). The goal of data analysis in qualitative studies is generally to describe the data and then interpret the data (Neale, 2016). Analyzing qualitative data can present challenges for the researcher (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Commonly, sorting through and coding data are the most complex aspects of conducting qualitative research (Chowdhury, 2015). Challenges of

qualitative data analysis include issues such as systematically organizing large volumes of information, using a proper data management tool, determining how data will be stored, coding the data consistently, and appropriately interpreting the data (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Researchers must also determine what data collected is worth the time and effort to analyze (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). To begin prioritizing the data, researchers can code data according to themes and topics (Vaughn & Turner, 2016).

Triangulation was used for this study. Researchers use triangulation to show consistency among the study findings by utilizing multiple sources to obtain the findings (Gibson, 2017). There are four types of triangulation: theory triangulation, data triangulation, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Yin, 2014). I selected methodological triangulation and thematic analysis to analyze the data collected in semistructured interviews with study participants. Triangulation was attained in this study through semistructured interviews, document collection, and field notes.

The first step in the data analysis process is to compile and transcribe the data (Yin, 2015). Structuring the data will provide the researcher with order to the data (Neale, 2016). Researchers should ensure that audio recordings are transcribed verbatim and with sufficient detail (Neale, 2016; Rosenthal, 2016). It is recommended that the researcher check the completed transcript against the audio recording (Rosenthal, 2016). The transcribed data should be reviewed to gain familiarity with the content (Neale, 2016). Once the researcher gains familiarity with the transcribed content, an acceptable method of data analysis can be applied (Neale, 2016). The researcher can then begin coding the data and organizing the ideas into categories. Coding data requires the

researcher to identify themes and add notes to those themes as the data is reviewed line by line (Neale, 2016). The coding process may result in overlapping codes, which can be identified by considering synonyms for existing codes (Rosenthal, 2016). I began the data analysis process by transcribing interview audio recordings verbatim. I used Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, and NVivo to organize and code the data. Coding allowed me to maintain the confidentiality of study participants by assigning code names in place of actual names of individuals and organizations. I organized the codes into overarching themes upon completing the coding process.

Themes within the data can be identified when data is organized in relation to the questions asked (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Researchers use software to assist in analyzing the data. Albeit, analytic software can be costly and may require training prior to the researchers' proper use (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). I reviewed the interview question responses question by question. Reviewing responses question by question allowed for the identification of themes within the data (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). I then reviewed the themes to determine whether themes could be combined or separated out prior to naming the themes. Once themes are identified researchers can develop a coding dictionary covering identified codes and corresponding definitions (Constantinou et al., 2017; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). NVivo is software qualitative researchers can use to assist in analyzing the content of data (DeFranco & Laplante, 2017). I used the NVivo software for this study to assist me in identifying themes and coding the data collected.

Before beginning to interpret the data, the researcher must be sure to have developed an understanding of the topics and themes identified in the data (Neale, 2016).

Researchers code the data and can then begin to analyze the coded data for patterns and differences (Neale, 2016). Conclusions based on the findings from the data analysis can then be made and compared and contrasted with the existing literature (Yin, 2015).

### **Reliability and Validity**

In qualitative research, validity refers to the question of whether the processes, data, and tools used were appropriate for the study (Gibson, 2017; Leung, 2015).

Researchers must be sure to address the reliability and validity of a study during the design phase, analysis phase, and in assessing the quality of the study (Cypress, 2017).

In assessing the quality of qualitative research four criteria are generally used: dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Constantinou et al., 2017).

#### **Reliability**

For qualitative studies, dependability serves as the equivalent to reliability assessed in quantitative studies (Constantinou et al., 2017). Ensuring dependability requires the researcher to describe all aspects of the study in sufficient detail to allow other researchers to replicate the study (Constantinou et al., 2017). Researchers can achieve dependability by maintaining consistent procedures with all study participants and across all methods used (Jiggins-Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Additionally, reaching data saturation can assist in assuring the dependability of the study findings (Cypress, 2017). I addressed dependability in this study by adhering to the same procedures for each study participant and reaching data saturation. Data saturation was achieved when the collection of additional information yielded no new themes or information.



