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Successful Staff Retention Strategies for Small Businesses in the Childcare Sector

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Cheneta M. Yates

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Successful Staff Retention Strategies for Small Businesses in the Childcare Sector

by

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MSA, Audrey Cohen College, 1998

BPS, Audrey Cohen College, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

Employee turnover is a significant issue for many organizations since it frequently results in more extraordinary training expenses, poor performance, and low morale, negatively affecting the bottom line. Small business owners in the childcare industry are especially concerned about employee turnover because it results in the loss of skilled workers and harms children's well-being and educational experiences. Grounded in Vroom's expectancy theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies childcare business owners use to reduce employee turnover. Participants were five business owners in the childcare sector that implemented retention techniques. Interviews with a semi-structured format and an examination of organizational documentation, such as employee performance appraisals, engagement surveys, and turnover reports, were used to collect data. Using thematic analysis, four themes were identified: (a) effective communication through employee involvement, (b) staff recognition and appreciation, (c) competitive incentives, and (d) professional development. A key recommendation for business leaders is to actively communicate, engage, and recognize their staff by giving monetary or nonmonetary incentives, benefits, and opportunities for professional development to increase employee retention. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce staff turnover and build an infrastructure that helps working parents, children, the community, and the economy as a whole.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is lovingly dedicated to my mother, Linda Marie Clarke, whom I lost at the age of 15. My mom emphasized the need to create one's own possibilities. She taught me to have confidence in myself and to realize that I CAN accomplish the impossible. My mother was a genuinely pleasant and compassionate person who encouraged me to excel, flourish, and accomplish my goals. She instilled perseverance within me and created a tangible vision of accomplishment in my mind. I am eternally grateful to her for motivating me to achieve my dreams and aspirations. I absolutely love you, Mommy!

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Employee turnover is a significant problem for many companies as it can often lead to higher training costs, uneven output, and low morale, which ultimately can affect the organization's bottom line (Agha et al., 2017). In the United States, 41.4 million workers voluntarily left their jobs in 2018, accounting for more than 27% of total turnover (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Not only does turnover reflect the sector's loss of educator expertise and experience, but it also disrupts attachment ties with children and families, consequently affecting children's well-being and learning experiences (Raza et al., 2021). Recruiting and retaining enough early childhood staff constitutes an immense financial burden for childcare organizations (Grant et al., 2019). High rates of turnover and vacancies have a heavy impact on financial and human service needs (Skelton et al., 2020); in the childcare sector, insufficient labor can have an adverse impact on service outcomes for children and families (Grant et al., 2019). As these data illustrate, turnover is a key issue for the U.S. childcare sector.

Problem and Purpose

For many business owners, the voluntary turnover of workers is very costly (Mishra & Mishra, 2017). Employee turnover can cost employers 33% of the annual salary of an employee and can impact the overall performance of a company (Hall, 2019). The general business problem is the high rate of employee turnover in United States childcare centers. The specific business problem is that some childcare business owners lack strategies to improve employee retention.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies some childcare business owners use to improve employee retention. The target population consisted of small business owners in the childcare sector in the southeastern United States who had successfully implemented strategies to minimize employee turnover. Implications for positive social change may include providing strategies that small business owners in the childcare sector can use to increase employee retention, which may contribute to employee and community prosperity through stable employment and local economic stability. Workers who retain their positions could potentially live more financially stable lives and have a better quality of life.

Population and Sampling

This study's population consisted of leaders who own small childcare companies in the southeastern United States. I recruited participants via a familiar professional childcare networking group that successfully designed and delivered effective methods to increase employee retention within their organization. For this study, I chose purposive sampling (also known as decision, selective or arbitrary sampling), a sampling technique in which the researcher selects the population to participate in the sample (Sharma, 2017). Although the various purposeful sampling techniques have different aims, researchers can be justified in generalizing from the sample being examined, if such generalizations are theoretical, empirical, and logical in nature (Sharma, 2017). Expert sampling is a type of purposeful sampling that is used when information rooted in specific expertise is desired (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The researcher recruits experts and begins collecting data directly from these individuals (Etikan & Bala, 2017). It also

includes sampling of people who can explain using their expertise or training in specific fields. The reasons for using expert sampling are to provide a better way to build the views of individuals in a particular field (Etikan & Bala, 2017). I used the expert sampling method to reinforce the validity of study findings and to ensure data saturation for this employee retention study. Consequently, I selected participants who had demonstrated positive retention techniques to retain workers for a minimum of 2 years.

The selected sample consisted of five small business owners in the childcare sector in the southeastern United States who had successfully implemented retention strategies within their centers. The right sample size is important during research as the aim is to collect quality data (Harf et al., 2015). Researchers must communicate with enough participants and analyze enough sources to generate useful and exhaustive information on the subject (Cleary et al., 2014; Guetterman, 2015). I collected data from five small business owners of five childcare organizations. I also reviewed employee records and other relevant company documentation to gain a deeper understanding of employee retention phenomenon.

Nature of the Study

I selected the qualitative method for this study. The qualitative method is associated with a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon as the researcher interprets the expressed results of the study (Yin, 2018). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study in which I explored a phenomenon by observing and interpreting strategies in the original setting. The quantitative method involves testing hypotheses and analyzing independent and dependent variables' relationships or

differences using statistical methods (Ridder, 2017). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because I did not examine numerical data for statistical analysis. Researchers use the mixed methods approach to combine qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques and analyses to attain a comprehensive approach to a research question (Ridder, 2017). The mixed-methods approach was not appropriate because I did not need to test a hypothesis, analyze variables' relationships, or interpret categories of data.

I considered three qualitative research designs: phenomenology, ethnography, and case study design. Ridder (2017) noted that phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology for examining people's lived experiences. The main goal of the method is to explain the essence of the specific phenomena (Ridder, 2017). In conducting this study, I did not intend to gain insight into personal lived experiences. The phenomenological technique was, therefore, not an appropriate research strategy for this study. Ethnographic researchers explore the social connections between people focusing on the parameters of what they share. Researchers use the ethnographic design to analyze and interpret cultural and social dimensions (Elmusharaf et al., 2017). The ethnographic method was not appropriate for this study because I did not analyze cultures, ideas, and beliefs.

Researchers use case study designs to investigate the patterns of phenomena in a particular case or a series of multiple cases (Yin, 2018). Researchers can use multiple-case study designs to explore many data sources instead of relying on single case data; including multiple cases can potentially yield richer and more valid data (Yin, 2018). The

multiple-case study design was the most suitable method for this study to explore retention strategies to enhance childcare workers' retention as rich data from, multiple sources was desired to ensure validity.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this study was as follows: What strategies do small business owners in the childcare sector use to improve employee retention?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to minimize employee turnover within your organization?
2. What methods have you put in place that, based on your organization's experience, motivated workers to stay with the organization?
3. How is the effectiveness of the strategies to minimize staff turnover assessed?
4. Based on your organization's experience, what role, if any, do organizational rewards play in retaining employees?
5. What is the organization's most crucial employee retention strategy?
6. How, if any, are the effective strategies represented in the organization's long-term employee sustainability plan?
7. What additional details would you like to provide about your organization's effective methods to improve employee retention?

Conceptual Framework

Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation was the lens I used for this qualitative multiple-case study. The expectancy theory is a framework based on the idea that people

choose their activities based on what they believe will result in the best outcome. This theory is based on how much importance a person spends on certain motivations (Vroom, 1964). Vroom's (1964) approach shows how to motivate team members in different ways, such as by finding out what drives them to do better, giving them better tasks, and setting goals to give them meaningful incentives. Vroom's model focuses on three distinct performance factors—expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Vroom's expectancy theory used these ideas to focus on cognitive factors that show how different people are motivated to do their jobs. Vroom's theory has managerial implications such as effort-to-performance expectations, performance-to-reward expectations, and incentive valences. Using Vroom's expectancy theory as a guide, leaders of organizations should look at the link between efficiency, pay, and motivation. Vroom's expectancy theory was appropriate to explore strategies that small business owners in the childcare sector use to increase employee retention.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions of terms used in this study provide a richer understanding of the research:

Expectancy theory of motivation: A model that states that a person behaves the way they do because they are motivated to choose that action above others because of the outcome they expect from that behavior (Vroom, 1964).

Employee burnout: An employee's occupational strain that grows over periods with no relief of stress (Rumschlag, 2017).

Employee retention: An employer's attempt to retain desirable employees to achieve specific business goals (Kundu & Lata, 2017).*Employee retention:* An employer's attempt to retain desirable employees to achieve specific business goals (Kundu & Lata, 2017).*Employee stress:* A negative emotional condition that develops when the demands of the job surpass the employee's ability to cope. (Hung et al., 2018).

Employee turnover: The removal and replacement of staff with other individuals in the form of layoff, discharge, or termination (Agha et al., 2017).

Job motivation: An individual's desire and inclination to accomplish a set of goals and objectives (Bella et al., 2018). Motivation is an overriding concern for many organizations because managers want to comprehend what makes their employees effective, how to keep them satisfied, and what motivates them within the context of the roles they occupy at the company (Eliza, 2016).

Job satisfaction: A pleasant emotional state that arises from various job factors. Job satisfaction may be shaped by the worldviews, expectations, disappointments, and happiness of individuals and may influence their attitude to themselves, their family, and their organization (Parveen et al., 2017).

Organizational culture: The beliefs, traditions, references, and guidelines relating to an organization's environment. Organizational culture is also a unifying factor, reducing disputes and encouraging workers to perform their duties well, thereby positively impacting the company's actions and results (Maswani & Rina, 2019).

Retention strategy: A plan that employers create and execute to retain their workers and help achieve optimum organizational objectives (Syahreza et al., 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are what the researcher believes to be true based on their perceptions or previous research (Khorsandi & Aven, 2017). One assumption that I had when conducting this qualitative case study was that the necessary data to address the research problem would be obtainable from semistructured interviews. A final assumption was that the participants would provide honest responses to the research questions and provide the most up-to-date documents needed to complete the case study.

Limitations

Limitations are deficiencies that may limit the study results and impact the study's validity (Greener, 2018). This study has three limitations. The key drawback of the analysis was time limitations for collecting and evaluating data due to participants' accessibility. A second limitation of this qualitative study was the purposeful sampling of small business owners of childcare enterprises in the southeastern United States; childcare staff who provide direct services to children and their families were not included. This is a limitation to the study because I did not find out about the employees' experiences or perspectives. Additionally, restricting the sample population to a single geographic area limits the generalizability of the research.

Delimitations

Researchers use delimitations to define the scope of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The following delimitations describe this study's boundaries. The first limitation is that I restricted the study to childcare centers in the southeastern United

States. Although I limited the sample size to small business owners in the childcare sector, I was able to generate pertinent findings that address employee retention strategies. The second limitation was that the study included only participants who met the following eligibility criteria: (a) a position of an owner in a childcare center for at least 2 years, (b) an employment situation in a childcare center that is non-franchised and not in-home, (c) a leadership role for a minimum of three employees, and (d) previous use of strategies that improved employee retention.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study could be useful for small business owners in the childcare sector who are looking for strategies to effectively strengthen employee retention and contribute to employee and community prosperity. Lee et al. (2017) observed that knowing the factors that underpin employee turnover is essential for business leaders to increase profitability, operational performance, and employee retention. Reducing employee turnover may help leaders to minimize human capital costs and retain a qualified workforce to achieve organizational goals (Mapolisa, 2015). Implementing successful retention strategies helps ensure the long-term sustainability of childcare centers dependent on qualified labor to achieve strategic goals (Kundu & Lata, 2017).

Contribution to Business Practice

Identifying employee retention strategies can improve overall efficiency, revenue, employee engagement, and employee morale (Perreira et al., 2018). Gilbert (1978) addressed information, instrumentation, and motivation to diagnose potential behavioral

triggers and recognize performance enhancement techniques. To understand what improvements a management system must make to achieve excellent results, a manager must first assess the behavioral factors. Gilbert (1978) explained that behavior is the product of an individual's characteristics (repertory) and behavioral environment. Within each of these behavioral dimensions, conditions can be examined for weaknesses and eventually manipulated to enhance performance. Environmental enhancements typically provide the most significant leverage for performance enhancement. Providing employees with clear performance goals and guidance, the right tools for the job, and appropriate incentives and performance recognition are also the most cost-effective improvements to incorporate inside a management framework (Victor & Hoole, 2017). Impacting an individual's intrinsic values is more complicated and expensive. If the potential for enhancing performance is still high after behavioral supports are manipulated, the manager should consider an instructional intervention to improve a person's abilities and knowledge. Capacity and motives for an individual's actions are factors that are likely best met by performer selection and recruitment strategies that may be less cost-effective to execute once a performance discrepancy occurs (Casey & Sieber, 2016).

Implications for Social Change

A community's strength and viability depend on the presence of community organizations that provide jobs and income opportunities (Palmer et al., 2016). This study's implications for positive social change may include identification of strategies that small business owners in the childcare sector can use to increase employee retention,

which may contribute to employee and community prosperity through stable employment. Some of these efforts include enhanced teaching quality and effectiveness by (a) implementing effective communication and engagement strategies, (b) establishing more employee engagement and recognition initiatives, (c) developing more competitive incentive strategies, and (d) expanding practical professional development opportunities. Additionally, reliable childcare allows parents to manage their work and caregiving obligations without jeopardizing their children's well-being or employment (Kim & Yang, 2016). Furthermore, local government officials could potentially use tax revenues generated from employees to improve community facilities and services.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that some small business owners in the childcare sector use to improve employee retention and decrease turnover costs in the childcare industry. Pretto et al. (2017) noted that the literature review is essential to the development of a doctoral study because it provides the framework and outline for the scope of the research. In the literature review, I examine professional and academic content related to the topic of retention strategies. Theoretical and current published information and knowledge relating to the topic are included and assessed as to their relevance and support of this study.

Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation served as this study's conceptual structure. Lloyd and Mertens (2018) recommended using a model that identifies factors to meet employees' motivational needs and the organization's ability to retain high-quality employees. I used Vroom's model to gain a deeper understanding of employees' work

characteristics and the factors that influence their decision to stay with their employer. Additional models of motivation were reviewed to compare similarities and differences to the relevant constructs of the BEM as they relate to this study. I reviewed literature on employee motivation and retention techniques, including peer-reviewed articles and papers, dissertations, articles, and books. A search of the literature included the following database and search engine sources: Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, ProQuest Central, Emerald Management Journals, PsycInfo, Google Scholar, ABI/INFORM Global, SAGE Premier, and EBSCOhost. I also searched government publications and company reports. The key terms and phrases included *employee turnover, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, employee performance, employee motivation, organizational culture, and retention strategies*. The review of literature yielded a comprehensive understanding of factors pertinent to worker retention.

In accordance with Walden DBA requirements, most of the sources in the literature review are peer-reviewed, and most were published within the 5-year time frame of my expected graduation. I had 164 total peer-reviewed journal articles, 129 of which were within the 5-year range. Thirty-five (21%) were outside of the 5-year range. Table 1 provides totals for the different types of sources in the literature review.

Table 1

Overview of Literature Sources

Literature type	Total no. of sources	Total %	No. older than 5 years	% older than 5 years
Peer-reviewed articles	164	94	35	21

Non-peer-reviewed articles	0	0	0	0
Books	8	5	7	4
Other	4	1	1	1
Total	176	100	43	24

Table 2 summarizes the references for the literature review by publication year.

Table 2

Literature Review Sources by Year of Publication

Literature type	Publication year				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Peer-reviewed articles	49	43	27	9	1
Non-peer-reviewed articles	0	0	0	0	0
Books	0	1	0	0	0
Other	2	1	0	0	0
Total	51	45	27	9	1

The literature review begins with an analysis of the conceptual framework consisting of Vroom's expectancy theory or motivation, followed by the supporting work of Gilbert's BEM. I also discuss contrasting theories of Herzberg's two-factor motivation theory, McClelland's needs/achievement theory, and Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model. The third section consists of a review of the literature various characteristics relevant to job satisfaction and motivation and how these factors affect an employee's conduct at work and performance and what strategies managers can use for retention.

Background of Motivation

The term *motivation* stems from the Latin word "movere," which simply means "to move" (Luthans et al., 2 *Organizational Behavior* 021). There are two primary types

of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to achieve something (Kanfer et al., 2017). By comparison, extrinsic motivation is characterized as the desire to participate in an activity with the intent of achieving a positive outcome, such as an incentive, or preventing a negative result, such as a punishment (Kuvaas et al., 2017). "Motivation" is commonly used as a catch-all word to refer to the dense network of ideas and their interconnections that underpin measurable shifts in the initiation, course, intensity, and persistence of voluntary action (Kanfer et al., 2017). Reeve (2016) explained that the classic definition of motivation is "any internal process that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior" (p. 31). Deci et al. (2017) suggested that individuals participating in an endeavor with a strong sense of willingness, volition, and preference exhibit autonomous motivation. Despite this often-spirited discussion, relatively few researchers have rigorously examined the relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, as extrinsic motivation is rarely evaluated (Kuvaas et al., 2017).

Work motivation is vital to an organization's or society's success and an individual's well-being (Kanfer et al., 2017). In this era of globalization, motivation has gained more significance as it is one of the primary factors relating to workplace engagement (Deci et al., 2017). Human capital is an essential asset; hence, companies are mainly concerned with the satisfaction and motivation of employees to support retention (Tambe, 2017). Employee retention is the ability of a company to keep its talented and valuable employees in the organization by reducing turnover and fostering a positive work environment that promotes engagement and productivity for the organization (Akunda et al., 2018). An individual is recruited and employed based on their skills and

abilities and the organization's desire to achieve a goal or a result (Akunda et al., 2018). Some of the major challenges to employee retention include monetary dissatisfaction, lack of motivation, job dissatisfaction, ineffective leadership, and a lack of growth and training opportunities (Devonish, 2018). In such cases, employee engagement becomes extremely difficult.

Researchers have identified three elements of motivation in the workplace: employee job satisfaction, a positive work environment, and an effective leader (Deci et al., 2017; Kurniawaty et al., 2019). A key factor for the long-term success of a company is maintaining happy and motivated employees (Benevene et al., 2018; Kuvaas et al., 2017). To accomplish this mission, organizational leaders must recognize specific characteristics of their employees and develop policies and procedures related to performance management, and they effectively utilize these strategies to attract and retain talented workers (Park & Kim, 2017).

Motivational theories are categorized mainly into content theories, which emphasize individual needs, and process theories, which emphasize what is going on in the employees' heads (Kuvaas et al., 2017). For instance, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory predates four assumptions. One assumption is that individuals enter organizations with preconceived notions about their wants, motivations, and prior experiences (Vroom, 1964). These preconceptions influence individuals' reactions to the organization. A second belief is that an individual's behaviors result from a purposeful choice made by the individual (Ola & Igor, 2018). That is, individuals can pick the actions that their expectation computations advise. The third premise is that individuals desire specific

things from an organization (e.g., competitive compensation, job stability, promotion, and challenge; Joubert et al., 2017). A fourth view is that individuals choose options to optimize their desired outcomes (Kanfer et al., 2017).

Content theories, also termed “need theories,” are motivational theories that examine what an individual’s needs are and work to motivate and direct behavior to respond to a specific goal (Helbling, 2018). Many early methods, such as Gilbert’s BEM, Herzberg’s two-factor theory of motivation, McClelland’s needs/achievement theory, and Hackman and Oldham’s job characteristics model, established core concepts to help explain motivation, particularly within the organizational setting. Each provides a unique perspective on job satisfaction and motivation in the workplace. However, the methods differ in terms of key premises about how an individual chooses which need or goal to engage in and what returns from the activity will satisfy their specific needs (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). Therefore, the relationship between job satisfaction and employee motivation are key factors to examine because they are closely linked to retention and an organization’s success (Harrison et al., 2017).

Expectancy Theory of Motivation

I selected Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory of motivation as the conceptual framework for this study because it focuses on the effort-performance relationship, performance-reward relationship, and rewarded personal goal relationships. Vroom paid attention to how and why people make choices to satisfy maximum satisfaction with minimal pain. Vroom's expectancy theory helps describe how individuals make choices to achieve the desired outcome (Purvis et al., 2015). Employees have personal goals they

want to accomplish. Organizational incentives and job outcomes will help the employee achieve that goal. Motivation happens when there is a high degree of anticipation (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). Vroom asserted that workers based their job performance on knowledge, personality, and experience.

The tenets of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory vary from those of Gilbert's BEM theory. Vroom focused on the results of one's motivation and not fulfilling one's needs. For example, the expectancy theory is a belief that one's effort will lead to desired performance or results. Therefore, Vroom contended that the effect is one's motivation to perform some action or behavior. Vroom's theory contains three constructs: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Vroom surmised that if a manager understood what motivates an employee, it would be possible to know the appropriate steps to correct the employee's behavior and the proper rewards to implement to guide the employee's attitudes. Each of Vroom's constructs is linked to motivation (Baumann & Bonner, 2017). A key tenet of expectancy theory is that rewards for effort and performance are desirable (Purvis et al., 2015). The expectancy theory is a valued method to examine organizational behavior and employee motivation (Ohemeng et al., 2015). Historically, business researchers used Vroom's expectancy theory to investigate work selection, job efficiency, and job satisfaction (Ohemeng et al., 2015).

