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Leadership Strategies for Improving Employee Retention in the Fast Food Industry

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2020

Abstract

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by

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MS, University of South Alabama, 2007

BS, University of Southern Mississippi, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The turnover of skilled employees in the fast food industry results in significant yearly financial losses to organizations across the United States. Applying the findings in this study may help business leaders improve best practices in fast food industries in order to minimize employee turnover. Grounded in the expectancy motivation theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies 5 transformational business leaders in southern Mississippi used to improve employee retention in a fast food restaurant. Data collection included semistructured face-to-face interviews and an assessment of the company's documents (e.g., employee handbook, training manual, and vision and mission statements). Using Yin's 5 steps of analysis led to three central themes: communication, positive reinforcement, and training. A key recommendation for business leaders in the fast food industry is to cultivate a work setting that fosters open communication. The implications for positive social change include increasing business leaders' understanding of retention strategies, which could enhance the overall success of their organization and stabilize the local community by reducing unemployment rates.

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Dedication

This doctoral research study is dedicated to my parents and siblings. The four of you have been my rock through this journey. I will be forever thankful for your support and love as I have worked hard to become Dr. Stallworth. I am extremely blessed and know that all things are possible through God, who strengthens me.

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First, I acknowledge my family who supported me in the completion of my educational goals. To my parents, Thomas and Mary Stallworth, Sr., this is for you. I learned how to be persistent and determined from you. I hope I have made you proud. To my sister, LaTanya Stallworth-Ali, and brother, Thomas Stallworth, Jr., thank you for continuously encouraging me to accomplish this goal. To my dear friend Sikini Knight, I will be forever grateful for our friendship and your drive and devotion to keep me inspired through this doctoral program.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Approximately 90% of business leaders believe employee engagement can improve productivity and organizational effectiveness in the workplace (Joyner, 2015). Indeed, the survival of an organization is contingent upon business leaders' ability to retain productive employees (Jadon & Upadhyay, 2018). Effective employees enhance organizational sustainability, which results in profitability and achievement of the stakeholders' expectations (Jadon & Upadhyay, 2018). Yet, business leaders continue to struggle with predicting and managing employee turnover, according to researchers (Peretz, Levi, & Fried, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Businesses profit from the use of strategies that increase retention and recruitment of knowledgeable employees (Sayer, Barriball, Bliss, Bakhshi, & While, 2015). However, according to Joyner (2015), only 25% of business leaders in the United States implement strategies to decrease employee disengagement in the workplace.

Employee engagement has been one of the biggest issues in the fast food industry and has resulted in high levels of employee turnover (Bradley, Elenis, Hoyer, Martin, & Waller, 2017). Turnover intention is inevitable in the lifespan of an employee; therefore, employee retention is one of the main parameters used to measure the health of any organization (Alhamwan & Mat, 2015). Given the importance of retaining knowledge workers and talents in the 21st century, identifying the factors that influence employee engagement can benefit organizations significantly (Mustamil, Yazdi, Syeh, & Ali, 2014). For this qualitative single case study, the goal was to identify the relevance of the expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) to strategies some business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees. The population for this study was transformational business leaders who worked at a fast food restaurant chain located in Southern Mississippi. I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews to obtain data from the participants. To analyze the data collected and group the information into themes, I used NVivo12. The primary themes that emerged from data analysis included employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Background of the Problem

A tactical objective for most human resource managers is retaining skilled employees (Vivek & Satyanarayana, 2016). Employees are one of the most fundamental assets to organizations (Alkahtani, 2015). Even though organizational leaders establish and define retention strategies to improve their organizations' competitive advantage and productivity, the employees of those organizations are accountable for effectively executing such strategies (Appiah-Adu & Amoako, 2016). When employers invest, train, and provide their employees with adequate tools to do their job, the expectation is for employees to develop organizational commitment and contribute to promoting business objectives (Wilton, 2016).

The fluctuations of employee turnover and retention can cause disruptions in operations, work team dynamics, and unit performance. Employee turnover costs can contribute to 20% of an employee's salary or more for a specialized or high-level employee (Faulk & Hicks, 2015). Since the 1970s, organizational leaders have devoted their energies to understanding the phenomenon of voluntary employee turnover (Wen & Liu, 2015). The loss of high-performing employees due to business leaders' ineffective leadership and managerial practices negatively affected the organizational health of approximately 89% of businesses in the United States, according to Soundarapandiyan and Ganesh (2015). Developing strategies to retain high-performing employees is thus critical for sustaining organizational health.

Problem Statement

Roche, Duffield, Homer, Buchan, and Dimitrelis (2015) indicated businesses in the U.S. spend approximately $11 billion each year to hire and train employees due to voluntary employee turnover. In 2016, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a 3.4% increase from 2015 in voluntary employee turnover, which resulted in financial losses to organizations across the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). The general business problem is that when an organization loses a skilled employee, the economic profitability of the organization is impeded (Puangyoykeaw & Nishide, 2015). The specific business problem is that some business leaders do not have adequate retention strategies in place to retain skilled employees (Vivek & Satyanarayana, 2016).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies some business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees. The specific population for this study was transformational business leaders at one Southern Mississippi fast food restaurant who have retained skilled employees for more than 5 years. The results of the study may contribute to enhancing organizational sustainability and increasing organizational growth and profitability in the food industry, which in turn may lead to a source of income, food for consumers, and job opportunities in rural communities.

Nature of the Study

Researchers can select from three research methods when conducting a study: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. I selected the qualitative method to identify and explore the retention strategies business leaders use to retain employees in private sector organizations. The qualitative research method allows researchers to study an individual, group, business, or situation to obtain new insight (Wilkinson, Podlewska, & Sakel, 2016). Researchers may use a qualitative method to explore the underlying reasons for a problem (Yin, 2015). A quantitative method is more rigorous than a qualitative method and suitable when the researcher gathers numeric data to examine problems (Yin, 2015). In quantitative studies, the researcher strives to be detached from the data and primarily focuses on generalizing results from a sample of a target population to the broader study population (Brockington, 2014). A mixed-methods approach is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research designs, which allows the researcher to obtain the information needed to address a theoretical perspective at various levels (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Spencer, Ritchie, O'Connor, Morrell, & Ormston, 2014). The intent of this study was to explore retention strategies business leaders use to retain employees rather than measure variables numerically; as such, neither a quantitative nor a mixed-methods approach was appropriate for this study.

I considered three research designs to explore retention strategies business leaders use to retain employees in the fast food industry: (a) single case study, (b) narrative design, (c) and phenomenology. A single case study involves one individual or a small number of individuals experiencing a similar event (Yin, 2015). Researchers employ single case study designs to study complex phenomena within their contexts (Yin, 2015). According to Hyett, Kenny, and Deckson-Swift (2014), narrative researchers seek to collect stories from group conversations and documents as the primary source of data to define what is taking place. Researchers use the phenomenological approach to examine participants' worldviews based on lived experiences (Hyett et al., 2014). The narrative inquiry and phenomenological approaches were not appropriate for researching this specific business problem. The focus of the study was not on exploring the experiences of humans related to the study phenomenon or determining the meanings of these experiences; participants' stories about their life were also not an object of interest Because of my interest in exploring the study phenomenon within its context, I determined that a case study would be the best design for the study.

Research Question

What retention strategies do business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees?

Interview Questions

1. What factors do you believe have led to employees leaving the fast food industry?
2. How have you addressed those factors?
3. What retention strategies and leadership characteristics do you use that are most effective in retaining skilled employees?

4. How do you evaluate the employees' level of job satisfaction, and how do you use that evaluation to improve employee retention?
5. What improvements have you witnessed in reducing voluntary employee turnover because of your efforts?
6. What additional information would you like to share about retention strategies you use to retain skilled employees?

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the expectancy motivation theory. Vroom (1964) established the expectancy motivation theory in 1964 to describe how individuals' actions lead them to act or behave in a specific way. According to expectancy motivation theory, individuals are inspired if they can envision the outcome or the goal of their efforts (Nimri, Bdair, & Bitar, 2015). Vroom identified three beliefs that influence the relationship between people's behavior at work and their goals: (a) expectancy, the alleged likelihood that an individual's efforts will lead to employee performance through self-efficacy and perceived control; (b) instrumentality, a reflection of extrinsic motivation which influences an individual's performance; and (c) valence, the individual's value of the anticipated reward (Sigaard & Skov, 2015). I used expectancy motivation theory to guide my data collection and analysis.

Operational Definitions

Expectancy: The likelihood that a certain effort will lead to the desired outcome (Jovanovic, Bozilovic, & Ekonomika, 2017).

Instrumentality: The degree to which a first-level outcome will lead an individual to a desired second-level outcome (Jovanovic et al., 2017).

*Job satisfaction***:** Employees' general affective evaluation of their job (Daley, 2017).

*Motivation***:** The set of forces that cause people to behave in certain ways (Chen, Zhou, & Klyverz, 2019).

Organizational commitment: The employee's willingness to sacrifice for their organization in a positive manner. (Stefanovska & Mitrevski, 2017).

Transformational leadership: A style of leadership in which leaders encourage their employees to go further than the standard expectations by exceeding individual beliefs for the advantage of the organization (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Valence: The strong point of an individual's preference for a specific output (Jovanovic et al., 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

An assumption is a statement the researcher believes to be true without obtaining supporting evidence to support its existence (Hopwood, 2014). The first assumption I had was that retention strategies used by business leaders continue to be a critical component of private sector organizations in Southern Mississippi. The second assumption was that the population of business leaders in this study was appropriate for examining common themes involving the employee retention strategies in private sector organizations. The third assumption for this study was that a qualitative, single case study approach was the best research design. The fourth assumption was that the participants would answer each interview question openly and honestly.

Limitations

Limitations are potential flaws exposed by the researcher that are beyond the researcher’s control and might limit the results of the study (Hopwood, 2014). I identified five limitations in the study. First, I selected a small sample of five participants, which limits the generalizability of results to a larger population (Yin, 2015). Second, the participants might not have answered the interview questions thoroughly and honestly. They may also have been constrained in responding to interview questions by the privacy policies of their organization. Third, the results of the study revealed the views of the managers interviewed and not those of other managers on the organization’s leadership team in other departments within the organization. Fourth, the participants’ leadership experience varied, which limited the research results because some of the business leaders were not as experienced as others, implementing retention strategies. Fifth, my skills and capabilities as the interviewer may have limited the depth and richness of the information collected. According to Yin (2015), the researcher is the main tool for data collection in a case study and the researcher’s experience and knowledge influence the researcher’s interpretation of data.

Delimitations

Delimitations are restrictions used to limit the scope of research (Hopwood, 2014). The boundaries for this study evolved around three delimitations. First, I analyzed one industry sector, the fast food industry. Second, I purposively selected five managers who (a) had been employed for a minimum of 5 years; (b) had experience implementing retention strategies; (c) were at least 18 years of age or older; and (d) either possessed a high school diploma, a general educational development diploma (GED), or a 4-year college degree. Third, the organization was located in Southern Mississippi.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The outcome of this study may be valuable to business leaders because the cost to replace a valued employee can be as high as twice the employee’s annual salary (Yang, Wan, & Fu, 2013). The implementation of effective retention strategies is critical to an organization’s ability to decrease costs, improve organizational performance, and increase job satisfaction (Park & Shaw, 2013). The results of the study may assist other business leaders in developing and implementing effective retention strategies by contributing a greater understanding of which strategies work to decrease voluntary turnover and replacement costs. Additionally, the results of this study may enhance business leaders’ knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the impact that voluntary turnover has on organizational performance and job satisfaction.

Increasing business leaders’ awareness of effective retention strategies needed to retain valued employees may prompt managers to mitigate voluntary turnover proactively. Retention strategies that are used appropriately may have a significant effect on organizational growth and sustainability (Mutsuddi, 2016). Exploring the insights of business leaders and how they think and respond to job engagement and retention may contribute to existing literature on management practices, employee satisfaction, employee retention, and voluntary turnover. In addition, the business leaders' insight may prove to be useful in achieving organizational effectiveness, development, learning, and change.

Implications for Social Change

Business leaders in the fast food industry have a challenging task in regard to sustaining economic development through creating employment, increasing work standards, and enhancing the growth of entrepreneurship within communities (Shumba, Zindiye, & Donga, 2017). Individuals, businesses, and society may benefit from the results of this study by learning more about the retention strategies needed by business leaders in the fast food industry to retain skilled employees. The results may contribute to positive social change by giving business leaders the self-assurance and techniques necessary to effectively address employee retention and the common variables that impact employee turnover. An effective employee retention program may engage employees and foster loyalty with customers, which could improve the health of the economy. When business leaders employ an effective retention program to minimize employee turnover, they contribute to the stabilization of jobs, reduced crime rates, and poverty in local communities (Gathungu, Iravo, & Namusonge, 2015).

As organizational engagement improves, employees may become committed and keen to help increase competition and profitability of the organization. Engaged employees may influence new and existing customers and possibly inspire communities by offering financial knowledge to local schools, churches, and other organizations. The implications for positive social change of this study include (a) reducing voluntary employee turnover, (b) reducing unemployment rates, and (c) sustaining profits, all of which may directly and positively influence the economic health of a community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

There is a significant relationship between perceived supervisor support, perceived organizational support, and organizational commitment towards employees' turnover intention (Kalidass & Bahron, 2015). Business leaders can view levels of employee work engagement in the workplace as reciprocation for the exchange content provided by employers, which includes positive reinforcements for the employees (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Employee engagement is a strength employers may use to motivate and connect employees within their organization, cognitively or emotionally (Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). In order to enhance the employees' career, organizations provide training to the employees (Kiilu, 2018). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies some business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees. The specific population for this study was transformational business leaders at one fast food restaurant who had retained skilled employees for more than 5 years.

Managing employees successfully depends on the quality of leadership within organizations (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The role of organizational leaders is to facilitate the collaboration of employees in the workplace (Akbari, Nader, Imani, Rezaeei, & Foroudi, 2017). Transformational leadership allows leaders and their subordinates to elevate each other's level of motivation (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). In addition, the transformation process includes the business leader, the subordinates, and the system in which the leader and the employees are working (Raziq, Borini, Malik, Ahmad, & Shabaz (2018). Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) posited that the subordinates are motivated to work to their full potential and the leader provides consideration to the followers' needs and wants.

The supportive literature included in the review is a collection of peer-reviewed articles, books, and governmental reports. The literature consists of 78 sources. Of the 78 sources, 70 are peer-reviewed, and 98% have publication dates between 2014 and 2018. I obtained peer-reviewed articles by searching the Walden University library databases using various search terms. The terms were (a) *fast food industry*, (b) *leadership style*, (c) *organizational commitment*, (d) *employee turnover*, (e) *employee retention*, (f) *job satisfaction*, and (g) *organizational leadership*. The databases I used were (a) Academic Search Complete, (b) Business Source Complete, (c) Directory of Open Access Journals (d) Emerald Insight, (e) Expanded Academic ASAP, (f) ScienceDirect, and (g) Social Sciences Citation Index.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies some business leaders use to engage and motivate employees. Vroom's (1964) expectancy motivation theory was the conceptual framework for the study. The literature review is an overview of the current research on the study topic and the conceptual framework. The review begins with a presentation of the conceptual framework, progresses to factors affecting employee engagement and motivation in the fast food industry, and concludes with an analysis of retention strategies business leaders need to retain employees.