Procedures for this study were documented, including procedures for interviewing participants and interview notes. I asked the study participants the same interview questions in the same manner. I also used member checking and transcript review to increase the dependability of the study results. This was accomplished by asking participants to review their interview transcripts for accuracy. I shared my interpretation of data collected with the study participants and provided the opportunity for participants to make corrections and validate my interpretations.

### **Validity**

In qualitative studies, credibility refers to the degree to which the research findings truly reflect reality (Constantinou et al., 2017; Cypress, 2017). Establishing credibility requires the researcher to use context-rich and thick descriptions of the phenomenon being explored (Jiggins-Colorafi & Evans, 2016). The use of member checking, triangulation, and an interview protocol can enhance credibility (Cypress, 2017). I ensured credibility in this study by utilizing an interview protocol (see Appendix), member checking, and triangulation. To accomplish this, I recorded each interview. I shared interview summaries and data interpretations with study participants and allowed for any corrections that may have been needed. I applied data triangulation through secondary sources such as archival records and documents from participating organizations. I collected documents and records, such as organizational policies and procedures. Archival records and documents provide an acceptable means of corroborating data collected from primary sources in qualitative case studies (Yin, 2014).

Assessing the transferability of a qualitative study allows for a determination as to whether the results of the study can be transferred to similar cases (Constantinou et al., 2017). Transferability requires that the researcher describe the phenomenon being explored and the context in which the case was explored in sufficient detail to allow for the conclusion that results of the study can be safely applied to other cases and contexts (Constantinou et al., 2017). The transferability of the study results can also be enhanced through purposive sampling (Cypress, 2017). The transferability of the results of this study may have been impacted by the geographic limitations of the study. To address transferability, I used purposive sampling and the provision of sufficient detail in describing the case being explored. I accomplished this by concisely detailing the population being explored, participant selection, and geographic boundaries of the study.

Researchers can achieve confirmability by ensuring that the study results reflect the thoughts and experiences of study participants and not those of the researcher (Jiggins-Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Creating a detailed audit trail and reporting on potential researcher bias can also assist in ensuring confirmability (Jiggins-Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Although researcher bias cannot be completely reduced, I mitigated my personal bias in this study through an interview protocol and consistency in the interview process. I addressed confirmability through member checking. To accomplish this, my interpretations of the interview data collected were reviewed by each participant for accuracy and completeness. I also achieved confirmability in this study through the Walden University doctoral study review process, in which a committee of no less than three independent individuals reviewed the study for neutrality and relevance.

Researchers use the term data saturation to refer to the point at which no additional data is needed (Constantinou et al., 2017). Data is saturated when new themes or information relating to the research question cease to arise from the raw data collected (Constantinou et al., 2017). Reaching data saturation is an indication that the depth of research is sufficient for analysis and description (Constantinou et al., 2017). I ensured data saturation in this study by continuing to interview nonprofit managers until no new information or themes arose.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, I discussed my role as the researcher and described the eligibility requirements for study participants. I provided a detailed explanation of the research methods and design and discussed the scope of the study. Section 2 includes information as to how ethical standards were upheld during the research process. I also discussed the instruments that were used for data collection and the process of collecting the data. Section 2 covers information on how the data was organized and analyzed and closes with a detailed discussion on assessing the quality of the research findings. Section 3 begins with a summary of the findings. In Section 3, I also discuss the application of the study findings to professional practice as well as implications for social change and recommendations for action. I conclude section 3 with recommendations for further research, my reflections, and my conclusions.

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

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore successful strategies that nonprofit organizations' managers use to retain employees. The target population was managers in four Illinois nonprofit organizations who have implemented successful strategies for employee retention. The data came from semistructured, face-to-face interviews, company documents, and archival records. Interviews were conducted at a date and time convenient for each study participant. Each interview was audio-recorded; interviews were transcribed verbatim, and member checking was conducted to minimize the potential for misinterpreting the data. I used NVivo 12 software to assist in organizing and coding the data. The data analysis process revealed three themes: employee fit, workplace culture, and employee feedback.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The research question for this study was, "What strategies do nonprofit sector managers use to retain employees?" Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory served as the foundation for this study, which helped in exploring strategies utilized by nonprofit leaders to retain employees. Motivation-hygiene theory suggests that an employee's level of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is produced by different work factors that can determine an employee's intent to leave or stay in a current position such as motivation factors (e.g., recognition of achievement, work itself, growth) and hygiene factors (coworkers, salary, supervision; Darmody & Smyth, 2016; Grigaliunas & Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg, 1974, 1987). The theory is premised on the idea that sources providing

for work satisfaction differ from sources providing for dissatisfaction (Mateia & Abrudana, 2016). Furthermore, although hygiene factors are not responsible for motivating employees, the lack of hygiene factors may contribute to job dissatisfaction (Darmody & Smyth, 2016).