The expectancy theory differs from other motivational theories because Vroom's focus was on cognitive variables that reflect the individual differences involved in work motivation. The managerial consequences of Vroom's theory include effort-to-performance expectations, performance-to-reward expectations, and incentive valences

(Vroom, 1964). Therefore, by using Vroom's expectancy theory as a lens, organizational leaders should concentrate on the relationship between efficiency, salary, and motivation (Baumann & Bonner, 2017). Harrison et al. (2017) applied the expectancy theory to assess the motivation of 755 managers and workers in food service environments and assess the validity of Vroom's theory with workers' compliance with food safety and sanitation regulations. Harrison et al. found that the relationship between extrinsic valence and motivation varies depending on employment in the food industry. However, Harrison et al. also validated Vroom's theory as a method that leaders should use to inspire workers. Hence, organizational leaders can influence employee behavior by integrating expectancy, instrumentality, and valence into work characteristics and attempts to improve motivation (Woods et al., 2015). Furthermore, Munoz et al. (2016) endorsed Vroom's expectancy theory by surveying to assess students' intention to engage in technical student organizations. Munoz et al. found that students taking an active part expected benefits from school organizational administrators.

Per Vroom's expectancy theory, leaders need to effectively communicate with their staff, build future rewards (intrinsic or extrinsic) that they respect, set challenging but realistic goals, and be truthful and trustworthy. Vroom's theory expands on employee motivation. I also selected the approach as the primary model for this study's conceptual framework because I wanted to explore factors in the workplace that lead to motivation and job satisfaction and how they successfully contribute to employee retention. The focus on Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation is not on self-interest in rewards but on the connections that people create with expected results and the contribution they

believe they can make towards those results (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Thus, the theory provided a useful framework for the present investigation.

Other Theories and Models of Motivation

Behavioral Engineering Model

Gilbert's (1978) BEM is a tool for assessing the factors of deficient organizational success and how they correlate with retention (see Figure 1). Crossman (2010) and Ross and Stefaniak (2018) addressed the BEM's ability to associate success with financial results and observed that outstanding success is rooted in alignment between the BEM's environmental and behavioral components. Researchers using the BEM in their studies updated Gilbert's initial BEM to communicate societal updates on employee actions and attitudes. Ross and Stefaniak (2018) also investigated how managers were prepared to provide positive input to increase employee efficiency in terms of organizational infrastructure and individual competencies using Gilbert's BEM. Fusch and Gillespie's (2012) updated BEM version involves incorporating hard and soft management skills and indicated how environmental support helped to dictate worker's behavior to influence employee knowledge, instrumentation, and motivation. Fusch and Gillespie's updated BEM illustrates influences, environmental support, and worker behavior as leading causes of human performance issues. Fusch and Gillespie proceeded to demonstrate how Gilbert's BEM model allowed researchers to provide useful information for administrative changes, such as management techniques (the "hard side of management") and employee-focused approaches ("soft side of management"). Furthermore, Fusch and Gillespie described the hard side of management as

environmental factors improving the company through management decisions and environmental improvements. The soft side of management is applied to the potential for better worker-controlled actions in the organization (Fusch & Gillespie, 2012).

Gilbert (1978) used the BEM to identify and explain an essential component of the human competence model that encompasses a systemic approach in assessing the performance of employees as per the improvements in their productivity and competency. To explain the utility of the human competence model in the study of performance improvement, Stull and Freer (2019) outlined the usefulness of the model's segmented factors, information, instrumentation, and motivation to represent perceived performance. Stull and Freer noted the importance of recognizing the company's priorities and found that problems, including a lack of clarification, may impact overall performance. In addition to Fusch and Gillespie (2012), researchers Binder (1998) and Chevalier (2007) also looked at new ways to describe each cell in Gilbert's original BEM model and made improvements. They also gave the new model a new name. Binder changed the name to the six boxes model in a BEM adaptation and revised the initial six cells. Using the six boxes model to describe behavioral factors, Binder modified cells to (a) expectations and feedback, (b) tools and resources, (c) ramifications and rewards, (d) skills and expertise, (e) capacity, and (f) motives and preferences. Binder also argued that the six boxes model is suitable for business applications, such as introducing alignment for performance enhancement programs and enhancing organizational change communication.

To expand on BEM variations, Chevalier (2007) suggested that his revised layout provided organizations with a more efficient way of troubleshooting and improving

performance problems, with the six factors specified for effects. To clarify, Chevalier argued that the order of the revised elements offered leverage for a solution and detailed the needless difficulties of obtaining the employee's motivations without checking any possible employee dissatisfaction factors. Figure 1 is an illustration of the BEM.

Figure 1

The Behavior Engineering Model

	Information	Instrumentation	Motivation
Environment	<i>Data</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relevant and frequent feedback about the adequacy of performance 2. Descriptions of what is expected of performance 3. Clear and relevant guides to adequate performance 	<i>Resources</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tools, resources, time and materials of work design to match performance needs 	<i>Incentives</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adequate financial incentives made contingent upon performance 2. Non-monetary incentives made available 3. Career-development opportunities 4. Clear consequences for poor performance
Individual	<i>Knowledge</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Systematically designed training that matches the requirements of exemplary performance 2. Placement 	<i>Capacity</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexible scheduling of performance to match peak capacity 2. Prosthesis or visual aids 3. Physical shaping 4. Adaptation 5. Selection 	<i>Motives</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessment of people's motives to work 2. Recruitment of people to match the realities of situation

Note. Gilbert developed this concept in 1978, identifying the barriers to individual and organizational effectiveness. From *Human competence: Engineering worthy performance, Tribute Edition*, by Gilbert, T. F., 1978, (p. 87), by Wiley J., and Sons, 2013. Copyright 2013 by John Wiley and Sons. Reprinted with permission.

Gilbert created the BEM to assume that the biggest impediment to deserving success is a lack of management information and resources, not an individual's lack of motivation to perform well. Gilbert's model focuses on two distinct performance

factors—the environment and an individual's behaviors—that can be viewed through three lenses: knowledge, instrumentation, and motivation. The BEM uses these variables and components to diagnose potential behavioral influences and classify performance enhancement techniques. Appropriate application of Gilbert's BEM will help managers optimize employee behavior by supplying the necessary knowledge, instrumentation, and motivation to support the workplace behavioral repertoire and improve retention. I did not choose the BEM for the conceptual framework because I do not want to focus solely on the factors that influence one's behavior to perform, but the factors that contribute to employee retention.

Motivation-Hygiene Theory

Herzberg developed the two-factor theory in 1950, also known as Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg, 1974; Herzberg et al., 1959). In the workplace, factors causing satisfaction to differ from those causing dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Hygiene factors are extrinsic, and motivators are intrinsic.

The two-factor theory principles are hygiene factors and motivators. In the original study, Herzberg collected data from accountants and engineers to gain a better understanding of satisfiers and dissatisfiers and what motivated employees (Herzberg et al., 1959). Although motivational factors increase work satisfaction, inadequate hygiene factors create dissatisfaction (Krasniqi, 2018). Herzberg et al. recommended that reducing dissatisfaction and increasing satisfaction would boost productivity and retention of employees. The motivational factors (a) accomplishment, (b) gratitude, (c) progress, and (d) acknowledgment build dedication to the organization and job

satisfaction (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Factors of hygiene include (a) workplace environment, (b) supervision, (c) compensation, and (d) job stability (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Both Vroom (1964) and Herzberg et al. suggested that good leadership is key to employee motivation (Chiat & Panatik, 2019; Ross & Stefaniak, 2018). Leaders empower workers to optimize their full potential to achieve organizational goals.

Islam and Ali (2013) used Herzberg's two-factor theory to classify factors encouraging work satisfaction and job dissatisfaction in the private sector. Teck-Hong and Waheed (2011) applied Herzberg's two-factor theory in Malaysian retail stores and found that work conditions, acknowledgment, policy, and wages influence job satisfaction. Employee working environment is one of the primary motivating factors relative to employee wages (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). According to Teck-Hong and Waheed, when increasing employee satisfaction, retail store managers should focus on working conditions, recognition, company policy, and salary, ultimately leading to increased productivity and job performance. Chien (2013) examined a Chinese chemical fiber company and found that working conditions did not motivate employees. Putra et al. (2017) found that highly skilled workers with complex tasks have intrinsic motivation, whereas low-level employees have extrinsic motivation.

Employers can focus on retention factors using Herzberg's two-factor theory. Researchers have used the two-factor approach as a framework for exploring best practices for employee retention (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018; Juariyah & Saktian, 2018; Ross & Stefaniak, 2018). Tourangeau et al., (2015) have recognized that supportive supervisor relationships have helped increase employee retention. Zhang et al. (2014)

have determined that prospective job opportunities, verbal praise, promotion potential, and satisfactory working conditions motivate workers. Davis (2013) incorporated Herzberg's two-factor theory and concluded that strategies to improve employee morale led to improved retention and job satisfaction. Islam and Ali (2013) believed that the motivational factors for growth, recognition, achievement, and accountability could influence employee retention. Retention factors are related to job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction.

Motivation factors can bring job satisfaction (Van Scheers & Botha, 2014). Lukwago (2014) discovered that motivation factors increase job satisfaction. Van Scheers and Botha (2014) found that motivation and job satisfaction correlates. Motivation entices employees to commit to their job. The authors also stated that dedicated employees are more likely to experience job satisfaction (Van Scheers & Botha, 2014).

From the beginning, there have been opponents of Herzberg's two-factor theory. In distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic factors, the two-factor principle may be impractical (Wernimont, 1966). King (1970) assumed disparity between the investigator and the respondent. Locke (1976) claimed the sample size used in Herzberg's original study was too small and different causes of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction exist. Critics often resist Herzberg's two-factor theory.

Some researchers, such as Ozguner and Ozguner (2014), have focused on the conceptual structure of Herzberg's two-factor theory. Although Ozguner and Ozguner argued that the use of Herzberg's two-factor theory may not always be valid, they agreed that organizations should focus on intrinsic, hygiene, and extrinsic motivational factors.

Sithole and Solomon (2014), outlined relationships between hygiene and motivating connections. Organizational managers cannot uphold only intrinsic hygiene elements (Ozguner & Ozguner, 2014). Damij et al. (2015) used Herzberg's two-factor theory to test its relevance. The researcher's study results showed that Herzberg's two-factor theory is valid (Damij et al., 2015). Pek-Greer et al. (2016) showed a reliable connection between intrinsic and extrinsic influences and an employee's decision to leave. The results of Pek-Greer et al. study can help managers develop approaches to reduce voluntary turnover and boost retention.

Nanayakkara and Dayarathna (2016) attempted to classify factors that affected non-executive level workers' turnover intentions by applying Herzberg's Two Factor Theory of Motivation. The researchers' goal was to identify whether hygiene factors or motivational factors affect the employee's decision to leave. Data was collected from a sample of 100 non-executives in selected supermarkets in Colombo, Sri Lanka, using a standardized questionnaire consisting of 44 questionnaire statements, including 34 statements from five Likert Scale points. The study results resulted in motivation, which negatively associates with the employees' turnover intentions. The main two dimensions of motivation, hygiene variables, and motivators are negatively associated with the employees' turnover intentions. However, hygiene variables were more potent than motivators for turnover. Nanayakkara and Dayarathna (2016) concluded that most workers are unhappy with motivational factors (intrinsic motivation) in the supermarket field. As a result, certain acceptable practices, policies, strategies, and initiatives

potentially increased workers' work satisfaction to attract them and make their full contribution to the sustainable performance of businesses.

Numerous attempts to combine Herzberg's two-factor theory postulated motivational and hygienic components (Hussain et al., 2019). Khalifa and Truong (2010) conducted research in which they used the two-factor approach to recruit and train technical employees at the United States Department of Energy. This endeavor produced both congruence and disagreement with Herzberg's findings. For instance, hygienic variables had a substantial effect on motivation, and the quality of labor had a clear correlation with job satisfaction. Additionally, hygienic considerations have been identified as a driver of employee retention, contradicting the two-factor paradigm (Khalifa & Truong, 2010).

Factors described by Herzberg can be routinely monitored and assessed by managers to strengthen their comprehension of their employees' views on their jobs. Moreover, while it has not been explicitly claimed that the theory could be applied universally to the solution of barriers to employee motivation and satisfaction, it may promote work enrichment by maximizing human capital by fostering a near-perfect match between human resources and employment opportunities (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Also, research on how to align Herzberg's theory with a firm's particular needs can inform the theory's functional implementation in the work setting (Chiat & Panatik, 2019).

There are many practical applications of the two-factor theory in various contexts. While the original theory has shortcomings and errors, the evidence available shows a

clear connection between the theory and contemporary studies on intrinsic motivation (Rahman & Nurullah, 2014). Although Herzberg's two-factor theory is beneficial when exploring employee retention, the studies reviewed for this literature review were inconclusive despite decades of study. It is doubtful that new studies attempting to confirm the hypothesis would lead to anything but a confirmation of existing content. Therefore, I did not choose this theory as a focus for the conceptual framework because future research should concentrate on implementing the theory as an analysis tool, as exemplified by some of the articles discussed above.

Three Needs Motivation Model

David McClelland was a psychologist best known for his 1961 work, *The Achieving Society*, based on psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of need theory. Maslow defined five essential needs that all humans are believed to have: physiological, safety, love/belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Based on Maslow's work, McClelland (1965) described three motivators he believed all human beings have: a desire for achievement, a need for association, and a need for power. McClelland says we were not born with these motivators. We learn them as we move around in life. These three motivators will lead us, one of them being the primary force, regardless of our cultural/social/racial/religious history. Khurana and Joshi (2017) tried to understand people's drive towards the three motivators established by McClelland's three-needs model and observed that while the need for achievement was dominant for both men and women, men had slightly higher scores than women. The need for accomplishment and the need for strength. However, Khurana and Joshi noted that

women have a higher average rating than men in the need for the association. This finding suggested that women seem more critical than men in establishing interpersonal relationships at work.

Regardless of gender, McClelland's (1965) three need theory remained at the forefront as people with achievement motivation demonstrated natural entrepreneurial abilities (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). These people are typically able to take calculated risks to achieve goals, strive to excel, and select tasks that push them to achieve their goals. Men were more driven towards power than women and enjoyed being in an authoritative situation and control (Khurana & Joshi, 2017). Efficient leaders of bureaucratic firms need power because the desire for power motivates, achieving targets by manipulating others (Spangler et al., 2014). McClelland's theory differs from Herzberg's two-factor theory because, according to McClelland's three needs theory, achievement-oriented individuals compete against high expectations of performance, not specifically against individuals.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, Herzberg's two-factor motivation theory, and McClelland's desire for accomplishment theory have a significant link. According to Osemeke and Adegboyega (2017), these are all motivational theories that impose a specific set of demands that must be met to drive and maintain behavior. Additionally, the authors stated that McClelland's approach benefits leaders and administrators since it enables them to be more effective when considering the individuals beneath them. What inspires one person may have little effect on another (De Stasio et al., 2019). A thorough grasp of motivational aspects and differences can also aid leaders and managers in

leading successfully and eliciting the most outstanding performance from their followers (Kanfer et al., 2017).

However, McClelland's work is not appropriate for this study because his theory does not support the physiological and safety needs, resulting in a manager having trouble recognizing an employee's needs. There is also no clear relationship between cause and effect between need and behavior (Hussain et al., 2019). One specific need can give rise to different types of behavior in different persons. On the other hand, specific human behavior could be the product of various needs. Therefore, managers should consider balancing autonomy and support workers with achieving their job goals. Managers can grant employees control but be available when they need help.

Job Characteristics Model

Hackman and Oldham (1976) said motivated workers perform well to complete job-related tasks. The job characteristics model components are (a) skill variety, (b) task identification, (c) task importance, (d) autonomy, and (e) feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Sun and Wang (2017) suggested that when leaders allow their workers the flexibility to make work choices, workers gain confidence and job satisfaction. Employees that receive feedback, job satisfaction, and internal motivation help reduce absenteeism and turnover (Kundu & Lata, 2017). By raising the work performance and job satisfaction of employees, leaders provide employees with significant opportunities for job enrichment and personal achievement, increasing employee retention.

Zhao et al. (2016) used Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job model to examine the motivation of 401 frontline hospitality staff working in six upscale hotels. Job

characteristics control employee emotional outcomes (Hauff & Richter, 2015). For example, when accomplishing a job with confidence, hospitality workers feel empowered. In both employees and coworkers, job satisfaction and motivation increased (Zhao et al., 2016). Zhao et al. concluded that work stress is minimized by flexibility, role identification, and task significance, while input and task relevance improve job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Anthony et al. (2017) said reducing workplace stress increases work satisfaction and decreases employee turnover. Researchers acknowledged that job design enhances workplace productivity and work-effectiveness (Deci et al., 2017). Work enrichment also causes better performance and productivity (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Hussein (2018) applied Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job model to explain the need to enrich 211 media employees' work. Leaders improve jobs for media workers to boost job efficiency and profitability (Hussein, 2018). Abdirahman et al. (2020) found employee engagement to improve employee needs and enrich job outcomes. Employees need to know their work outcomes to produce positive or negative motivation and job satisfaction. The extent to which an employee feels responsible for successful work is crucial to the employee's value system (Marinova et al., 2015). Kuvaas et al. (2017) said intrinsic motivation generates work satisfaction, life satisfaction, and happiness. Hans and Gupta (2018) said job design affects an individual's inherent willingness to share institutional information. Job design and internal enhancement are opportunities for successful results and retention.

Hans and Gupta (2018) reported that organizations encourage workplace characteristics to enhance positive employee attitudes. Leaders promote mutual leadership by creating a mentally healthy work climate and team success using job design (Hans & Gupta, 2018). Business leaders use psychological strategies through work features to promote mutual leadership in a team environment. Many organizations make rapid talent and performance management decisions using collective leadership (Alkhateri et al., 2018). As a result, leaders enrich work to inspire workers and create a collaborative atmosphere to attract highly qualified employees.

The job-characteristic model has some drawbacks. For one, since it distinguishes the five job characteristics it uses, it does not treat the job with the certainty that it can alter (Zhao et al., 2016). Among the five core features, Hackman and Oldham failed to consider essential components in a workplace: social atmosphere and job context. The model is also restricted to unskilled and semi-skilled employees (Hussein, 2018). For highly qualified occupations, complex elements may already be involved in job tasks. There is little room to apply work enrichment in their cases. Moreover, technology may also pose a challenge, as it does not require all workers to be enriched (Zhao et al., 2016). Specialized machinery, tasks, and processes may not make the jobs very meaningful. Hackman and Oldham's model was inappropriate for this study because it is a normative approach to career enrichment or job redesign (see Oldham & Fried, 2016). I did not attempt to examine how small business owners in the childcare sector create new roles or redesign current ones in the face of low staff satisfaction or productivity.

Childcare Educator Turnover and Retention Issues

The importance of early childhood education extends well beyond elementary school. It seeks to holistically meet a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs to lay a firm and comprehensive basis for lifetime learning and well-being.

According to Rumschlag (2017), childcare educators with a high level of competency positively affect children, offering high-quality early childcare and education, which meets the expectations of young kids and their families. Several studies have shown that childcare educators play a significant role in providing quality care to foster children's learning and development (Rumschlag, 2017; Wolomasi et al., 2019). Teachers also play a vital role in supporting and cultivating literacy development at a child's early age.

Early childhood educators' retention is a serious and ongoing issue in the sector. While the reasons for turnover are generally well established, the reasons educators remain in the field may be distinct from the reasons they depart. McDonald et al. (2018) report that most childcare educators leave their jobs due to a lack of effective management techniques, limited professional growth and training opportunities, and sometimes low pay. Pek-Greer et al. (2016) noted that childcare educators' job satisfaction and retention could increase by offering benefits to employees, such as monetary rewards, praise, and promotion. For instance, extrinsic rewards that include financial and non-financial rewards, yearly compensations, and annual leave to childcare staff, flexible work arrangements, and motivation can promote employee retention (Pek-Greer et al., 2016; Supriati et al., 2019). Motivating employees through financial rewards

helps them meet their basic needs, including shelter, food, clothing, and leisure (Darma & Supriyanto, 2017).

Many teachers enter the profession because they possess an innate passion for supporting children in achieving success and aspire to be a part of that transformation. The compensation teachers received from watching their students "form and know who they are" is much greater than the extrinsic rewards (Bear et al., 2017; Kun & Gadanez, 2022). According to McDonald et al. (2018), money is not among the high level of needs nor motivators for employees. However, other significant factors such as the right work environment, self-achievement, and personal growth are the main factors that motivate childcare educators and employees in many organizations (Kun & Gadanez, 2022).

Professional development opportunities are also necessary for retention because it enables teachers to undergo specialized training, offering quality care and education. Therefore, children's love for learning improves through a learning environment (Caillier, 2018). Zelnick et al. (2018) noted that many childcare educators do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their professional skills, which is a critical factor in providing quality early childhood education programs. High-quality childcare offers young children a stimulating, healthy, and caring atmosphere. Therefore, childcare leaders need to invest in training staff to provide higher quality care for children and families. Evidence-based professional development develops early childhood educators and administrators (Zelnick et al., 2018). Such initiatives are committed to strengthening and enhancing service quality for current and future workforce professionals.