Expectancy Theory

Motivation is a process an employer may use to prompt employees to perform at a level acceptable to leadership's expectations (Chen et al., 2019). The term *motivation* as used here emerged from three theoretical frameworks: self-determination (Decker & Quaquebeke, 2015), expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), and the expectancy-value model (Bauer, Orvis, Ely, & Surface, 2016). According to Vroom (1964), motivation is a determinant that causes individuals to act in ways that produce wanted outcomes. Business leaders may exert an extensive amount of effort among their employees to achieve wanted results; however, those results are dependent on the value of the outcome (Ernst, 2014). Bauer et al. (2016) suggested business leaders look for particular performance outcomes, with the emphasis placed on the motivational aspects that employees find valuable. Business leaders must determine what motivates employees in the workplace in order to exceed the employees' expectations for wanted outcomes.

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory consists of three variables: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy is an individual's belief that something desirable will occur based on his or her actions (Barba-sánchez & Atienza-sahuquillo, 2017). Instrumentality is an individual's expectation that the rewards received will be equivalent to his or her level of performance (Nimri et al., 2015). Valence is the manner in which an individual perceives the reward (Purvis, Zagenczyk, & McCray, 2015).

Vroom (1964) argued that people have different sets of goals and are inspired if they believe (a) a positive relationship exists between their efforts and performance, (b) their performance will result in a positive reward, and (c) the reward will satisfy an important need. Vroom (2013) suggested an employee's beliefs about expectancy, instrumentality, and valence interact psychologically to create a motivational force that causes employees to act in ways to bring pleasure and avoid pain. This motivational force derives from valence, expectancy, and instrumentality. Vroom (1964) presented motivation as a mechanism for leadership to influence the work environment. According to Vroom (1964), business leaders may use the three beliefs of the expectancy theory of motivation to point out and project an employee's job satisfaction, occupational choice, and the likelihood that the employee will stay on a job.

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory focuses on the idea that an employee's performance supports individual factors such as (a) behavior, (b) skillset, (c) performance, (d) knowledge, and (e) ability. The ability of an individual to exert certain skills to increase performance levels is an example of the expectancy variable. An individual's difficulty with goals, lack of perceived control, and self-efficacy are contributing factors of the expectancy level (Nimri et al., 2015). Self-efficacy is an inner belief that an individual has about accomplishing a task and reaching measurable goals (Bandura, 1977).

Employees' behavior is unpredictable without considering self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is a factor that business leaders may use to reinforce the positive effect of retention on job performance (Bandura, 1977). Williams and Rhodes (2016) suggested that self-efficacy is a predictable behavior that individuals exert when they are motivated to complete specific tasks and goals. When individuals cannot reach specific goals, their level of self-confidence may decrease (Lee, Keil, & Wong, 2015).

Bandura (1977) argued that employee behavior cannot be predicted without considering self-efficacy. In addition, Bandura explained that self-efficacy is a factor that business leaders may use to reinforce the positive effect of retention on job performance. Self-efficacy is a predictable behavior that individuals exert when they are motivated to complete specific tasks and goals (Williams & Rhodes, 2016). An individual's level of self-confidence may decrease when goals are not reached (Lee et al., 2015).

When business leaders inspire their employees to be successful in a work environment that fosters motivation, they optimize employee engagement and performance. Engaged employees tend to handle challenges at work, be productive members of an organization, help fellow coworkers with heavy workloads, and find ways to do their work more efficiently (Hau et al., 2016). The negative attitudes of workers toward their respective organizations stem from the lack of support they receive from management (Hayibor & Collins, 2016). Under rewarded employees feel a sense of frustration and resentment, which may lead to a lack of performance, thus having a profound impact on the organization's financial profitability (Hayibor & Collins, 2016). Business leaders will not obtain the outcomes they want if they do not effectively communicate with their employees, develop trusting relationships, establish career paths for growth and development, and recognize individuals for a job well done (Hayibor & Collins, 2016). These motivators result from the original formulation of the expectancy theory. An individual's motivational level to engage is a function of valence, instrumentality, and expectancy (Vroom, 1964). To obtain wanted outcomes, business leaders may need to develop a strategy that supports the organization's mission to guarantee employee engagement and performance increase.

Some business leaders incorporate challenging goals in their day-to-day tasks among their work groups; business leaders use this strategy to reinforce their employees' beliefs that with determination, they can meet challenging goals (Lee et al., 2015). Expectancy includes positive influences of goal difficulty. If effective leaders do not monitor employees' behaviors, organizational goals will decrease (Lee et al., 2015). Perceived control is an individual's belief that he or she is capable of influencing others to make a difference in their surroundings to obtain a preferred outcome (Ladeira, Santini, Pinto, Araujo, & Fleury, 2018). The way employees perceive different tasks affects their level of engagement (Ladeira et al., 2018). An individual's sense of control is contingent upon their behavior being forced or self-determined (Ladeira et al., 2018). An individual's confidence stems from their sense of control. In addition, an individual's true confidence is based on his or her ability to learn and to do what it takes to attain wanted outcomes.

When business leaders inspire their employees to be successful in a work environment that fosters motivation, they help to optimize employee engagement and performance. Employee engagement consists of employees being able to handle work challenges and be productive members of their organization. Engaged employees may help fellow coworkers with heavy workloads, volunteer for other work duties, and find ways to do their work more efficiently (Hau et al., 2016). Most often, the negative attitude of workers towards their respective organizations may result from the lack of support they receive from their managers.

Vroom (1964) suggested employees must have a good understanding of the relationship between wanted outcomes and job performance. An employee's behavior stems from individual factors such as character, skillset, knowledge, experience, and abilities, which play a major role in the goals that are in place for the employees (Vroom, 1964). According to Vroom, an individual's motivation determines his or her level of performance. The level of performance for an employee is driven by the individual's behavior, personal goals, and expectations (Vroom, 1964). Vroom used the variables *expectancy*, *instrumentality*, and *valence* to account for an individual's level of performance.

Vroom (1964) described expectancy as the belief employees have about their efforts in relationship to good performance. Business leaders may find various factors to influence employees to deliver their best possible performance. Those factors may be support or training from a business leader who builds his or her employees' level of confidence. Vroom indicated that increased efforts by business leaders and employees lead to better performance.

Instrumentality is an individual's belief that employers grant awards for good performance (Nimri et al., 2015). Instrumentality takes place when employees trust their leadership and the reward process is transparent (Sigaard & Skov, 2015). Transparency is an essential component of instrumentality (Vroom, 1964). Business leaders must form a trusting relationship between their employees to make sure employees have the essential resources to reach goals and expected outcomes (Nimri et al., 2015).

Valence is the emotional orientation individuals embrace while striving to reach specific goals and results (Purvis et al., 2015). To create this emotional orientation, business leaders may create nurturing work environments (Purvis et al., 2015). An enthused leader motivates workers to feel inspired towards their jobs (i.e., by using valence). However, each individual will value the outcomes differently (Purvis et al., 2015). Business leaders should identify what their employees value and determine which extrinsic motivators make wanted outcomes attractive (Vroom, 1964).

Various researchers have used expectancy theory to validate the relationship between employees' motivation, engagement, and performance (Purvis et al., 2015). When business leaders recognize which factors impact individual behaviors and motivation, engagement increases (Purvis et al., 2015). Employees' efforts to meet and exceed performance standards are not readily obtainable if upper management does not set the organization's goals and expectations (Chen, Ellis, & Suresh, 2015). In addition, employees' motivation and engagement are likely to decline if business leaders are not routinely assessing employee behaviors to determine what organizational changes they need to make to sustain high levels of job performance (Chen et al., 2015).

Expectancy theory is comprised of three motivators: motivation to learn, motivation to transfer, and expectancy motivation (Bauer et al., 2016). The motivation to learn is an individual's desire to learn a new skill. Motivation to transfer is an individual's aspiration to apply the learned skill to their daily job tasks. Expectancy motivation is the strength of an individual's tendencies to act in certain ways that are dependent upon the strength of the expectation or wanted outcome (Bauer et al., 2016). Employees live in a knowledge-intensive economy that requires them to share their knowledge base in order to help their organization stay competitive (Hau et al., 2016). Social, emotional, and intellectual factors may prompt some employees to obtain certain skills and perform those tasks in the workplace (Hau et al., 2016).

Intrinsically motivated employees engage in work activities they find useful and enjoyable. By contrast, employees tend to seek rewards when they are extrinsically motivated. Employers use extrinsic rewards to persuade employees to acquire new skills and knowledge in the workplace (Hayibor & Collins, 2016). Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators must exist in the workplace to obtain wanted outcomes (Sigaard & Skov, 2015). Extrinsic motivators may be used to improve job performance; however, business leaders should help their subordinates find job duties that intrinsically inspire them (Law, Chan, & Ozer, 2017). Implementing intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in the workplace may be beneficial to business leaders because they increase employee engagement and motivation. For this reason, business leaders who utilize the expectancy theory to improve employee engagement and motivation may have success in increasing employee performance and organizational commitment.

The process of such cognitive variables reflects individual differences in employee motivation. de Simone (2015) examined such variables from a management position with the goal of determining what factors affect such motivating methods. The author used an empirical study design to investigate motivation means within three large health care organizations (de Simone, 2015). The participants (*N* = 492) answered questions based on factors that motivated them in terms of work environment, work preference, and work expectancy. The findings were analyzed with de Simone concluding that expectancy theory does have merit in that the implications for what employees desire as motivating factors are training, education, work autonomy, and professional growth. The participants reported feeling that rewards were valued, and they recognized that job performance is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (de Simone, 2015). de Simone suggested that leaders should increase such expectations of reward value that come from desired performance.

In summary, business leaders may present a clear picture of the desired organizational commitment so that the employees are aware of what is expected of them. Business leaders may be fundamental to (a) the achievement of employees in finishing their tasks successfully and (b) reducing employee frustration and their desire to seek other employment. Certain obstacles may lead to employee disengagement at work, which, in turn, brings about problems for employees and challenges for leaders. Furthermore, a reduction in employee engagement levels can have an impact on performance, productivity, and customer service.

Employee Engagement

The link between a business and its employees is both critical and substantial (Kim, Tam, Kim, & Rhee, 2017). In the 21st century, employee engagement is one of the most important duties of business leaders because of its impact on competition, effectiveness, and organizational commitment (Lu, Lu, Gursoy, & Neale, 2016).

Nonprofit and for-profit organizational leaders invest in human resource initiatives to improve and sustain engagement in their workplace (Lu et al., 2016). Employee engagement is a multifaceted construct that allows employees to connect with leaders, coworkers, and the organization as a whole (Lu et al., 2016). The health of an organization revolves around its employees; therefore, business leaders believe employees are the greatest asset to the organization (Jungsun & Gatling, 2018). To stay competitive and increase organizational profits, business leaders must find strategic ways to increase employee commitment and engagement.

Disengaged employees may significantly influence an organization's bottom line. Lu et al. (2016) suggested there are three drivers of employee engagement affecting employee performance: work-life balance, communication, and leadership. Therefore, the ability to balance work with their personal life would help employees to remain satisfied. When business leaders effectively communicate with their employees and provide them with the essential tools and resources to perform their job, productivity and profits increase (Heymann, 2015). Business leaders who sustain high levels of engagement may reduce the number of employees who voluntarily seek other employment.

Forming an organizational culture that inspires employees to be innovative boosts employee engagement; engaged employees sustain greater levels of work performance (Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). When business leaders create a work atmosphere that nurtures motivation, employee performance improves. The decision to put forth energy and determination to accomplish and surpass performance criterion rises when employees understand the business leaders' expectations. If employees improve their job performance, they will meet organizational goals (Mehrzi & Singh, 2016).

Empowering and inspiring employees help business leaders have a greater impact on their employees, which may increase organizational performance (Vivek & Satyanarayana, 2016) and decrease attrition (Wen & Liu, 2015). Business leaders may influence employees' creativeness and readiness to participate in innovative processes by letting employees know the organization wants their input and trusts their judgement (Suifan, Abdallah, & Janini, 2018). Meaningful work helps employees feel valued in the workplace (Valdivia, Montes, & Moreno, 2018). Business leaders may use different strategies to inspire their employees to exceed their abilities by providing a better way of completing tasks and solving problems (Valdivia et al., 2018). Business leaders use different mechanisms to encourage employees through various processes by boosting employee engagement, which includes emotional, cognitive, and physical influences. Engaged employees may connect emotionally when they focus their feelings towards work (Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). It bears noting that emotional support may include the ability of the employees to develop connections with their peers in the workplace. A cognitively engaged employee is observant and engrossed in their work (Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). A physically engaged employee demonstrates extra determination and vigor in the workplace (Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). Employee engagement helps business leaders market the organization's brand, increase productivity, minimize turnovers, build an alliance of trust, and creates an atmosphere of philanthropically minded employees (Mehrzi & Singh, 2016).

In conclusion, employee engagement improves worker satisfaction. Business leaders play an important role in improving the organizational performance through employee engagement. If the leaders are able to inspire the employees, the employees are more likely to be motivated and engaged. When business leaders foster adaptive work experiences, employees may recognize development opportunities within the work organization.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a level of contentment employees feel with their accomplishments at work (Lu et al., 2016). Factors such as work environments, incentives, and compensation contribute to an employee's level of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Lu et al., 2016). Javed, Balouch, and Hassan (2014) identified job satisfaction as being the most important antecedent to turnover because it contributed more than 32% to turnover intentions. In order to sustain job satisfaction, business leaders shall keep their subordinates informed about choices or procedures that may affect their relationship with the organization (Kim et al., 2017).

Talent management, coaching/mentoring and training, and development have a significant impact on job satisfaction of employees, while performance management systems, succession planning, rewards, and recognition have a positive but insignificant impact on the job satisfaction and retention of employees (Lei, Basil, & Hassan, 2018). It is highly recommended to the management of companies to strengthen their coaching, mentoring, training, and development strategies to increase employee job satisfaction because employees who are satisfied with their skills and job are likely to stay (Lei et al., 2018). When job satisfaction is enhancing, it strengthens employee retention in the food industry.

The salary and compensation in the organization must be in line with the qualifications of the employees in order to motivate the employees and encourage them to stay (Kiilu, 2018). The assignments given to employees shall align with their skills. However, some organizations do not give its employees the opportunity to come up with new skills and apply new technologies, but they received support professional growth by their immediate superiors (Kiilu, 2018). Employee development also has a positive relationship with retention of talent based on this study and therefore, it is important to make sure that the employees have opportunities to develop their skills (Kiilu, 2018). The organization sponsors employees for training purposes of enhancing their careers; but, business leaders shall discuss policies regarding training and professional development in the organization in order to gain the employees' attention and address any concerns they may have (Kiilu, 2018). The kind of training organizations offer must focus both on technical as well as managerial capabilities of the employees (Kiilu, 2018). Working conditions in the organization seem to have a positive relationship based on the study conducted by Kiilu (2018) as well. The working environment in their organization allows employees to work well and effectively. Kiilu (2018) argued that a peaceful coexistence exists between employees in the organization.