After conducting the research and completing data analysis, I concluded that the themes identified align with the motivation-hygiene theory. The findings also support the literature on effective employee retention efforts. Identified themes include employee fit (emerged 19 times in interviews), workplace culture (emerged 28 times in interviews), and employee feedback (emerged 21 times in interviews). Employee fit considers motivators such as the individuals' desire for career advancement and personal growth. Employees are provided opportunities to further ingrain themselves in the work they do, allowing for a sense of personal fulfillment. The theme of workplace culture can fall within hygiene factors or serve as a motivator. The findings of this study suggest that workplace culture may serve as a motivator; workplace culture supportive of employee needs can provide a sense of responsibility and personal growth. All the participants indicated that employee feedback allowed the organization to identify and address the needs of employees. By identifying employee needs, managers can gain a better understanding of how employees will respond to various motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators and hygiene factors will differ based on the current career level of employees (H. Lee, 2019). Study participants indicated that recognition and identification of individual motivations and understanding employee concerns might provide the participating organizations with data allowing for a more tailored approach to retention.

The findings of this study indicated that the identified strategies are effective methods of increasing employee retention within the participating organizations. The study results also indicated that organizations successful in employee retention identify the motivators and hygiene factors impacting employees and use the information to tailor their retention efforts. Therefore, I concluded that identification and consideration of motivators and hygiene factors affect employee retention within nonprofit organizations.

### **Theme 1: Employee Fit**

The first theme to emerge from the analyzed data was employee fit. All four study participants discussed the importance and need for employee-job fit. All the participants inferred that the first step in employee retention is hiring the right person. Organizations seek to hire employees who will fit the work to be done and then retain these employees once onboard (Hur & Hawley, 2019). P2 shared,

We look at job interviews as a very sort of two-way street. It's not just us interviewing a potential applicant; it's them interviewing us and really getting a sense of whether they will fit in here. We give them as much information as we can and are honest about what the opportunities and challenges of working at the organization are like.

P1 also stated that retention within the organization is in part due to the organization's mission. P1 shared that employees within the organization develop a sense of expertise within their field, which helps employees build their view of themselves. In discussing the importance of finding employees who will commit to the organization, P3 stated, "It has been a struggle to find people because when you're

thinking long term, is this person going to stay here for the long term? You never know. What is their timeframe? It is very difficult to know.”

The findings indicated that retention efforts are more successful when the employee is a good fit for the work environment. Employees may perform better when the work aligns with the individual’s skills and abilities (Hur & Hawley, 2019). Ensuring that prospective employees will fit well within the organization was revealed to be a high priority consideration for a nonprofit organization’s employee retention efforts. P1 shared,

A lot of it starts with just picking the right people. I find that when I pick the right people they tend to stay longer and have more of a commitment to the organization, and they’re not just here. I think that when selecting people, it is not just looking at skillset, but also why he/she wants this.

P4 also detailed the importance of identifying and retaining employees who fit well within the work environment. P4 stated, “We really try hard to make sure we hire people that fit well. We don’t want to lose them. We want to help them learn and grow...”

## **Theme 2: Workplace Culture**

The second theme to emerge from the analyzed data was workplace culture. All four study participants discussed the importance of maintaining a workplace culture that promotes flexibility and trust; managers who are flexible and trust their staff have high levels of employee retention. Generally, the nonprofit sector is less competitive in terms of providing extrinsic motivators (Fowler & Birdsall (2019). Although this may be true, a flexible and supportive workplace culture may provide for greater intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivators are inherent in the work and the organization (Fowler & Birdsall (2019). The results of the study indicated that a flexible and supportive workplace culture empowers managers to more directly address employee needs and provide additional opportunities for personal development and growth. Within the participating nonprofit organizations, both managers and employees are receptive to change and able to adapt. P2 shared,

Employees apply their own pressure and need to be responsible for their own actions. To the authority and autonomy, I'm not going to tell employees how to do their job, but the expectation is that they are going to do their job. So long as they are doing that, we're all fine.