A healthy early learning environment begins with a person capable of establishing a favorable social and emotional climate based on caring and responsive interactions. Therefore, it is critical to foster a pleasant, nurturing, responsive, and trustworthy atmosphere in which children feel comfortable knowing that their caregivers will meet their needs. Childcare educators are known to confront the most significant stress and pressure when dealing with children with inappropriate behaviors (Syahreza et al., 2017). Stress and strain may come from children and colleagues, and parents, particularly when an educator must share negative feedback about a child's performance or conduct. Ishaq and Mahmood (2017) noted that other sources of stress that may result in an educator's departure from the job are extended hours and unpaid overtime, minimal or lack of management support, and limited work resources. Additionally, the authors highlight that heavy administrative burdens and the responsibility of caring for many children might cause childcare instructors to lose their enthusiasm for the profession. Therefore, maintaining job satisfaction for educators improves the worker's morale and effectiveness and enhances retention (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019).

Job satisfaction and employee loyalty are two of the most significant problems managers confront today while managing their staff (Kurniawaty et al., 2019). Educators' job dissatisfaction may result from not being able to handle the challenges with children, the administration's unrealistic demands, low recognition of one's achievements, and a lack of parental support. Schaack and Le (2017) noted that job satisfaction has a significant impact on teacher retention. Many educators indicated that they experience job satisfaction while working with the children they see grow and develop because of a

nurturing and supportive learning environment (Blackburn et al., 2017). Administrators who can motivate and support staff will increase employee work satisfaction.

Burnout is a leading reason for teachers to leave their job, and it has contributed to the increasing teacher turnover rate over the last few decades. Burnout may negatively impact learning in a childcare center due to increased employee absenteeism and ineffective guidance (Schaack & Le, 2017). Teaching is a physically demanding and mentally taxing profession, which can adversely impact the teacher's commitment to an organization, and they may begin to seek other employment. According to Rumschlag (2017), burnout is 30% higher in the education field than in other occupations. Disproportionate numbers of obligations above and beyond teaching, lack of administrative help, over-emphasis on standardized tests, teacher assessment based on standardized test scores, increasingly challenging student conduct with growing frequency and intensity, to name a few, lead to teacher burnout (Schaack & Le, 2017). To avoid becoming a teacher burnout victim, leaders need to help educators learn how to manage their lives. One way is by setting clear work boundaries. Educators must always build a delicate balance in personal relationships and have downtime. Making sure they have some time to themselves every weekend, when school is the last thing on their minds, is perfect. The teaching profession helps create opportunities for students to explore new ideas, gain knowledge and guidance. However, if one runs on empty, they cannot successfully create these opportunities for students. Educators must take care of their needs, balance their lives for optimum health, and regularly check their mental well-being. Avoiding teacher burnout will also help enhance retention.

A lack of self-efficacy often damages an educator's ability to manage stressful situations. Low self-efficacy affects one's attitude towards fulfilling educational obligations and impedes their work performance (Blackburn et al., 2017). In most cases, childcare educators with a high degree of self-efficacy are more likely to continue and succeed in their respective professions (Blackburn et al., 2017). Low self-efficacy reduces one's commitment to one occupation, causing one to pursue other employment. Conversely, this results in low employee retention.

Most childcare professionals view their professions as rewarding, and the delight of assisting children in their intellectual and emotional development is one of the most attractive aspects. However, when one experiences a shortage of job satisfaction, a lack of self-efficacy, burnout, poor working environment, a lack of professional development opportunities, or inadequate reward systems, and the person will likely not continue to enjoy the career, contributing to employee turnover (Blackburn et al., 2017; Ishaq & Mahmood, 2017). Organizational leaders need to ensure that all the above considerations are considered to boost employee retention and increase employee efficiency. Employers can help staff achieve work-life balance by setting clear policies and practices that allow them to pursue more balanced lives. Plans, such as flexible work hours, paid time off (PTO) policies, reasonably organized expectations of time and communication, and company-sponsored family events and activities, are just a few strategies employers can implement. Thus work-life balance reduces employee effect of stress resulting in improved organizational performance and retention.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction and retention are critical aspects of a business's success and survival. Alkhateri et al. (2018) found that job satisfaction substantially influences employee efficiency, retention, and work habits. Leaders use creative management approaches to further organizational and cultural stability (Deci et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2017). When the employees' salaries, opportunities, and working conditions are improved, this results in an overall high level of job satisfaction (Afif, 2018). Employees who enjoy and value their work are generally able to enjoy and appreciate their jobs, and as a result, they report feeling job satisfaction (Juariyah & Saktian, 2018). Additionally, job satisfaction is a factor in determining work efficiency (Dinc, 2017; Juariyah & Saktian, 2018).

To better understand employee behavior at work, employers should examine one's physical, psychological, and spiritual levels. Additionally, the link between workplace spirituality and a favorable attitude toward work, i.e., job happiness, must be established. Rahmati et al. (2018) did a study in which they evaluated the link between workplace spirituality and job satisfaction and motivation among 80 special education teachers. Rahmati et al. found a definite link between employee efficiency, employee morale, and spirituality at work. The authors clarified that meeting the spiritual needs and perceptions of workers improves work satisfaction. Bella et al. (2018) emphasized that organizational spirituality meets the spiritual needs for productive work. Workplace spirituality fosters a positive work environment, enhances employee attitudes towards work, and decreases the desire to leave (Bella et al., 2018). Rahmati et al. found that promoting workplace

spirituality improves job motivation and job satisfaction among special educators. A sense of community often increases job motivation, as teachers feel linked to a group (Bella et al., 2018). This partnership allows teachers to handle work-related duties and career burnout. Workplace spirituality can improve workplace satisfaction, helping workers cope with stressful circumstances.

Work, or career, is a critical component that affects every element of an individual's life. Essentially, the profession is what defines an individual. Job satisfaction and self-esteem are crucial components of teachers' professionalism (Benevene et al., 2018). Job satisfaction is also critical for the teacher's happiness. In a study conducted by Benevene et al. (2018), the researchers explored job satisfaction as a mediator of teachers' happiness and self-esteem. The researchers examined 300 primary and middle school teachers using a work satisfaction survey. According to scholars, job satisfaction and work contribute to teachers' happiness and self-esteem. Happiness is a critical notion that contributes significantly to teachers' well-being (Benevene et al., 2018; De Stasio et al., 2019; Kun & Gadanez, 2022). Happiness or subjective well-being promotes healthy teacher behaviors (De Stasio et al., 2019). Satuf et al. (2018) emphasized that high levels of personal well-being improve satisfaction and job satisfaction. The job provides financial support and workplace identification. Satuf et al. showed that employees who positively view their work are happier, more socially active, and retainable.

Job satisfaction is influenced by a variety of individual and societal variables. Self-esteem and life happiness are significant determinants in these variables (Granziera & Perera, 2019). According to Benevene et al. (2018), job satisfaction predicts teachers'

happiness, health, and self-esteem. Additionally, Kun and Gadanez (2022) noted that teachers' happiness and well-being allow them to manage burnout and work-related stress. The authors reported that subjective well-being is linked to job stress, absenteeism, intrinsic motivation, engagement, creativity, and satisfaction. Additionally, workplace well-being and happiness have been described as significant predictors of success, job satisfaction, and burnout susceptibility (Kun & Gadanez, 2022). Leaders maintain their employees' subjective well-being to promote job satisfaction and reduce health and attrition costs (Satuf et al., 2018). Benevene et al. argued that leaders should develop human resources policies to encourage job satisfaction and improve work environments and employee well-being. Happier employees can increase teaching efficiency and choose to remain in the education profession.

Most organizations take the initiative to please their workers since it correlates with achieving their goals. In a study performed by Agarwal and Sajid (2017), the researchers analyzed 206 public and private sector employees' relationships between work satisfaction, organizational engagement, and turnover intentions. Agarwal and Sajid demonstrated high organizational engagement and work satisfaction in the public sector, while turnover intentions in the private sector increased. Darma and Supriyanto (2017) and Sabbagha et al. (2018) observed high job satisfaction results in increased employee loyalty to the company, increased motivation, happiness at work, increased productivity, and retention. Organizational engagement is also a work satisfaction indicator (Cho et al., 2017). Abdirahman et al. (2020) found that job satisfaction motivates workers to perform

harder and interact with the organization. Lee et al. (2017) said work satisfaction reduces employee turnover intentions and increases organizational engagement and productivity.

Other significant predictors of teacher work satisfaction include job security, compensation, advancement, adequate supervision, and meaningful work. Darma and Supriyanto (2017) found that compensation and work satisfaction are two factors that lead to an employee's performance improvement. Abdirahman et al. (2020) wrote that leaders use benefits to drive employee engagement and job satisfaction while Sabbagha et al. (2018) indicated that compensation is the key motivator for retaining skilled workers. Job satisfaction is a more powerful predictor of organizational performance than organizational success is a predictor of job satisfaction productivity (Darma & Supriyanto, 2017). As a result, leaders must prioritize work satisfaction to maintain organizational productivity.

Employee turnover concerns have become significantly more prevalent in today's workplace. This is a significant problem because, in addition to the adverse effects for personnel, a high rate of job turnover in an organization may harm the business's overall effectiveness. Addai et al. (2018) reported that employee turnover intentions predict job satisfaction and organizational responsibility. On average, 10,000 Ghanaian teachers leave the teaching profession due to job dissatisfaction and inequality (Addai et al., 2018). Public-sector workers prefer to stay on the job even though they are unhappy with a part of their profession (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). In comparison, private-sector workers' attrition intentions depend solely on the degree of satisfaction employees derive

from the job (Agarwal & Sajid, 2017). Leaders should consider workplace satisfaction mediating factors and employee retention motivation.

Due to the high costs of voluntary turnover, considerable effort has been focused on determining why people leave their employment. As a result, it is critical to evaluate ways for decreasing voluntary turnover and the contribution that leadership may make to the work environment. Sun and Wang (2017) examined the impact of transformational leadership on employees' actual leaving behavior using structural equation modeling. Sun and Wang obtained data from 62,115 pedagogical staff across schools in New York City within the 2011-2012 school year. The researchers found how critical it is for public institutions to build capacity and enhance their efficiency. Recruiting and maintaining a sustainable workforce is vital for resolving substandard results (Sun & Wang, 2017). Contemporary theories stress the importance of recognizing workers' characteristics and organizational dynamics to understand their motivations and potential voluntary turnover. Additionally, the authors discovered a link between intention to leave and actual turnover rate.

Support from supervisors is critical for improving employee work satisfaction. Thus, by providing timely supervisor assistance, work satisfaction may be significantly increased. Additionally, employees' perceptions of their work being just, and fair can be energized further by supervisor support. Alkhateri et al. (2019) conducted a study to examine the relationships between employee job satisfaction (EJS) and perceived supervisor support (PSS), trust in supervisor (TIS), and affective organizational behavior (AOC) in Ras-Al-Khaimah schools in the United Arab Emirates. A random sample of

494 teachers from Ras-Al-Khaimah schools was chosen. A survey was conducted on a representative sample to ascertain the degree to which PSS, AOC and TIS have an impact on EJS. The researchers proposed a model in which PSS served as the independent variable, TIA and AOC acted as mediating variables, and EJS served as the dependent variable. The findings suggest that the three independent and mediating variables together account for 41.9 % of EJS. The study of Alkhateri et al. (2019) is vital for practitioners because it shows the importance of AOC, PSS, and TIS. Although the researcher's study's cross-sectional nature precludes establishing a direct causal relationship between the variables, the findings suggest that PSS, AOC, and TIS are critical for increasing EJS. This series' order should allow organizations to place a more significant premium on supervisor and moral manager growth. Additionally, the significant finding implications have important implications for schools in Ras-Al-Khaimah and for local government authorities. By integrating the findings, a range of practical consequences was established, including the promotion of PSS actions and AOC and TIS, which results in improved EJS and thus higher research quality.

Employee performance is greatly influenced by leadership styles, work climate, and job satisfaction. According to Anthony et al. (2017), job satisfaction reduces workplace uncertainty, resulting in increased job performance. The experts performed a study to examine service in school domains by looking at the combined impacts of the external service environment and internal service in schools on teachers' work attitudes, including work commitment, job satisfaction, and desire to leave employment. The research surveyed 423 teachers from 30 separate schools in Israel. Eldor and Shoshani

(2017) hypothesized that teacher work engagement would mediate the indirect relationship between the environment for service and teachers' job satisfaction and intention to leave work. Their results corroborated this theory. Furthermore, the indirect relationship through teacher work engagement was strongest when the internal service quality was strong, enabling teachers to deliver on the service climate's expectations. As a result, service-oriented resources—both external and internal—may be critical in influencing teachers' job attitudes and should be targeted explicitly by principals and other educational decision-makers. By creating a more relaxed and welcoming work atmosphere, providing employees with career development opportunities, and fostering positive employee engagement, employers can ensure that employees are satisfied with their jobs and stay with the organization (Eldor & Shoshani, 2017; Judge et al., 2017).

Job satisfaction plays a significant role in deciding whether an employee stays with an organization or leaves. Dissatisfied employees will erode their relationship with the company to the point that they want to quit (Alkhateri et al., 2019; Juariyah & Saktian, 2018). According to Huang et al. (2017), assessing employee satisfaction will shed light on an employee's decision to leave an organization and call attention to necessary behaviors. Alam and Asim (2019) speculated that an employee's overall perception of the workplace influences the decision to leave. Organizations can benefit from a more consistent alignment of management efforts, employee services, and resources to avoid employee exits (Alam & Asim, 2019; Ma et al., 2018). Kumar and Yakhlef (2016) showed how businesses could complement their workers' expertise by providing knowledge and skills to internal employees who will take departing colleagues'

place. Apart from examining turnover models or predictors, researchers have long known that recruiting and selection processes affect (Lee et al., 2017). Particularly during the early stages of employment, when turnover threats are highest, practical work previews—or detailed and candid job descriptions—delivered to hires or new employees may boost retention (Hom et al., 2017). Additionally, firms will use personality tests and work interviews to determine a person’s match with a job or an organization, as misfitting newcomers are more likely to leave. Additionally, managers should analyze their workers’ biographical characteristics (i.e., which school they attended, their previous turnover rate, etc.), comparing those who remain with those who leave.

Employee Stress and Burnout

Many things can lead to job burnout, and they are different for every person. However, common factors such as a lack of work-life balance or a poor work culture can be recognized as causes of burnout and workplace stresses (Ishaq & Mahmood, 2017; Ochoa, 2018). For example, employees in the education sector are valuable assets, as they are responsible for shaping children’s minds and their future. Stress occurs due to an incompatible fit between individuals and their environment, a discrepancy between goals, a lack of organizational support, and work pressures (Anthony et al., 2017). Excessive workloads, long work hours, disruptive working environments, complicated relationships with co-workers, uncooperative students, and a lack of career advancement opportunities are some of the significant stressors encountered by faculty members (Anthony et al., 2017).

Stress makes people almost three times more likely to leave their jobs, temporarily impairing strategic thinking and dull creative skills (Peart, 2019). Burnout, then, is a threat to the employer's bottom line, costing the US more than \$300 billion a year in absenteeism, turnover, reduced productivity, and medical, legal, and insurance costs (Peart, 2019). A 2011 survey of teachers in the UK showed that 60.7% experienced work-related stress feelings (NASUWT-The Teachers' Union, 2018). In comparison, a 2017 American Federation of Teachers surveyed a random sample of 830 educators and revealed that 61% of the teachers felt overworked and stressed because of their job (American Federation of Teachers – AFT, 2017). Research on the negative consequences of long-time exposure to a stress-related environment is extensive (Hung et al., 2018). Stress is one of the most significant contributors to job turnovers and a lack of retention. Work-related stress is defined as the emotional and physical response triggered when people cannot meet the job's pressures and demands because they lack the skills, expertise, knowledge, and capability (Hung et al., 2018). Other factors, such as reduced involvement in the job or reduced organizational commitment, can lead to decreased productivity and increased stress for employees, which ultimately cause job burnout (Hung et al., 2018).

Work-related stress has been studied across several disciplines, such as health, education, and human services. For example, researchers found that stress contributes to burnout among health care workers and nurses (Addai et al., 2018; Ishaq & Mahmood, 2017). Factors such as inadequate resources or insufficient salary, lack of autonomy at work; higher workload; low advancement opportunities; discrimination in the workplace;

lack of managerial or social support, and job security contribute to stress in the workplace (Abdirahman et al., 2020; Terera & Ngirande, 2017). These factors contribute to various adverse outcomes, including decreased work performance, job dissatisfaction, reduced organizational engagement, and increased absenteeism and turnover intentions (Koc & Bozkurt, 2017). Also, unfavorable working conditions, higher work intensity, and interpersonal working relationships contribute to stress (Hsu et al., 2019; Kurniawaty et al., 2019).

Professionals engaged in helping and caring for others, such as nurses and childcare educators, reported increased levels of stress and burnout compared to the general population (Perreira et al., 2018). Stress is reportedly a common aspect of the teaching profession (Burkhauser, 2017). Makhdoom et al. (2017) found that people who work in environments where public transactions are regular (e.g., nurses, physicians, bank workers, and teachers) are more likely to experience burnout. Makhdoom et al. reported that teachers are at higher risk of developing burnout symptoms in Pakistan culture because teachers enjoy little, if any, respect in society but must maintain many extra-role duties such as performing polling station duties or taking censuses. Stress significantly impacts Pakistani teacher's performance levels. Ishaq and Mahmood (2017) examined the relationship between work stress (JS) and employee burnout (EB) among university teachers, as well as how self-efficacy (SI) moderates the relationship between these psychological disorders. The data collection procedure included visits to five public and four private universities in Punjab to complete the questionnaire. This study targeted university faculty members, including lecturers, instructors, and assistant

professors. Convenience sampling was used to gather data from the various departments. The researchers concluded that the current study identified a substantial difference in the level of stress experienced by private and public sector university teachers. This is because the private sector faces greater job instability, work demand, and work hours than the public sector. In summary, Ishaq and Mahmood's study enables management to consider policies that promote teachers' well-being, thus motivating them to perform tasks effectively or efficiently and increasing their degree of self-efficacy. The researcher's study focuses on university policymakers who need to rethink their strategies to increase teachers' jobs. Additionally, the results suggest a significant association between work stress and employee burnout among university teachers, indicating that stressed teachers turn to burnout. Secondly, the study demonstrated self-moderating efficacy's effect on stress and employee burnout. Those with a higher degree of self-efficacy are not as impacted by these psychiatric disorder situations as those with a low self-efficacy level.

Everyone experiences stress in certain situations. When faced with obstacles as a part of life, this is either eustress or distress when faced with undesirable consequences such as poor morale, work discontent, absenteeism, and decreased productivity. Ishaq and Mahmood (2017) identified a substantial gap in the degree of stress experienced by private and public university teachers. Therefore, reform must begin with top management, who must recognize their workers' (employees') concerns and implement strategies to increase or maintain teachers' well-being. If unrecognized, burnout and its

consequences are detrimental to employee well-being and business performance (Peart, 2019).

Stress and burnout can have significant implications for both organizations and individuals, resulting in decreased performance, increased financial costs associated with turnover, and individual illness (Havens et al., 2018). Additionally, burnout has been linked to lateral aggression, frustration with life, low self-esteem, and health problems (Anthony et al., 2017; Ishaq & Mahmood, 2017; Labrague et al., 2017). Over time, chronic stress and burnout impair an individual's capacity to compensate and cope, resulting in health problems such as headaches, insufficient sleep, decreased socialization, and ultimately depression (Havens et al., 2018). To combat this epidemic and to build healthy work environments, leaders must commit to improving what looks like "workplace wellness."

Leadership

Leadership is a critical component in determining a company's effectiveness. In childcare, business leadership influences the workplace's participation and efficiency. Transformational leadership may be the most significant factor in explaining how leaders may influence followers' desired behavior and reach peak performance levels (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019). Under the leadership theory laws, it is difficult for managers, among other leaders, to question and encourage their junior and subordinate workers (Brewster, 2017). Therefore, transformational leadership dimensions, such as self-employed leadership techniques, affect work performance and employee engagement (Caillier, 2018).

Today, disruptive leadership methods such as equipping people with potentially ambitious ideas and encouraging them to challenge the status quo have a beneficial effect on employee performance (Mishra & Mishra, 2017). When confronted with conflict situations, passionate employees are more likely to feel positive feelings, enhancing their cognitive capacity to channel specific skills toward resolving the conflict (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017). That is optimistic feelings arising from their enthusiasm for work broaden employees' toolkit for resolving task-related problems (Simonet et al., 2018). Similarly, when people are enthusiastic about their jobs, they demonstrate a more remarkable dedication to achieving work objectives, even more so when confronted with adverse work conditions (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017). Thus, the degree to which workers are passionate can motivate them to resolve disputes that would otherwise obstruct work objectives. On the other hand, workers who lack enthusiasm for their jobs are usually less motivated to accomplish work objectives.