Terera and Ngirande (2014) conducted a study among nursing professionals to determine the effect rewards has on job satisfaction and employee retention. The authors' objectives of the study were to identify a correlation between rewards, job satisfaction, and employee retention (Terera & Ngirande, 2014). The researcher uses a quantitative research design and 180 nurses as the research participants. Terera and Ngirande (2014) formulated a hypothesis to test the relationships between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Terera and Ngirande (2014) concluded that rewards given to employees lead to employee retention, but they do not result in job satisfaction.

Voluntary employee turnover in the healthcare organization is one of the most expensive and disruptive business problems that healthcare organizations encounter (Boyd, 2017). Business leaders may address this issue to ensure that the employees are still satisfied in order to sustain higher job retention (Boyd, 2017). The employees of an organization shall be a priority and business leaders shall practice participatory leadership to gain trust, loyalty, and commitment (Boyd, 2017). Therefore, these themes may be relevant to increase the job satisfaction of the employees. The findings may promote positive social change by providing healthcare managers with information on successful strategies for retaining high-performing healthcare employees, which could reduce unemployment rates, stabilize families, and improve employees' work-life balance outside their organizations (Boyd, 2017).

Given the rising concerns in different fields about staff retention and the increased importance attached to individuals' career adaptability, Coetzee (2015) explored how career adaptability relates to employees' satisfaction with factors that organizations regard important for their retention. It bears noting that career retention is important in order for the skills to remain within an organization. Coetzee (2015) conducted a canonical correlation analysis on a sample of 321 employees in a South African automotive industry. The study findings reveal that business leaders must find creative ways to acknowledge employees' concerns, goals, and career plans in order to keep the employees engaged. It is essential for business leaders to avoid the use of strategies that involve the use of benefits to retain the employees (Coetzee, 2015). Black and white participants differ regarding the variables. Coetzee (2015) utilized prior research on career adaptability by adding insights about the usefulness of the construct in the retention context.

Due to the limited availability of talents in the metal-making industry, retaining talented employees has become increasingly challenging across all sectors (Kumar, 2016). The challenge stems from -e-commerce, which is a competitive market (Kumar, 2016). E-commerce is an online market that allows consumers to buy and trade products (Kumar, 2016). Kumar (2016) explored the gaps to retain talents in the metal sector. In addition, Kumar (2016) selected and analyzed case studies of three remotely located metal manufacturing companies in India. Through a series of personal interviews among the talents, the study findings conclude that the location of the company and compensation packages along with their township amenities is the most common factors in retaining talents (Kumar, 2016).

Overall, job satisfaction is an essential part of an individual’s lifecycle. Job satisfaction is one factor that business leaders use to motivate employees. Motivated employees tend to remain loyal and employed to their organization. Job satisfaction among employees boost productivity, which helps organizations, increase their profits.

Job satisfaction may increase the level of performance and motivation in any organization including the fast food industry (Joung, 2015).

Employee Satisfaction in the Fast Food Industry

The fast food industry inhabits a major presence in the areas of employability, profitability, and human resource proficiency (Bradley et al., 2017). The fast food industry is one of the world's most accessible employers (Joung, 2015). McDonald's, Taco Bell, Wendy's, and Burger King are some of the well-known food chains that operate on high volume and speed with low cost. The fast food industry is a small business enterprise that employs mostly employees between the ages of 20 to 30 years old; this age group of employees were born between the early 1980s and 1990s (Bradley et al., 2017). In 2020, 47% of the fast food industry will include millennial workers (Bradley et al., 2017). Employee turnover from the millennial-aged employees creates operational uncertainty for business leaders in the fast food industry (Bradley et al., 2017). It is imperative for business leaders to identify which business practices help market their business, create an innovative work culture, reduce employee turnover and increase employee retention in the fast food industry.

The success of an organization depends on the employees' level of knowledge, experience, and skills (Bradley et al., 2017). Employees may stay at an organization for different reasons. Employee turnover generates challenges for organizations and without a strategy; the business may lose skillful workers, reputation, and profits (Bradley et al., 2017). For example, the fast food industry is a business driven by its employees (Joung, 2015). Business leaders must be transparent in their efforts to build high-quality relationships that empower employees towards achieving the organizational goals and vision.

Marketing practices has an effect on employee engagement in the fast food industry. Joung (2015) examined the connections between internal marketing practices, employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention in the fast food service industry. The sample population includes employees who worked at a restaurant in the USA. In order to simplify the results of the study, all respondents chosen lived in different states. A confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the measurement model, and subsequently, structural equation modeling tested the suggested model (Joung, 2015). The researcher concludes that food service operators shall focus solely on internal marketing practices to have pleased employees who, in turn, are more likely to provide high service quality to customers (Joung, 2015). The results of the study show that job satisfaction and affective commitment have a substantial impact on decreasing employee turnover intention (Joung, 2015).

Employees of a restaurant must devote to the work they perform. Beehner and Blackwell (2016) conducted a quantitative experimental two-group pretest, posttest study to determine whether the implementation of a workplace spirituality program influenced turnover intention in food service organizations. The sample consisted of 53 employees of a multi-location quick service restaurant in the state of Florida. In 2015, employee turnover was a significant problem in the fast food service industry. Beehner and Blackwell (2016) found the effect of a workplace spirituality program on turnover intention was not significant (p = .274), suggesting workplace spirituality interventions may not be an appropriate turnover intention mitigation method within the fast food service industry.

Not all companies implement the same set of practices. The success of any management practice depends on organizational characteristics. Nonaka, Kaihara, Fujii, Yu, Shimmura, Hisano, and Asakawa (2016) analyzed employee satisfaction in the fast food service industry by looking at the results of a questionnaire delivered to the restaurant staff. Question items were divided into seven question categories: work environment, work efficiency and service quality, relationship with bosses, rules, education system, attitude and motivation toward work, and interest in multi-skills development (Nonaka et al., 2016). The target analysis for this study was a Japanese restaurant chain located in Japan. Satisfaction structures and the differences among the attributes of work position, employee pattern, age group, and length of continuous employment were analyzed with correlation analysis and covariance structure analysis (Nonaka et al., 2016). Nonaka et al. (2016) found it is essential for Japanese business leaders to ensure that job satisfaction of employees in the fast food industry is a priority and maintained.

In the fast food industry, employees create the organizational culture, which affects the development of job satisfaction. Rashid and Ghose (2015) conducted a study on the link between organizational culture and brand identity in retail food and beverage industries. In addition, the researchers wanted to examine how managers in retail coffee shops and cafes established their brands. Rashid and Ghose (2015) indicated establishing the correct brand name up-front to help the market leader minimize issues during the process of brand identity creation. The market leader’s character can influence the organizational culture, and a continuous flow of modernized industry intelligence plays a critical role in the creation of a distinct brand identity. According to Rashid and Ghose (2015), managers need to incorporate internal marketing and personal values in the retail industry in order to construct the internal culture, which helps enhance brand identity. Therefore, managers should form an internal culture that encourages job satisfaction.

In closing, the organizational culture in the fast food industry sector helps in ensuring that the employees maintain job satisfaction and value for the jobs they perform. It is important for the employers and business leaders to create a momentum that inspires the workers. The fast food industry is unique because it is service oriented. Business leaders need to discover and realize that the ability to provide quality service should also be of utmost importance for the workers working in the fast food industry. In the following section, I focused on organizational commitment within organizations.

Organizational Commitment

Perceived organizational support, involving employees' perception that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, is the work experience most strongly linked to their emotional bond to the organization (Kim, Eisenberger, & Balk, 2016). Kim et al. (2016) suggested that employees' perception concerning the organization's ability to achieve its goals and objectives may enhance this relationship by more effectively fulfilling the socio-emotional needs of the employees. Kim et al. (2016) conducted three studies with employees in the United States and South Korea to assess the interactive relationship between perceived organizational support and perceived organizational commitment and their distinctive antecedents. The hierarchical linear modeling and ordinary least squared regression results showed that perceived organizational commitment strengthened the relationship between perceived organizational support and commitment and that this association carried over to extra role performance, which leads to the employees committing to stay (Kim et al., 2016). Further, leaders initiating structure contributed more too perceived organizational commitment than to perceived organizational support, whereas leader consideration contributed more to perceived organizational support than to perceived organizational commitment. These findings suggest perceived organizational commitment plays an important role in moderating the relationship between perceived organizational support and commitment (Kim et al., 2016).

Although retention of employees in an organization has become a hot topic in this turbulent career era, practically no empirical research is carried out in the fast-growing ceramic sector till now, and the research conducted by Umamaheswari and Jayasree (2016) filled the gap in the literature. Umamaheswari & Jayasree (2016) revealed that organizational commitment influences retention and all the above factors enhance it. Organizational commitment among the employees partially mediated the relationship between the proposed factors and retention (Umamaheswari & Jayasree, 2016). Multiple regression analysis indicated that training and development did not have any notable influence on retention; therefore, professional development and training are not determining factors for job retention. Umamaheswari and Jayasree (2016) offered recommendations to HR (Human resource) managers that they should extend their professional support to the work environment, supervisor support and training and development in order to generate a better relationship with employees and to reduce their likelihood of leaving the company.

Employees are undeniably the most valuable assets of an organization and a company. There is a great demand for skilled professionals across different sectors (Anitha & Begum, 2016). Employee retention means various regulations, policies, and practices, which let the employees, stick to an organization for a long period of time (Anitha & Begum, 2016). In order to achieve competitive advantage in the workplace, maximum utilization of resources, and get organizational efficiency, business leaders shall retain employees in a true spirit in order to cope with all these conditions. Adigwe (2015) expressed that an employee's level of job satisfaction stems from specific outcomes either meeting or surpassing the employee's expectations. Job satisfaction differs from employee to employee in each organization (Adigwe, 2015). When there is a change in the organization, employers tend to see an increase in job dissatisfaction among employees (Adigwe, 2015). The results of this study revealed organizational change within a business is a leading factor that influences an employee's level of job satisfaction; but, the level of job satisfaction of employees depends on the impact of organizational change.

Anitha and Begum (2016) focused on automobile manufacturing and service sector and highlighted factors like organizational commitment and organizational culture that measure how to retain employees in an organization. Organizational commitment comprises three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitments, which derive from Allen and Mayer's model (Anitha & Begum, 2016). The employees' perception of others in the organization may affect their ability to complete tasks effectively and stay with the company (Anitha & Begum, 2016). The findings of the study revealed that organizational culture has a high impact on employee retention than continuance commitment and normative commitment. The culture of an organization shall promote the welfare of the employees to ensure that they are still satisfied with their jobs (Anitha & Begum, 2016). Affective commitment does not influence employee retention to a significant extent (Anitha & Begum, 2016).

Business leaders may view employee retention and turnover, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment as critical issues for the organization (Valaei & Rezaei, 2017). Employee turnover and job satisfaction remain contingent upon various components of organizational commitment (Valaei & Rezaei, 2017). Organizational commitment includes affective, normative, and continuance commitment as components (Moin, 2017). Affective commitment is an employee's desire to engage emotionally within the organization. Employees with a higher degree of affective commitment aspire to use more efforts on work tasks (Valaei & Rezaei, 2017). Normative commitment indicates that an employee is very eager and displays high levels of vitality after entering into the organization (Valaei & Rezaei, 2017). Continuance commitment is the notion employees have to either stay or leave their organization. Zopiatis, Constanti, and Theocharous (2014) posited that the exceptional casual relationships of job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment may influence employee turnover.

However, ending employment with the organization will eliminate job-related and non-job-related benefits that affect individual households (Moin, 2017).

In summary, organizations view employees as their greatest assets. Business leaders must understand employees' emotions and expectations in order to cater to their needs. When employees display their emotions in a positive manner in the workplace, they are more than likely to adapt to the organization's values and goals. When employees adapt to the organization's values and goals, this exemplifies organizational commitment. Organizational commitment includes three components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Each type of organizational commitment influences job retention in the workplace in one way or another.

Job Retention

Employee retention is the process of physically keeping employee members who are skilled and talented in an organization; however, employee retention is one of the key fundamentals that are necessary for organizational success (Kundu & Lata, 2017). In a globalized environment, employee retention and engagement of high prospective employees are a huge challenge to organizations especially in times of high turnover rates (Kundu & Lata, 2017). In many cases, even engaged employees feel dissatisfied with the outcomes of organizational performance, which may lead them to look elsewhere and leave their current jobs. Due to these reasons, it is important to investigate motivational factors that influence employee retention and examine their impacts on both organizations and employees (Kundu & Lata, 2017). Financial rewards, job characteristics, career development, recognition, management, and work-life balance may be crucial motivational factors that influence employee retention. Business leaders and employers may formulate appropriate retention strategies in a holistic manner to reduce turnover rates; each strategy requires a commitment from the employers and the employees, which will be well worth the investment in the long term (Kundu & Lata, 2017). Olckers and Du Plessis (2015) noted that highly skilled employees identify with the elements of psychological ownership. The value of psychological ownership shall be favored in the workplace in order to ensure that employee retention decreases. Contextual factors such as clear communication, relationship building, clear direction, goal alignment, recognition and acknowledgment, and leadership, surface more explicitly as requisites for talent retention (Olckers & Du Plessis, 2015).

The direct and indirect relationships among job satisfaction, organizational commitment, attitudes toward organizational change, and their dimensions may be studied among employees (Yousef, 2017). Yousef (2017) found that employees in the investigated departments tend to be highly satisfied with supervision and co-workers. However, employees may show signs of enthusiasm when their work environment and job assignments align properly. Employees will display low satisfaction with pay and promotion facets of the job if they are unhappy (Yousef, 2017). Job retention may attribute to the willingness of the employees to stay. Yousef (2017) argued that employees in the investigated departments remain with their current departments because either they want to stay in their departments, or because they have to do so, but not because they feel, they ought to do so.

Jaiswal and Dhar (2015) examined the attitudes of employees working in Indian hotels catering to tourists. An integrated model highlights the relationship between perceived accessibility to training, perceived support for training, perceived benefits from training, and the implications of training on service quality mediated through organizational commitment exhibited by the employees (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015). Jaiswal and Dhar, (2015) conducted a sample on 494 employees, using a structural equation model to establish a relationship between the variables by analyzing the responses of employees working in small and medium-size tourist hotels operating in Uttarakhand, India. Jaiswal and Dhar (2015) indicated a strong relationship exists between employee training and the quality of services offered by employees in tourist hotels. The authors discussed the implications of the presented findings and suggest potential practical applications (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015). Jaiswal and Dhar (2015) notated the attitude of the employees has an impact on the job retention.

Peng et al. (2016) aimed to explore how basic self-evaluations swayed job burnout and primarily concentrated on the confirmation of the mediator roles of organizational commitment and job satisfaction between the employees. Approximately 583 female nurses completed the Core Self-Evaluation Scale, Organizational Commitment Scale, Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, and Maslach Burnout Inventory–General Survey. The outcomes of the study disclose that core self-evaluations, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job burnout considerably associate with each other and job retention will change these factors (Peng et al., 2016). The structural equation model shows that core self-evaluations can considerably influence job burnout among the employees and arbitrates organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Peng et al., 2016).

In summary, job retention is an organization's ability to retain skilled employees. Business leaders use retention strategies to foster an innovative work culture. Organizational leaders may use retention strategies to manage employee turnover proficiently and successfully. High employee turnover rates may affect the functionality of an organization. High employee turnover may cause organizations to accrue unwanted costs as well as negatively influence the employees.

