

**An Exploratory Analysis into the Application of
Motivation Theory as a Retention Tool:
A Case Study**

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Master of Business Administration**

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Abstract

This dissertation is an exploratory analysis into the application of motivation theory as a tool in the retention of employees. In today's economic climate and increasingly competitive labour market, people managers are expected to do more to retain their workforce and to keep their employees engaged and motivated at all times in the achievement of organisational goals. The purpose of this research is to explore this from the perspective of people managers. Qualitative research was conducted using semi-structured interviews to address the research objectives. Purposive sampling was used to identify ten participants who fit the outlined criteria for inclusion. The interviews consisted of ten open-ended, which the researcher analysed using thematic analysis. The findings were then critically evaluated in light of existing literature. This research shows that people managers view motivation as a significant factor influencing an employee's decision to stay with or leave an organisation. Furthermore, the research demonstrates that people managers conduct conversations with their employees regarding the employee's motivation, however, this happens in an impromptu and haphazard fashion. This, in conjunction with the absence of knowledge and/or application of traditional theories of motivation, demonstrates that training and a modern framework for motivating employees in the workplace may be beneficial to people managers in their efforts to retain their employees.

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Title: An Exploratory Analysis into the Application of Motivation Theory as a Retention Tool: A Case Study

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Motivation plays an important role in employee retention (Sahir, Phulpoto and Zaman, 2018; Al-Asfour and Lettau, 2014; James and Mathew, 2012). Unmotivated employees typically put minimal effort into their roles and often leave their organisation in search of better offers. Contrastingly, motivated employees are more likely to be enthusiastic and productive in their work, producing high quality outputs because they feel inspired to do so (Mariana, 2013). The topic of motivation has been widely researched and discussed in the literature yet no absolute conclusion has been reached as to what the most accurate theory of motivation is. Despite the criticism of the seminal theories of motivation, many of which were put forth in the 1950's and 1960's, they are still often taught to students in e.g. a leadership lecture or a management training on motivation.

In today's highly competitive labour market, it is increasingly important and critical to organisational success to have strong employee retention rates (Salgado, Flegl and Fejfarová, 2020; Ott, Tolentino and Michailova, 2018). While it varies depending on the scale of the organisation and nature of the roles, recruitment is typically a costly process for organisations and therefore it is a costly error for organisations not to have effective employee retention strategies in place (James and Mathew, 2012). Hiring and training new employees requires considerable amount of time, effort and money. Numerous issues are brought on by significant personnel turnover, including high expenses, knowledge loss, and low productivity.

The importance of motivation in the workplace and strong employee retention have been outlined. The purpose of this research is to explore the role, if any, theories of motivation play in retaining employees in a modern organisation. Ten people managers have been interviewed to explore how they approach motivating their employees and if motivation theory plays a part in that.

1.2 Identified Problem

Retaining employees contributes to the overall success of the organisation, while high employee turnover can damage a company's performance. In recent years, many industries have seen stark rises in the competition for talent and so awareness and discussion around the importance of employee retention has grown considerably. In researching employee retention, the topic of motivation arises frequently and how an employee's motivation, and thus, their engagement, influences their decision to stay with or leave an organisation. The problem that the researcher identified, is that while there is a significant body of work on motivation and motivation theory, there is a lack of research on if, and if so, how this theory is applied in modern organisations in an effort to retain employees.

1.3 Proposed Research

In exploring if/how motivation theory is applied in modern organisations, the researcher was immediately interested in understanding this from the perspective of the presumed catalyst in any existing application of this theory; people managers. The study will aim to explore, from the experience of people managers, if motivation theory is used in their efforts to motivate an employee and consequently retain that employee. Semi-structured interviews with ten people managers in one particular organisation were conducted to collect the data, which was then assessed using thematic analysis to address the research question and objectives, which are all described in detail in later chapters.

1.4 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is presented in seven chapters.

Chapter 1 provides a background and context to the research being undertaken, the research problem is positioned and justified and an overview of all chapters in the dissertation is provided.

Chapter 2 provides an up-to-date review and synthesis of the literature around the topic of motivation theory, people managers and employee retention.

Chapter 3 presents the research question and research objectives which the researcher aims to address through the study.