Leadership and Employee Retention in the Childcare Sector

The need for leadership depends on the form and theory of leadership within an organization. Employees' minimal supervision eases managers' jobs and cuts down the cost incurred when hiring managers among other leaders in situations where self-leadership exists (Etikan & Bala, 2017). In most cases, employees tend to feel more unrestricted and more active when there is less supervision, unlike where there is strict supervision, which may force them to look for other occupations. The need for leadership, however, was hardly studied as a leadership contingency. A dynamic leadership style is known to improve work engagement and job satisfaction, critical

factors in employee retention, and company performance. In a childcare business, leaders need to ensure that employees can control themselves, promote self-efficacy, and motivate them through an effective reward system (McDonald et al., 2018).

In schools or childcare business organizations, educational leaders significantly affect the students' performance and achievement. Influential leaders understand the primary purpose of childcare facilities and create and shape their school direction and guide the childcare educators where necessary (McDonald et al., 2018). They must also monitor the learning and growth of effective childcare educators that ensure powerful teaching and learning. The effectiveness of any company is measured by the leader's experience and level of skills. They must establish positive working relationships with and among childcare educators. Additionally, employee satisfaction is influenced by a sense of accomplishment and emotional rewards (McDonald et al., 2018).

Childcare organizations should implement transformational leadership that is centered and more stable than the others. However, the latest research shows that transformational leadership and self-leadership positively impact the relationship between leaders and employees and employees' general work performance and engagement (Ferreira, 2017). The fact that both managers and workers can be leaders translates into increased efficiency for an organization. Leaders encourage and empower workers to ensure fair working conditions. Educators who leave the field are far more likely to cite low pay, increased certification requirements, and poor working conditions as reasons for their departure (McDonald et al., 2018).

Consequently, inadequate staffing would compromise the childcare sector's ability to provide adequate services. Leaders should serve as role models in achieving organizational goals that guarantee performance. However, change and self-leadership must be aligned with the environmental conditions and applied (Ferreira, 2017).

Positive employee perceptions are influenced by transformational leadership. The leader's image in their constituents' eyes is vital to understanding transformational leadership's advantages (Peck & Hogue, 2018). According to Peck and Hogue, the employee's focus on leadership elucidates a critical component of the employee's expectations. Transformational leadership contributes to achieving strategic business goals and positively affects success on both the financial and social levels (Wang et al., 2017). According to Wang et al. (2017), when leaders assign tasks equally and make processes clear, they (re)shape employees' views of their work environment and foster a positive work identity. Leaders use several leadership styles to lead organizations. Gaining a deeper understanding of how people are treated will help leaders implement more effective leadership techniques. The following data show alternative leadership models that either contradict or affirm transformational theory-based leadership. There are several conceptualizations of leadership within an organization, owing to the transformational paradigm and the diverse viewpoints and attitudes that affect employee expectations. Furthermore, the archetypes provide a concise overview of the various types of leadership characteristics. The research examines employee perceptions of leadership styles and their impact on performance.

Types of Leadership in Childcare Organizations

Leadership is perhaps the most studied topic in management research. Given the high cost of voluntary turnover, considerable effort is focused on determining why individuals leave the workforce and the influence of leadership on this factor. The majority of empirical research on the causes of voluntary turnover uses individuals as their unit of analysis (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019). The underlying premise is that the membership of an organization is an individual decision. Thus, these studies indicate that reducing voluntary turnover can be successful only when managers recognize and adapt to employee's or people's needs and desires (Sun & Wang, 2017). Individual motivations, however, can differ, and managers of public agencies may have little control over variables such as compensation, benefits, and promotion, both of which have a significant impact on individual workers' job satisfaction and intention to leave. As a result, the techniques established due to these studies could have limited effectiveness in public organizations. As a result, research on voluntary employee turnover must consider the factors contributing to the work environment. The general atmosphere of a workplace has a significant impact on how individuals feel about their organizations and their decision to leave (Sun & Wang, 2017).

Transformational Leadership. Transformational leaders encourage their staff to value work, develop teamwork within work groups, and instill trust in their team. Transformational leaders also empower workers to recognize the value of work, foster unity among working groups, and foster trust in their team (Ferreira, 2017). Staff is satisfied with their job due to transformational leadership, which positively impacts

employee performance and productivity (Ferreira, 2017). Transformational leaders are zealous, energizing, and committed to their employees' success (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019). They are motivated by a long-term vision shared with workers, and by inspiring employees and aligning their objectives with the organization's goals, employees become empowered and dedicated (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019). Transformational leaders also aim to build a sense of belonging within the workplace that will benefit everyone involved. With this strategy in place, workers become more enthusiastic about their jobs and truly focus on their duties. The transformational leadership style also creates more resourceful working environments (Torlak & Kuzey, 2019). Any fluctuations in transformational leadership result in changes in the performance of employees. Transformational leadership pulls the best out of its workers, resulting in improved productivity, leading to its growth (Deci et al., 2017; Yamin, 2020).

Self-Leadership. Self-leadership is the discipline of knowing oneself, defining desirable experiences, and purposefully directing oneself toward them. It encompasses all aspects of determining what we do, why we do it, and how we do it. The theory of self-leadership is based on two distinct fields of psychology. First, the social cognitive theory describes human behavior in terms of reciprocal interactions between the person and the environment and human capacities for learning through social action, perceiving effectiveness, and managing and controlling one's behavior (Caillier, 2018). The self-leadership theory explains methods in both cognitive and behavioral aspects that workers use to improve their self-regulation effectiveness. Behavior-based strategies are used primarily to stimulate desirable behaviors and suppress the undesirable ones, which

result in success in job place performance (Dong et al., 2017). The philosophical foundations of social cognitive theory date back to Edwin B. Holt and Harold Chapman Brown (1931) and was later advanced by Albert Bandura (1961), which asserted that all animal behavior is motivated by psychological needs such as feeling, emotion, and desire. The most striking feature of this theory is that portions of an individual's information acquisition may be directly linked to experiencing others in social interactions, perceptions, external media stimuli (Caillier, 2018), and behavioral outcomes serve as sources of knowledge and motivation. (Deci et al., 2017; Etikan & Bala, 2017). Self-leadership discusses how self-leaders think and adopt cognitive, motivational, and behavioral techniques. Self-leadership brings some form of self-determination, a sense of belonging, and purpose, which is associated with positive impacts such as job satisfaction, self-efficacy, increased employee productivity, and a high level of employee retention (Akunda et al., 2018). Leadership and development programs that instill a sense of accountability and obligation in individuals correlate with objective and subjective performance, resulting in a high degree of job performance (Akunda et al., 2018). In comparison to transformational leadership, self-leadership allows employees to be more engaged, vigorous, and committed to their jobs, which results in their success.

Pseudo-Transformational Leadership. By comparison, pseudo-transformational leaders are concerned with their self-interest and prestige (Lin et al., 2017). In 1998, Bass coined the term “pseudo-transformational leadership” (Bass, 2000). The pseudo-transformational leader makes decisions based on egoistic criteria and is solely

concerned with self-interest (Montaudon-Tomás et al., 2021). A pseudo-transformational leader demonstrates coercive actions and sabotages the employee's efforts to connect with the organization (Lin et al., 2017). Furthermore, pseudo-transformational leaders seek the most significant benefit for themselves. The ostensibly transformational leader is only interested in personal gain. The pseudo-transformational leader takes advantage of their power over employees (Montaudon-Tomás et al., 2021). Deceptive intentions diminish any beneficial effect on transforming transformation. Lin et al. (2017) demonstrated that pseudo-transformational leadership has a minimal impact on motivating subordinates to make an additional effort on job-related tasks. Pseudo-transformational leaders have a detrimental effect on the workforce. For example, the leadership style has the opposite effect on workers as a transformational leader's characteristics.

Employee Turnover

Employee turnover involves separating workers from employers and replacing them with other individuals by layoff, discharge, or termination (Agha et al., 2017). Employee turnover affects many companies' efficiency and profitability. Childcare teacher turnover has a detrimental effect on individuals, organizations, and society and results in the loss of skilled staff, diminishes the standard of education and the care provided to children, and erodes parents' loyalty and satisfaction with programs and institutions (Yeo-ul et al., 2018). Additionally, it undermines the remaining teachers' contact system, decreases morale, impedes work immersion, and raises the social cost of selecting and nurturing new teachers (Yeo-ul et al., 2018).

Organizational and personal factors also contribute to turnover. Childcare staff turnover includes psychological traits, demographic aspects, and administrative variables, including job conditions, company practices, and procedures (Schelbe et al., 2017). The turnover of childcare teachers exacerbates the distress of infants and toddlers who have missed an object of attachment and the tension and stress experienced by infants and toddlers as they adjust to new teachers (Yeo-ul et al., 2018). Additionally, repeated teacher changes have a detrimental effect on infants' and toddlers' overall growth by degrading the level of teacher-infant interaction, which can serve as the foundation for recognizing young children's desires and abilities (Yeo-ul et al., 2018). The employee retention problem is particularly severe for the millennial generation. In comparison to previous generations, Millennials lack the same sense of organizational responsibility and loyalty (Frián & Mulyani, 2018; Valenti, 2019). They do not join the workforce with the expectation of making their first job a career. They are significantly more likely to change positions during their careers, even if the change does not result in increased compensation or promotion (Valenti, 2019). Moreover, increasing research shows that millennials tend to adapt to organizations' needs, unlike baby-boomer-born workers (Valenti, 2019). Consequently, millennials are tech-savvy, with vast experience in digital technologies, allowing them to work more efficiently, creatively, and globally (Frián & Mulyani, 2018; Valenti, 2019).

Employee turnover is frequently a result of work dissatisfaction. Thus, it is necessary to investigate the underlying variables that contribute to employee retention. Psychological issues such as job dissatisfaction, poor compensation, a lack of

professional growth or advancement opportunities, a hostile work environment, and a lack of leadership are all major contributors to high turnover (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018; Kim et al., 2017). Griffiths et al. (2020) focused on a sample of 117 frontline public child welfare supervisors in a southern state. The sample represented 43.8% of the frontline child welfare supervisors across the state. The researcher's objective was to concentrate on frontline workers' perspectives since little is known about frontline supervisors. The frontline supervisor plays a critical role in the child welfare workforce, directly affecting employee retention, workplace environment, and service delivery (Griffiths et al., 2020). It is essential to understand frontline child welfare supervisors' perspectives and the factors that may lead to their premature departure. Griffiths et al. concluded that managers were most pleased with their sense of achievement and degree of peer support. Their satisfaction with professional development and administrative support, on the other hand, was close to "neutral," while they expressed dissatisfaction with their recognition, workload influence, and salary. This indicates that while supervisors perceived adequate support from colleagues at their local offices, they did not perceive administrators' same level of approval. Additionally, while supervisors expressed a sense of pride due to their work, they did not feel adequately recognized. In the childcare sector, each of these variables influences turnover rates. Although organizations may sustain the required administrative support culture, they must be prepared to spend the necessary capital on reducing turnover (Quinn, 2017).

Lack of professional advancement and promotion opportunities can contribute to turnover. Additionally, turnover results in a lack of qualified, trained, and dedicated

workplace personnel (Kim et al., 2017). Further, organizational rules and practices can significantly impact employee productivity (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). For instance, if intrinsic motivation, financial capital, and leadership and management practices are not incorporated into the organizational framework, employee retention suffers significantly (Holston-Okae & Mushi, 2018). Employees with high job interest are likely to leave the company if they feel undervalued or unappreciated (Alkhateri et al., 2018). Employees who earn respect and appreciation may remain with the organization longer (Alkhateri et al., 2018).

Lack of strategic and operational leadership also leads to organizational instability. Most people choose to work and stay in a company with excellent and secure leadership (McDonald et al., 2018). Poor management is a significant factor affecting employee turnover (Yamin, 2020). Successful educational leaders must have best practices for employee engagement, dedication, participation, and retention (Stevens, 2017). Administrators also need to be careful not to use a quantitative supervisory approach but to establish a dynamic communication style and cultivate positive relationships between managers and employees.

Working in a supportive and healthy environment will substantially affect staff well-being and improve individuals' job prospects. On the other hand, adverse working environments can lead to increased team-conflict, aggression, dismissal fears, tension, and unhappiness (Ingersoll & May, 2017). Most importantly, stressful work conditions can also induce insomnia, anxiety, and depression. If one employee is upset at work, it

affects everyone else in the workplace. Therefore, a manager who can build a healthy work climate will help everyone.

Along with other techniques, such as building positive teacher-student relationships and increasing students' social and emotional competencies, the most successful teachers and schools use praise and incentives to teach and promote desired behaviors to reduce undesirable conduct (Bear et al., 2017). Similarly, Santhanam et al. (2017) stated that human resource practices should enhance employees' serviceability through hiring strategies, training practices, integrated performance assessment, fair compensation, and encouraging employees to make decisions to minimize turnover intentions. In terms of disposition towards benefits and bonuses, workplace turnover is re-examined. Administration and management should typically understand the reasons behind avoidable turnover and implement the most appropriate steps to solve the problem.

Employee turnover has a plethora of organizational consequences, is expensive, and can have a long-lasting impact on the company. The ramifications for businesses across industries and within childcare may be significant, even to the point of jeopardizing long-term viability. Apart from the possible harm that employee departures can cause to children, families, and organizations, turnover often poses risks to society.

Strategies to Improve Employee Retention

Employee retention is critical to corporate performance. Employee retention refers to the process through which employees exercise their free will in deciding to remain and continue working for their firm (Baharin & Hanafi, 2018). Retention

strategies refer to steps taken by an organization to ensure that its personnel remain with the organization (Dhanpat et al., 2018; Silva et al., 2019). One of the most significant challenges managers confront today is figuring out how to retain valuable people and minimizing the cost it incurs when an employee voluntarily leaves the organization (Rubenstein et al., 2019). Employee retention entails using strategies to encourage employees to stay with the company for an extended time (Baharin & Hanafi, 2018; De Simone et al., 2018). Managers cannot prevent employees from seeking a more appealing job, but they can use employee retention tactics to help increase employees' loyalty during their tenure with the company (Khalid & Nawab, 2018). To maintain a competitive edge, organizational leaders must create ways to retain talented personnel (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2017; Dhanpat et al., 2018). Employee engagement is one strategy for increasing retention (Akunda et al., 2018; Buil et al., 2019).

Employee Engagement

Managers in organizations should seek to create and support engagement, including the mutual relationship between employees and employers. An engaged employee is fully aware of the company's status and wants to improve job performance to benefit the company (Teimouri et al., 2018). Compared to individuals with low engagement levels, highly engaged employees have a greater connection to their workplace and company and are more likely to stay on the job (Fletcher et al., 2018). Furthermore, engaged employees frequently exceed job expectations, increasing organizational value, and are more likely to stay at their current position (Lyons & Bandura, 2019). Employee engagement positively affects job embeddedness, and

employee encouragement and ingenuity help retain employees (Teimouri et al., 2018). Managers can increase employee engagement by encouraging employee involvement.

Employee Participation

Employee participation encompasses both direct and indirect activities. Direct participation occurs when an employee says how the organizational system is changed or designed, typically during the consultation (Khalid & Nawab, 2018). Employee participation is achieved indirectly by using management committees, consulting committees, and a board of directors (Khalid & Nawab, 2018). Understanding how employee participation affects job satisfaction among millennial employees, businesses can develop strategies and opportunities to engage millennial employees in the workplace, increasing job enjoyment (García et al., 2019). Employee participation in their business through expressing thoughts, concerns, and ideas and having authoritative control over employment decisions can help enhance employee retention (Khalid & Nawab, 2018). Additionally, according to García et al. (2019), job satisfaction among millennial employees increases when collaborating with top organization executives by sharing their perspectives to exert more significant influence. Compensation for employees may affect their degree of participation.

Compensation

Offering competitive compensation is undoubtedly the most direct link between compensation and employee retention (Lee et al., 2017). While businesses may use financial incentives and other forms of compensation to retain employees, different strategies have a far more significant impact. Employers may increase employee retention

by varying the type of compensation and the terms and conditions of their employee compensation package. Additionally, the business must provide incentives for exceptional personnel and chances for advancement. Further, employers should consider retention strategies while attempting to increase staff performance. The organization might concentrate on initiatives that motivate individuals to stay with the organization to retain exceptional workers. These include staff development and training, recognition of outstanding employees, job security, and competitive wages.

If an employee considers their salary insufficient to meet fundamental necessities, they are more likely to leave their job searching for a higher paying one (Edward & Kaban, 2020). Employees on lesser incomes, such as first-line supervisors, are less likely to participate in organizational activities such as conferences, delegation, and suggestions, resulting in decreased employee retention (Khalid & Nawab, 2018). According to Park et al. (2019), the most critical factor related to intention to leave among nurses working in small and medium-sized hospitals was pay level satisfaction rewards. Additionally, competitive, and acceptable wages and wage increases help retain employees (Lyons & Bandura, 2019). Compensation is a critical aspect in attracting employees and increasing an employee's commitment to their firm, hence promoting employee retention (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

Organizational Commitment

Commitment refers to an employee's capacity to identify with their organization and their level of commitment (Ntenga & Awuor, 2018). In a study published by Xu and Payne (2018), the researchers examined the effect of commitment on employee turnover

by evaluating various types of commitment, including affective, normative, and continuity commitment, as well as value-based and exchange-based commitment profiles. The term “affective commitment” refers to an employee’s identity and emotional relationship with their employer (Moin, 2018). Affective commitment is a critical factor to consider when analyzing employee turnover (Yang et al., 2019). A person with a high level of affective commitment will stay in a relationship for a more extended time if they find their job emotionally gratifying (Hessling et al., 2018). Normative commitment refers to an employee’s sense of corporate moral obligation due to the benefits they receive from the company (Moin, 2018). Continuance commitment refers to the perceived cost to an employee of quitting their organization (Afshari et al., 2019). Employees with affective commitment stay with their organization because they want to. Those with normative commitment wait to return the benefits they receive, and those with continuing commitment remain with their organization because they must (Moin, 2018). The value-based commitment profile consists of normative commitment regarding a moral obligation to accomplish desired results and affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2006). When the parties engaged cooperate efficiently, it increases value-based commitment because both sides benefit from the collaboration (Hessling et al., 2018). Employees with exchange-based commitment profiles demonstrate normative commitment through a responsibility to meet other people’s expectations and via continued commitment (Meyer et al., 2006). Both job embeddedness theory and commitment profiles suggest that employee retention is influenced by retention-related characteristics and attachment (Xu & Payne, 2018). Employee turnover is lower when

commitment is based on exchange rather than worth (Xu & Payne, 2018). Organizations must employ strategies to ensure staff maintain a high level of dedication and commitment to maximize retention (Labrague et al., 2018). Therefore, childcare business owners must grasp the various types of organizational commitment and the corporate culture to successfully encourage their staff to ensure job satisfaction and decrease voluntary turnover.

Organizational Culture

Employees may choose to remain with their employer if they perceive the work environment as helpful (Lyons & Bandura, 2019). For example, when paired with high turnover, low morale, and burnout among nurses, poor work cultures have a significant impact on the quality of patient care (Adams et al., 2019). A cost-effective technique for improving patient outcomes and reducing nurse turnover is to enhance the work environment for nurses (Smith, 2018). Supporting nurses in their work environment is critical for developing the knowledge and skills necessary for new nurses to assume the tasks of more experienced nurses (Smith, 2018). An employee may resign if they consider their beliefs do not align with the organizational culture (Ma et al., 2018). Supervisors explain the company culture to employees and how their aspirations and ambitions correspond with the corporate culture and objectives (Ma et al., 2018). Childcare managers that are culturally aware can develop effective ways for managing and leading their personnel.

Effective Leadership

The lack of support by the administration and management can damage the organization's efficiency (Ferreira, 2017). Poor management is a significant factor that causes employee turnover (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Retaining employees need strong leadership with a long-term perspective (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Educational leaders need to be educated in the best supervision skills to achieve effective outcomes (Stevens, 2017). Although not many workers are friends with their supervisors, it is necessary to establish positive working relationships (Santhanam et al, 2017). Collaboration, teamwork, and professional partnerships can help improve employee involvement, loyalty, and trust. According to Santhanam et al. (2017), several motivational techniques such as open communication, an employee remuneration program, periodic rewards, and a career development and training program all contribute to employee retention.

Training and Development

A low turnover rate is likely to be encountered in an organization where workers can grow their careers through the organization (Dong et al., 2017). The administration should build an atmosphere that allows workers to have an open conversation about career growth (Dong et al., 2017). The growth and development of a company also depend on the efficiency of the employees' services (Player et al., 2017). An educational institution should create training programs for teachers to expand the skill set of their employees. Thus, the proper management of a childcare company should consider individual factors impacting employee turnover and leadership should recognize the causes of employee turnover and develop strategies to solve the problem.