Employee Turnover

Recent research suggests that perceived supervisor leadership may contribute to employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, which makes the employees stay within an organization (Mathieu, 2015). Mathieu (2015) proposed a structural turnover intention model to illustrate how person-oriented and task-oriented dimensions by management influence an employee's level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Business leaders in any size corporation may use the structural turnover intention model to differentiate between leadership behaviors, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. A person-oriented leader cares about the employee's well-being (Mathieu, 2015). Task-oriented leaders are more concerned about getting specific tasks done in a timely manner (Mathieu, 2015). The study findings revealed that person-oriented leaders in comparison to task-oriented leaders have a positive impact on organizational commitment, which increases job satisfaction and turnover intention. Based on the results of the study, the leadership of the organizational leader may affect the decision of the employees to stay.

Lang, Kern, and Zapf (2016) analyzed the specific impact of proactivity, career satisfaction and job embeddedness on career turnover and aims to contribute to the improvement of future recruitment and retention policies. Lang et al. (2016) proposed an integrated model that focuses on direct and indirect effects of proactivity, career satisfaction, and job embeddedness, on alternative job opportunities, going to job interviews, and signing a new job contract among the employees. Lang et al. (2016) suggested that proactive but not career satisfied, and embedded employees carry with them a higher risk of leaving for greener pastures through their easier access to alternative job opportunities because of the desire to grow more. On employee's way up the career ladder, only high levels of job embeddedness and in particular attractive career opportunities within the present organization make staying more attractive than leaving (Lang et al., 2016). Employee turnover may stem from the employee's desire to find better job opportunities.

Nica (2014) conducted a study on the factors that affect organizational effectiveness. The factors identified in this study were employee retention, employee turnover, leadership behavior, employee contentment, and turnover intentions. Nica (2014) suggested that human resources practices within organizations are a predictor of turnover intentions and organizational effectiveness. An important part of a business's focus and direction is to accomplish high levels of competitiveness and sustainability, which depend on the organization's human resource practices (Nica, 2014).

Organizational effectiveness is contingent upon having appropriate personal in position at the right time to encounter fast changing business requirements. The study results revealed poor working environments, unsuccessful leadership, ineffective communication, and the lack of training lead to a decrease in productivity, which results in higher employee turnover (Nica, 2014).

High turnover and low productivity remain the leading signs of job dissatisfaction (Rashid & Ghose, 2015). Employees who start a job without any kind of orientation or preparation may be unaware of workplace strategies and processes that may influence their job performance. Employees need the necessary tools to complete their duties. Ineffective leadership results from employers' failure to offer support and rewards for workers who exhibit aptitude and interest in advancement opportunities (Rashid & Ghose, 2015). Employers who effectively communicate with employees reduce the risk of forming a workforce that feels unappreciated and misunderstood (Moin, 2017).

Because of changes in the composition of families and the workforce, such as couples with dual careers and single mothers with young kids, the responsibilities of both male and female employees in the household has increased (Huffman, 2014). Failure to maintain a steady pace with these challenging responsibilities may cause consequences for employees and organizations. These challenges may negatively affect the morale of employees and increase organizational costs associated with absenteeism, turnover, and recruitment (Huffman, 2014). Huffman (2014) conferred that spousal career support and family friendly programs reduce the odds of employee turnover. The concept of work modifications indicate that employees are content with family-friendly benefits when they fulfill their intrinsic expectations (Caillier, 2016). The work modification concept implies that organizations may enhance the satisfaction of programs by altering them in accordance to the needs of employees as a replacement of taking a one-size-fits-all approach (Caillier, 2016).

Sukriket (2014) investigated job satisfaction variables related to turnover intentions of software programmers employed in the industrial technology industry in Thailand. Business leaders shall analyze employee behavior in order to ensure the positive factors that may lessen employee turnover. Programmers chose samples from firms in Software Park, Bangkok. Also, programmers sent self-administered questionnaires via hyperlink to 800 software programmers; 400 valid samples were used for analysis in this study (Sukriket, 2014). The findings of the study show that employee benefits, nature of work, and leadership relate to turnover intention regarding the pull factor, which makes the employees decide to stay (Sukriket, 2014). For the push factor, only two factors, nature of work and job conditions link to turnover intention. Pull factors tend to have a stronger impact on turnover intention than push factors (Sukriket, 2014). Many factors lead to the decision of employees either to stay in an organization or to leave; it is important to recognize the different factors that affect employee turnover.

The caring climate within an organization has a direct impact on job satisfaction, organizational command, and job performance (Fu, 2014). The caring climate in an organization also has an indirect impact on organizational commitment through the mediating role of job satisfaction, job performance through the mediating role of job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Fu, 2014). Job satisfaction among employees has a significant direct impact on organizational commitment and an indirect impact on job performance. Organizational commitment has a significant direct impact on job performance within an organization (Fu, 2014).

Samaha and Hawi (2016) explored the relationship between extrinsic, intrinsic, and social rewards among Chinese workers turnover intention in public and private service industries. The empirical results of the study illustrate that turnover intention has a significant and negative impact on employees’ performance within an organization, and both perceived organizational support and affective commitment has partial mediation effects between trust in management and employees’ turnover intention (Samaha & Hawi, 2016). Factors other than the work conditions may prompt employee turnover. Rothausen, Henderson, Arnold, and Malshe (2017) suggested when an employee considers leaving a business, the individual may encounter an identity phase, which is a direct consequence of the turnover decision.

Transition

The first section of this study consisted of the problem and purpose statements, the nature of the study, the interview questions, and conceptual framework to support the rationale for selecting a qualitative, single-case study design for this research. Other elements of section 1 included the operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, significance of the study, and the literature review. The literature review entailed a thorough assessment of the following themes: employee engagement, job satisfaction, employee satisfaction in the fast food industry, organizational commitment, job retention, and employee turnover. I chose each theme to gain a better understanding of the research topic. Section 2 included the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument. As the researcher, I provided a thorough overview of the data collection and analysis process. In addition, I discussed ethical issues and the importance of confirming reliability and validity in qualitative research. Section 3 included the study findings, approvals for real-world application of the data collected, a reflection of the doctoral journey, and a summary.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes a detailed synopsis of the research method and approach that I applied to the research study. I begin by discussing (a) my role as the researcher, (b) the participants, (c) the research method and design, (d) population and sampling, and (e) measures taken to ensure ethical research. I discuss the criteria for selecting the participants and the geographic area of the study. Discussion of the data collection, organization, and analysis procedures follows. In addition, this section includes a discussion of the reliability and validity of the research findings. Section 2 concludes with a summary of key points and a transition to Section 3.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies some business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees. The specific population for this study was transformational business leaders at one Southern Mississippi fast food restaurant who have retained skilled employees for more than 5 years. The results of the study may contribute to enhancing organizational sustainability and increase organizational growth and profitability, which in turn may lead to potential job opportunities and encourage economic growth in local communities.

Role of the Researcher

In gathering and analyzing data, the researcher acts as the primary instrument in qualitative research (Schoenherr, Ellram, & Tate, 2015). In a qualitative case study, the researcher's role is essential as the data collection instrument (Yin, 2015). The researcher is responsible for collecting the participants' experiences and relating them to the qualitative study (Bettis, Gambardella, Helfat, & Mitchell, 2015). As the primary data collection instrument, I reported all data and sought to detach my personal perceptions, beliefs, morals, and values when doing so. As the researcher, I interacted with the participants by means of semistructured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of the study phenomenon.

I chose to conduct research on the strategies business leaders need to use to retain employees in the fast food industry because of my desire to learn more about why the turnover rate in local food chains is so high. I do not have a professional or individual relationship with the study participants. As a customer, I have witnessed the regularity in employee fluctuations due to the recurring nature of employee turnover at numerous fast food establishments. I was eager to learn more about organizational issues that business leaders need to address in order to achieve the mission and vision of the organization. Researchers choose a study topic centered on their individual interests and an exhaustive assessment of the literature (Bhatti, Janjua, Akhtar, & Azad, 2014).

When conducting my research, I followed the ethical components outlined in the *Belmont Report*. The ethical components include (a) respect for humans, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). In order to comply with these elements, I abided by the rules and regulations of Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as the ethical components of the *Belmont Report*. The *Belmont Report* lays out an ethical, analytical framework to resolve issues arising from research containing human subjects (Adashi, Walters, & Menikoff, 2018). The researcher may protect the participants from harm by properly coding and protecting the participants' data (Barbara, 2016). Beneficence requires the researcher to shield the participant from detriment (Adashi et al., 2018). The researcher shall ensure that each participant receives fair treatment during the study in order to guarantee justice. I ensured participants were aware that their participation was voluntary during the research process. I discussed with the participants the purpose of the research study, possible threats, concerns, and benefits. In addition, I reassured the participants of their privacy and protection of the data collected, based on the ethical principles associated with the *Belmont Report*.

Researchers may encounter various challenges during the qualitative research process, which may lead to ethical encounters (Brockington, 2014). The research scholar shall partake in self-assessments and preserve individual factors while remaining conscious of their role in the research study (Berger, 2015). It is common for researchers to show emotions and thoughts toward a phenomenon or the study participants (Berger, 2015). A researcher might consider keeping his or her opinions in check to shun their biases from manipulating the results of the research study. Member checking and interview protocols may be used by the researcher to mitigate bias in a qualitative study (Hyett et al., 2014). Yin (2015) suggested that the use of various data sources and data saturation helps reduce bias in a qualitative research study. In order to reduce the potential for bias, I used various sources such as employee records, participant observation, documentation from the organization, and interview transcripts as data sources to support the participants' statements about retention strategies needed in the fast food industry to retain skilled employees.

The field of qualitative research is widespread and offers the researcher the opportunity to use different techniques to collect data. Although the researcher may use various techniques to obtain data, the desire of qualitative research scholars is to expose the human rationale of the story (Dikko, 2016). When conducting qualitative interviews, the interview protocol is essential for sustaining reliability (Dikko, 2016). An interview protocol is an instrument the research scholar may use to ask participants specific questions about his or her study (Dikko, 2016). Use of a protocol allows the researcher to standardize the participants' interview experiences and eliminate biases. Furthermore, use of an interview protocol enhances the level of efficiency and competence during the interview process (Alby & Fatigante, 2014). The interview protocol helps researchers improve their study by (a) increasing the methodological rigor of interviews, (b) improving the interview scripts, and (c) increasing the relevancy of the information collected in the interviews (Dikko, 2016). Peters and Halcomb (2015) suggested that interview protocols are effective and support reliability during the interview. I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions for this study. Using an interview protocol helped improve the accuracy of the data collection process.

Participants

In qualitative research, the usefulness of the research findings depends on the quality of the information collected (Yin, 2015). The number of cases for the assessment of a phenomenon is not suggestive of the researcher attaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon; such an understanding is contingent on the quality of data (Hoyland, Hollund, & Olsen, 2015). Qualitative researchers may find single or various sources of data equally valuable when conducting research (Kmita, 2017). Researchers may use different methods and interview protocols to eliminate bias and to increase their chances of obtaining valuable data.

Berger (2015) observed that an appropriate choice of study participants and an acceptable sample are the foundation for building reliable research. Qualitative researchers shall use logic for the selection of participants especially when the researcher is trying to fulfill a specific purpose related to the research question (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). Researchers use purposeful sampling strategies for identification and selection of participants within qualitative research (Palinkas et al., 2015). As the researcher, I used different criteria to select the participants. I purposely selected five managers who (a) had been employed for a minimum of 5 years; (b) had experience implementing retention strategies; (c) were at least 18 years of age or older; and (d) either possessed a high school diploma, a general educational development diploma (GED), or a 4-year college degree. The organization was located in Southern Mississippi.

Before I conducted any interviews or engaged with potential participants, I sought approval from Walden University's IRB. The IRB approval number for this study is 10-04-19-0336902. Once approval was granted, I consulted with my local Chamber of Commerce for a listing of the local fast food chains in the study's geographic area. The Chamber of Commerce does not grant researchers permission to conduct a study. However, the Chamber of Commerce provided me with a list of all operational fast food businesses in the local and surrounding cities. I selected a fast food chain that employs 1,500 employees or less. To gain successful access to the participants, I sent an email script to the point of contact in HR at the chosen fast food restaurant. The email included the informed consent form to conduct research, a copy of the letter of cooperation, and the interview protocol with questions. After I obtained a signed copy of the letter of consent, I contacted the HR manager and requested the names of the research participants. Researchers shall obtain the support of senior leadership to gain access to potential participants (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014).

Researchers may offer individual participants necessary information to make a cognizant and voluntary decision to participate in the study or not (Bristol & Hicks, 2014). Each participant shall feel a sense of empathy, acceptance, and a collaborative relationship with the researcher when participating in a research study (Bristol & Hicks, 2014). When the researcher builds a comfortable relationship with the participants, there is a higher chance that the participants will be honest and self-disclosing in individual interviews (Bristol & Hicks, 2014). The time and location for guiding the interviews shall be favorable to the exercise to warrant that the participants appropriately engage in the interview process. The interviewer shall find a place that the interviewee is contented with and has no issues with confidentiality (Cleary et al., 2014). I allowed the participants full autonomy in selecting the time and place best conducive for conducting their interviews to ensure they are comfortable during this process.

While guiding a study, it is important that the engagement of the researcher stay transparent (Cleary et al., 2014). Trust may transpire through effective communication, which is essential to the formation of an equally humble relationship between the researcher and participants (Cleary et al., 2014). Participants may feel relaxed sharing in a process when they are more knowledgeable about the researcher. Before conducting the interviews, I reviewed the informed consent form with the participants. While reviewing the informed consent form, I offered the participants a better understanding of the study's purpose, possible benefits of conducting the study, and answer any questions the participants may have. Additional efforts to boost the participants trust include maintaining a level of confidentiality while allowing the participants to share in the findings of the study.

When researchers use the single, case study approach, they must include participants who are knowledgeable with experience applicable to the research topic (Cloutier & Felusiak, 2015). Participants may be useful when they are familiar with the study topic and can guide and facilitate an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon. The selection of appropriate participants was important in collecting useful information for this research study. The formation of sufficient participants is essential during the selection process (Cairney & St. Denny, 2015). Knowledgeable participants help broaden the researcher's understanding of the retention strategies needed to decrease employee turnover in the fast food industry (Cairney & St. Denny, 2015).

Research Method and Design

When conducting any type of study, it is important for the researcher to select the correct research method. The selection of an appropriate research method is fundamental to attaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Gaus, 2017). Qualitative researchers may choose from a selection of research designs to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2015). Next, I present and support the chosen research method and design.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Long (2014) argued that the chosen research methodology is the primary process, the balanced flow, and the theoretic foundation that researchers use to guide a study. The research method replicates common beliefs within a community of research scholars (Long, 2014). The research method helps researchers determine how to select participants and ask specific questions (Long, 2014). For this study, I selected a qualitative method to explore strategies some business leaders in the food industry use to retain skilled employees.

A qualitative study is appropriate when the researcher looks for ways to understand the participants' lives and experiences as they compare to a specific phenomenon (Boddy, 2019). By perceiving the lived experiences of the research participants, Fusch and Ness (2015) found qualitative scholars offer a distinctive viewpoint that could be vital to identifying social issues and problems more accurately and proficiently. In qualitative studies, the attached values and viewpoints of the participants are necessary for understanding a phenomenon (Snelson, 2016). The qualitative method is independent and does not require the researcher to measure variables or test hypotheses about variables (Boddy, 2019). A qualitative method allows a research scholar to collect and examine information about human behavior that could not be done by using numerical analysis (Leung, 2015).