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology applied by the researcher to address the research aim and objectives.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the research in relation to key findings from the literature review in order to address the research aim and objectives along with limitations of the study.

Chapter 6 presents a reflective and critical discussion of the findings and the broader literature context with practical considerations along with research limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 7 presents a critical conclusion to the research.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the problem that the researcher aims to study and why this is a worthy problem deserving of research. Some key literature has been noted in addition to the identified research gap which the researcher is aiming to address. Finally, an overview of the structure of the dissertation has been provided. The next chapter will present evidence from and a synthesis of the literature as reviewed by the researcher.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review chapter is to provide an analysis of the literature on the topics concerned with the research objectives. These three key topics are motivation in the workplace, managerial responsibilities in a modern organisation and employee retention in a modern organisation. Literature gaps will also be identified in this section to justify this particular research.

2.2 Motivation Theories

Motivation can be described as the reasons which influence an individual's behaviour (Hitt, Black and Porter, 2014). Motivation theories are concerned with the understanding of what motivates an individual to work do take action and accomplish a goal. Choices are often a part of motivation. What drives a person to prioritize or choose one action over another ultimately depends on that person's motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2012). Every person has characteristics that will influence, guide, and ultimately propel them in a particular direction (Adair, 2002). Numerous variables, including the society in which we live and factors that are ever-changing and situation-specific will shape an individual's motivation at different times throughout their life and career. Motivation theory is of importance to organisations as motivation is the catalyst in an individual achieving their potential and in the process adding value to the organisation and it is a responsibility of the people managers in organisations to identify those key drivers of motivation for their team members (Ehiobuche, 2013).

This section will examine some of the key traditional theories of motivation and those which are considered to be seminal work in the area of motivation theory which are: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Alderfer's ERG Theory, Herzberg's Two Factor Theory and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. Each theory will be explained and critiqued in accordance with the findings from the literature.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

In 1943, Abraham Maslow created the 'Hierarchy of Needs' theory. Visualising the concept in a pyramid format, the most basic human need is at the bottom and progressing in a hierarchy format to the top of the pyramid, with the bottom need needing to be fully met before moving on to the next need, and so on. From bottom to top those needs include physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation needs (Maslow, 1969).

Support of Maslow's theory is evident amongst various academics. According to Sadri and Bowen (2011), Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been a driving force in the introduction of various benefit packages in many companies which have consequently contributed to improved motivation and thus productivity and revenue. Udechukwu

(2009) supports the utilisation of Maslow's theory by organisations as it contributes to the general understanding of what job satisfaction is. With this improved understanding, managers can ensure that employee's needs are being met and that strong performance will be a likely outcome of that (Udechukwu, 2009).

While there is evidence that demonstrates support of Maslow's theory, it has also come under scrutiny. Rouse (2004) argues that employees satisfy the two bottom levels of the hierarchy only, which are physiological and safety needs. The practical application of the theory has been scrutinised by Goebel and Brown (1981), who argue that given the theory provides no direction on how it is to be applied to employees in an organisation, it is very difficult to accept the theory as beneficial. Goebel and Brown (1981) also argue that the theory lacks definition and clarity for the audience and that there is concerning lack of evidence in Maslow's theory. This critique is highly relevant to this study and the research will seek to assess the application of the theory.

While it is clear that intrinsic motivation is related to self-esteem and self-actualization, the rigid structure of Maslow's hierarchy suggests that intrinsic motivation only becomes a factor after a minimum set of requirements has been met. Supporting evidence of the relevance of this claim in modern society and organisations is lacking. Academics argue that the traditional carrot-and-stick reward systems are out of date and need to be improved to account for new working practices and changed expectations from upcoming generations of workers (Deci and Ryan, 2010, Marciano, 2012). The above support and critique of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory demonstrates that the theory while there is evidence that the theory has worked successfully in the favour of organisation's aspiring to motivate their workforce, the theory is not fully accepted amongst academics and its relevance in modern organisation.