Personal Well-Being and Work-Life Balance

Organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of addressing workers' work-life issues. With the levels of stress, competitiveness, and insecurities in life, work-life balance problems have become critical (Agha et al., 2017; Fináncz et al., 2020). Recognizing the value of work-life balance benefits improves employees' well-being (Agha et al., 2017) and the bottom line of a company in terms of recruiting and maintaining top talent. The well-being of professionals employed in early childhood education is a little-studied field. However, it can influence the standards of care and education (Cumming, 2017) and significantly affect the quality of life of future generations. Nowadays, employees seek incentive policies and incentives that enable them to be happier, in addition to focusing solely on their wages. That is, communities are becoming increasingly concerned with work-life balance, personal well-being, and job satisfaction (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020). These market and social trends have compelled companies to alter their vision and strategy for human resource management, necessitating the development of formulas for attracting and engaging valuable human resources (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020). Flexibility practices can help workers cope with tension, exhaustion, and conflict. This translates into increased engagement for the company, which boosts productivity and lowers recruitment costs due to lower staff turnover. Thus, implementing work-life balance policies can serve as a retention strategy for valuable and talented human resources.

Summary

The literature review comprised an examination of sources on employee retention via the lens of a synthesized conceptual framework. The motivational theory of Gilbert's BEM identifies elements that influence an employee's desire to remain with the organization. The literature review summarizes the research and concludes that job satisfaction, work-life balance, and the organizational climate all influence an individual's willingness to remain or leave an organization. Ensuring long-term employee retention includes working to generate a warm and welcoming work atmosphere, improving benefits and compensation, and focusing on training and advancement to help employees progress within the company. Additionally, leadership styles and how leaders manage and collaborate with their people might influence an employee's decision to stay with the organization. Because each employee reacts differently to different leadership styles, the leader must remain adaptable moreover, open to change. A flexible leader that can promote change can contribute to increased childcare staff retention.

The study's findings may provide small business owners in the childcare sector with techniques for increasing employee retention. A leader who identifies and appreciates motivational aspects such as recognition, achievement, and progress can inspire employees, hence boosting the likelihood of retaining competent and valued staff. This study is essential since it elucidates why people stay, improving employee retention and reducing staffing and turnover costs.

Transition

The purpose of the research was to explore what strategies some small business owners in the childcare sector use to improve employee retention. I used a qualitative method and multiple-case study research design. The participating business owners were located in the southeastern United States. The results of this study may provide business executives with a better understanding of the factors related to employee retention in the childcare sector. Specifically, the study findings may highlight strategies to improve business practices to reduce turnover and increase retention.

In Section 2, I will specify the purpose of the study, the researcher's role, the research method and analysis of the design, the participants, population sampling, and ethical research. I will also discuss the data collection instruments, the techniques to analyze the, and the reliability and validity of the research study. In Section 3, I will present the findings, discuss applications to professional practice and implications for social change, and offer recommendations for future actions and research.

Section 2: The Project

Employee turnover is a significant problem for many companies as it can often lead to higher training costs, uneven output, and low morale, which can ultimately affect the organization's bottom line (Agha et al., 2017). In the United States, 41.4 million workers voluntarily left their jobs in 2018, accounting for more than 27% of total turnover (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Turnover is a pressing problem for childcare facilities in the United States. Not only does turnover reflect the sector's loss of educator expertise and experience, but it also disrupts attachment ties with children and families, consequently affecting children's well-being and learning experiences (Raza et al., 2021). The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the strategies that some small business owners use to improve employee retention and reduce turnover costs in the childcare industry.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple- case study was to explore strategies some childcare business owners use to improve employee retention. The target population consisted of small childcare business owners in the southeastern, United States, who had successfully implemented strategies to minimize employee turnover in the childcare industry. Implications for positive social change may include identification of strategies that small childcare business owners can use to increase employee retention in the childcare sector. Increased retention may contribute to employee and community prosperity through stable employment and local economic stability. Businesses are increasingly recognizing the shortage of affordable childcare as an impediment to hiring

and keeping staff, since parents require childcare to work or receive the training they need to advance. Without a safe way for parents to take care of their children as part of the business infrastructure, many parents would not be able to work to support their families and give their young children the help they need to reach their full intellectual and emotional potential in the first few years of life (Modestino et al., 2021). Moreover, developing a flexible work-life balance in the organization will result in workers who are happier and healthier (Adnan, 2019). Happier workers result in greater staff retention. Local government officials can potentially use tax revenues generated from employees to improve community facilities and services.

Role of the Researcher

A researcher's role in conducting a study data has four main components: (a) collect and analyze the data, (b) report on the results, (c) protect the confidentiality of the participants' information, and (d) conduct the analysis in an ethical manner (Yin, 2018). Clark and Vealé (2018) noted that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. I explored how small business owners successfully implemented strategies to minimize employee turnover in the childcare sector. I recruited participants and collected and analyzed data.

I have more than 15 years of professional experience as a manager and teacher in the childcare sector, and I have more than 10 years of experience serving as a leader in several nonprofit childcare organizations. I am currently providing government oversight to several child protection organizations in the southeast part of Pennsylvania. I have formed a range of essential networking relationships with colleagues, local childcare

companies, and state government agencies that provide services to children and their families. Although I have experience in childcare and have established networking relationships with colleagues, I had no personal connection or association with the study participants.

The researcher's role includes eliminating or diminishing biased views that may potentially disturb their interpretation of data (Berger, 2015; Henry, 2015; Tracy, 2013). Specific bias mitigation approaches include using multiple data sources to achieve data saturation (Yin, 2018). I mitigated bias in three main ways. First, although I performed my doctoral research in the metropolitan area where I live and work, I did not use any of the centers that I have been associated with in the past. Second, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix) to standardize the process that I used to engage with participants (e.g., using the same set of questions with everyone in the same order). Finally, I followed up with participants during the member-check period to verify the authenticity of the interview transcript. During member-checking, I emailed each participant a synthesized paragraph of each interview question for their review; I asked if my interpreted synthesized paragraphs accurately represented their responses or whether additional information was required.

In the early stages of the research process, before they collect any data, researchers should seek approval from applicable ethics boards or committees to conduct the research (Johnson, 2017). It was essential to obtain ethical approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before performing the study. The *Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical and

Behavioral Research, 1979) contains guidelines and ethical values for protecting humans used as research participants. Compliance with the guidelines helps protect both the researcher and the participants and includes three principles (a) beneficence, (b) justice, and (c) personal respect (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Before engaging with participants for the study, the researcher must seek institutional approval. I applied for permission to perform the research with Walden University's IRB. I also followed the recommendations of the *Belmont Report* protocol to mitigate bias in the study, maintain ethical research standards to respect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, and ensure that I protect participants from harm. Via telephone or email, I contacted potential participants from professional organizations that I have forged partnerships with and requested their participation in the study. To preserve the identity of research participants during and after the data collection and analysis process, I referred to them as P1, P2, P3, and so forth, and to their childcare establishment as CC1, CC2, CC3, and so forth. Participants did not incur economic loss or harm to their professional image. Any information collected was used only for analysis purposes.

Researchers can experience numerous challenges when conducting qualitative research that can lead to ethical conflicts (Reid et al., 2018). Berger (2015) recommended that researchers engage in frequent self-assessments and retain personal factors and responsibility while remaining aware of their role in the study. Researchers may have feelings and opinions about a phenomenon or the participants (Berger, 2015). By using

member checking and an interview protocol, researchers can mitigate bias in qualitative research (Harvey, 2015; Overgaard, 2015).

Participants

Selecting participants and having a clear purpose and a specific goal are vital in any study (Cleary et al., 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2017). I selected five participants from five individual small childcare companies in the southeastern United States. All five participants had successfully implemented strategies to minimize employee turnover for 2 or more years.

Before selecting participants, a researcher must define and develop inclusion and exclusion requirements (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). These criteria should be mutually exclusive to select the appropriate respondents. A study's sampled respondents must be capable of providing insight into significant dimensions and perspectives of the phenomenon being investigated (Patino & Ferreira, 2018; Yin, 2018). The researcher-defined participant requirements are characteristics that a participant must possess to be qualified to participate in the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). By clarifying the criteria, I was able to eliminate confusion and bias and set reasonable limits for the study. I used the following criteria to select participants: (a) the participant was over 18 years of age, (b) the participant was the owner of a small childcare company, (c) the participant's center had been in business for at least 2 years, (d) the participant has successfully adopted strategies to reduce employee turnover for at least 2 years and (e) the participant could effectively describe the processes and techniques that they used when implementing employee retention strategies in the small business. In a qualitative study,

selecting participants with prior experience with the research subject or phenomenon is essential and beneficial, as the selected participants will provide the most insight into the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). I ensured that participants met the study's requirements.

Means of Gaining Access to Participants

It is vital to choose the appropriate sample size to address the research questions adequately (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative researcher employs purposeful sampling to ensure appropriateness (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sharma, 2017). Unlike quantitative researchers, who use random or chance sampling to generalize data from a survey to a population (Etikan & Bala, 2017), qualitative researchers actively seek out specific individuals or locations that can speak the most to the research issue under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a result, purposeful sampling entails selecting content and relevant cases (Sharma, 2017). This applies to selecting participants and data collection sites based on their ability to contribute to an understanding of the research issue and phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

For this study, I collaborated with colleagues to recruit participants. I have established networking relationships with state agencies, nonprofit childcare agencies, conferences, seminars, and community meetings within the southeastern United States. The networking relationships I have established allowed me to gain access to the owners of small childcare businesses. I contacted the participants after receiving approval from the IRB. I contacted potential participants over the phone using the indicated resources obtained through my networking partnerships. I discussed the goals of the research, the

timeline for the research, the activities that I would perform, the questions that I would ask, and how the data would be stored and shared when the study was completed.

Prospective participants who met the requirements and displayed interest were emailed a consent form. In initial conversations with representatives from potential partnering organizations, the researcher should clarify why they chose the selected organization as the fieldwork venue, the form of work to anticipate, the risk of disruptions, and the completed study's reporting procedures (Clark & Vealé, 2018). I asked the owners questions to understand the company, such as each leadership role, corporate culture, and job responsibilities.

The researcher must obtain consent from the participants when conducting research (Harris & Robinson Kurpius, 2014; Islam, 2014; Naanyu et al., 2014). Tam et al. (2015) explained that researchers must give informed consent to the participants so that they can ask questions and choose whether they want to participate in the research voluntarily. Potential Participants examined the consent form agreed and submitted consent via email stating "*I Consent.*" The consent form was forwarded to an uncommon-infrequent email address that no one except the potential participant monitored. I created and utilized a different email address from my primary one. The account will be deactivated, and after 5 years, and it will be destroyed. I informed each potential participant to save or print the consent form emailed to them for their records. Upon acceptance of the invitation, I arranged meetings (via the Zoom audio application) with all persons to discuss the intent of the study and explained the interview process. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research and their right not

to answer specific questions. I also requested access to company data via employee orientation and training materials, related to employee engagement.

Establishment of a Positive Working Relationship

As I conducted this qualitative study, I remained transparent and gained the participants' confidence. Yin (2018) noted the importance of transparency when performing a qualitative study and clarified that researchers must identify research processes to improve study readability. I conveyed the study's intent, the data collection methods used, the interview procedures, and research security protocols to participants before the first interview. It is essential to build trust through clear communication to establish a mutually respectful relationship between a researcher and respondents (Siegle et al., 2014). Respondents may feel more comfortable participating in the exercise if they are more familiar with the researcher and research. To create trust and a positive work relationship, the participants and I reviewed the informed consent form before conducting the interviews. I provided insight into the purpose and benefits of the study during the review of the informed consent document and answered all participants' questions. Specific measures to improve the trust of the participants included retaining privacy and entitling the participants to contribute to the study findings.

Johnson et al. (2017) noted that it is vital to maintain positive working relationships during the analysis to facilitate data collection. I clarified my participant confidentiality processes meticulously using tools, including data encryption and coded participant identifiers. The time and place to perform the interviews must be conducive to the exercise to establish a genuine work relationship and to ensure the total participation

of the participants (Wang et al., 2015). Harris and Robinson Kurpius (2014) argued that the interviewer should choose a venue that is relaxed for the interviewee and has no concerns about privacy. When arranging interviews, I invited each participant to meet at their convenience for a comfortable, conversational interview. Additionally, I informed each participant at each point of the interview process that participation in the study is voluntary and that they can contact me with any questions or concerns.

Research Method and Design

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to examine staff retention strategies employed by small business owners in the childcare sector. This study aimed to determine what techniques childcare companies use to lessen employee turnover, increase staff motivation, and increase overall economic health.

Research Method

In qualitative inquiry, scholars must provide a strong rationale regarding the purpose for performing the research, select the best methods to capture the voices of individuals involved in the phenomenon, answer the central research questions, and provide an in-depth understanding of the person's experiences (Alderfer & Sood, 2016). When conducting research, there must be clear guidelines regarding how the data is collected, the reporting of the qualitative results, and an analysis of the quality of the study (Alderfer & Sood, 2016). Researchers use qualitative data instruments such as open-ended questions, in-depth interviews, field notes, and observation, to provide a comprehensive description of the participant's experience (Eyisi, 2016).

The three primary research approaches are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Almalki, 2016). Qualitative analysis is used to investigate what, why, and how of a research issue (Yin, 2018). To further explain qualitative research strengths, Hammarberg et al. (2016) noted that qualitative research is appropriate for use in research to clarify attitudes, perspectives, and meanings from the participants' perspective. I chose a qualitative analysis as my research tool because I was interested in the what, why, and how of employee retention. The qualitative approach also allows the researcher to scrutinize an event to gather thoughts, opinions, and likely phenomenon patterns. A distinctive characteristic of qualitative research methodology is the emphasis on building theories rather than supposed logical deductions (Peterson, 2019). Hammarberg et al. (2016) stated that qualitative approaches include analytical tools, such as small group discussions prevalent behaviors, semi-structured background interviews, and record analysis such as documents, diaries, and private or scattered information websites.

The qualitative analysis was most fitting for this study because I used open-ended questions during the interview process. To establish relationships and actively involve participants, qualitative researchers use open-ended questions (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). A qualitative study is an appropriate tool for understanding fundamental beliefs, attitudes, and views of communities concerned (King et al., 2018). Moreover, qualitative methods allow versatile data categorization styles and feature the ability to identify research variations, clarify relationships, and represent individual experiences (Yin, 2018). The qualitative research approach was ideal for this study because I aimed to

research employee motivation and retention strategies from the manager's perspective and obtain qualitative information using open-ended questions.

The quantitative analysis approach was not useful for this study as I was not evaluating and generalizing the outcomes that would relate to the target population. Hammarberg et al. (2016) clarified that the optimal use of the quantitative method in a study is to address research questions that involve (a) factual data, (b) when the topic is known and definite, and (c) when variables are isolated. Researchers use the quantitative approach to test a hypothesis and generalize data obtained on the drawn trial populations (Ridder, 2017). Blaikie and Priest (2019) said researchers conducting a quantitative study usually use self-administered questionnaires and standardized data collection interviews. Johnson and Christensen (2017) claimed that, in quantitative analysis, researchers test theories and analyze the cause and effect of estimated phenomena. Additionally, the quantitative process depends more on statistical data than on recording individuals' actual experiences, which makes it limited in scope (Bansal et al., 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2017). I did not use the quantitative approach for this study because the analysis does not include hypothesis testing or use of close-ended questions.

The mixed methods approach is a valuable technique to use if the researcher seeks to locate knowledge such as testing previously constructed theories, testing once completed hypotheses, quantitative forecasts, and independent research results (Ridder, 2017). A mixed-methods approach is inappropriate for this study because I did not intend to collect the research data using primarily semistructured interviews. According to (Ridder, 2017), the mixed methods research approach incorporates qualitative and

quantitative methods. This study is based on identifying and reviewing small business owners in the childcare sector's strategies for successfully retaining workers and not testing a hypothesis related to the subject matter. Therefore, the quantitative component is not needed, and I did not use the mixed method approach since this analysis did not use quantitative techniques.

Research Design

For this small childcare business employee retention analysis, I considered four research designs including (a) case study, (b) narrative, (c) ethnography, and (d) phenomenology. Researchers use a case study design to study real-life cases to capture uncertainty and information (Yin, 2018). Stake (1995) described case study research as the process of examining the complexities and specifics of a single phenomenon to understand behavior in critical event circumstances. Case study researchers need to produce comprehensive observations to understand dynamic processes (Harrison et al., 2017). To build on methods used to establish a thorough understanding, Creswell, and Poth (2018) argued that researchers need to obtain and incorporate various qualitative data types that can range from interviews to audiovisual data. For this research, I chose a case study design as I studied strategies to enhance employee retention in small childcare businesses. Researchers use the narrative method to explain participants' experiences, relationships, and life events (Bruce et al., 2016; King et al., 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018) described narrative research as a method used by researchers to understand participant perceptions and stories. Researchers using narrative techniques can investigate individual narrative experiences such as psychological,

cultural, cognitive, family, and linguistic descriptions, aside from a world view (Bailey et al., 2017). Narrative researchers may also collect participants' experiences through various methods, such as interviews, group interaction, records, and observation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I did not choose a narrative research design since this study did not need narrative data to examine employee retention methods.

Ethnographic researchers are involved in exploring and explaining cultures from a member perspective (Johnson et al., 2017). Creswell and Poth (2018) observed that an ethnography research design would be suitable if the researcher analyzed a social group's internal workings for details such as attitudes, vocabulary, and behaviors. Johnson et al. described phenomenology as a qualitative technique used to examine an individual's experiences within a within a group. I chose not to use an ethnographic research approach for this study since data on group culture are irrelevant to the topic of employee retention techniques.

I contemplated using a phenomenological design in this study. Researchers use phenomenological architecture to investigate problems of organizational culture and perspectives of stakeholders (Ridder, 2017). Moustakas (1994) claimed that phenomenologists concentrate on explaining experiences and intuitively finding meaning through multi-perspective phenomenon analysis. Phenomenologists neglect anything beyond the research to focus on aspects and interpret the phenomenon's ordinary meanings (Holloway, 1997). Welman et al. (2001) clarified that phenomenologists seek to consider social and psychological perspectives from those interested in phenomena. I

did not select a phenomenological study design for my study because I concentrated on employee motivation and retention methods rather than experience connotations.

Population and Sampling

Population and sampling techniques may affect data collection processes, including the target population and the ideal sample group (Edwards, 2014). Martínez-Mesa et al. (2016) noted the significance of assessing the population and sampling techniques early in the study's planning stage and stressed the researcher's need to ensure that the sampling process fits the study's objectives and strategies for sufficient data saturation. This study's population consisted of leaders who own small childcare companies in the southeastern United States. I recruited participants via a familiar professional childcare networking group that successfully designed and delivered effective methods to increase employee retention within their organization.

Martínez-Mesa et al. (2016) said that sampling is characterized as a subset of the target population participants and clarified that the sample population chosen is identical to the target population. King et al. (2018) emphasized the significance of selecting a sample population representing the population to be studied. An ideal participant sample size is sufficiently large to answer research questions and small enough to obtain valuable employee retention data. Qualitative sampling approaches involve sampling techniques such as convenient sampling involving selecting accessible participants, theoretical sampling involving the researcher developing a hypothesis, selecting some participants to test the theory, and purposeful sampling. I selected the most appropriate sample to answer the research question (see Marshall, 1996).

For this study, I chose purposive sampling (also known as decision, selective, or arbitrary sampling) a sampling technique in which the researcher selects the population to participate in the sample (Sharma, 2017). Although the various purposeful sampling techniques have different aims, researchers can be justified in generalizing from the sample being examined, if such generalizations are theoretical, empirical, and logical in nature (Sharma, 2017). Expert sampling is a type of targeted sampling that is used when specific expertise-based information is needed (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The researcher seeks study experts or recognized experts and collects data directly from them (Etikan & Bala, 2017). It also includes a sampling of people who can explain using their expertise or those trained in specific fields. The reasons for using expert sampling are to provide a better way to build the views of individuals in a particular field (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The intended use of the expert sampling method was to confirm the validity of the sampling strategy and to ensure data saturation for this employee retention study. Consequently, I selected participants who had demonstrated successful retention techniques to retain workers for a minimum of 2 years.

The selected sample consisted of five small business owners in the childcare sector in the southeastern United States who had successfully implemented retention strategies within their centers. The right sample size is important during research as the aim is to collect quality data (Harf et al., 2015). Researchers must communicate with enough participants and analyze a sufficient number of sources to saturate data or exhaustively generate useful information on the subject (Cleary et al., 2014; Guetterman, 2015). I collected data from five small business owners of five childcare organizations. I

also reviewed employee records and other relevant company documentation to gain a deeper understanding of the employee retention phenomenon.

Data saturation is essential when collecting data in qualitative research (Harvey, 2015). Data saturation occurs when no new data information, codes, or themes emerge (Elo et al., 2014; Siegle et al., 2014). In case study research, data saturation is also supported by using multiple data sources (Harvey, 2015). I used five different small business owners from five separate childcare organizations to collect data along with employee records and company documentation to examine the effective methods childcare owners use to improve employee retention within the southeastern United States. The number of participants in any study does not guarantee data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Fusch and Ness suggested that data saturation is not about the number of sources. Still, the more sources there are, the more likely it is that there will be too much information about the phenomenon and not enough that is useful and complete.