Qualitative researchers use approaches that result in rich textural data rather than statistical outputs (Leung, 2015). Qualitative researchers may confirm the reliability of the information collected is preserved by ensuring that the techniques used to collect the data are reliable, current, and exemplify the intended focus (Leung, 2015). Research scholars may use qualitative methods to theorize relationships, describe concepts, and choose variables of interest (Bennett & McWhorter, 2016). The qualitative method allows researchers to conduct a study in natural settings and detect any unconventional behavior (Snelson, 2016). Qualitative researchers may use the opportunity to interact with participants while collecting data about the phenomenon (Bennett & McWhorter, 2016). Therefore, I chose a qualitative method because it allows research scholars to define and explore how participants understand procedures, methods, and consequences in the perspectives of their experiences within social settings (Gergen, Freeman, & Kenneth, 2015).

Qualitative and quantitative research methods differ fundamentally (Verhage & Boels, 2017). Quantitative research is deductive, as researchers test hypotheses empirically; by contrast, qualitative research is inductive and does not necessitate a theory to begin the research process (Verhage & Boels, 2017). The technique of testing hypotheses is a major aspect of the quantitative method (Morgan, 2015). In quantitative research, scholars may collect information using objective measurements and conduct numerical analysis of hypotheses (Boddy, 2019). A quantitative researcher does not seek the participants' perspectives and experiences to comprehend a phenomenon (Groeneveld, Tummers, Bronkhorst, Ashikali, & van Thiel, 2015). The quantitative method is appropriate for validating studies in which researchers use statistics to test relationships or variances among variables (Jervis & Drake, 2014), which is not the intent of my study.

Research scholars may use a mixed methods approach to conduct a study. The mixed methods approach is beneficial in understanding a phenomenon by examining the differences in the qualitative and quantitative methods (Verhage & Boels, 2017). Research scholars conducting a mixed methods study inquire about the process of designing, executing, and mixing qualitative and quantitative information (Bentahar & Cameron, 2015). The mixed methods approach is suitable as a triangulation method but necessitates time and effort to construct because the researcher must implement both the qualitative and quantitative methods proficiently (Jervis & Drake, 2014). The mixed methods approach is not applicable for this research study because quantitative components are beyond the scope of the study.

Research Design

For this study, I took into consideration three research strategies: phenomenology, narrative, and case study. Of the three strategies, phenomenology and the narrative design did not support the purpose of this study. I used a single case study design to answer the research question. The selection of the research design includes important indicators about the data the researcher is attempting to evaluate (Yin, 2015).

Phenomenology is a philosophical and methodological notion that may be useful when scholars try to gain a deeper understanding of an event (Ziakas & Boukas, 2014). The objective of the phenomenological design is to expand and better comprehend the range of immediate experiences (Zwier, Blok, & Lemmens, 2016). The phenomenological design is beneficial when the researcher seeks to comprehend the participants' lived experiences and realities through the perspectives of others, excluding the situation (Yin, 2015; Ziakas & Boukas, 2014). The phenomenological design is an exact depiction of an experience minus its psychological origin (Ziakas & Boukas, 2014). Therefore, the phenomenology design was not applicable for this study.

Researchers may use a narrative design to describe, explore, and discuss the participants' stories about their life experiences (Seal & Mattimoe, 2016). Individuals narrate the same phenomenon in numerous ways and ascribe distinctive meanings and explanations to their experiences (Kourti, 2016). Researchers use the narrative design to concentrate solely on the meanings and stories individuals contribute to their reality to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Makrygiannakis & Jack, 2018). The purpose of this study is not to explore community cultures for a long period; therefore, the narrative design is not suitable for this study.

A case study design is beneficial when the researcher seeks to investigate real-life phenomenon within an environmental context (Ridder, 2017). Researchers use descriptive single case study designs to examine an individual or small group of individuals, businesses, or strategies by reviewing one or more forms of information through observations, private interviews, and multiple sources of data (Omair, 2015; Yin, 2015). A case study design is useful when the researcher attempts to reflect on the participants' viewpoints, which may affect the study's validity (Ladeira, Santini, Pinto, Araujo, & Fleury, 2014). A case study design is the ideal choice for scholars to explore single or numerous circumstances using numerous sources of data to comprehend a phenomenon (Omair, 2015). A case study design is experimental and covers the how and why of a research question to get a thorough understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2015).

A multiple case study includes the examination of more than one unit of inquiry to address the research question being explored (Bager-Elsborg, 2018). Multiple case studies offer a more difficult and broad approach than a single case study research due to the triangulation of data (Bager-Elsborg, 2018). Multiple case studies are applicable when the researcher seeks rigorous methodology for replication logic (Pashaei & Olhager, 2017). A single case study design is applicable when the researcher attempts to explore a modern subject that may be hard to differentiate between the phenomenon under study and its context (Ridder, 2017). The single case study design is appropriate to explore the retention strategies business leaders need to retain skilled employees in the fast food industry; this strategy offers clear data for exhaustive analysis and understanding of problems in their natural life setting (Ridder, 2017). Data saturation is the process of absorbing data during the course of analysis (Morse, 2015). Collecting sufficient data helps ensure the dependability of the results (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2015). Qualitative researchers seek data saturation to ensure they have addressed the research question (Kiernan & Hill, 2018). Data saturation is the point when no extra concepts, themes, or classifications transpire from the last participant interviewed (Malterud et al., 2015). As the researcher, I purposefully selected business leaders who have a sufficient amount of tenure within the fast food industry and possess experience in implementing retention strategies to retain skilled employees. Data saturation is obvious when data are redundant and when additional information collected adds little or no value to the research study (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015). For this study, I continued the data collection process until the information begins to replicate, which indicates the achievement of data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study was a minimum of five business leaders within one fast food restaurant located in Southern Mississippi. The population and sampling method must align with the intent of the research, the research problem or phenomenon, and the research methodology (Argerich & Cruz-Cazares, 2017; Gentles et al., 2015). Qualitative researchers use sampling to obtain helpful information in order to understand the phenomenon and not to represent the population (Boge & Salaj, 2017). An appropriate sampling method allows the researcher to select a relevant sample of participants with the ability to provide insightful data about a phenomenon (Boge & Salaj, 2017). A case study design in a qualitative study allows researchers to use a smaller sample size to obtain rich descriptions of a phenomenon (Robinson, 2014; Yin, 2015).

Qualified participants met the following criteria to participate in this study: (a) have been employed for a minimum of 5 years; (b) have experience implementing retention strategies; (c) are at least 18 years of age or older; and (d) either possess a high school diploma, general educational development diploma (GED), or a 4-year college degree. Through an email reply or signed form of consent, I confirmed each participant met the outlined criteria. I selected each participant through purposeful sampling.

Purposive selection includes picking participants who meet specific criteria. Researchers who use purposive sampling construct a detailed analysis of the phenomenon (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Homogenous sampling simplifies the use of small samples and the addition and elimination of certain situations increases homogeneity (Robinson, 2014). For an interview-based case study, Robinson (2014) suggested a sample size of one might be adequate to address the research question.

The sample size of a study refers to the number of participants from whom researchers gather information during the data collection process (Fugard & Potts, 2015). Qualitative scholars using a case study design may use a smaller sample size to collect data from at least two independent sources (Morse, 2015). The objectives of qualitative scholars during the sample size process is not how big the sample size is but collecting consistent data to obtain a systematic understanding of the research problem (Colombo, Froning, Garcìa, & Vandelli, 2016). Researchers may consider the participants' experience and skillset when selecting a sample size for a qualitative research. In a previous doctoral study, Gandy (2015) conducted a study with a sample of four participants to examine small business tactics business leaders used to encourage company profitability and sustainability.

In qualitative research, the establishment of a sample size is circumstantial and somewhat dependent upon the scientific model under which exploration is taking place. Qualitative samples must be large enough to reveal significant data, but not be so large that ample information is redundant (Parker & Northcott, 2016). Boddy (2016) suggested that qualitative research slanted towards positivism will necessitate a bigger sample size than detailed qualitative research does, so that a descriptive picture of the entire population under review can be gained. The most appropriate sample size is one that adequately answers the research question (Malterud et al., 2015). Some scholars need a minimum sample size of five participants to participate in their research study to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A sample size with a minimum of one participant may be highly instructive and validated in examples from management and medical research (Boddy, 2016). The proper size of a sample is one where the research scholar obtains all relevant data, and this may possibly be as small as one participant (Yin, 2015).

Reaching data saturation is a required component in qualitative research; scholars must continue gathering data until the information becomes repetitive (Colombo et al., 2016). Researchers may enhance the reliability and validity of qualitative research studies by attaining data saturation (Morse, 2015). Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that one of the goals of qualitative researchers is to achieve data saturation. Researchers may use a case study design to collect data from numerous sources to achieve data saturation (Harvey, 2015). To ensure data saturation, I interviewed business leaders with a tenure of five years and have experience implementing retention strategies in the fast food industry. I continued interviewing the participants, and adding participants if necessary, until data saturation is achieved.

I interviewed the participants in a quiet and relaxing setting. Participants tend to openly respond to interview questions and provide honest feedback when the interviews are held in a comfortable environment (Harvey, 2015). I conducted the interviews at the convenience of the participants. The interviews took place at a private location with no distractions. I conducted the face-to-face interviews within an hour or less.

Ethical Research

Ethical issues may occur when a research study includes human participants (Madikizela-Madiya, 2017). For this study, human participants answered 6 interview questions (see Appendix A). Yin (2015) suggested that research scholars reveal each part of a qualitative study to the participants. The concept of ethical concerns in research necessitates validation, which entails disclosure of the aspects in the study to the participants (Gaus, 2017). Researchers must use informed consent forms to abide by the ethical application process during the course of study.

Before I engaged with the participants, I obtained permission from the Walden University’s IRB. Upon the receipt of IRB approval, the institution provided me with authorization number 10-04-19-0336902, which I included in the informed consent form. I sent each research participant an informed consent form via email, which specified the actions taken during this study. The participants signed the informed consent form or replied to the email with “I consent” in order to participate in the study.

An ethical procedure is a tool used by researchers to protect study participants. Ethical procedures permeate the complete research method and scholars should not relegate principled practices to a tested application in a research study (Sturm, 2017). Kim (2017) argued that researchers are accountable for (a) informing research participants about the consequences of their participation, (b) protecting the participants’ confidentiality, and (c) protecting participants from mischief. The Walden University informed consent form is one technique scholars may use to safeguard study participants. The consent form includes a full disclosure explaining the purpose and scope of the research, participant confidentiality, and the protection of data.

The participants may voluntarily participate in this study and can withdraw at any time before the data analysis phase begins. If a participant asks to withdraw from a study, researchers must cease any communications or relations with the research subject and abolish any information gathered from the participant (Gaus, 2017). As the researcher, I ensured the ethical actions of this study were appropriate by following the guidelines of the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The informed consent form included details about the withdrawal process. The participants had the option to withdraw from the study by notifying the researcher either by email or by telephone.

In research, scholars may entice the participants with monies, gift cards, vouchers, or items with cash value (Berger, 2015). Researchers must confirm that the value of the incentives will not affect the quality or consistency of the information participants provide (Berger, 2015). Proposing participants incentives may help scholars acquire enough subjects to increase the consistency and validity of the research findings (Berger, 2015). Although posing incentives can be useful and help influence data saturation, the participants did not receive any type of incentive for participating in this research study.

Research scholars must create acceptable measures to secure information gathered during the data collection, data analysis, and data storage process in order to safeguard the rights and privacy of the participants (Yin, 2015). As the researcher, I obtained oral approval of the informed consent form and authorization to record the participants prior to each interview. To protect the participants' confidentiality, I assigned each participant an identifier. I ensured data saturation by creating an excel spreadsheet which converts the transcription information into codes and themes. For 5 years, I stored data obtained during the study in a locked file cabinet within my home. I abolished the data linked with the doctoral study at the end of the data storage period.

Data Collection Instruments

For qualitative single case studies, the researcher serves as the main tool for gathering and analyzing data (Merriam, 2014). Researcher scholars may use various data collection methods to gather data, such as observations, review of records, and interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Researchers may conduct structured, unstructured, or semistructured interviews for their research study (Baskarada, 2014). The research scholar should consider the most suitable data collection method to implement in the beginning of the research process and determine if enough data exists to support the research problem (Lewis, 2015). If researchers choose to collect information through group discussions, in-depth interviews, or observations, the data collection technique needs to be suitable for the research topic (Keenan et al., 2017). As the researcher and primary data collection instrument, I conducted semistructured face-to-face interviews for this study because I was seeking open-ended feedback from the participants regarding specific themes.

Face-to-face interviews permit participants to communicate openly and contentedly to offer clear, detailed data about a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Research scholars may ask semistructured research questions to capture the participants' experiences through their perspective (Borger, Van Hoof, & Sanders, 2016). Each interview consisted of six interview questions highlighting the participants' viewpoints and experiences on which retention strategies business leaders need to implement to retain skilled employees in the fast food industry. As the main data collection instrument, I was responsible for confirming that there is cohesiveness between the principal research question and the research questions. I used an audio recording to capture the participants' responses to the interview questions. As the researcher, I documented notes taken during each interview and used a word processor to type out the research findings.

Documentation obtained from the organization under study is the secondary data source for this research study. I used organizational documents and interviews to confirm the information through triangulation. Jackson (2018) posited that triangulation is supported by both its method to epistemological and ontological journey; a technique of relating theories and methods to improve outcomes. The intent of triangulation is to use various sources of data to converge lines of inquiry through numerous measures of similar phenomenon (Yin, 2015). Research scholars may implement member checking and triangulation of data sources in their study to increase the reliability and validity of the study (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015).

Member checking confirms the information captured is correct and supports the analytical data process (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). To improve the validity and reliability of information collected for a research study, researchers may use member checking and an interview protocol to decrease discrepancies during the data collection process (Keenan et al., 2017). In a qualitative study, member checking is practical when the research scholar transcribes the participants' responses to ensure data saturation (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). Following the recommendations by Harvey (2015) I completed four steps to finalize member checking: (a) synthesize the data collected prior to completing each participant's interview, (b) provide each participant with a printed copy of the synthesized data, (c) confirm if the participants' responses signify the data synthesized, and (d) continue the procedure till there is no new information. Each participant received a copy of my findings to ensure the information discussed was not misinterpreted.

Data Collection Technique

Once I obtained IRB approval, I contacted the selected organization's manager to distribute the informed consent and invitation via email. The participants did not have to sign the letter of consent. Each participant could respond to the email with the expression *I consent* as a means to accept the invitation to participate in the study. In addition, if the participants chose not to participant in the study, they were not required to respond to the emailed invitation. Once I obtained consent from the participants, I contacted each participant to schedule a mutually agreed upon date, time, and location to discuss the interview protocol (see Appendix B). Each of the interviews took place as quickly as possible on different dates. I did not offer the participants incentives for participating in this research study.