P3 stated,

There is a great deal of flexibility offered within the organization. If somebody wants to work from home one day for whatever reason, they could do that.

During the summer we have summer hours. Employees get every other Friday off, which is very appealing, especially for employees who have small children. I try to be as accommodating as possible.

Upon receiving feedback from employees, managers can better identify the needs of employees at the group level as well as at the individual level. An organization's approach to employee retention can then be better tailored to address those specific needs. P2 shared that work-life balance is a nuanced thing for every person. P3 shared the same sentiment: "Employees have to balance their personal life and their family life



with the job.” P2 provided examples of how needs may be identified and addressed within the organization:

I’m a very firm believer that work and personal life are not separate things. If you are raising a child and that child is sick, that’s going to have an impact on your work. I don’t expect that it wouldn’t or shouldn’t. I think that’s an inhuman and unrealistic expectation. It’s really just trying to live as much as I can in a fluid environment and be very forthright about what my needs and expectations are and understanding what my employees’ needs and expectations are.

P4 also focused on employee needs and shared that the organization works to ensure employees are challenged and learning, and that management is doing everything it can to keep that going. P4 assesses the employee population to determine the needs of employees and suitable retention strategies based on generational differences. P4 stated, “We’ve got two sides of the curve. On the one hand, the older folks, you’ve got caregivers. We have to be open and cognizant of what their needs are. Then you’ve got millennials on the other hand.” P4 added, “Millennials want a lot of constructive feedback . . . their whole focus, which we’ve heard a lot here, is they want to know how to get to the next level. They want to know what’s next.”

**Organizational size.** Within workplace culture, the subtheme of organizational size emerged. This subtheme emerged upon a discussion of the organizational approach to providing promotional opportunities within the organization. Based on the findings,

organization size may impact hygiene factors, such as salary and status, in that smaller organizations generally do not have many opportunities for advancement. Several of the study participants indicated that smaller organizations with high rates of employee retention do not have many opportunities available for staff to advance into managerial positions. P3 stated, “I will never try to stop an employee from leaving. In part because we are very small. So, the potential for upward mobility is very limited here.” P1 shared that being a smaller organization has been one of the bigger challenges, especially in terms of upward mobility within the organization.

Although organization size can serve as a hygiene factor, the workplace culture can assist in creating motivators within smaller nonprofit organizations. Managers who promote inclusive and positive workplace cultures that support employees will see increased levels of employee job satisfaction (Knapp, Smith, & Sprinkle, 2017). In discussing the organization’s ability to solicit feedback from employees, the smaller organization size also appeared to be an advantage for the study participants. P3 shared, “They love the fact that we’re very small. That there is not a lot of bureaucracy.” P4 shared that as a smaller organization, there is more of an ability to solicit feedback from employees. P4 stated, “We get a lot of feedback. Our folks are very vocal, which is great. We don’t right now formally poll them. But we’re still small enough that we do get out and talk to each of them.”

### **Theme 3: Employee Feedback**

The third theme to emerge from the analyzed data was employee feedback. All four study participants discussed the importance of soliciting and providing employee

feedback. All four study participants inferred that employee feedback is integral to understanding employee concerns and performance trends and assessing how well management is performing in identifying, assessing, and responding to employee needs. The findings indicated that smaller organizations lack formalized policies on employee retention. As such, soliciting and tracking employee feedback has served as the primary means for gauging the level of employee satisfaction and intention to stay. P4 indicated that the data collected from employees is what determines whether retention efforts are effective. The findings indicated that in soliciting employee feedback, managers successful in retaining employees generally go beyond basic workflow conversations and focus on gauging employee satisfaction and development. In discussing how managers obtain feedback, P4 indicated that the focus is not on workflow:

It's more about how I can help you? How can I help you thrive? What do you need to learn? Do you need to go to a course? Is there professional development on the whole that we need? What is it?