Guetterman (2015) noted the importance not only of sample size but of the consistency and intentionality of sampling procedures and the reflexivity of the researcher throughout the study. Accordingly, Shaheen (2016) researched successful employee retention strategies in childcare centers. The sample size Shaheen used is like the population sample size I used to analyze childcare managers' successful strategies to enhance employee retention. Researchers can also use triangulation to saturate results (Ramthun & Matkin, 2014). A review of detailed interviews, insightful field notes and company data can provide an evaluation context and help triangulate the findings (Nelson & Cohn, 2015).

In qualitative research, the quality of the data is reliant on the integrity of the sources (Heywood et al., 2015). Researchers must use participants that possess proper knowledge and experience that apply to the research topic (Heywood et al., 2015). Selecting well-informed participants helps create a robust and denser understanding of the research phenomenon (Colombo et al., 2016; Hoyland et al., 2015). Due to the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), field research that was previously conducted face-to-face has been relocated online or via telephone to prevent the virus from spreading. I used an interview protocol to conduct the five audio-recorded interviews and a standardized semi-structured interview with the participating childcare owners. The meetings were held individually with each owner, in my private office located in my residence. Each interview was audio-recorded and later transcribed by me. Also, I collected company data in the form of employee orientation and training manuals, relevant surveys associated with employee engagement, attendance and turnover records, employee performance reviews, and all pertinent retention policies and procedures to later analyze.

The outputs of various formal and informal tools add value to the study by helping to explain different aspects of an issue (Badley, 2015). The usage of multiple sources of data is called methodological triangulation (Yin, 2018). Methodological triangulation requires converging data obtained from different sources to assess consistency (Yin, 2018). Using the triangulation approach allowed me to eliminate the need to collect a considerable participant sample size and helped reassure me that the study results are correct.

Continued participation, detailed interviews, participant feedback, insightful field observations, and data triangulation are all essential to sustain data exhaustion before additional data results are obtained (Britton et al., 2017). To encourage accurate and consistent data, performing member checks during the interview process can help ensure that the participants' experiences and views are correctly interpreted, and that no additional data is obtained from the participant (Britton et al., 2017). I followed the advice from Britton et al. to endorse data saturation. I used transcript checking, member checking, and triangulated the data with other sources, such as internal documents, to determine data saturation. After transcribing each interview, I shared the meeting information with each participant to verify the quality of the content. This process continued until no new participant data existed. Researchers reach data saturation when there is ample information available for duplicating the analysis, no further information is necessary, and no more coding is possible (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Ethical Research

Considerable emphasis on conducting an empirically sound and ethical study is vital, with consideration for peers, stakeholders, and participants (Yin, 2018). Ethical research involves protecting critical data, respecting one's privacy, and providing confidentiality to safeguard participants (Alby & Fatigante, 2014). The informed consent form outlined the intent of the research, study methods, study design, and privacy information. After receiving IRB approval (no. 10-25-21-0560438), I picked each participant using the same eligibility criteria (National Commission, 1978). Participation is voluntary in a qualitative study (Judkins-Cohn et al., 2014). I had the participants read

and agree to the letter of consent before the interview and provided the participant with a copy. The process of securing informed consent is beneficial in protecting participants and their organizations from any potential problems that may arise because of unscrupulous research practices (Judkins-Cohn et al., 2014). The informed consent included a background of the study, information related to the respondent's importance for participating in the study, and the benefits and positive social impact the research will have on business practice. The informed consent also included notification for the need to record written and audio interviews to diminish data loss. For security, I assigned an alpha numeric code to each participant. The researcher must maintain the anonymity of the participants throughout the study (Cairney & St Denny, 2015). I concealed the participants' identity by using codes as opposed to identifiers. Researchers must provide valid data and prove that they are trustworthy, truthful, and credible (Sarapin et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2014).

Individuals who wish to withdraw were treated with dignity and respect. All written, verbal, or audio data collected by participants who want to withdraw from the study are destroyed, and all contact and interaction with the participant will cease. The researcher must safeguard an individual's rights and confidentiality as a priority (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). All participants were advised that they can willingly withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. A participant no longer interested in participating and wanting to withdraw may send an e-mail informing me of their decision. If a participant seeks to withdraw, I can remove them from the study without further clarification. Although researchers may offer monetary rewards or

benefits to participants in return for their contribution to the study, the researcher should ensure that the benefits do not undermine the validity of the participants' data (Bouter, 2015). To prevent possible conflicts, I did not give monetary rewards and encouraged volunteer engagement in the study.

Before undertaking work, researchers must accept and incorporate the requirements of the *Belmont Report*, which follows the ethical standards of justice, benevolence, and respect for human rights (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). I adhered to the principles of the *Belmont Report* by masking each participants' identity to ensure their business is not harmed and not exposed to professional risk, such as, the company's reputation. For security purpose, all information is kept confidential and secure for 5 years, through a password-protected flash drive, locked inside the researcher's home in a storage cabinet. After 5 years, study data will be destroyed. Both physical copies of collected information and study-related electronic data files are shredded. To protect participants' rights, researchers need to obtain authorization from their institution's IRB before attempting to communicate with study participants (Fiske & Hauser, 2014). Upon obtaining approval from Walden University's IRB, I contacted the selected participants. I sent them an invitation via email, with a telephone follow-up call, explaining the purpose of the research and the positive social impact of the study results on business practice.

Data Collection Instruments

As a researcher in this qualitative case study, I am the primary data collection instrument. The researcher is the primary data collection method in a qualitative analysis

because the researcher listens, observes, and interprets data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Yin, 2018). I planned a 45-minute Zoom meeting with participants. Traditionally, face-to-face semi-structured interviews have been and continue to be the most preferred form of interviewing as they offer versatility to research participants to expand on in-depth ideas important to them (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). However, given the COVID-19 epidemic, the face-to-face technique was not the most secure option at this time. The researcher may also use semi-structured interviews to examine participants' nonverbal communication and their comprehensive viewpoints (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Roulston & Choi, 2017).

I chose semistructured interviews as a data collection technique for the study. The open-ended questions (see Appendix) were aligned with the overall research question, problem statement, and purpose statement and allowed for comprehensive data inquiry (see Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). Yin (2018) indicated that the researcher should follow the interview procedure and ask questions without prejudice. Before beginning the interview, I clarified that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants' identity would remain confidential. I also reminded each participant that their responses would be audio recorded during the interview process, and I followed up at a later time to confirm accuracy. Using the interview protocol, I achieved continuity before, during, and after the interview (see Appendix).

To ensure study accuracy, integrity, and validity, I applied the methodological triangulation process using multiple data sources along with the member checking technique. Qualitative researchers use methodological triangulation to collect data from

numerous sources (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016). Including the semi-structured interviews, I collected data from other sources, including reviewing current company documents in the form of employee orientation and training manuals, employee handbooks, related employee engagement surveys, and other applicable retention policies and procedures that participants were willing to share. Houghton et al. (2016) noted that researchers use multiple data sources to obtain a deeper understanding of a topic or phenomenon. When implemented correctly, various sources help verify and enhance the reliability of data vital to the research process (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Yin (2018) maintained that if you are trying to understand a subject and explain why such events happen, an in-depth analysis of various sources is necessary to answer specific phenomenon-related questions. According to McGrath et al. (2019), A qualitative method known as member checking gives a novice researcher a good opportunity to check the consistency of the data. The member checking method is an essential component of qualitative research as it helps add credibility to the findings of the data (Brit et al., 2016). I used the member check process and ask participants to verify the accuracy of an interpreted transcript summary and provide clarification opportunities or any additional information they may wish to contribute.

Data Collection Technique

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the successful strategies used by small business owners to enhance employee retention in the childcare sector. To address the central research question, I chose the semistructured interview technique to interview participants. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix) to

support objectivity and consistency. Researchers may use various interview approaches in qualitative research (Cleary et al., 2014). Interview methods include focus groups and individual interviews. Face-to-face, email, and telephone interviews are some of the formats that researchers can use (Cleary et al., 2014). Typically, individual, face-to-face interviews would be preferable to a focus group for this study. Focus groups are ideal for non-sensitive topics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), such as this research. I rejected the group interview method because it does not encourage individual responses and is influenced by others; therefore, this technique was not appropriate. Oltmann (2016) and Barr et al. (2017), noted that conducting face-to-face interviews provides distinct advantages such as detecting social cues in the form of voice and body language, which may give the researcher additional knowledge not readily detectable during a telephone. Nonetheless, Goldstein (2017) reported that the face-to-face approach is the most effective interviewing technique as it lets the researcher explore answers to questions from the participant's perspective.

While advancements in information and communication technology provide new avenues for interviewing research participants, research on the use of digital technologies as data collecting methods is still in its infancy stage (Archibald et al, 2019). However, as a research tool, audio and video conferencing have several advantages. It is less costly, more convenient, and more cost-effective for researchers than in-person interviews or focus groups (Archibald et al, 2019; Joshi et al, 2020). Due to the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), field research previously performed face-to-face had to be shifted online to minimize the spread of the virus (Dodds & Hess, 2020; Sutherland et al,

2020). I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews using interactive virtual interviewing utilizing web-based audioconferencing services such as Zoom. In comparison to in-person interviews, audio interviews provide some obstacles (Joshi et al, 2020; Lobe et al., 2020). For instance, significant disadvantages of audio or videoconferencing interviews is the inability to meet informally and engage in casual discussions with real people. Joshi et al. (2020) note that numerous researchers value such encounters because it enables researchers to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences. According to past studies, common concerns connected with utilizing audio and video technologies such as Skype and Zoom include missed conversations and pauses, poor audio or video quality, and an inability to understand nonverbal clues due to irregular and delayed connections (Archibald et al, 2019). While audio and video consultations cannot completely replace face-to-face interactions, they can significantly lessen the necessity for them, reducing the chance of COVID-19 spreading further in many areas. Sutherland et al. (2020) stated that, while audio and video consultations for palliative care constitute a radical change in service delivery in the United Kingdom, worldwide research appears to support their effectiveness, accessibility, acceptability, and cost-effectiveness. Additionally, the authors claimed that patients and family find audio and video consultations quite beneficial and frequently wish they had been available sooner.

Before conducting interviews, I asked each participant to review and sign the informed consent to ensure that the respondents understand the interview process and what is required of them to participate in this study. The informed consent details the

research objectives, the participant's rights as contributors to the study, and privacy concerns. Upon agreement to participate in the study, I requested business owners to grant access to analyze employee records and company reports.

There are advantages and disadvantages to performing interviews. Krall et al. (2014) stated that some disadvantages of interviewing involve high time consumption, sample size limits, and reliance on participants' subjective experiences. The semi-structured interviews were performed in my private office at my household using Zoom audio and an iPhone memo app as a secondary recorder based on the participants' option. Only the participant and I were permitted in the private office during the Zoom audio interview. I asked questions per the interview procedure (see Appendix). I reminded participants that they will be audio recorded for the interviews. If the audio recording device failed, my iPhone memo App acted as a backup method. Other data collection included analyzing employee records and company documents.

Semistructured interviews are open-ended questions associated with the significant research problem (Cridland et al., 2015). I began by introducing myself and the purpose of the research while remaining aware of the ethics and professionalism needed. I followed the interview protocol for each interview. Upon discussing the interview format with each participant, I reminded each respondent that their participation is voluntary, and they may withdraw from the study at any time. I asked the participant to read and provide consent to the informed consent document, including their consent to the audio-taped interview. I used the interview protocol for data collection. A trustworthy interview protocol is critical for obtaining high-quality interview data (Yeong

et al., 2018). Developing a reliable interview protocol, on the other hand, is not an easy undertaking, even for novice researchers (Yeong et al., 2018). I concluded by thanking everyone for their participation. I used numeric coding to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participant. For example, I coded the first person interviewed as a participant, or P1, along with their childcare establishment as CC1. I marked the second participant and the corresponding childcare establishment as P2 and CC2 for the remaining participants. For analysis, I maintained a list of participants and linked their names to the coded number.

In a case study, data collection approaches can involve combining objective and perceptive data from sources such as interviews, documents, and archival documents (Atmowardoyo, 2018). According to Yin (2018) archival records such as (a) books, (b) newspapers, (c) personal records, (d) earlier studies, (e) blogs, (f) online materials, (g) mass media communications, (h) government documents, and semi-government documents provide accurate data collection information. Having multiple data collection sources promotes triangulation usage and helps build the trustworthiness of research results (Aguilar, 2020). Johnson et al. (2021) noted that data triangulation is used to find convergence of data gathered from several data sources and methodologies (e.g., observation field notes and interview transcripts) to avoid or reduce mistakes or bias and maximize the accuracy of data collection and analysis procedures. By comparison, the use of archival documents may pose some drawbacks, such as (a) unreliable information not found by the researcher (b) failure to resolve essential research issues, or (c) incomplete information (Yin, 2018). By using archival data, the researcher can fail to

understand the answers to the research question. To minimize the risk for insufficient archival documentation, I gathered additional data from sources independent of archival documents. According to Hoadley and Campos (2022) if necessary, researchers will improve the generalizability of research results and reduce archival documentation limitations by reformulating research questions. Similarly, study findings will demonstrate congruence based on the scope, documentation, methodological and ethical rigor of data collection methods that reinforce the conceptual framework and research question (Cleary et al., 2014). For this study, I used the documentation provided by the participating childcare companies' business owners to address the research question for this study.

Brit et al. (2016) defined member checking as a quality management process that enables the researcher to return the data collected to the participants so that they can confirm the validity and interpretation of the recorded responses and comment on any inconsistencies in the statements. Vance (2015) proposed that the researcher should provide the participants with interview summaries at the end of the study, while Sutton and Auston (2015) reasoned that the researcher could arrange for a review of the transcribed responses at any point of the consultation stage and not just at the end of the interview sessions. After the interview process, I used member checking to help verify the quality, purpose, integrity, and validity of the information collected during the interview. Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that member checking is the most accurate and crucial alternative to establish credibility, verify the data, and achieve data saturation. Also, qualitative researchers regularly use (a) participant checks, (b)

triangulation, (c) thick classification, (d) peer review, and (f) external data quality audits (Elo et al., 2014).

Data Organization Technique

Collecting and organizing data throughout a research study is paramount (Woods, Paulus, Atkins & Macklin, 2015). I developed a master electronic file to organize the data I collected and sorted the data according to its relevance using Microsoft Word. I also created a journal with reflective research logs to track my efforts and results. Reflective research logs are used by researchers to stay organized and focused, as well as elicit knowledge based on their experience (Rich, 2015). Accordingly, researchers use reflective research logs to analyze and recall new information and bracket data to correlate with any preconceived ideas produced before the study (Rich, 2015). I preserved all the data, such as the recorded interviews and reflexive notes, interview transcripts, and field notes on a password-protected flash drive. Labeling all data files is essential for qualitative research (Fusch & Ness, 2015) I translated all interview recordings into password-protected Microsoft word files and keep in a unique folder. The respective reports and documents reviewed also reflected a pseudo naming system. The file form and suffix CC1, CC2, etc. are included in each document or record referring to the childcare center. For example, a copy of an employee training plan corresponded to the following file name tag: Employee training plan CC2. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that a back-up of all collected data be maintained and kept in a secured location for 5 years. To protect participants' rights, I stored data and consent forms on a USB-encrypted flash drive that is password protected and that I will keep for 5 years. It is

locked and stored in my home office storage cabinet; I am the only one with a key and access to the data. After 5 years, I will delete all data according to the university guidelines (Walden University, 2016). This includes shredding all physical and audio files and deleting all digital copies.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is defined as a method of systematically gathering and arranging transcripts of interviews, observation notes, or other non-textual information collected by the researcher to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Analyzing qualitative data requires coding or categorizing data (Dudley et al., 2015; Syed & Nelson, 2015). Ramani and Mann (2016) noted this consists primarily of making sense of large quantities of data by the amount of raw information, identifying key patterns, and gradually extracting meaning from data and then building a logical chain of facts.

For this case study, I incorporated the methodological triangulation process to compare and analyze feedback from semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, archival documents, and current company data from each company owner, such as turnover reports from the participating organization for population into the NVivo software system. Methodological triangulation is a method that researchers use to explain data collected (Abdalla et al., 2018). I used methodological triangulation for data analysis since Yin (2018) reported that researchers use the technique to enhance the validity of a study by converging multiple data sources that may lead to the same conclusion. I cross-referenced the constructs from the conceptual framework to guide my analysis of the

interview data and internal organizational documents to clarify the components of effective retention strategies that small business owners can use in their childcare establishments.

Triangulation consists of four types: (a) process, (b) source, (c) analyst, and (d) theory (Fusch et al., 2018). Methodological triangulation requires combining different data sources to improve data validity and reliability (Fusch et al., 2018; Noble & Heale, 2019). For this qualitative study, I used methodological triangulation to include data from the interviews and supporting evidence from internal company records. I asked each owner to obtain the employee manual and other company information relevant to current retention policies and strategies.

Data analysis includes five steps: collection, disassembly, reassembly, data interpretation, and conclusion (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The first step, compiling, is organizing data to code and categorize (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The collection involves arranging transcripts and other resources more usefully (Yin, 2018). Once I completed the transcription data collection, I moved forward to data disassembly and then data interpretation. I finalized the analysis with the concluding recap.

Data Disassembling

Disassembling the data means the data is separated and significant groupings are created (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This method is usually coded. By converting raw data into qualitative analysis, coding means defining unifying principles, themes, or unifying ideas (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Coding also includes researchers finding similarities and data variations. Before I began coding, I conducted a thorough analysis

through the multi-level dataset in my research journal. These descriptions can be understood in the qualitative study as inclusion and exclusion criteria and ensure that codes are reliably applied (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Reflective messages or notes are not mere summaries of the data but instead, aids in providing future directions, answer lingering questions, concerns with the analysis, and help make valuable connections with the data (Saldaña, 2016). The process of data disassembly includes coding each transcript for repeated or thematically similar words and categorizing them accordingly and note their frequency. I used the coding procedure to set up the NVivo software application and run the transcripts through it. Then, I compared the details that I manually coded.

Developing patterns in the ongoing review of data will assist me in coding each interview transcript (Rogers, 2018). Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis or CAQDAS are helpful, but Microsoft Excel and Access programs can be as capable (Houghton et al., 2016). Broadly, used tools provide technological support for qualitative research that streamlines the data analysis process and enables more complex, more in-depth data analysis (Nwoye, 2017; Simmons, 2016). NVivo is used for many projects, and it is simple to use when making beautiful data graphical displays. Such software tools enable the researcher to look at code patterns and code connections through broad data fields (Fusch et al., 2018; Houghton et al., 2016).

Researchers use the NVivo software to code, arrange, and organize data in themes (Maher et al., 2018). Researchers can export interview transcripts, organizational documents, and records, and other relevant data to the NVivo software to categorize data collection and enhance the quality and accuracy of the data (Maher et al., 2018).

Researchers using NVivo software can also work more methodically and systematically during data analysis (Pawa et al., 2017; Zamawe, 2015). Although NVivo software improves data analysis process speed and accuracy, the software system is not 100% reliable (Zamawe, 2015). Therefore, after creating a list of codes based on repetitive keywords and phrases, I used an axial coding technique to identify relations between categories and subcategories, or information missed in the software. Axial coding is a qualitative research technique that incorporates data to reveal codes, categories, and subcategories within the voices of participants in the data collected (Allen, 2017). That is, axial coding is one way to connect data (Allen, 2017).

Data coding or categorization is the most critical stage of qualitative data processing (Stuckey, 2015). Coding and analyzing data are not synonymous, but coding is a vital component of qualitative research (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Coding often includes subdividing and eventually distributing the overwhelming amount of raw or data into groups (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In other words, codes are tags or marks for assigning different topics from data collected in the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Researchers can capture the context of their original data via codes and themes (Saldaña, 2016). I created a master list for the coding process after thoroughly analyzing the participants' answers. The analysis of the participant's responses consists of identifying frequently or reoccurring words, phrases, or sentences that emerge from the data and will be grouped to be categorized into patterns or themes. I attempted to analyze these themes to ensure they aligned with the conceptual structure and the resources used in the literature review. From the master list, I sorted the initial codes into a more

condensed order as specified by Saldaña (2016) to mark the segmented data by descriptive words and then group the data by themes, patterns, and categories. After evaluating and reviewing the initial data, I performed some further data content reviews to find any omissions in all key themes and subthemes. The implication of performing additional evaluations enhances the researcher's data collection process by gathering accurate and relevant details required for thorough analysis (Stuckey, 2015). Research software can also be used to recognize recurring words or phrases and other patterns for proper coding (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Data Reassembling

Reassembling is a process in which code analysis leads to themes (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). A theme includes something significant about the data regarding the research question and reflects some form of patterned response or significance of data collection (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). In other words, themes are patterns in the codes that take various pieces of linked code to elaborate on what is represented and can potentially be further be grouped into subthemes. Two common ways in which qualitative researchers organize data into themes are through hierarchies and matrices (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Thematic hierarchies establish a visual guide to explain whether subjects are subordinate or superordinate (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Hierarchies are designed for higher-order codes by clustering related codes. The researcher will then analyze restructured data at various granularity rates. The higher-order codes give the researcher a view of the vast, thematic data landscape (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Codes that are more specific enable the researcher to examine

subtle differences across cases. Matrices are formed into rows and columns by arranging participant positions, themes, variables, evolving concepts, and data sources to provide a broad visual representation that bases data and meaning findings (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). During reassembly, the researcher's critical thought is demonstrated. The researcher starts by collecting all relevant data for each possible theme and continuously tests each theme to assess if the coded extracts and data set are robust (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Careful consideration should not be applied to manipulate or circumvent the data. I checked the quality of the theme development by first analyzing the interviews to see if there are similar words phrases, or patterns in the data.