Research scholars should use semistructured interviews to conduct a qualitative case study because it provides the chance for follow-up questions (Ziebland & Hunt, 2014). A researcher may use four different types of interviews when conducting a qualitative study: (a) focus groups, (b) face-to-face interviews (c) telephone interviews, and (d) electronic mail. A research scholar may use any of the interview types to gather information. For this qualitative study, I collected data through a face-to-face semistructured interview process. The primary data collection tool was semistructured interviews. A semistructured interview is an effective technique to collect data for a qualitative case study (Yin, 2015).

The interview process is for researchers to gather data based on the how and what (Yin, 2015). Data collecting techniques among researcher scholars include the use of electronic media, transcribed documents, direct observations, and face-to-face interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For this qualitative study, the main data collection technique includes asking the participants open-ended interview questions through face-to-face semistructured interviews, creating field notes, and evaluating the organization's documentation (training manual, employee handbook, & bulletin). Research scholars use semistructured interviews as a tool to interact directly with participants in order to draw important data from open-ended questions (Baskarada, 2014). In addition to taking notes, I used an audio recorder to help me recall information discussed during the interview sessions, with the participants' permission. Researchers may use electronic devices to record clear data in a quite location (Taylor et al., 2015). Patton (2015) emphasized that recording with digital devices such as audio recorders and notebooks is useful for collecting data. During the interview process, researchers may take notes pertaining to verbal cues (feedback) and nonverbal cues (body language and facial expression) from the participants (Patton, 2015). In addition to collecting primary data, I collected secondary data from the organization's documentation on employee turnover from the years 2014-2019, as well as bulletins and emails.

For this qualitative study, face-to-face semistructured interviews were the primary source for collecting data. Face-to-face semistructured interviews consist of advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages of face-to-face interviews is the participants offer useful information about their experiences (Fitzgerald, Platt, Heywood, & McCambridge, 2015). Face-to-face interviews allow a research scholar and participants the opportunity to examine a theme in order to gain insight into a specific topic or problem (Taylor et al., 2015). The research participant may reply to a question that may remind him or her of overlooked data or an experience that formerly appeared insignificant (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The disadvantages of a research scholar conducting face-to-face semistructured interviews is the dialogue may extend to the researcher being influential, the participant may view the interview as being intrusive, and the participant responding to questions to appease the researcher (Yin, 2015). There is the likelihood of misunderstanding of questions and answers (Baskarada, 2014). Face-to-face interviews necessitate prolonged commitment to gathering and examining data. To manage the disadvantages of the data collection, I motivated each participant to take time answering the research questions and requested clarification throughout the interview process (Topkaya, 2015).

After conducting each interview, I analyzed and synthesized the information collected from each research participant. I used member checking in order for the participants to assess the information captured to confirm accuracy. Qualitative research scholars may use member checking to confirm they are meeting data saturation (Ziebland & Hunt, 2014). Data saturation exists when there is no up to date data presented (Tran, Porcher, Falissard, & Ravaud, 2016). Researchers may use member checking to ratify the data captured is correct (Harvey, 2015). Once the interviews are completed, I gave the participants forty-eight hours to review the transcribed information. During this timeframe, I allowed the participants to modify any data that was misinterpreted or incorrect.

The secondary data collection source is organizational documents. I requested a copy of the employee handbook and ethical policy from the organization's human resource management (HRM) department. In addition, I reviewed the organization's mission statement, vision statement, and leadership principles by means of the organization's website. I used organizational documents and synthesized transcripts to triangulate the data associated with retention strategies in fast food industries. The organizational documents authenticated the information obtained from the interviews. Yin (2015) suggested scholars gather data from two independent sources when conducting a research study. Using numerous data collection methods stimulate credibility and allow researchers to reach data saturation (Yin, 2015). Research scholars may examine documents as one method to collect data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Data Organization Technique

Data organization is essential to control information collected. For this research study, the organization of data entailed member checking and recording the participants' responses into Microsoft Word and inputting data into the qualitative software NVivo12. During the data collection process, I used an audio recorder to record the participants' responses to specific questions. Research scholars may use NVivo12 to arrange and group information into themes. NVivo 12 is a computer analysis software researchers use to analyze data (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015). NVivo 12 allows researchers to manage information, disclose themes, query and graphically model concepts, and report the facts (Woods et al., 2015).

NVivo 12 software helps research scholars logically analyze the information collected in qualitative studies (Woods et al., 2015). Researchers may use NVivo 12 software to generate dependable outcomes to help answer the central research question (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). In comparison to other qualitative data analysis software such as Atlas.ti, researchers may choose NVivo 12 because it is user friendly and compatible with other computer programs such as Microsoft Word (Sotiriadou et al., 2014). Although Atlas.ti and NVivo include comparable functionalities, I prefer to use NVivo because of the software capabilities to import and store data from transcripts, audio recordings, and literature (Woods et al., 2015). In addition, NVivo allows the researcher to sort, arrange, and examine data (Woods et al., 2015). To safeguard the participants' identity, I labelled the interviews as PI1 through PI5, for recordings, transcriptions, and additional documentation. To sustain the participants' privacy, I secured all raw data, using an encrypted USB drive, for 5 years in a protected file cabinet.

Data Analysis

Research scholars may align, shorten, review, and summarize findings through data analysis (Wilson, 2014). I asked the participants six interview questions based on the expectancy motivation theory to help support the research. In order to meet methodological triangulation, I used a semistructured technique with open-ended interview questions.

There are five components for analyzing data. The five components are (a) gather information, (b) disassemble, (c) construct, (d) simplify, and (e) conclude (Yin, 2015). I began the data process with a thorough review of the literature. I then collected documents and rich textural data through semistructured interviews. Researchers may disassemble information in a controllable manner (Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue, 2014). According to Yin (2015), data are considered constructed or reassembled when it is coded and grouped by the researcher. When the research scholar finishes data organization and generates practical components or themes, the following step is to simplify the information. The last step in the data analysis process is for the researcher to conclude the research findings based on the information construed in the previous step. After I complete the five steps, I aligned the data into proper themes, synthesizing the data findings and making a decision based on my understanding of the research findings.

Research scholars use methodological triangulation to reveal a cluster of data collected from divergent sources to authenticate the comparison in the research findings (Yin, 2015). Methodological triangulation is valuable when individuals are able to obtain a large wealth of knowledge on the research topic, rather than depending on one data collection technique for validity (McAbee, Landis, & Burke, 2017). The research scholar is responsible for choosing appropriate data sources in order to provide value to the research study (Chen et al., 2014). If a researcher uses multiple sources to gain an in-depth understanding of the research problem, the researcher will likely improve his or her understanding of the data collected. For this qualitative study, I used methodological triangulation to validate the data analysis process. Methodological triangulation is the assimilation of data collected from numerous sources, to validate the consistency in a research finding (Yin, 2015). During the research process, I used methodological triangulation for validity. The use of methodological triangulation gives research scholars the opportunity to obtain a wealth of data (McAbee et al., 2017).

Research scholars can use computer-assisted qualitative data software to lessen their chances of mistakes during the data analysis process. Thomas (2017) argued that several research scholars recommended NVivo as a useful tool to code and identify specific themes and important patterns in research. Researchers may use NVivo to generate themes with partial mistakes during the coding and theme collection phases (Harvey, 2015). Computer-assisted qualitative data software may aid research scholars in understanding the data coded, implement noteworthy searches, and assemble the information into a structured framework. After the member checking process, I used NVivo software to organize the data collected, manage the data, query data, create models of the data, report data findings, and improve the overall quality of my research.

Selecting a theme is one of the requirements of a research scholar when conducting a qualitative study. Researchers use the following steps to select adequate themes: (a) search for repetitious words, (b) identify indigenous categories, (c) pinpoint subthemes, (d) categorize themes by the level of importance, and (e) link themes to the theoretical framework and central research question (Wray, 2016). In addition, research scholars may sort themes by type, which may make it easier to identify the main themes and the subthemes. I chose themes centered on the guidance of Wray (2016) in order to increase the quality of this research study. I used interviews and documents to associate significant themes within the academic and professional literature until no additional data transpires to warrant data saturation.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability of research entails statements of truths, standardization, and accurate measurements (Eisner, 2017). In qualitative research, scholars seek to create consistency through trust in rigorous research practices (Taylor et al., 2015). Data analysis techniques and constant repetition of research principles involving the validation of collecting information and assessment aid researchers in building trust with the participants in their research study (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Taylor et al. (2015) affirmed there are numerous aspects of qualitative consistency or validity. The aspects consist of dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

Reliability

In qualitative research, scholars may establish a trustworthy study by implementing strategies that consists of data reliability and validity (Taylor et al., 2015). Reliability in research is the dependability of qualitative study outcomes over a period of time (Nobel & Smith, 2015). Scholars may create the reliability of research by assuring the dependability of the study. To establish dependability in a research study, the scholar confirms that the research technique and strategy align with the interview questions and the research question (Munn, Porritt, Lockwood, Aromataris, & Pearson, 2014). Over a period, researchers may confirm dependability and data stability by using numerous research settings (Elo et al., 2014).

A study is considered reliable when information collected from one study results in outcomes of comparable studies, by means of the data collection instruments of the initial study (Nobel & Smith, 2015). For this study, I provided detailed examples of how the research question, research design, and overreaching question align. The research scholar throughout the beginning stages of the research project, which require clear direction, notates dependability in research as a series of actions (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). In addition, the scholar's research question, literature review, and theoretical framework need to be concise during the planning stage of the research study in order to ensure dependability occurs (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Research studies illustrate signs of dependability if the process of choosing, explaining, and implementing research approaches and techniques project clear data (Taylor et al., 2015). Misunderstanding the data may weaken the validity of the research; therefore, member checking is necessary (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015).

Validity

In qualitative research, the validity contains the research scholar's forward planning of the study's design and methodology prior to engaging in the research process

(Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). The validity of the research study incorporates the chosen research methodology, design, size of the sample, and data collection methods and analysis as they correlate to the principal research question (Leung, 2015). Researchers may use credibility, transferability, and confirmability to determine the value of a study (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Percy, Kostere, and Kostere (2015) described credibility as directing research that produces reasonable results. Credibility is apparent when the researcher presents a precise picture of the studied phenomenon (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

Methodological Triangulation

I used methodological triangulation and member checking to ensure credibility of this research study. Methodological triangulation is when researchers use numerous data collection sources to examine a phenomenon (Taylor et al., 2015). I conducted semistructured interviews and review the organization's documents through methodological triangulation in order to confirm the credibility of this study. Member checking is an additional source researchers may use to stimulate credibility (Morse, 2015).

Member checking is a plan research scholars use to guarantee dependability (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Through member checking, scholars may authenticate the truthfulness of the interview with the interviewee to warrant precise explanations of the interview (Morse, 2015). Member checking implicates captivating the research scholar's understanding of the information back to the study participants to approve the credibility of the analysis (Boblin, Ireland, Kilpatrick, & Lewis, 2015). Member checking is the desired validation technique for qualitative scholars to use for interviews (Morse, 2015). Research participants may simplify and correct inaccurate analyses of their interview through member checking (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). I asked the participants to validate the analysis of the themes that transpire from their interviews and the organization's documents.

To warrant transferability, researchers must provide a thorough explanation of the research context (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Transferability is the scholar's ability to relate the results of one research study to another situation (Percy et al., 2015). When the researcher is able to provide a thorough explanation of their study, prospective readers can determine if the results of the study are transferable to an additional context (Lewis, 2015). To ensure transferability of this research study, I provided a clear account of the research framework, research participants, analysis, and outcomes; however, forthcoming readers and scholars can decide if the outcomes of this research study are transferable to additional context.

Confirmability is the point, which the findings of a research study precisely, transfers the involvements of the participant rather than the research scholar (Taylor et al., 2015). In qualitative research, research scholars may increase confirmability by providing readers of the study with the new data, analyses of interviews, transcribed documents, tables, and graphs (Salminen-Tuomaala, Leikkola, & Paavilainen, 2015). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), member checking is one technique researchers can use to encourage confirmability (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

In qualitative research, attaining data saturation or the point where no additional themes exists from the original data is essential to the quality of the study (Elo et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Percy et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). To ensure redundancy, research scholars must gather information preceding the point of saturation because there is no specific formula for calculating data saturation for qualitative research (Eisner, 2017). There is the probability of omitting opportunities to link concepts while working with an unsaturated data set (Percy et al., 2015). Correspondingly, Marshall and Rossman (2016) mentioned that the value of qualitative research escalates to the point of saturation. Gathering information after the saturation point may stop research scholars from guiding a profound analysis of the data (Percy et al., 2015).

Transition and Summary

Section 2 validated the research method and approaches to conduct the study. The objective of this study was to explore strategies some business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees. Section 2 included the role of the researcher, participants, the research method and design, data collection and analysis, and the reliability and validity of the data collection process. In Section 3, I presented the findings of the study, consents for real-world application of the collected data, an overview of the doctoral journey, and concluded with a summary.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies some business leaders in the food industry use to retain skilled employees. The specific population for this study was transformational business leaders at one Southern Mississippi food restaurant who have retained skilled employees for more than 5 years. The results of the study may contribute to enhancing organizational sustainability and increase organizational growth and profitability, which in turn may lead to potential job opportunities and encourage economic growth in local communities.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was, What retention strategies do business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees? I used methodological triangulation of the interview and documentation data collected to support the validity and reliability of the study. In addition, I used member checking to confirm the accuracy of the data interpreted from the semistructured interviews. Data were collected from (a) transcriptions of semistructured interviews conducted with the five participants and (b) the organization's documentation (one training manual, one employee handbook, and the vision and mission statements).

I imported all the data collected into NVivo 12, which I used to store, organize, code, and analyze the data. I explored data from the sources and placed the information into nodes. Each node was sorted into parent nodes (i.e., themes) based on similarities and unique relationships. From the parent nodes, I categorized the nodes into three central themes: (a) communication, (b) positive reinforcement, and (c) training. I used character codes P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 to identify each participant. Table 1 illustrates the themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Table 1

List of Major Themes

Central themes	Sources	References
Communication	9	32
Positive Reinforcement	7	36
Training	7	30

Theme 1: Communication

Communication was the first theme to emerge in this study. The communication theme resulted from the organization's documentation and participants' interview responses. Each of the participants acknowledged communication as a strategy some business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees (P1 – P5). Table 2 represents aggregated findings of a text query narrowed to reveal the strategies and references of the major theme *communication*. The references are patterns identified and developed from the data collected. Table 2 displays a thematic synthesis of the significance of communication, as expressed by the participants, based on a text generalization query. Each of the participants indicated that communication improved employee retention.

Table 2

Communication Strategies

Communication strategy	Participants	References
Feedback and evaluation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5	24
Internal communication	P2, P3, P4	15
Open-door policy	P3, P5	8
Face-to-face communication	P4, P5	7
Top-down communication	P1	4

All of the participants indicated constant feedback and evaluation was a standard in the managerial process. Performance management is an ongoing practice that business leaders could use to assess employees and provide feedback and coaching for growth development in the organization (Steelman & Wolfeld, 2018). P1 stated, “During evaluations, I discuss with employees areas of improvement and areas they have excelled in.” This quotation is consistent with the finding that Heller (2017) indicated regarding business leaders have to be specific with their feedback and find meaningful mechanisms to resolve issues the employee is encountering. P2 expressed, “During the evaluations, I reiterate to the employees that there are numerous opportunities within the company, but the employee has to be willing to stretch out of their comfort zone.”