P4 also indicated that focus groups are employed as a means to ensure consistency and equal opportunity for employee participation. P3 regularly speaks with staff to determine if employees feel that they are sufficiently supported. P1 stressed the importance of employing an open-door policy:

I think it is important to keep people in the loop and to have an open-door policy, so people come in and chat whenever they want, and about anything. I think people do like to come in and talk strategy or things like that. So, you have to keep that open.

P1 indicated that providing information to employees is just as important as receiving information from employees. P1 shared that employees want to be kept informed: “One of the things about nonprofits is that it’s important that people always know the why. Then they can then understand.”

All study participants emphasized the importance of providing each employee with the opportunity to express their ideas, concerns, and goals. Managers who solicit employee feedback regularly and encourage open-door policies can respond to employee feedback more directly and effectively. Similarly, employees are more likely to be engaged when they feel that their work is meaningful and their voice is valued (Williams & Bland, 2019). P4 stated that employee feedback can be used to better understand employee goals as well as to provide management with insight into how the organization as a whole can improve. Participants also identified the importance of using employee feedback to tailor managements approach to retention efforts. Employee feedback was shown to be critical to understanding what motivates individual employees. P1 and P4 shared that some generational groups were identified to require more managerial feedback than others. P4 shared that employee feedback assisted in identifying tailored approaches to soliciting and providing feedback within generational groups.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The results of this study revealed strategies that may assist nonprofit organizations in retaining employees. The findings are relevant to improved business practice as many nonprofit organizations struggle to retain employees. The results of this study may help organizational leaders with various strategies that may improve employee

retention. Nonprofit sector managers may benefit from the study results by utilizing the findings in developing and implementing strategies to retain employees. Successful strategies identified in this study focused on workplace culture and managements receptiveness to employee voiced concerns. The results of the study indicated the importance of ensuring a proper person-job fit and maintaining flexibility in addressing employee desires to take on additional roles or a different role within the organization. The retention of employees may lead to a competitive advantage as institutional knowledge and experience are retained when employees remain with the organization.

Organization size may also factor into the organization's development of retention strategies. The findings of this study indicated that smaller nonprofit organizations are more informal with retention strategies and seem to develop workplace cultures in which management maintains closer connections with employees. Managers of smaller nonprofit organizations may feel that less formality leads to a workplace culture that promotes the ability of employees to voice concerns and provide suggestions. The findings also suggest that larger nonprofit organizations are more likely to have a formalized system of gauging the effectiveness of retention strategies and tracking employee feedback. From this study, individual managers may see opportunities to implement new strategies for employee retention. The findings of this study may also provide managers in nonprofit organizations with a framework for creating work environments that support employee retention and provide for happier employees, clients, and stakeholders.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Social change can be described as the promotion of engagement to assist underserved and disadvantaged groups, which extends beyond the interests of immediate family and friends (E. Thomas, McGarty, Stuart, Smith, & Bourgeois, 2019). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore successful strategies that managers of nonprofit organizations use to retain employees. The target population was managers in four Illinois nonprofit organizations who have implemented successful strategies for employee retention. The implications for positive social change included the potential to retain employees and positively impact employment stability. The findings of this study can be used to increase employment stability and may lead to less stress on employees at work and at home. Decreases in employee stress may lead to social impacts such as increases in innovation and more positive working environments.

The ability of nonprofit organizations to retain employees is critical for such organizations to continue operating and provide services. Therefore, organizations may benefit from improved retention strategies as institutional knowledge will be retained, and customer satisfaction potentially improved. Communities may also see improvements in the form of increased employment stability and the continuation of essential services provided by community nonprofit organizations. This may lead to lower unemployment rates within the communities the organizations serve and decreased levels of stress on families assisted by the organizations. In addition, nonprofit organizations can provide a better environment for their employees and encourage employee engagement if employees feel that they are trusted, and their opinions are

valued. Hence, the implementation of the strategies identified in this study can serve as a tool for nonprofit organizations to affect social change by increasing employee morale, which can lead to positive changes in the services organizations provide to the public.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The findings from this study may be beneficial for nonprofit sector managers seeking to develop more effective strategies for employee retention. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that nonprofit organizations focus on creating a culture of open and honest communication. Such a workplace culture will promote communication and allow managers to better identify and address the needs of employees through the formation of formal or informal processes providing for sufficient amounts of flexibility and in-depth, continuous solicitation of employee feedback.