Alderfer's ERG Theory

In 1969, Clayton Alderfer proposed a theory which built on what Alderfer perceived as the shortcomings of the 'Hierarchy of Needs' Theory. Alderfer's ERG theory proposes that there are three core needs for each individual which are: existence, relatedness and growth (Alderfer, 1969). The ERG theory has received more support than the

Hierarchy of Need's theory through empirical evidence (Ko, Rhee, Walker, and Lee, 2014). Unlike Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory which requires a need to be fulfilled completely before moving on to the next need in the hierarchy, Alderfer's ERG theory allows for different needs to be active at any one time (Chang and Yuan, 2008).

Ko *et al.* (2014) argue that the ERG theory supports managers in recognising that an employee has several needs which they wish to have satisfied simultaneously. With that said if an employee's growth needs are not being met, then that individual may revert to relatedness needs and if relatedness needs are not being met, then that individual may revert to existence needs, and this knowledge from the ERG theory support managers in effective people management (Ko *et al.*, 2014).

Contrastingly, Arnolds and Boshoff (2002) question the validity of Alderfer's ERG Theory and argue that evidence is lacking to demonstrate how it can impact an impact an employee's motivation and/or job satisfaction.

Herzberg's Two Factor Theory

In 1959, Frederick Herzberg proposed what became a seminal theory in the area of motivation theories known as the 'Two Factor' theory. While Maslow's theory was a sequential process from top-to-bottom, Herzberg's theory proposed a theory from the perspective of employees in the workplace and what motivated them through assessing factors that offered satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Herzberg's theory is that there are hygiene factors, which exist to prevent dissatisfaction, these include aspects such as salary and job security. The second of the two factors in the theory are motivational factors which include aspects such as progression, how challenging the work is and recognition (Herzberg, 1987). The hygiene factors (salary, job security) are not leverage for employee motivation, rather they exist to prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1987). Several researchers have found empirical evidence to support Herzberg's theory that intrinsic factors can have a greater influence on one's motivation comparative to extrinsic motivators (Bassett-Jones and Lloyd, 2005).

Sachau (2007) argues that Herzberg's Two Factor theory provides managers with a tool to comprehensively understand the factors that are to be considered in improving overall performance and job satisfaction amongst employees.

On the other hand, Herzberg's Two Factor theory has been subject to criticism particularly with regard to Herzberg's theory that extrinsic rewards e.g. financial rewards, exist only to prevent dissatisfaction, as empirical research has demonstrated that financial incentives can provide a create deal of motivation to employees (Adair, 2006). Lyons (2007) argues that theories such as Herzberg's are erroneous due to the degree of diversity and subjectivity of each individual. With such diversity and uniqueness, an individual's preferences and motivators will differ and cannot be simplified in the terms set out by Herzberg.

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

In 1960, Douglas McGregor proposed his 'Theory X and Theory Y' theory. McGregor developed the framework known as Theory X and Theory Y to present the two categories that employees fall in to. The assumptions of employees in category X are unfavourable and state that the individual is not intrinsically motivated to work and so they require a considerable deal of direction. Comparatively employees in category Y are motivated, enjoy responsibility and their skills should be fully utilised by the organisation (McGregor, 1960).

McGregor's Theory has been scrutinised in the literature. The theory is criticised for lacking consideration for various external factors and/or other variables that could affect an individual (Gurbuz, Sahin and Koksall, 2014). Separating employees into two drastic groups as McGregor suggests, has been found to be flawed, as one study found that employees could have views of both theory X and Y (Ozaralli, 2002). Furthermore, it is argued that the theory lacks sufficient supporting empirical evidence and the theory lacks and instruction on how this would be applied in a real life setting (Kopelman, Prottas and Davis, 2008).

2.3 Employee Retention

It should be an organisational goal to achieve competitive advantage and a critical part of doing so is retaining top talent as otherwise, those employees will likely move on to a competing organisation. Employee retention is the goal of reducing employee turnover through a variety of practices in the organisation that work to keep talented employees appealed and working for the organisation for as long as possible (Sepahvand and Khodashahri, 2021). Organisations are increasingly reminded of the importance of employee retention through the increasing competition that is to be observed in various industries (Wright, 2021). Poor employee retention practices can be very costly to organisations through the high costs incurred in recruiting and training costs. Financial disadvantages aside, high turnover impacts on employee morale and motivation and can contribute to missed goals and objectives in an organisation (Krishna and Garg, 2022). Employee retention can be summarised as the techniques used to encourage employees to continue to work for an organisation for as long as possible (Bussin, 2018).