Data Interpretation

The interpretation is a critical method to identify the significance of concepts and their relevance to the study issue (Kural, 2018). The interpretation needs to be reliable with all raw data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The interpretation explores the relationship between the themes and codes to explain the overall research issue (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The researcher's interpretation process must occur during the first three steps (compiling, disassembling, and reassembling) (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Yin (2018) explains that there is no checklist for proper interpretation, but five qualities should be the goal of all qualitative interpretations. First, interpreting should be complete. Readers should see the beginning, middle, and end of how interpretations are drawn (Yin, 2018). Secondly, interpretations should be fair, as other researchers should achieve the same analysis of data are the same (Branson, 2019; Yin, 2018). Third, raw data interpretations should also be accurate and representative (Yin, 2018). Fourth,

functional literature studies add value to our understanding of the subject (Yin, 2018). Fifth, data methods and subsequent interpretations should be credible and respected by colleagues. Once data is reassembled through coding, I extracted and showed excerpts from the data in conjunction with each other. By identifying patterns throughout the data, I gained a more detailed understanding of what was happening inside, and across different backgrounds, views, and histories, questions were more specific, and the thematic trends shaped into results. Themes capture the essence of the phenomenon under study concerning the study question or purpose (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). As part of this research stage, I built a thematic map and their connections to visualize the themes and codes I recognized. Thematic maps typically contain detailed descriptions of the themes, including patterns in coded data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Qualitative data analysis software is particularly useful in developing data visualization as a three-dimensional code cluster map. Through viewing re-assembled data in this way, researchers can see not readily apparent relationships and interactions between constructs (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). For example, researchers use NVivo for data visualization to demonstrate how codes cluster together in the data text. Robins and Eisen (2017) suggested that I use NVivo to organize, code, analyze, and categorize the raw data I gathered from the research notes, interview data, and company documents. Once the information is imported into the NVivo database, I set up the program to identify themes from my recorded interviews and written notes. Transcribing audio or video to text involves the researcher taking the media files and importing them into the NVivo application allows it to be converted to a text document in the same language as

the original speaker (Houghton et al., 2016). Raw data includes codes, and codes develop thematic maps (Bernard et al., 2017). Identifying and defining them leads to interpretations. Conclusions are the study's research questions or purpose (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Following the coding of the data, I determined meanings from the data to address the research questions. The interpretation from the data is the basis for my conclusions.

The conceptual framework constructs also serve as a guide for analysis once the terms are coded and the themes are identified. Continuously, I compared identified themes with the constructs in the conceptual framework, other theories, and content from my literature review as part of the analysis. The expectancy theory of motivation is the theory that supports the conceptual framework for this study. Vroom's theory describes how people decide to obtain their desired outcome. The conceptual framework's concepts are separate from my interview results. Moser and Korstjens (2018) recommend that the researcher manually tests for additional findings after the data is collected and classified and decides whether further inquiry is required. When the research was completed, I examined how aligned or mutually incompatible the conceptual framework constructs and the literature review's content were. I discussed the implications of the conceptual framework findings and my literature review content in Chapter 3. I also provided a synthesis of how it applies to my research.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Qualitative researchers discuss the study's reliability and validity through relevant attributes, such as trustworthiness, that measure and evaluate the reliability and validity values within a study research (Yin, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985) clarified that the assessment of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity of the research involved examination by four natural analogs (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability, starting early in the research and continuing throughout the study. By using different types of data collection methods to obtain information, a researcher may improve data collection validity and reliability (Fusch & Ness, 2018; Haradhan Kumar, 2017). Reliability is the degree to which the study results are repeated (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that a precise repetition of the investigation's findings shows the principle of reliability. To elaborate, Lincoln and Guba clarified how dependability is a criterion for reliability. It is essential to consider the case of both research variables as reliable when deliberating on results. Credibility strategies include ongoing contact with participants, continuous research assessment, peer-debriefing, member-checking, reflective journaling, and methodological triangulation (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016). Confirmability is consistency, whether the findings are congruent and replicable (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016). Polit and Beck (2014) noted the concept of transferability is distinct from other aspects of the research, and readers determine how relevant the results are to their circumstances⁴).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research refers to the stability of qualitative results over time and when conditions change (Moon et al., 2016). Dependability is often measured by the consistency of the data-collection, data interpretation, and theory-generation processes (Moon et al., 2016). To ensure dependability, I performed member checking follow-up interviews and used my interview protocol during the interviews. Also, to support the trustworthiness of the results of the study, I interviewed all owners in small businesses within the childcare sector who have strategies to enhance employee retention. Birt et al. (2016) indicated that researchers use member checking to validate the data's consistency during the interview. I used the interview protocol to ensure that I followed up on my interview questions and recalled key points. Fusch et al. (2018) clarified that the interview protocol is an instrument that researchers can use to ask questions about relevant project-related details. Castillo-Montoya (2016) also stated that researchers should mark their interview protocol when assessing the significant points that are relevant to ask during the interview.

To check and achieve similar results, the researcher must provide evidence that the research study findings are consistent, relate to specific scenarios, circumstances, incidents, and populations (Baille, 2015; Elo et al., 2014; Haradhan Kumar, 2017; Henry, 2015). If there are enough parallels between the two cases, readers may infer that research findings in their case are the same or similar (Cope, 2014). Consistency is using the same approach and leading to similar findings (Leung, 2015). For continuity, the researcher should combine rigor, thoroughness, and accuracy (Cypress, 2017; De Massis

& Kotlar, 2014). To achieve consistency and reliability, I engaged respondents in the member checking process to assess the accuracy of their responses. Member checking is a qualitative technique used to create credibility and trustworthiness in research (Birt et al., 2016). The value of performing member checking is to establish credibility and to demonstrate that the results are accurate and truthful (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The member checking process gives participants additional opportunities to check the data and provide feedback for further efficiency and consistency (Madill & Sullivan, 2017). The interview transcripts are essential to the interpretation and evaluation of my research because they allow the participants to validate the results. Consequently, methods used to establish credibility include continuous study assessment, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflective journaling (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016). I maintained the credibility of the study by asking participants to review the transcript of their interview, and to provide supplementary information as needed.

Validity

Validity is the study's appropriateness and trustworthiness through ongoing research analysis (Leung, 2015). Validity is supported through theory-based facts and concepts (Cypress, 2017). I conducted member checking to ensure I accurately transcribed interview data and asked participants to authenticate the interpretation of the data. Researchers improve their study's credibility by enabling participants to confirm the accuracy of research findings (Check et al., 2014; Yin, 2018). Coleman (2022) clarified that transferability refers to the researcher's guarantee that results can extend to specific contexts and settings. In my study, I provided a detailed description of my data analysis

process, the rationale for selecting the participants, and the relevance of each decision based on the research question. Houghton et al. (2016) noted the importance of offering full explanations of the research context and procedures to improve a study's transferability. Readers can extend the results of this study to small childcare organizations to develop robust retention strategies.

In qualitative research, the researcher must ensure that the validity of the data is reasonable, reliable, trustworthy, and defensible (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). Qualitative research validity refers to the appropriateness of the methods, procedures and data gathered to examine the research problem (Leung, 2015). In evaluating study validity, the researcher should select the correct research process, design, sampling choice, and data analysis (Leung, 2015). Thus, researchers seeking to assess the soundness of their analysis should apply the four parameters investigating credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, when performing a qualitative study (Barkhordari-Sharifabad et al., 2017; Leung, 2015).

Achieving validity also involves achieving data saturation, which helps preserve the findings of the study, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Leung, 2015). Data saturation is when the researcher does not find any new topics or information to reinforce the research phenomena (Murgatroyd et al., 2015). Until the researcher can achieve data saturation, they endeavor to establish validity by evaluating the data to determine that the participants influence the findings of the study without the impact of the researcher 's perspective on the phenomenon (Yin, 2018).

Subsequently, the concept of data saturation demonstrates the validity of the content (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015a). The researcher should therefore make sure that data saturation is achieved, which improves the quality of research findings (Yin, 2018). One way of achieving data saturation is through the interview process, and the number of interviews depends on the quality of responses received (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To achieve data saturation, I interviewed multiple participants asking semistructured questions and collected detailed information from their perspective until replication of responses does not generate any new data or themes, thereby supporting data saturation. Member checking supported the process of data saturation. Replication of data mean' participants' responses are typical, but not necessarily identical (Morse, 2015a).

Qualitative analysis validity ensures the data obtained is reasonable, reliable, trustworthy, and defensible (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). In qualitative research, validity means correct methods, processes, and data collected, examines the study problem (Leung, 2015). In assessing study validity, the researcher should select the proper research process, design, sampling choice, and data analysis (Leung, 2015). I used member checks to validate the interview data to improve the confirmability of my study. I achieved data saturation by transcribing interview data and triangulated the interview data with organizational documentation. The methodological triangulation approach helps researchers achieve data saturation by analyzing multiple data sources including interviews, observations, and archival documents, and confirming that data is rich and has depth (Agyemang & Carter, 2014; Heesen et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2017). Although researchers may use cross-validation methods to verify the results, triangulation is

intended to capture various dimensions of knowledge about the same phenomenon (Ramthun & Matkin, 2014). Therefore, not only did I use methodical triangulation to explain the studied phenomenon and improve the validity of qualitative data, but I also explored how it complemented and clarified quantitative findings by helping to define common themes.

Researchers use the triangulation method to ensure consistency in study findings and remove bias by cross-examining the interviewee's validity of answers (Anney, 2014). By using data triangulation, I obtained a deeper and more valid understanding of the phenomenon by using more than two techniques of data collection. According to Archbold et al. (2014), the validity of the study results occurs because of capturing different aspects of the same phenomenon and confirm cross-verifying definitions, thematic problems, and two or more methods of data. In the same manner, Cooper, and Hall (2014) argued that researchers would generate complementary data sets based on two or more data collection methods by using data triangulation.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which results can be corroborated or confirmed (Moon et al., 2016). Validity combines complete research design and methodology and decides whether the findings obtained satisfy all research criteria (Yin, 2018). Validity in data collection means that the researchers' conclusions correctly reflect the phenomenon they claim to measure (Watts & Finkenstaedt-Quinn, 2021). Researchers further enhance credibility by agreeing to confirm the accuracy of the study findings via the member checking method (Yin, 2018). Saville Young (2016) acknowledged the need to go

beyond traditional data collection and analysis approaches and perform procedures to verify that the findings of the researcher are correct, including reliability tests such as consensus, audit, validation, and triangulation.

The researcher's objective is to decide which data collection methods serve to demonstrate an all-inclusive view of the social phenomenon (Johnson et al., 2020). Confirming this study's credibility will require using the methodical triangulation method, which will help the researcher reinforce the study's purpose. Methodical triangulation means using several methods of gathering data related to the same research concern (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016). To enhance understanding of strategies needed to improve retention and to ensure the credibility of study results, I conducted semistructured interviews and examined current organizational records and archival documentation (see Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Coleman (2022) stated that to improve the credibility of research findings, one must account for personal biases that may affect the research findings. It is also essential to recognize the preferences in the sampling process and critically reflect the methods used to ensure the appropriate depth and relevance of the data collection and analysis process. The authors further stated that the researcher must establish a comprehensive and reliable record-keeping system that provides a consistent trail for any decisions taken while maintaining the continuity and reliability of the data collection process. Scholars must provide concise and accurate explanations of the participant's experience in support of the findings and clarify the rationale process during the data analysis phase (Coleman, 2022). It is critical for the researcher to arrange for participants to review the transcribed responses to ensure

consistency of the information reported, compare the themes of the interviews, and align them with the conceptual framework and archival documentation. In summary, all qualitative researchers must integrate techniques to improve a study's credibility during research design and execution (Coleman, 2022). For this study, I implemented the methods, as suggested by Coleman.

In this study, the credibility of the research design was discussed along with the interview protocol method I used. In the investigation process, qualitative researchers must explain their decision-making process and provide a basis for the appropriateness of the technique used to examine the context (Anney, 2014). Implementing the member checking procedure to validate data from each interview can help to improve the confirmability of the study. Sutton and Austin (2015) stated that confirmability requires a participant, impacts the results of the analysis, and does not include the phenomenon perspective of the researcher. Using multiple comparative approaches increases research trustworthiness and reputation and encourages data saturation (Stewart et al., 2017).

Transferability

Coleman (2022) noted that transferability refers to how widespread or applicable qualitative study findings are to various conditions or settings. Watts and Finkenstaedt-Quinn (2021) indicated that it is vital for researchers to provide a detailed explanation of the research process and methodology to improve a study's reliability. Readers or prospective researchers can thus analyze the steps and decisions taken during the research and apply the results to similar small childcare organizations to improve employee

retention strategies. Researchers may also relate the value of this study to help improve the performance objectives of a company by balancing employee and organization needs (Cypress, 2017; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Solomon & Amankwaa, 2016). Upon gathering all the necessary interview data, related archival reports, and company documentation, I attempted to develop the relevance of the research study's findings to other contexts, circumstances, times, and similar populations, and objectively report and convey the information in a reliable or appropriate language. The key to writing effective results in a study is to ensure that the reader can easily access data and understand what the information means to the research (Coleman, 2022) To gain authenticity, I ensured that the language I used reflected the participant's voices, the source of the findings, and the actual results. I also supported transferability by providing readers with evidence that research results can extend to other circumstances, conditions, times and populations. These techniques include (a) transcribing participant responses, (b) coding and organizing data, (c) performing triangulation processes, and (d) presenting results in a practical and repeatable way to evaluate the study's generalizations as suggested by Watts and Finkenstaedt-Quinn (2021).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to show the data reflects respondents' answers, not the researcher's biases or perspectives (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers demonstrate confirmability by explaining how conclusions and interpretations are formed and explain results originally derive from data. Researchers show confirmability in reporting qualitative research by presenting rich

excerpts from participants depicting each evolving subject (Watts & Finkenstaedt-Quinn, 2021). Researchers achieve confirmability when interpreting data is impartial and free from the researcher's personal bias (Johnson & Rasulova, 2017). They add that confirmability techniques include maintaining a research audit trail and log memos. Yin (2018) defined confirmability after researchers establish reliability, credibility, and transferability. I analyzed interview responses, established a correlation between the data collected and findings, and used the literature to improve confirmability in the research results to support confirmability. Furthermore, the participants also received a copy of their transcribed statements for member checking and data accuracy. Achieving data saturation resulting from information and analysis supports the study findings. Cope (2014) concluded that a researcher shows confirmability by explaining how the researcher draws conclusions and interpretations and exemplifies the results directly derived from the data.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I described my study in detail, including my role as the researcher, the purpose statement, the participant selection criteria, and the qualitative process. I also described the ethical research principles and methodological design used and data collection, organization, and analysis techniques. Finally, I considered important aspects of the reliability and validity and data saturation of my research study.

Section 3 is a presentation of the study's qualitative findings. Additionally, I address the practical implications for professional practice and the implications for

societal transformation. Section 3 contains recommendations for activities, suggestions for future, reflections on the study, and a concluding statement.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies some childcare business owners use to improve employee retention. In Sections 1 and 2, I discussed why this study is important and how the study was designed and implemented. To analyze employee retention, I used Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation because it focused on how people decide what to do to get what they want. For instance, the expectation theory is the assumption that an individual's work will result in the expected performance or outcomes. The findings corroborated Vroom's expectancy theory. Three constructs comprised Vroom's theory: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Vroom stated that if business leaders understood what motivates an employee, they would be able to take the required actions to correct employees' behavior and adopt the appropriate rewards to influence their attitudes. Each Vroom component is associated with motivation (Baumann & Bonner, 2017). An essential component of the expectancy theory is that rewards for effort and performance are desired (Purvis et al., 2015). In accord with expectancy theory, participants employed tactics such as effective communication, employee appreciation and recognition, a competitive incentive system, and professional development opportunities to increase employee retention.

Presentation of the Findings

In this study, I conducted semistructured interviews to answer the following overarching research question: What strategies do small childcare business owners use to improve employee retention? I also analyzed the childcare center handbook, employee

applications, performance reviews, engagement surveys, job descriptions, and disciplinary action records provided by each childcare center owner to improve data triangulation for this study. I performed the interviews via Zoom audio recording and used my phone as a backup. No interview lasted longer than 45 minutes. After conducting each interview, I examined the audio and written notes that I gathered to ensure that I appropriately interpreted the interviews of each participant. I then transcribed the data through repeated, careful listening to ensure that I accurately documented what was said by everyone. Then, I uploaded the transcription into the NVivo 12 program to find themes and codes that were similar in each interview and document.

To protect the identities of the center owners, I substituted their names with P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. After I had coded all the data and found no additional new themes, I performed member checking by providing the participants with a summary of the interpretation of their responses to ensure there were no additional gaps, missing information, or inaccurate statements. The business owners provided responses to the interview questions pertaining to their experiences, views, and insights regarding effective staff retention techniques. By analyzing the interview responses and other data, I was able to answer the research question.”

Participants indicated that effective communication and culture, employee appreciation and recognition, competitive incentives, and professional development were the main strategies that led to successful retention within their establishments. I used Yin's (2018) five-step method for data analysis; the steps include (a) compiling the data,

(b) disassembling the data, (c) reassembling the data, (d) interpreting the data's meaning, and (e) concluding the data. As Yin suggested, I looked for overarching patterns that emerged from the data. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, four significant themes emerged that were shared by all participants. I selected subthemes and addressed them in the findings of the data analysis. All five business owners in the study stated that they used the following strategies for employee retention: effective communication via employee engagement, employee recognition and appreciation, competitive incentive, and professional development.

Theme 1: Effective Communication via Employee Engagement Strategy

Communication is critical to an organization's functioning (Prasetyo et al., 2021). If an organization's communication is inadequate, it will be difficult for leaders to identify adequate solutions to organizational problems. If communication is effective, the likelihood of an organization performing efficiently increases, regardless of how the company's goals and objectives are established (Prasetyo et al., 2021). All five participants suggested that effective communication across the center and involving everyone is critical to aiding employees in maintaining high levels of satisfaction and, ultimately, retaining them. P1 and P4 indicated that regularly soliciting input and suggestions from employees and making them a part of the process regarding what works and what does not have promoted employees' overall level of satisfaction. P2, P3, P4, and P5 concurred that effective communication necessitates an open-door policy that helps everyone at the center by expeditiously addressing any situation, as employees can approach the person in charge. P1 and P3 suggested that demonstrating care and support

for employees would facilitate communication. These findings corroborate Yue et al.'s (2019) observation that employees who perceive transformational leaders' personal care, emotional support, and inspirational motivation will feel a sense of obligation to reciprocate such support and will thus be more likely to trust their organizations during times of change. Effective listening on the part of management will reflect positively on the organization (Durning et al., 2022). P3 recommended that employees establish relationships with parents as they may not understand the teachers' perspective; doing so will lessen employees' stress and contribute to their higher level of satisfaction.

According to P4, parents are an integral part of the center, and communicating with them will decrease teacher stress and build a strong relationship between parents and staff.

Additionally, P4 noted that utilizing modern technologies to interact with parents will create a positive dialogue between parents and staff. Instead, P2 and P5 indicated that a lack of communication with parents and an inability to approach them appropriately about concerns about their children causes stress for instructors, resulting in discontent and employee turnover. I agree that a lack of communication between parents and staff can cause a toxic and stressful environment. So, leaders must help their employees learn the skills they need to have good, open, and honest communication. This may help reduce the likelihood that there will be problems with turnover in the future.

Relationship to the Conceptual Framework

The results of the first theme are consistent with Vroom's expectancy theory because, with excellent communication, one can effectively engage employees and ensure that they have complete faith that their efforts will yield the intended rewards.

Effective communication can promote performance and positively affect instrumentality, resulting in increased employee motivation. I learned that effective communication could significantly contribute to achieving organizational objectives by increasing employee motivation and fostering strong workplace relationships, if it is accompanied by proper management techniques such as staff training, development, and communication.

Individual variables play a significant role in achieving objectives and employee behavior (Rehman et al., 2019). Every effort, performance, and motivation are interrelated. According to Vroom (1964), a positive correlation between effort and performance is essential to encourage workers. Perception is also a vital aspect of Vroom's expectancy theory. An organization should feel that, as an employer, it gives its staff all they need to motivate them sufficiently. The motivational principle of Vroom's expectancy theory is not usually based on the worker's personal desire for bonuses. It is also about the relationships and communication between employee performance and outcome.