#### **Recommendation 1: Feedback Process**

The first recommendation is that a common process is developed for staff to engage in feedback and provide input on all aspects of the work itself and how the employees see their position within the organization. It is recommended that managers within nonprofit organizations take additional steps in soliciting employee feedback to better understand their employee base across generational lines. Only 2 of the participating organizations identified either a formal or informal means of tracking generational differences among their employee base. Of those organizations that do track the information, both indicated that the information was helpful in employee retention efforts. Notably, retention rates have been shown to vary depending upon generational factors and the career level of employees (X. Lee, Yang, & Li, 2017). Managers can

better address employee needs and develop strategies to retain employees when detailed information about the organization's employee base is available.

### **Recommendation 2: Managerial Training**

The second recommendation is that managerial training is provided. Providing training to managers can assist in developing managerial capacity and knowledge (Y.J. Lee & Suh, 2018). Also, managerial training can lead to improvements in accountability and organizational effectiveness (Seidle, Fernandez, & Perry, 2016). Training should be provided to assist managers in developing stronger interviewing skills to identify candidates who may be a better fit for the organization. Likewise, training can also be provided to assist managers in understanding how to better motivate and encourage employees. The results of this study will be disseminated by sharing the findings with the study participants. The results will also be disseminated through publication in the ProQuest dissertation database and business-related forums.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Further research may focus on addressing the limitations identified in this study. Future researchers may consider a larger participant pool with a more diverse group of nonprofit organizations in terms of geographic location and organization size. The study participants were limited to managers of nonprofit organizations. Future research into employee retention efforts of nonprofit organizations may also benefit from including employees in the data collection process to gain further insight into understanding why employees leave an organization. Future researchers may expand on the results of this



study by delving further into the needs specific to the different generations in the workplace, their motivations, and targeted retention efforts pertaining to these groups.

### **Reflections**

My journey through the doctoral program has been enlightening and inspiring. I have completed several degree programs, and yet, I did not anticipate the time commitment and rigor involved in completing a doctorate program. This journey has helped me develop a stronger sense of self-motivation and has provided the opportunity for personal reflection on how I plan to use the knowledge I have gained, the title I will earn, and the connections I have made, to make positive impacts in society. This journey has sparked an interest in continuing the research process. I hope to use the skills I have developed through the Doctorate in Business Administration program to continue my research into areas that guide organizations serving underserved and disadvantaged populations.

In approaching and beginning the doctoral study process, I had the preconceived idea that formalized retention strategies were necessary for successful employee retention within nonprofit organizations. As such, I expected participants to have specific and identified strategies for employee retention. The research process and the research results have provided data that indicates the formalization of retention policies is not as important as the data and consideration behind the policy. I am thankful to the participants for providing this insight and serving as a model for nonprofit organizations that may be struggling with employee retention efforts.

## **Conclusion**

Employees serve as one of the most valuable resources and can provide the organization with a competitive advantage (Narayanan, Rajithakumar, & Menon, 2019). The purpose of this study was to explore the successful strategies nonprofit sector managers use to retain their employees. The results of this study indicated that nonprofit sector managers should devote time and resources to understand the needs of employees, what motivates them, and how to engage them. The results also suggest that it is important to create a workplace culture that emphasizes mutual respect and positivity.

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## Appendix: Interview Protocol

**Interview Topic:** Strategies for Employee Retention in Nonprofit Organizations

1. The interview will begin with a greeting, personal introductions, and a brief overview of the study.
2. Participants will have received the consent form prior to the interview.
3. I will confirm that the participant read and understood the consent form and ask if there are any questions pertaining to the study.
4. I will remind the participant that he/she can withdraw from the study at any time.
5. I will inform the participant that recording will begin.
6. I will start the recording device.
7. I will state the date, time, location, and interview number.
8. I will identify the participant by a coded name.
9. I will begin asking interview questions 1-7 as well as any follow-up questions.
10. I will end the interview by thanking the participant.
11. I will discuss the member checking process and schedule a date and time for a follow-up interview if needed.
12. The interview will last no more than 45 minutes.