There are many recommendations made to modern organisations on what is most effective in retaining employees for as long as possible. A company may retain talented workers and lower turnover rates by creating a healthy workplace that increases engagement, demonstrates employee appreciation, and provides competitive pay and benefits in addition to a good work-life balance (Fahim, 2018). It is evident in the research that the factors that influence an individual's decision to stay or leave an organisation have changed in recent years. Expectations of one's employer have changed over the years and attitudes towards things like a healthier work-life balance have likely contributed to these evolving preferences (Lanier, 2017). There are many recommendations made to modern organisations on what is most effective in retaining employees for as long as possible. It is argued that organisational culture, ongoing development opportunities, strong compensation packages, and work-life balance are most important (Ardebili, 2017). It is argued that poor management can be a significant factor in an individual's decision to leave an organisation (Fahim, 2018).

Hanaysha (2016) argues that employees who are motivated in their workplace are more likely to perform efficiently and take pleasure in their jobs than those who are demotivated. To achieve this, managers need to execute well on their roles and

responsibilities as leaders (Hanaysha, 2016). Therein lies the connection between employee retention and people managers, which will be reviewed next.

2.4 People Managers in a Modern Organisation

The role of a people manager has evolved significantly over the past number of years to include a lot more responsibilities (Birkinshaw, Gudka, and Vittorio, 2021). In the past, the role of a people manager mainly involved the hiring/firing of staff and ensuring the required work was completed. Over recent years, that role has changed to include a lot more responsibilities. A people manager in a modern organisation is expected to hire a diverse and talented team, train new hires, coach and develop team members, uphold company values, cultivate an inclusive environment, cultivate strong stakeholder relationships, lead by example, and help each individual reach their potential all the while exceeding against key performance indicators and metrics.

People managers are expected to retain employees in an organisation (Campione, 2015). Retention in an organisation can be viewed as the initiatives that are applied by Human Resources and managers to retain employees and prevent resignation from the organisation (Cascio, 2014). Furthermore, Kwong (2016) argues that the perception an employee has of their manager, and of their manager's competency in the role, can significantly influence the employee's attitude towards their work. Heyns and Kerr (2017) explain that the expectations employees in modern organisations have of their workplace have increased considerably in recent years and so the expectations of people managers to support organisations in meetings those expectations have increased considerably, too. A highly important expectation of people managers in a modern organisation is that they maintain and increase the motivation of their employees (Heyns and Kerr, 2017).

Stanton (2017) recommends that people managers should aim to get to know their employees on a personal level and work with them to understand their unique strengths and what their personal career goals are, as opposed to making assumptions or managing that employee in a particular way because the theory and literature recommends so.

The demands of the changing workplace have added a lot more expectations to the roles and responsibilities of a people manager. According to a recent HBR study, 70% of midsize Human Resource directors concurred that people managers are overburdened by the volume of their responsibilities, although just 16% of them took action to redefine the people manager role in their organisation to lessen the responsibilities (Kropp, Cambon, Clark, 2021).

The literature review of the role of people managers in modern organisations demonstrates that their responsibilities have transformed over recent years and they carry a responsibility to ensure the motivational requirements of their employees are being met as part of a varied effort to retain employees.

2.5 Research Gaps

While there is a significant catalogue of literature available on both motivation theories and employee retention, there remains some aspects that are limited in their exploration. This provides a great opportunity for new research to be conducted in these areas. The gap that most interested the researcher was the application of this theory by people managers in a modern organisation and the impact of this as a retention tool. While there is a huge body of work to be found when searching the literature on the topic of motivation there is limited literature to be found regarding the tangible steps involved in applying this information in practical terms.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a summary of the extant literature on motivation theories in the workplace, employee retention, and the role of people managers in a modern organisation. As demonstrated above, the literature review supports the view that people managers are important, and to a degree, responsible for the motivation and the retention of an employee. The literature demonstrates the importance of employee retention in organisational success and demonstrates that many factors influence an employee's decision to stay with an organisation, including the employee's engagement and motivation in their role and towards the organisation. The literature review presents a lot of empirical data from the perspective of employees, however, there is a gap in the research on how this is viewed from the perspective of people

managers. In light of the growing expectations employees have of their organisation and of people managers, the researcher was interested in exploring the perspectives of people managers in a modern organisation on motivating their team members and if traditional motivation theory plays any role in this. The literature offers various observations around these topics, which the empirical data from the research will be assessed against in chapter 5. The next chapter provides details on the research question, objectives and aim.