Performance evaluations and feedback offer opportunities for business leaders to foster relationships with employees (Hendijani, Bischak, Arvai, & Dugar, 2016). P3 indicated, “Employee evaluation and feedback sessions are meaningful because it helps the manager understand the employee's needs." Evaluating an employee's performance is essential to make sure that the organization is making modifications based on individual employee needs and these needs manifest in continuing performance assessments (Hendijani et al., 2016). To confirm the participant's statement, I referenced the organization's employee handbook. The employee handbook indicated, "Managers and subordinates are strongly encouraged to discuss job performance and goals on an informal, day-to-day basis." P4 pointed out, "Communication and feedback is keen in retaining employees." Ongoing performance management is a key practice for constructing a bold organization, increasing employee retention, and providing opportunities for employees (Heller, 2017). P5 stated, "The employee's feedback is important because it makes them a part of the decision-making process and it helps make the work environment more conducive." The employee handbook noted, "Performance appraisals are an instrument for supporting communication between the employee and management." In order to shape the health of the organization, leaders should conduct routine evaluations and provide feedback to their employees so that they can work from a standpoint of clarity (Kipfelsberger, Herhausen, & Brunch, 2016).

Business leaders can use internal communication as a strategy to influence employee engagement. Internal communication is an infrastructure for sharing pertinent, thorough, present, and accurate information among employees and management electronically (Wiencierz & Rottger, 2017). Internal communications include technical features that require the handling of a selection of communication channels. For example, the communication channels may include the intranet, messaging app, e-mail, and social media in the workplace (Carbonell, Martin-Alzazar, & Sanchez-Gardey, 2018). Internal communication helps management reach their employees with instant electronic notifications (Wiencierz & Rottger, 2017). P2 discussed the significance of internal communication to increase employee retention in the workplace. Internal communication allows employees to discuss their thoughts, improve productivity, and sustain a connection between their coworkers and management within the organization. Internal communication could sway an employee's performance and behavior (Kang & Sung, 2017). P2 stated, "Employee engagement can increase profits, which results in organizational proceeds." Internal communication is a critical factor to increase employee retention (Kang & Sung, 2017). In addition, internal communications in the workplace reinforce to the employees that their workplace contributions are appreciated. Illustrating this point, the organization's handbook specified, "The organization provides an assortment of electronic communications systems to carry out its business and keep the employees abreast of upcoming news." P3 stated, "Employees are encouraged to use the internal communication systems to ask questions or express concerns that he/she does not feel comfortable discussing in an open forum." Through the review of company documents, I observed e-mail messages between an employee and the manager, which specified that the employee was disgruntled about a previous situation that recently took place. P3 indicated, "All electronic communications are monitored closely by the Information Technology Department." To confirm this statement, I reviewed the employee handbook. The organization's handbook specified, "The Company may access and disclose all data or messages stored on its systems or sent over its electronic mail system."

Adequate and persistent communication helps employees understand what happens in the organization and allows them to commit to reaching the organization's objectives and stay engaged, which decreases retention (Cope & Murray, 2017). P4 discussed the importance of constant communication to improve retention. P4 stated, "There is no such thing as over-communicating." Using various communication tools such as the company intranet, text messaging, and email to distribute information keeps employees informed and improves retention. P4 stated, "In the fast food industry, it is hard to relay messages to employees without verbally communicating. This industry includes various age groups. Each age group has a preference on how they like to receive communications." P4 used text messaging to relay communications to the younger age group. P4 stated, "Employees 40 plus typically like to receive communications on the bulletin board or via email." Communication tools such as the intranet, emails, and cell phones make it possible for employees to get or save routine communication (Cope & Murray, 2017).

P3 discussed the prominence of building an environment of open communication to increase employee retention. P3 discussed concerns with employees, provided input, listened to questions, and employed suggestions to sustain open communication. Open communication can be influential to employees, which in turn has a positive effect on employee retention (Kim et al., 2017). The company's handbook specified, "Employee suggestions for improving the organization's operations are always welcome. Employee complaints or questions are of concern to the organization." Business leaders in the fast food industry can use open-door policies to sway the employee's decision to communicate (Ortiz, Chiu, Wen-Hai, & Hsu, 2016). P3 stated, "Using open communication can help employees understand organizational objectives and what assets are available to achieve those goals." P3 stated, "An open-door policy has helped retain employees. I think an open-door policy helps build the employee's trust with management, which stems from open communication." According to P3, "It is my belief that all employees want to feel valued. Therefore, it is management's duty to keep their employees abreast of things going on within the organization." P5 expressed, "Without an open-door policy, the team morale could plummet, which could hinder performance." P5 also stated an open-door policy is a great opportunity for management to hone on their listening skills and provide meaningful input to their employees."

P4 and P5 addressed the importance of one-on-one communication sessions to increase employee retention.

P4 indicated,

> Management has bi-weekly meetings with the employees to discuss company business and any other concerns the employees want to address. Management posts the meeting times on the employee bulletin board, which is visible to all employees in the store. During the face-to-face meetings, I always address attendance and punctuality.

The employee handbook states, "Each employee is expected to be punctual and regular in attendance. Any tardiness or absence causes problems for your fellow employees and management." P5 used one-on-one communication sessions to provide employees with a chance to express their concerns about issues they were unwilling to discuss during team meetings. Individual sessions are a form of employee engagement that can enhance an employee attitudinal and behavior outcome that improve retention (Kang & Sung, 2017). P5 stated, "One-on-one communication sessions were used to discuss the employees' concerns and to offer feedback to help the employees be prosperous. Specific matters are not required, and employees should ask questions as well." The objective of the individual sessions is to develop a rapport with the employees (Sarker & Ashrafi, 2018). P5 stated, "One-on-one communication sessions were important to retain working relationships."

P1 discussed the importance of effective communication to improve employee retention. P1 stated, "Effective communication is the best leadership strategy for this industry. Employees want to know first-hand what is going on in the organization, and it is management's responsibility to implement a top-down approach to communicate this information."

P1 expressed,

> The information relayed from upper management is usually centered on the organization's mission and vision statements. The mission and vision statements are used to set the employees goal and objectives in order for the organization to be one of the leading restaurants in the industry.

To confirm the participant's statement, I reviewed the organization's mission statement. The mission statement specified, "The mission of this organization is to become the best restaurant in the world." Effective communication between business leaders and their employees has a positive effect on the retention of workers (Ahmad & Bhat, 2018). P1 expressed, "When I communicate with my employees, I want them to understand the information being discussed and share any issues or concerns they may have." The most noteworthy features of communication between employees and business leaders are the reaction from the leader, accompanied by the notion of the leader listening to the employee (Valaei & Rezaei, 2017).

Communication in the workplace was an essential part of industry practices and is consistent with the literature. For the communication theme, the participants collectively provided feedback that expanded the understanding of how business leaders in the fast food industry communicate in ways that form and keep continuous collaboration in the workplace. Communication has a significant role in altering an employee's decisions to stay with an organization (Baciu & Virga, 2018). Ejohwomu, Oshodi, and Lam (2017) indicated that communication plays a vital part in the relationship, trust, and collaboration among business leaders and their employees. Employees greatly value effective communication, which inspires free flow of information to nurture opportunities for experimental learning and swift development (Naim & Lenka, 2017).

Communication allows both supervisors and workers to interact with one another. Effective communication contributes to employee retention. The analysis of the participants' data is consistent with present literature on effective business practice by confirming that the responses obtained from the five business leaders in the fast food industry indicate that communication is an effective strategy to improve employee retention. Due to the high demand for workers in the fast food industry, skilled employees are hard to find and retain (Kundu & Lata, 2017). Employees play an instrumental role in the rate of retention in the fast food industry due to the lack of talent (Ortiz et al., 2016). Business leaders have a critical role in developing effective communication conditions amongst employees in the organization, which depends on their communication skills (Mishra & Mishra, 2017). Employees can align with the goals and objectives of the organization when communication is instituted in the workplace (Ackerson & Stiles, 2018).

The communication theme aligned with the theoretical framework, which was Vroom's expectancy theory. Vroom (1964) posited that employees should do the required work to obtain wanted outcomes. Each of the business leaders used communication to inspire the employees to attain an outcome. Based on the participants' replies, communication was an effective retention strategy used to retain employees.

Communication allows business leaders and employees to discuss feedback, express concerns, and provide solutions to enhance the work environment (Tan, Loi, Lam, & Zhang, 2019). Business leaders in the fast food industry can use communication to understand the employees' goals and desires, keep employees up to date about information that relates to the organization, and offer employees feedback about their progress on the job. Kundu and Lata (2017) argued that employee retention is a challenging concept and there is not a particular formula to retain employees within an organization. Gandolfi and Stone (2017) stated that business leaders could use communication strategies to increase employee retention in the workplace. By engaging in continuous dialogue, all of the participants agreed that communication enhanced employee retention.

In this study, the participants' feedback aligned with Ahlin, Strandberg, Norberg, Ternestedt, and Ericson-Lidmon (2017), who emphasized that the use of a communication protocol could promote the exchange of data, causing an increase in employee retention. All of the participants' input aligned with literature by Gazzola, Ratti, and Amelio (2017), who stated that communication in the place of work, helps employees comprehend the organization's goals, values, and vision and mission statements. Cho and Auger (2017) revealed that collaborative communication where two parties converse, listen, and acquire information sustain long-lasting relationships that develop employee retention.

Theme 2: Positive Reinforcement

The second major theme emphasized during participant interviews highlighted the concept of implementing *positive reinforcement* strategies some business leaders use in the food industry to retain skilled employees. Positive reinforcement emerged from the organization's documentation and participants' interview responses. All of the participants acknowledged positive reinforcement as a retention strategy used to retain skilled employees (P1 – P5). Table 3 represents aggregated findings of a text query narrowed to reflect the references and frequency of the major theme positive reinforcement. The references and frequency are patterns identified and developed from the collected data including interviews and secondary data. Data in Table 3 reflects the importance of positive reinforcement, as expressed by the participants.

Table 3
References and Frequency of Positive Reinforcement

Source	Reference	Frequency (%)
P1, interview questions/organizations' documentation	28	6.24
P2, interview questions/organizations' documentation	17	4.80
P3, interview questions/organizations' documentation	33	7.12
P4, interview questions/organizations' documentation	41	8.35
P5, interview questions/organizations' documentation	38	6.89

P1 stated, "The organization has an internal recognition program. Once a month, we have employee recognitions to recognize an employee for a job well done." Positive reinforcement is composed by material reward stimuli and for individual reward activities, such as special recognition when a job is accomplished better than expected (Esteves, Lopes, Geremias, & Palma, 2018). P2 expressed, "The company offers an employee recognition/reward program. The program offers gift cards and other rewards. Sometimes, I use my own bonus money as an added incentive to engage the employees." To confirm the participant's statement, I reviewed the employee handbook. In the employee handbook, recognition is highlighted and followed by the following statement: "We find reasons to celebrate the achievements of others and have fun doing it." Business leaders may use nonmonetary or monetary rewards to strengthen employee behavior in the workplace (Adawiyah & Pramuka, 2017). P3 added, "The employee recognition program works well because employees like to be recognized for a good job. In addition, employees can be recognized for their years of service based on 5- year increments."

Managers can use positive reinforcement to influence their employees to attain the organization's goals and objectives through assistance, expressed satisfaction, or recognition (Potter, Egbelakin, Phipps, & Balaei, 2018). P4 said, "I think positive reinforcement is essential; especially, when management is trying to maintain a specific behavior within an employee." Positive reinforcement inspires repetitive engagement among employees for the rewarded behavior (Fan-Chen, Cheng, Li, & Teng, 2017). P5 stated, "Employees want to know they are doing a good job at work; therefore, positive reinforcement is beneficial to the organization's overall performance and bottom-line." Paul and Vincent (2018) emphasized that business leaders may use respect, recognition, and rewards to improve employee satisfaction. P1 stated,

> I use the company's success scale as leverage to innovate the employees to extend out of their comfort zone. The success scale is a point system, which mangers may use to leverage employee's success. The success scale allows employees to earn up to 10 points for a job well done. The success scale includes 4 levels: green, yellow, gold, and diamond. The employees are able to use their points to buy items such as shirts etc.

The use of internal rewards programs helps business leaders inspire the employee's self-value, which allows the business to prosper (Adawiyah & Pramuka, 2017). P2 expressed,

> Employees may be eligible for recognition based on the following: fastest cook, who can sell the most cheese for the month, and best customer service. The employee recognition/retention program offers employees gift cards, hats, and sometimes cash ($10-$20).

P3 said, I try to boost the employees' morale by offering the star points system. Employees can earn points for internal contests based on the manager's discretion per store. The employees can use this program to their advantage."

Understanding the employee's worth through recognition, and not exclusively through a monetary payment, can improve employee inventiveness in ways that lead to an increase in the organization's overall performance (Mehta & Dahl, 2018). P4 stated,

> The employee recognition is a good program and I encourage employees to participate. I like doing a team-building tactic outside of the organization. Team building events such as the year-end Christmas party is one initiative the employees look forward to attending.

Recognition for performance and accountability from business leaders offers motivation for the employee and employer to increase the day-to-day operations of the organization (Mehta & Dahl, 2018). P5 indicated, "The recognition program is a good tactic business leader use to retain employees. I think recognition programs have a positive impact not only on employee retention but also on engagement, the organizational culture and employee happiness." The employee handbook states, "We believe in people and encourage ideas from everyone."

Positive reinforcement stems from a pleasurable experience following a behavior that makes it more likely that the behavior will occur again in the future (Wissman & Rawson, 2018). In addition, positive reinforcement can be used as a retention strategy in the workplace to teach employees new skills and inspire them to do their best. Business leaders can use positive reinforcement to nurture loyalty, hard work, and creativity among employees in the workplace (Adawiyah & Pramuka, 2017). A work environment that offers ample resources is bound to nurture fulfilling and reciprocating employees who subsequently believe that their jobs satisfy their need for meaning, security, and belonging (Eldor, 2017). Providing organizational learning resources such as feedback and team learning, and rewards creates a robust employee work bond, develops employees' sense of reciprocity by improving positive feelings such as eagerness and the need to meet specific tasks (Eldor, 2017).

The positive reinforcement theme and the participants' feedback aligned with the theoretical framework, which was Vroom's expectancy theory. Caldwell and Peters (2018) posited that Vroom' expectancy theory suggests that new employees are worried about how they will be valued as an organizational member and if it is possible for them to obtain promised outcomes. Vroom (1964) posited that leaders could stimulate an employee's behavior and performance by instituting positive reinforcement such as rewards in the process. Each of the business leaders used positive reinforcement to inspire the employees to attain an outcome. Based on the participants' replies, positive reinforcement was an effective retention strategy used to retain employees.

For this study, the participants' responses aligned with Mayende and Musenze (2018), who indicated employees who trust that their organization supports them with job resources might cultivate positive attitudes toward other aspects of their employment and consider residing with the organization. All of the participants' feedback aligned with the literature of Esteves et. al (2018), who posited that the aspect of steady employment could trigger employees to take their task assigned casually, could be corrected by rewards. Okpozo, Gong, Ennis, and Ademuga (2017), revealed that business leaders are capable of decreasing the possibility of burnout in the workplace as they offer opportunities, and place employees in situations that facilitate growth and confidence in their job-related skills through positive reinforcement. A business leader's behavior can increase role clarity, personal efficacy and better job outcomes in the work environment such as personal efficacy and employee retention (Gupta, Bhattacharya, Sheorey, & Coelho, 2018).