Theme 2: Employee Recognition and Appreciation Strategy

Acknowledging and praising employees is a crucial aspect in retaining them. It is essential to express gratitude to the employees that work for your organization. It is crucial to convey an employee's value and contribution to the organization. Harshitha (2016) argues that management must be accessible to employee issues. Employees should be able to receive practical feedback from management (Raina & Britt-Roebuck, 2016). A more cheerful atmosphere exists when an employee feels valued in the workplace. Unappreciated employees become irritated, unsatisfied, and disruptive to business

operations. P4 stated, "Management wants employees to appreciate the company as much as they do." P3 stated "There is nothing that the owner/director asks of staff to do that the owner/director can't also do." P5 found that keeping employees meant giving them positive feedback and recognizing their accomplishments. According to P1, P2, and P3 requesting staff feedback is a way to demonstrate your value and appreciation for them. Allowing employees to offer comments or provide feedback demonstrates that you value their opinions.

Recognizing and showing appreciation for employees' contributions can be a retention tactic (Shonubi et al., 2017). Internal and external variables that contribute to employee turnover should be understood and addressed by organizational leaders and managers. Neglecting the underlying causes of staff turnover can have negative effects on business operations. Employees who also perceive management's admiration are more likely to be committed to their jobs (Shonubi et al., 2017). Increasing interpersonal commitment within the organization is one strategy to boost organizational commitment (Senen et al., 2017). An employee that is empowered will be more engaged and committed to their organization. According to Alam and Asim (2019) an increase in job satisfaction leads to an increase in employee retention. Therefore, organizations can establish and evaluate measures to show praise and appreciation for their employees, to reduce turnover within the company. Overall, a happy worker is more likely to be engaged, motivated, and willing to go above and beyond what is expected of them.

The responses from P3 and P4 aligned with the findings from Dzneladze and Khachidze (2018) that recognizing employees through verbal praise not only

acknowledges their involvement but is also motivates employees. P2 felt that giving employees feedback on their progress and capabilities builds trust and loyalty.

Relationship to the Conceptual Framework

The results of Theme 2 (i.e., employee recognition and appreciation strategy) are consistent with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and its proposition that work effort (expectancy) and performance (instrumentality) promote employee engagement, job satisfaction, and work motivation. In this study, I found that small business leaders in the childcare sector increase employee engagement and job satisfaction through engaging and inspiring employees to accomplish work-related tasks and by acknowledging individuals' efforts for their work contributions and impact. Vroom stated that leaders can encourage their staff if they perceive a favorable relationship between (a) work effort, (b) job performance, (c) job satisfaction, (d) employee engagement, and (e) employee recognition.

According to Vroom (1964), engaged employees are more motivated, fulfilled, and dedicated to the organization than disengaged and unmotivated personnel. Leaders who provide their staff with the independence to perform work activities in pursuit of corporate goals, increase engagement (Vroom, 1964). Vroom discovered that organizational leaders optimize the work performance of their employees by involving them in the decision-making process, granting them the authority to propose changes to organizational policies, and praising employees for outstanding job performance. Leaders improve work performance and reduce employee turnover by getting their employees more involved in their jobs, making sure they are happy at work, and giving them praise.

Theme 3: Competitive Incentive Strategy

Employees care about both monetary and non-monetary incentives, and they will depart regardless of the remuneration offered (Kerdasi & Azam, 2020). Depending on the person and the role, compensation expectations can vary. When an employee is satisfied with their wage, both work quality and performance may increase. But money alone is not sufficient to retain an employee; other considerations are also crucial (Darma & Supriyanto, 2017). According to P1, "we motivate personnel by naming them teacher of the month and allowing them to organize holiday or center-related activities for the entire staff, kids, and families." Not only does this incentive acknowledge personnel, but it also celebrates an individual and their ongoing contributions to the business. P2 mentioned that they designed bonus systems that offer monetary and educational incentives to employees. P2 established a "critical worker" bonus program in which dedicated employees earn gift cards every 3 months in recognition of their hard work. The first 3 months of employment are compensated with \$25. One can receive a \$50 gift card after 6 months and a \$100 gift card after 1 year. P2 remarked that "we present these gift cards to our employees because we value their service and appreciate their commitment." P3 stated

"We looked at what the competitors in their area were offering with regards to salaries and we try to align ourselves with one of the appropriate hourly wage. We pay more than the minimum wage. We also guaranteed our employees that once they passed the initial probationary period, whether that was 30 days or 60 days, we immediately gave them an increase. And so, our pay structure was designed to

basically give them raises during the first 6 to 9 months that they were working with our agency. We thought that that was the right thing to do because of our pricing structure. We had the funds to be able to do it. And so, we thought it was more important to have quality staff because that was one of the marketing points of marketing children coming into our school.”

P3 and P4 provide educational incentives in which the organization pays for the credentialing of its employees. P3 and P4 think that having knowledgeable and skilled employees gives value and credibility not just to the business, but also to the field of early childhood education. P3 and P5 provide their employees with robust medical insurance coverage. According to P3, medical benefits often begin after 60 days of employment. However, there are a few instances in which the firm accelerated benefits for an exceptional employee after 30 days of employment. P3 stated “If we believed we had an employee we wanted to retain, we shortened the 60-day waiting period to 30 days and began their benefits immediately.” P5 believes that providing healthy medical insurance not only provides tax benefits to the business and benefits the employee, but also assists organizations in recruiting and retaining high-performing employees and avoiding costly long-term costs.

Theme 4: Professional Development Strategy

Employees that stay with an organization seek job growth or opportunity for advancement over a period of time. Therefore, an organization can be conducive to providing employees with the opportunity for a continuous learning environment (Lin & Huang, 2021). Employees are willing to stay if opportunities for continuous learning are

available (Zaharee et al., 2018). P3 stressed the importance of advancement possibilities for employees in the workplace and stated “Before employees can be promoted, they must be given the opportunity to receive training on the job or through higher education.” This statement highlights the significance of career advancement opportunities inside a firm for keeping experienced and competent staff. It is clear from P3's excerpt below that career growth opportunities are crucial to retaining qualified and experienced workers. P3 stated

“When hiring experienced or qualified personnel for a company, the employer must meet with the employee to discuss their goals and objectives. As a manager, it is essential to understand an employee's goals and intended outcomes. It lets the manager come up with a training plan for the employee that will help them reach these goals. The response from P3 provides pertinent information explaining why it is crucial for small childcare owners to offer career advancement possibilities as part of retention efforts. In relation to the narrative, P4 claimed that professional development options give certain employees the motivation to remain because they know they have the chance to advance. Sometimes, the objective for qualified and experienced staff is less salary and greater self-development (Lee, 2018). The data revealed that the ability to enhance one's career within the organization is a crucial retention tactic. P1 and P2 made remarks about career progress, stating, "Providing employees with prospects for advancement by assigning them to an area of interest gives them hands-on training and some critical skills needed to bolster their credentials.” “People want to feel as though they are advancing in their careers, regardless of how long they have held their current position.” Duli (2019) stated

that an organization's provision of training and job security are significant factors in employee retention.

Relationship to the Conceptual Framework.

The third and fourth theme's findings are consistent with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, where excellent employee performance results in specific incentives and rewards. In this study, I found that the practices of small business owners in the childcare sector, such as incentives and rewards and opportunities for professional growth, increased staff engagement, work performance, and retention. According to Vroom, leaders use performance-to-outcome instrumentality to improve the job performance and retention of their staff. Employees believe they will receive a bonus or reward if their performance meets or exceeds expectations (Vroom, 1964).

Vroom (1964) underlined that leaders should be aware of the importance their employees place on incentives and rewards to exert job effort and achieve performance objectives. When executives place a high value on an individual's performance goals, there is a greater likelihood that the person will achieve the goal (Vroom, 1964). Organizations can customize incentives and rewards to the preferences of their employees and utilize performance evaluations to explain the incentives and rewards with respect to the employees' work performance. According to Vroom, extrinsic motivators, such as incentives and rewards, and professional growth, are successful employee retention techniques.

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies some small business owners in the childcare sector use to improve employee retention. Understanding employee turnover intentions and the issues causing employee turnover can provide leaders of childcare businesses with the knowledge and skills necessary to create effective employee retention strategies. A high staff turnover rate strains a company's financial resources, which may have an impact on employees' work effectiveness (Aeschlimann et al., 2019). Leaders of small businesses in the childcare sector can reduce employee turnover by implementing effective employee retention tactics.

Participants in the study provided suggestions and practices that could enable other small business leaders to duplicate tactics for reducing employee turnover that emphasize employee retention. Retaining skilled staff is vital to the efficiency and academic success of a business (Shifrer et al., 2017). Small business owners and other educational leaders can use the results of this study to reduce employee turnover in the childcare sector by improving communication; engaging employees by giving them chances to give feedback; and showing how much they appreciate their work by putting in place incentives, rewards, and opportunities for professional development.

According to the participants in the study, a collaborative and supportive work atmosphere is an excellent method for reducing employee turnover. Leaders employ strategies to decrease staff turnover and enhance their employees' work motivation, engagement, job satisfaction, and recognition. According to the five participants,

employee engagement boosted employee work motivation and organizational commitment while decreasing employee turnover. The participants noted that employee recognition increased their work enthusiasm and decreased job dissatisfaction and turnover. In addition, the five participants stated that monetary or nonmonetary incentives, rewards, and opportunities for professional development promoted employee retention.

In this study, I discovered that leadership techniques could also improve the efficacy and professionalism of small business leaders in the childcare sector. To reduce employee turnover, leaders may utilize the findings of this study as a reference to investigate new research on the implementation of professional practices in childcare settings. Small-business leaders in the childcare industry could enhance teaching quality and effectiveness by (a) implementing effective communication and engagement strategies, (b) establishing more employee engagement and recognition initiatives, (c) developing more competitive incentive strategies, and (d) expanding practical professional development opportunities. The findings of this study indicate the need for effective employee retention tactics. According to Redding and Henry (2018), there were around 110,000 teacher shortages in public schools during the 2017–2018 school year. Given how severe the employee turnover phenomenon, managers can create a culture favorable to open lines of communication, frequent praise and recognition, and options that meet the needs of both the business and the employees. Building retention strategies that are fair and people-centered increases employee happiness and discourages their intention to leave the organization (Gostautaitė et al., 2018; Nagai et al., 2017). Managers

and human resource leaders who can implement an effective strategic retention plan can increase the organization's productivity, services, and profits.

Implications for Social Change

Consequences of positive social change may include the opportunity for childcare institutions to investigate methods for enhancing employee retention. Increasing employee retention may reduce the local government's costs connected with employee turnover, freeing up more funds for supporting social initiatives and providing students with additional resources. Possibilities for positive social change occur when small childcare business leaders decrease personnel replacement costs and use additional funds to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching (U.S. Department of Education, 2019b). Khan (2017) observed that enhancing the performance of childcare businesses may persuade talented workers to remain with the company. Using the results of this study, business owners in the childcare industry can promote social change by using successful employee retention techniques to reduce staff turnover and improve teaching effectiveness, which is good for students, schools, and the community.

Moreover, the five participants indicated that social change projects promote the professional development of their personnel. Brown (2018) claimed that transformative learning methodologies give employees opportunities for continual professional growth, which may increase teaching quality and encourage professionals to remain with the organization. Arikan et al. (2017) found that when leaders implement accessible and integrated professional development across an individual's career, they improve teaching quality, recruitment, and retention, and reduce employee turnover. In addition, Arnoux-

Nicolas et al. (2016) stated that corporations use learning communities to grow staff into knowledge-rich instructors to improve teaching quality, student learning, and retention intentions. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) underlined that delivering professional development to employees might be advantageous to firms by enhancing employees' work performance, teaching quality, retention, and the generation of new skills. Adopting retention strategies, like opportunities for professional development, could help childcare administrators reduce the number of employees who leave on their own and provide social benefits that meet the needs of employees, students, and the community.

Recommendations for Action

Haque et al. (2019) explained that a cohesive employer-employee relationship increases employee engagement in the organization and job satisfaction. When leaders are collaborative and supportive, employees frequently exhibit high levels of trust, commitment, and job satisfaction, thereby reducing their desire to leave the organization (Amankwaa et al., 2019). Educational leaders and other company leaders may consider evaluating the tactics utilized to improve the work environment, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee appreciation to reduce staff turnover. These techniques, in conjunction with proper government policies, may minimize the shortage of highly competent childcare workers and increase the quality and efficacy of education. Based on this study's findings, I propose four actions that may result in greater employee retention in small childcare businesses:

The first recommendation is to establish supportive and collaborative work environments that encourage open and engaged communication. This recommended action suggests that business leaders respect the opinions of their employees and give them opportunities to express feedback. The first step in opening the lines of communication is recognizing that each staff member has a distinct and vital perspective on the firm and industry. Leaders that believe in a collaborative and supportive organizational culture contribute to an increase in employee productivity and a decrease in employee attrition. According to Haque et al. (2019), leaders that foster a collaborative and supportive work environment foster a sense of trust among their colleagues, raise employee engagement, and boost employee retention. Leaders of small childcare businesses who foster a culture of honest and open communication, leadership, and administrative assistance to empower their staff increase the likelihood of achieving their company's mission and realizing their full potential.

The second recommendation is to develop a culture of employee recognition that delivers sincere, genuine, and considerate appreciation to foster a good recognition culture in which people like working. In contrast to other incentive approaches, employee recognition does not emphasize monetary or material rewards, but rather recognizes employees' achievements and workplace ideals. Companies with a competitive advantage have the best-trained and most skilled employees (Andriotis, 2018). However, even the finest employees cannot perform successfully (and may even leave) if they are not sufficiently motivated. Therefore, employee recognition in the workplace must be ingrained in the culture of every organization. Being held in high regard by one's peers is

one of the greatest motivators for employees (Masri & Abubakr, 2019). The best way to win respect is to be recognized for one's accomplishments. Leaders who deliver acknowledgement can raise employees' trust in the organization and their perception of the business's support, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and performance (Yang et al., 2022).

Third, I recommend creating competitive incentives and rewards. This action proposal ensures that employees are appropriately compensated for their job performance, work efforts, and talents, resulting in greater employee retention. Adequate incentives and rewards are required to recruit and retain competent and motivated workers. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) reported that leaders in educational institutions offer incentives and rewards comparable to those offered to other professionals in similar disciplines to attract and retain a more skilled workforce. Leaders must recognize their employees' knowledge by rewarding their contributions to the workplace. In addition, according to Willis and Ingle (2018), organizational leaders that create multiyear incentives and rewards to enhance their employees' pay help increase employee retention. By creating effective incentive strategies to improve employee retention, it will help business leaders to attract, recruit, and retain competent employees to enhance educational quality and effectiveness. Last, corporate leaders should implement opportunities for professional development to ensure that staff thrive and excel, boosting employee retention. Kohli (2019) underlined that organizational leaders enhance the organizational commitment of their employees by giving them professional development opportunities, which promotes employee retention.

Continual professional learning communities can act as potent levers for enhancing teaching quality, boosting student achievement, and retaining employees. Thus, I want to publish the results of this study in various academic business publications and to distribute the findings in scholarly literature, conferences, and seminars pertaining to retention techniques in small childcare company settings. I urge that the business owners of small childcare businesses analyze this study's findings and implement these employee retention tactics within their organizations.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for future research include concentrating on a variety of sample sizes, industries, and geographic regions. Future researchers can also investigate employee retention and the profitability of centers that are able to keep staff. Future research in these areas could enable center administrators to develop a sustainable workforce and economy for the local community. Additional research could add to scholarly information and enhance understanding of successful tactics used to retain childcare center personnel. Because this study was limited to small childcare centers in Georgia, future qualitative researchers should investigate the employee retention tactics that executives deem useful in different regions. The primary constraint of this qualitative multiple-case study was that the data collected did not reflect all childcare facilities or staff. Recommendations for future study include conducting additional studies on preschools, charter schools, private schools, and public schools, among others. This research may be extended by other scholars to different fields. I also suggest investigating new, more expansive places besides the Atlanta, Georgia urban area. Researching with a

broader population and in a different context could have a different effect on the findings, leading to the emergence of new topics and tactics. Also, in the future, researchers should look at other corporate leaders to see if the findings can be used in other industries.

Future researchers should also consider using quantitative or mixed methods to examine the relationship between employee retention and variables such as (a) collaborative and supportive work environments, (b) employee engagement, (c) job satisfaction, (d) employee recognition, (e) incentives and rewards, and (f) professional development. Future researchers could provide school administrators with new statistical data that could help reduce voluntary employee turnover in small childcare enterprises by performing longitudinal studies to explore these characteristics.

Reflections

The entire doctoral research process provided me with a vast amount of knowledge. Prior to this journey, I did not comprehend the amount of time and effort required to accomplish a doctoral degree, as well as the level of quality required. I believe that conducting research was the most challenging aspect of the procedure. The literature review was the most challenging and rewarding milestone to fulfill. Because of my lack of familiarity with HyperResearch software, I found data collection to be a little challenging. Following the protocol for the interview, I avoided any personal bias that could have affected the participants. I am aware that doctoral studies require some time to complete. In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting interviews was very difficult. Because of the risk of being exposed to the virus during in-person visits, I was unable to conduct the interviews face-to-face. With the pandemic's mounting demand,

there have been extensive adjustments to the workflow. As a result, participants have been reassigned to new assignments or locations—In addition, the COVID-19 infection throughout the workforce has restricted the available labor force. Therefore, this study's participant interviews were done using Zoom audio conferencing.

As a result of performing this research, I found that the process of retaining employees was significantly more involved than simply increasing wages. During my discussions with the participants, they were friendly and accommodating, providing me with detailed information about their centers. I was apprehensive that the participants would not be able to accommodate the interview's requirements because of the lack of time in their schedules. Initially, this posed a problem. When I began contacting participants for my study, it was difficult to obtain responses regarding consent and later interview scheduling. Even though the volunteers eventually decided to participate in this study had an optimistic outlook, their businesses were nonetheless at risk of failing because of the economic impact of the COVID-19 epidemic. During the pandemic, numerous childcare providers' programs closed, and many struggled to continue operations for reasons of declining enrollment and income. It was difficult to find five childcare businesses that were still in existence and able to employ personnel profitably. However, based on the research findings and the literature review, I believe I now have a better understanding of effective techniques for retaining personnel in childcare centers. This study's findings enlightened me to areas I had always neglected while interacting with staff in my current position. As a manager of human resources, I may apply the tactics I have learned to retain my employees and ensure their job satisfaction. However,

after conducting my research, I believe that the childcare industry requires a broader community support effort to ensure that our children's development does not fail because of a high rate of employee turnover.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study is to explore strategies some childcare business owners use to improve employee retention. Five owners of small childcare businesses in the southeastern United States engaged in audio conferencing and semistructured interviews to help answer the study's primary research question: What strategies do small business owners in the childcare sector use to improve employee retention? The expectancy theory of motivation served as the conceptual basis for this research. In the expectancy theory, Vroom (1964) focused on the effort-performance relationship, the performance-reward link, and the rewarded personal goal relationship. Vroom focused on discovering how and why people make decisions that maximize pleasure while minimizing pain. The expectancy theory of motivation was used to interpret the findings of this study. The findings revealed four major themes: (a) effective communication through employee engagement; (b) providing effective employee recognition and appreciation; (c) offering a competitive incentive program and career advancement opportunities; and (d) providing positive career advancement opportunities through an effective professional development program. These themes were consistent with the concepts of the expectancy theory of motivation and previous research. These themes could be used by owners and managers of childcare and educational organizations to build successful retention strategies with the aim of retaining qualified and experienced

employees. Retaining employees contributes to the continued success of organizations (Shaheen, 2016). I have contributed to the literature on strategies required to retain childcare workers.

Economic and social productivity, as well as positive life trajectories for children, as well as larger economic and social productivity, rely on a professional, trained, and engaged early childhood workforce (McDonald et al., 2018). Yet excessive staff turnover, skill erosion, and unmet staff qualifications are pervasive in the sector, limiting ideal results. An organization can only deliver services when skilled and experienced individuals are available to help achieve this objective. Since losing a third of its workers at the onset of the pandemic, the childcare industry has seen a slow and incomplete employment recovery (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). After losing 4,500 jobs between September and November, the child daycare services business was projected to lose an additional 3,700 positions in December 2021, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022). To retain childcare professionals more effectively, ECE organizations and managers must understand why educators desire to leave their positions. Small childcare business leaders who face a high turnover of trained and experienced employees must contend with budget cuts that limit the quantity and quality of services their organization can deliver (Lu et al., 2017). Based on the findings of this study, I recommend that small business owners in the childcare sector create effective ways to retain competent and experienced employees in the workplace. By doing so, leaders might be able to cut costs and improve services for the industry and the community.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

I appreciate your willingness to engage in this research and consent to being interviewed.

I am grateful for your time today. Please feel free to ask me at any point throughout the interview any questions you may have.

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to minimize employee turnover within your organization?
2. What methods have you put in place that, based on your organization's experience, motivated workers to stay with the organization?
3. How is the effectiveness of the strategies to minimize staff turnover assessed?
4. Based on your organization's experience, what role, if any, do organizational rewards play in retaining employees?
5. What is the organization's most crucial employee retention strategy?
6. How, if any, are the effective strategies represented in the organization's long-term employee sustainability plan?
7. What additional details would you like to provide about your organization's effective methods to improve employee retention?

Once again, I appreciate you sharing your experiences with me today. It has been quite beneficial. I will contact you shortly with a summary of your interview so that you may verify its accuracy and share any other views with me. On the consent form, you have my email and phone number. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.