3. Research Questions and Objectives

3.1 Research Question

A focused methodology starts with a clear research question (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The purpose of this research is to explore the application of motivation theories by people managers as a tool in the retention of millennial employees by “Is, and if so, how, is motivation theory applied by people managers as a tool in the retention of millennial employees?”

3.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

Objective 1: Explore if, and if so, how do people managers apply the various theories of motivation with their employees.

Objective 2: Explore how people managers motivate their employees.

Objective 3: Explore how important motivation is in the retention of employees.

3.3 Research Aim

The research aims to explore if, and if so, how is motivation theory applied in modern organisations to retain employees.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research question, research objectives and research aim as identified by the researcher. The research methodology used to address the research question, objectives and aim is described in the next chapter.

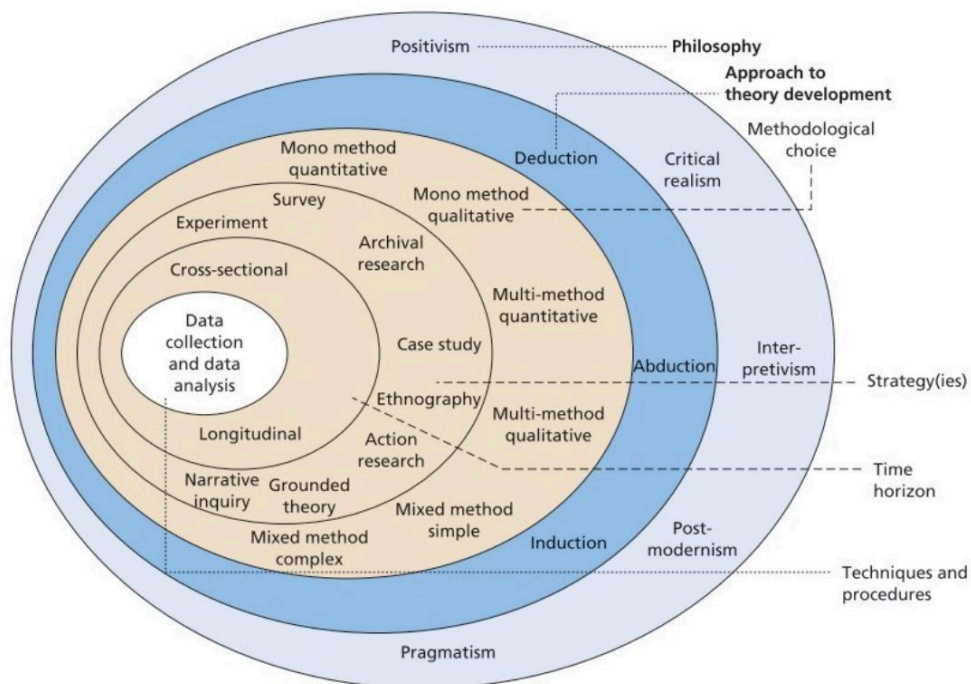
4. Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the approach adopted by the researcher to address the identified research questions, including a detailed description of the research philosophy, the research design and approach, the research methodology, the process of data collection and analysis and finally concludes with the limitations of the research.

In order to ensure credibility at each level of the research process, this study adheres to the 'Research Onion' framework as seen in Figure 1 below. The understandings and choices made in the outer layers of the onion give context for the decisions made in the inner layers. The six layers of the research onion include philosophies, theory development, methodologies, strategies, time horizons, and techniques and procedures (Saunders et. al, 2019). This is a crucial element in any dissertation's structure since it acts as a roadmap for the development of the research as a whole (Creswell, 2007).

Figure 1: The 'research onion'



Source: Saunders et al., 2019, p, 130.