Theme 3: Training

Training was the third theme that emerged from the data analysis. Each of the participants acknowledged that training was a strategy some business leaders used in the fast food industry to retain skilled employees. However, the theme emerged from the organization's documentation and participants' interview responses. Table 4 represents aggregated findings of a text query narrowed to reflect the references and frequency of the major theme training as expressed by the participants.

Table 4

References and Frequency of Training

Source	Reference	Frequency (%)
P1, interview questions/organizations' documentation	7	1.43
P2, interview questions/organizations' documentation	3	0.89
P3, interview questions/organizations' documentation	11	2.37
P4, interview questions/organizations' documentation	8	1.91
P5, interview questions/organizations' documentation	8	1.38

During the interview process, each of the participants acknowledged training as a tactic used to retain employees. P1 stated, "Training is a collaborative effort between the manager and staff." Training and development support from management consists of encouragement, feedback, helping employees find chances to obtain new information, skills, and it stimulates application of these competencies in the workplace (Park, Kang, & Kim, 2017). P1 conveyed, "Training can be either specific to the individual's job or common to all jobs in the organization."

> The organization's training manual outlined the following information: The Company requires new hires to go through an extensive training, which can be extremely difficult if not done the right way. New employees must be capable of

certain tasks right away, such as answering phones, taking customer orders, and cashing out customers at the front (Employee Training Manual, 2019, p. 5).

The contribution of a knowledgeable manager or employee training a new worker consist of on-the-job training using the tools necessary for accomplishing the job (Chauhan, Ghosh, Rai, & Shukla, 2016). Managers are expected to play a major role in motivating the employees to take part in training programs; providing support before, during, and after a training session in terms of opportunities and resources, decision-making, and encouraging the employees to apply skills that they have learned in the workplace (Chauhan et al., 2016).

P2 emphasized the importance of cross-functional training and development to improve employee retention. P2 stated, “I strongly encourage cross- functional training to all employees to enhance their development within the organization.” Cross-functional training and development efforts can help in the formation of superior quality while cultivating employee outcomes (Murphy, Torres, Ingram, & Hutchinson, 2018). An organization experiencing rapid growth might see the necessity for more cross-functional training and creating career paths for their employees (Murphy et al., 2018). P2 mentioned, “I believe an employee’s happiness stems from competitive pay, recognition, an accelerated career path, and flexible work schedule.” Madera, Dawson, Guchait, and Belarmino (2017) indicated that cross-functional training of employees is imperative to an organization’s overall performance. The lack of cross-functional training within organizations can lead to unwanted outcomes (Madera et al., 2017). Because organizations have their own unique culture, business leaders should incorporate cross-functional learning in the day-to-day operations to ensure the organization's prosperity (Sarfraz, 2017).

Participants P3 and P5 concurred that cross- functional training is a retention strategy that business leaders in the fast food industry may use to retain employees. P3 stated, "I strongly encourage employees to cross train because it is an opportunity for the organization to leverage internal talent." According to the employee handbook, "Employees are constantly encouraged to improve their performance, expand the scope of their responsibilities and help provide training to employees who need it." P5 stated, "I boost cross-functional training because it helps management enhance motivation in the workplace by investing in employees' career growth." Cross-functional training, vigorous selection, reward and benefit, and other Human Resource Management (HRM) practices can augment the value, rarity, non-substitutability and individuality of the organization, to sustain their competitive advantage (Arunprasad, 2017). Training is an effective motivator because it lets employees accomplish their self-actualization, achievement and power needs (Moodley, Hove, & Karodia, 2018).

Continuous training through knowledge sharing is needed in the workplace in order to create a hybrid of knowledge and collaboration (Masalimova & Shaidullina, 2017). P4 expressed, "Inadequate training and poor management skills are critical factors that lead to an employee's willingness to stay employed within the industry." An organization's performance can be improved by educating the people that run the business through continuous training (Ojwang, 2019). Employees favor work environments where they progress, re-invent themselves, learn nonstop, and their ideas are included and encouraged (Ojwang, 2019). P4 explained, “I encourage employees to stretch out of their comfort zone because there are so many opportunities within the organization.” Value creation in the workplace has moved from tangible factors, such as financial resources to intangible assets of production, such as knowledge sharing (Hussinki, Kianto, Vanhala, & Ritala, 2017).

Training plays a vital part in the success of an organization as it offers the employees a chance to develop their competencies (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017). Business leaders could use training as a reliable method to advance the organizational productivity of employees (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017). Training provides employees with the competencies needed to do their work effectively; therefore, employees are pleased with their job because they know what they are doing (Nelesh, Madou, Lugisani, Mabojane, & Phiri, 2018). On-the-job training inspires the development of information, skills, and assertiveness of the people for an individual objective (Sahoo & Mishra, 2017). Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) posited that training entails motivation from upper management to their employees. Motivation to transfer plays an essential part in the transmission of training. It may be difficult for employees to apply learned skills to the place of work without motivation (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017).

The training theme and the participants’ feedback aligned with the theoretical framework of Vroom’s expectancy theory. Vroom (1964) indicated the expectancy variable is what business leaders expect from their employee’s performance. A business leader may enhance their employee’s confidence through factors such as training and ongoing support (Vroom, 1964). Based on the participants' feedback, training was an effective retention strategy used to retain skilled employees.

For this study, the participants' feedback aligned with Chauhan et al. (2016), who indicated that training strengthens peer support as one employee acquires a new duty or requirement from another more knowledgeable worker while carrying out the job. Training replicates a learning process that employees can achieve while doing their job (Masalimova & Shaudullina, 2017). Knowledge sharing is one source of training and relating information from another source, collaborating successfully, and becoming an influential asset to the organization (Bilgihan, Barreda, Okumus, & Nusair, 2016). Training is a crucial tool used by business leaders to sustain employee retention and commitment within organizations (Hadi & Ahmed, 2018).

Applications to Professional Practice

Business leaders in the fast food industry seek to find successful retention strategies (Woodall, Southby, & Trigwell, 2017). The themes identified through the interviews and company documents will provide business leaders with successful strategies to retain skilled employees. Business leaders who understand the factors that influence employee retention could achieve business success. Kolar, Skilton, and Judge (2016) indicated that business leaders who create a work environment, which fosters employee retention strategies, is an advantage for business leaders who thrive in a changing, competitive marketplace. The findings of this study may be helpful to business leaders in the fast food industries that have been unsuccessful implementing communication, training, and positive reinforcement strategies. The findings of this study may also encourage business leaders to modify their current practices.

Leaders who have an effective communication strategy in place might act as a catalyst to an employee’s success. Kundu and Lata (2017) posited that open communication between business leaders and their workers help retain employees and enhance the competency of the organization. Business leaders must continuously communicate with the employees to get the best out of them (Goncalves, 2017). When employees feel vitally important to the organization and know what is expected of them, they will do their best (Prince, Nagar, & Chacko, 2017).

Training is one business practice leaders might use to positively affect the quality of the workers’ knowledge and skills, which results in higher employee performance and retention on the job (Prentice, Wong, & Lam, 2017). Training opportunities facilitate employee engagement (Johnson, Park, & Bartlett, 2018). Business leaders must develop training opportunities in accordance with the organization’s objectives in order to achieve wanted outcomes (Johnson et al., 2018).

Adawiyah and Pramuka (2017) indicated that positive reinforcement is a retention strategy leaders may use to strengthen an employee’s behavior. An organization built on positive reinforcement can nurture trustworthiness, hard work, and creativity (Adawiyah & Pramuka, 2017). Positive reinforcement by business leaders validates the importance of the work of the employees. Rewarding new behaviors forms new positive associations that can override those of the old behavior (Fiol & O’Connor, 2017). Employees that feel valued are less likely to leave the organization.

Based on my findings for this study, communication, training, and positive reinforcement are factors to consider when developing employee retention strategies. Offering employees, a range of retention strategies improves job satisfaction and commitment, which may decrease turnover intentions (Boonluksiri et al., 2018). Exploring different successfully implemented retention strategies allow business leaders to create tactics that meet the needs of their organization and the employees. Business leaders should create a work environment that is conducive to have open lines of communication, training opportunities, and positive reinforcement tactics. Developing retention strategies that are practical and people-centered increases employee satisfaction, which deters turnover intention (Gostautaite et al., 2018).

Vroom (1964) addressed the need for numerous factors to work together as a whole to accomplish goals. Business leaders who are pursuing methods to increase employee retention may use the strategies identified in this study. In addition, business leaders that can implement an effective strategic retention plan can increase productivity and profitability for the organization.

Implications for Social Change

Engaged employees are skillful, offer better customer service, work better with others, and normally go beyond the expectations of the job (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2017). Engaged workers contribute to the profitability and productivity of the business (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2017). For the business to operate successfully, business leaders with hiring responsibilities in the fast food industry need appropriate skills to attract and retain talent (Sarker & Ashrafi, 2018). When businesses operate profitably, business leaders may reinvest profits and offer continued employment opportunities to employees. Business leaders may execute effective employee retention strategies that possibly could decrease burnout, increase growth, sustain day-to-day operations, and in turn reinforce economic development.

The retention strategies identified in this study such as communication, positive reinforcement and training are reflective and supportive of constructive leader-subordinate relationships, team building, and individual development, which increases employee engagement, commitment, and decreases turnover. One of the top three causes for employees voluntarily leaving an organization is leadership behavior such as failure to develop constructive or productive relationships, the absence of management support, poor treatment of employees, and ineffective communication (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). The application and implementation of recommendations is for business leaders to employ effective retention strategies such as communication, positive reinforcement, and training, which could improve organizational productivity, the employees' morale, and add to the overall success of fast food chains in southern Mississippi. Communities may profit economically because of reduced unemployment rates and local economic stability. Employees in the fast food industry will view their organization as the best place to work because of the workplace culture along with the monetary and nonmonetary benefits.

Recommendations for Action

The recommendations for business leaders in the fast food industry are (a) to develop a work environment that encourages open communication; (b) to develop a rapport between business leaders, employees, and the community; and (c) offer different training and recognition programs to influence employee engagement. Woodall et al. (2017) stated employees should know how they fit within an organization and understand the associations that keep them embedded in the organization. Employees need to understand what they give up when they voluntarily leave an organization and the impact employee turnover has on the community. In order to strengthen the embeddedness in the organization, business leaders need to involve employees in the decision-making process (Woodall et al., 2017). The incorporation of training and recognition programs help employers expand the knowledge base of all employees within the business and lets employees know their contributions are appreciated (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018).

Business leaders should examine the outcomes of this study in order to identify and develop strategies to retain employees in the fast food industry. To promote the dissemination of the findings in this study, distribution will include publication in ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Database for forthcoming researchers and other businesses. Propagation of the abstract will be sent to the research participants to publicize among peers and other business leaders. I will look for opportunities to share the findings within business forums, organizational training sessions, and leadership seminars.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this research was to provide business leaders in the fast food industry with retention strategies to retain skilled employees. I provided five study limitations in Section 1. Limitations refer to matters outside of the researcher’s control and can include impending weakness with the study (Helmich, Boerebach, Arah, & Lingard, 2015). First, the sample size of the study limits the generalizability of the outcome of the study. I only collected data from the managers interviewed within one fast food restaurant in Southern Mississippi. However, the managers' years of experience varied, which somewhat increased the reliability of the results of the study.

Another limitation was the participants' replies to the interview questions were self-reported data, which could encompass personal bias. By interviewing multiple managers, continuing to gather data until I reached data saturation, and triangulating results with organizational documentation, I hoped to mitigate the participants' personal bias. Finally, using the participants' skills and capabilities as the primary tool to gather data limited the depth and richness of the information collected for the study.

Future researchers can address the limitations of this research study (a) by permitting sufficient time to collect data from participants, (b) expanding the sample both in size and scope, and (c) building upon the findings from this study. I would recommend future researchers conduct research pertaining to effective employee retention strategies from different fast food industries in different geographic locations. Future researchers can focus on a more substantial study population size, view larger organizations that include more employees, and management of employees for a minimum of 10 years as opposed to 5 years. I recommend that future researchers consider conducting a mixed methodology study, which would permit numerical data and statistical procedures reinforced by qualitative observations of employee retention strategies.

Future researchers should repeat this study with different populations of managers from rural, suburban, and urban locations to determine if the environment contributes to employee retention. A research study consisting of exit interviews from disgruntled employees may contribute to a better understanding of what factors contribute to employee dissatisfaction and attrition. Finally, research comparing fast food employees to other retail positions may contribute to knowledge on how the type of jobs or responsibilities contributes to retention.

Reflections

I found the doctoral process to be thought provoking, infuriating at times, and rewarding when overcoming the obstacles. I learned that time management and paying attention to details was fundamental to getting through the DBA program. The continuous support of my chair and peers inspired me to stay focused on the goal of becoming Dr. Stallworth. My predetermined notion that compensation was the central factor in retention was confirmed wrong as I went through the literature review and the data collection process. After completing the research study, my thought process changed about the retention strategies business leaders need to retain skilled employees in order to create a collaborative work environment. Sometimes, an employee's well-being can outweigh the financial benefits.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies some business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees. I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews. The themes that emerged from the interviews were (a) communication, (b) positive reinforcement, and (c) training.

To retain employees, business leaders in the fast food industry should invest in the growth and development of employees in a way that appeal to them. When employees work in an atmosphere that is favorable to open communication that allows for feedback and contribution to the decision-making process, rewards and recognition for their contributions, and training options, employees are less likely to be dissatisfied with their job. By implementing the results of this research study, business leaders may retain knowledge, decrease voluntary turnover, improve job satisfaction, and boost productivity that will increase organizational profits.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Research Question

What retention strategies do business leaders in the fast food industry use to retain skilled employees?

Interview Questions

1. What factors do you believe have led to employees leaving the food industry?
2. How have you addressed those factors?
3. What retention strategies and leadership characteristics do you use that are most effective in retaining skilled employees?
4. How do you evaluate the employees' level of job satisfaction, and how do you use that evaluation to improve employee retention?
5. What improvements have you witnessed in reducing voluntary employee turnover because of your efforts?
6. What additional information would you like to share about retention strategies you use to retain skilled employees?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Title: Leadership Strategies for Improving Employee Retention in the Fast Food Industry

The interview protocol will include approaches to form trust and a constructive relationship between the participants. The participants shall review and agree to the guidelines on the informed consent form before returning the document to the researcher.

1. The interview session will begin with introductions between the interviewer and interviewee.
2. At the beginning of the interview session, I will extend my appreciation to each of the participants for participating in this research study.
3. I will tell the participants that each session will be recorded, and the data collected will be transcribed.
4. I will enlighten each participant on what member checking is and how it will be used in this study to ensure reliability and validity of the data collected.
5. In order to participant in the study, the participants shall provide either a signed consent form via mail or approval to participant via email.
6. I will classify each participant with a specific code.
7. Prior to the interview session, I will confirm the participants are comfortable.
8. I will begin the interview session by recording the date, time, location, and identifier code.
9. I will give each participant the allotted time agreed upon for the interview session.
10. The interview session will not extend past one hour.

At the end of the interview, I will extend my gratitude to each participant for taking time to volunteer in this research study.