4.2 Research Rationale

In the process of reviewing the extant literature on motivation in the workplace, the researcher observed that a qualitative approach was often applied in order to capture details of the subjective opinions and experiences of the participants. The researcher was keen to capture the subjective opinions and experiences of people managers in relation to the topic at hand and so a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews was deemed to be most appropriate as this was observed in studies reviewed in the literature and seemed fitting for the data the researcher was aiming to collect.

4.3 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is described as the beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Reflexivity is the critical questioning of one's own beliefs and is a critical skill for researchers to develop (Lazard and McAvoy, 2020). The 'HARP' tool which was created by Bristow and Saunders was utilised by the researcher to clarify the researcher's own values and beliefs in relation to research. The 'HARP' tool is a highly effective tool for researchers to use before conducting research to develop a stronger understanding of their own beliefs and values (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). It is of great importance for the researcher to understand the philosophical views of the world in order to fully understand the philosophy and thus the methods and strategy underpinning the research.

Ontology and epistemology are two main concepts in the discussion of research philosophy. Ontology can be described as the study of the nature of human existence and reality (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Ontology can also be described as how the information is developed for a particular domain (Creswell, 2007). Epistemology refers to the origin and validity of human knowledge (Creswell, 2007 and Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Positivism and interpretivism are the two main approaches within epistemology.

Positivism is described as an approach that relies on scientific grounding, is objective in nature and does not rely on subjective experiences (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Positivism is a deductive approach that is typically applied to quantitative research and (Saunders

et al., 2019). This research applies an inductive approach in understanding the application of motivation theory by people managers and therefore interpretivism was recognised as the most appropriate approach.

Quinlan *et al.* (2019) describe interpretivism as a position within epistemology that one's reality is a subjective construct unique to each individual. Interpretivism is the focus on stories, interpretations, narratives and perceptions in the building of knowledge (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). According to Thanh and Thanh (2015), through an interpretivist philosophy, the researcher accepts that subjectivity is significant in our realities and the knowledge we hold. For this research, an interpretivist philosophy is most appropriate given that the research aims to spend time in the field with the participant, understanding each individual's perspective and experience regarding their lived experience with the application of motivation theory as it applies to the retention of employees. An interpretivist philosophy is the most fitting for the researcher to answer the research question at hand.

4.5 Research Approach and Design

A deductive approach, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), is when existing knowledge of a particular subject is used and scrutinised through an empirical lens. A benefit of a deductive approach is that it can reduce ambiguity during the research as the researcher has existing themes from the outset (Yin, 2016). According to Dudovskiy (2016), a deductive approach starts with existing knowledge which the researcher will review against empirical findings. Contrastingly, according to Creswell (2007), an inductive approach begins with observations through which theories are then proposed. As the researcher has explored the existing theory in the literature and will then seek to explore the experiences of the participants in relation to this knowledge, a deductive approach is most fitting for this research.

4.6 Research Method

The research method is the technique used to collect data (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). The selected research method chosen by the researcher depends on a variety of factors e.g. the research aim and the type of data required through the research (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). The key data collection methods are qualitative and quantitative while there

is also a mixed method approach comprising of a combination of both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research is an appropriate approach when the researcher seeks to understand the opinions, emotions and subjective experiences of the participants (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). For the purpose of this study, the researcher opted for a qualitative approach as understanding the subjective experiences of people managers was a necessity in this study.

With the aim of this research being to understand the application of motivation theory by people managers as a tool to retain talent, semi-structured interviews will be utilised as the appropriate research method to collect the required data. Semi-structured interviews is a qualitative research approach in which particular themes will be covered by the researcher (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Semi-structured interviews comprise of open-ended questions which create a conversational flow to the interview and allows the participant to hone in on what is of greater importance from their respective experience (Clifford, French and Valentine, 2010). Yin (2016) emphasises the importance of creating a conversational tone to the interview which will help to relax the participant, allow them to speak freely and have two-way open dialogue to ask clarifying questions and glean detailed insights. The researcher was conscious of practicing this during the pilot study in order to create this open-dialogue during the non-pilot interviews.

This approach was justified from the literature review of up to date resources around motivation theory and retention tools which included many resources following a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews to gather data from the participants.

4.7 Sample Selection

Purposive sampling was the applied technique in identifying participants for the interviews. With purposive sampling, the researcher is deliberate in their selection of participants based on certain criteria (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The benefit of purposive sampling is that suitable individuals with a relevant connection to the topic of study can be identified and approached for inclusion in the study (Yin, 2016). This research aims to understand if/how motivation theory is applied by people managers specifically

in relation to the retention of employees, therefore, it was necessary for the researcher to adopt a purposive sampling technique in order to interview people managers within the researcher's organisation. Purposive sampling was a noted technique used in empirical studies reviewed in the reviewed literature.

The criteria that the participants were required to adhere to were as follows:

- Must work in the researcher's organisation as this was a case study based on the researcher's organisation as a Technology company based in Ireland.
- Be a current people manager of at least 5 employees.
- Have a minimum of six months experience in the role.

The potential for bias in the purposive sampling process is a risk that is cautioned by Dudovskiy (2016). The researcher themselves is a people manager and works day-to-day with other people managers in the organisation. In order to conduct the most authentic interviews and reduce bias, the researcher selected people managers with whom they were not familiar, who worked in a variety of different markets and outside of the researcher's day-to-day. After filtering through the organisation's internal employee database, the researcher identified twelve potential candidates that met the participation criteria. After reaching out to the participants via email to assess their interest in participation, the number of participants was narrowed to ten participants.

4.8 Time Horizon

This time horizon is an important consideration of the research design as noted in the research onion. From a time frame perspective of the research, the researcher would typically consider either a longitudinal or a cross-sectional approach. A longitudinal approach is one that is more long-term as the researcher seeks to study data over a longer period of time (Bryman and Bell, 2011). A cross-sectional study is one that is a more short-term study and takes observations from a particular point in time (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The researcher chose to apply a cross-sectional approach here as the researcher sought to seek insights into the experience, knowledge and actions of people managers at a particular point in time rather than observing the participants over a longer period of time to produce data. While a longitudinal study would also be

applicable to research of this nature, given the time constraints of the research period it was decided that a cross-sectional study was appropriate. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants over a 14-day period. There is a high speed of change to be observed in leadership and employee retention in tech companies and so a great benefit of a cross-sectional approach here is that it can be utilised as a snapshot in future research on the observed phenomenon.

4.9 Data Collection

As the researcher sought to interview current people managers, it was a straightforward process for the researcher to identify people managers through the internal employee database. The researcher narrowed the participants to ten individuals and sent an email to each participant outlining the details of the study and the objectives of the research. The researcher requested a 45-minute interview via the online platform called Zoom. The researcher offered a variety of dates and times for the interview in order to be as flexible for the participant as possible and requested that the participant state their preferred date and time if they wished to participate in the study. The email included a consent form which the researcher requested that the participant complete and respond to the email with should they be willing to participate in the study. Upon receipt of the consent form from the participants, the meeting was scheduled via Zoom in accordance with the preferred date and time of the participant. As all participants work in the same organisation and a large part of the day-to-day unquestionably requires usage of the aforementioned technology Zoom, it was assumed by the researcher that all participants had the required IT equipment and that the participants were comfortable with this particular technology for the purpose of the interviews. In terms of anonymity, the initial email to participants advised that there would be full anonymity in terms of identifiable information and this was repeated by the researcher at the start of each interview. The researcher also sought permission to record the interview through the participant consent form and this permission was also verbally sought and given at the start of each interview. Creating a relaxing environment for the participant is of great importance in order to allow the participant to feel at ease and to express themselves freely (Dudovskiy, 2016), a skill which the researcher took the opportunity to practice in the pilot study as outlined in the next section.

4.10 Pilot Study

It is recommended that the researcher should conduct a pilot study in order to allow the researcher to test the technology being used, the quality of the questions in obtaining the required data from participants and to rectify any issues ahead of the legitimate interviews with participants. Qualitative interviews can be particularly challenging for inexperienced researchers, so pilot studies are particularly recommended for first time researchers to allow the researcher to practice their interview technique, their equipment and adapt any parts of their research that required adjusting (Doody and Doody, 2015). Given that this was the researcher's first time conducting research of this nature, it was decided to conduct one test interview as a pilot study. From this pilot study with one people manager (who was not part of the non-pilot study), the researcher felt comfortable with the equipment being utilised and some slight adjustments were made to the questions to ensure all questions were open-ended in order to glean as much insight from the participants as possible. The duration of the initial pilot study was 25 minutes, with the adjustment of some questions from closed to open-ended questions, it was anticipated that the non-pilot interviews would take between 30-45 minutes to complete.

4.11 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of reviewing, organising and identifying patterns in the collected data in order to help the researcher achieve the objectives of the research (Dudovskiy, 2016).

Thematic analysis was the applied approach in analysing the collected data. Thematic analysis is the process of analysing collected data through themes (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Thematic analysis is highly beneficial in terms of the flexibility afforded to the researcher in guaranteeing that the data has been rigorously reviewed (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Thematic analysis is the process of identifying reoccurrences in the data and categorising these patterns into themes, where a theme is therefore a systematic pattern in the data (Willig, 2013).

Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-step framework, outlined below, which the researcher applied when undertaking the thematic analysis. The six steps are as follows:

1. Familiarise oneself with the data
2. Generate initial codes from the data
3. Search the data for themes
4. Review the data for themes
5. Define and name the themes
6. Produce the report

When conducting thematic analysis, the researcher must decide whether an inductive or a deductive approach is the appropriate approach for the research. A deductive approach is

A review of the literature presented various themes which formed the basis for the interview questions, therefore, a deductive approach was most appropriate.

4.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations remained a top priority at all times throughout the course of the study. The National College of Ireland (NCI) ethics form was completed in January 2022 as part of the researcher's dissertation proposal, which was submitted to the NCI ethics committee to ensure authorisation to undertake this research.

Participation in the study was completely voluntary. Participants received full disclosure of the research's aims and objectives. If participants chose to volunteer to participate in the study, there was a requirement to complete a consent form outlining the details of the study and the data collection process. The consent form guaranteed anonymity and ensured the participant that they had the option to withdraw at any time if they wished to do so. The researcher verbally reiterated this at the beginning of each interview. No participant names or identifiable information will be presented in the research.

4.13 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed explanation of the research methodology used in the study to ensure the research aim and objectives were sufficiently addressed. The researcher's philosophy, research approach and research method were outlined. Details on the chosen sample, time horizon and pilot study were described. Finally, descriptions of the data collection and data analysis were provided.

The findings from the data analysis will be presented in the next chapter.

5. Analysis and Findings

5.1 Introduction

The research conducted as part of this study aims to examine if and how motivation theories are applied in practice by people managers and if/how this acts as a retention tool. The thematic analysis framework created by Braun and Clarke (2006) and the software 'Nvivo' will be utilised in the thematic analysis of the data in order to address the research aim and objectives.

5.2 Thematic Analysis

In chapter two, the researcher outlined prevalent themes that emerged through the literature review, which guided the interview questions constructed by the researcher in order to address the research aim themes were identified using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, the detailed steps of which were outlined in section 4.12. By completing the steps outlined in Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework, the researcher could identify themes in the acquired data. The researcher will outline below the five key themes that emerged through this process with supporting commentary from the ten participants.

To add rigour to the thematic analysis approach, the researcher used the software 'NVivo' to ensure that the themes being identified were representative of the acquired data. Nvivo is the leading software in conducting data analysis in qualitative research (Nvivo, 2022).

The steps involved in using NVivo to identify the themes are as follows:

1. The researcher downloaded the software and activated a license key to utilise the software.
2. The researcher uploaded the raw data into the software.
3. The researcher created 'codes' within the software that reflected a theme e.g. "Application of motivation theory".
4. The software allows the user to create a visual view of the codes and the volume of coding references associated with each code.
5. Figure 2 below was generated, demonstrating the codes on the X-axis and the volume of coding references on the Y-axis.
6. The researcher had 9 codes created in total and through reviewing and refining these codes, 7 key themes were identified by the researcher.

The themes that emerged through the Nvivo software were synonymous with the themes that emerged through the manual process of conducting Braun and Clarke's six-step framework. This gave the researcher confidence in the accuracy of the identified themes. The Y-axis denotes the volume of times a theme emerged in the findings, while the X-axis denotes the themes that the researcher had coded the text with.

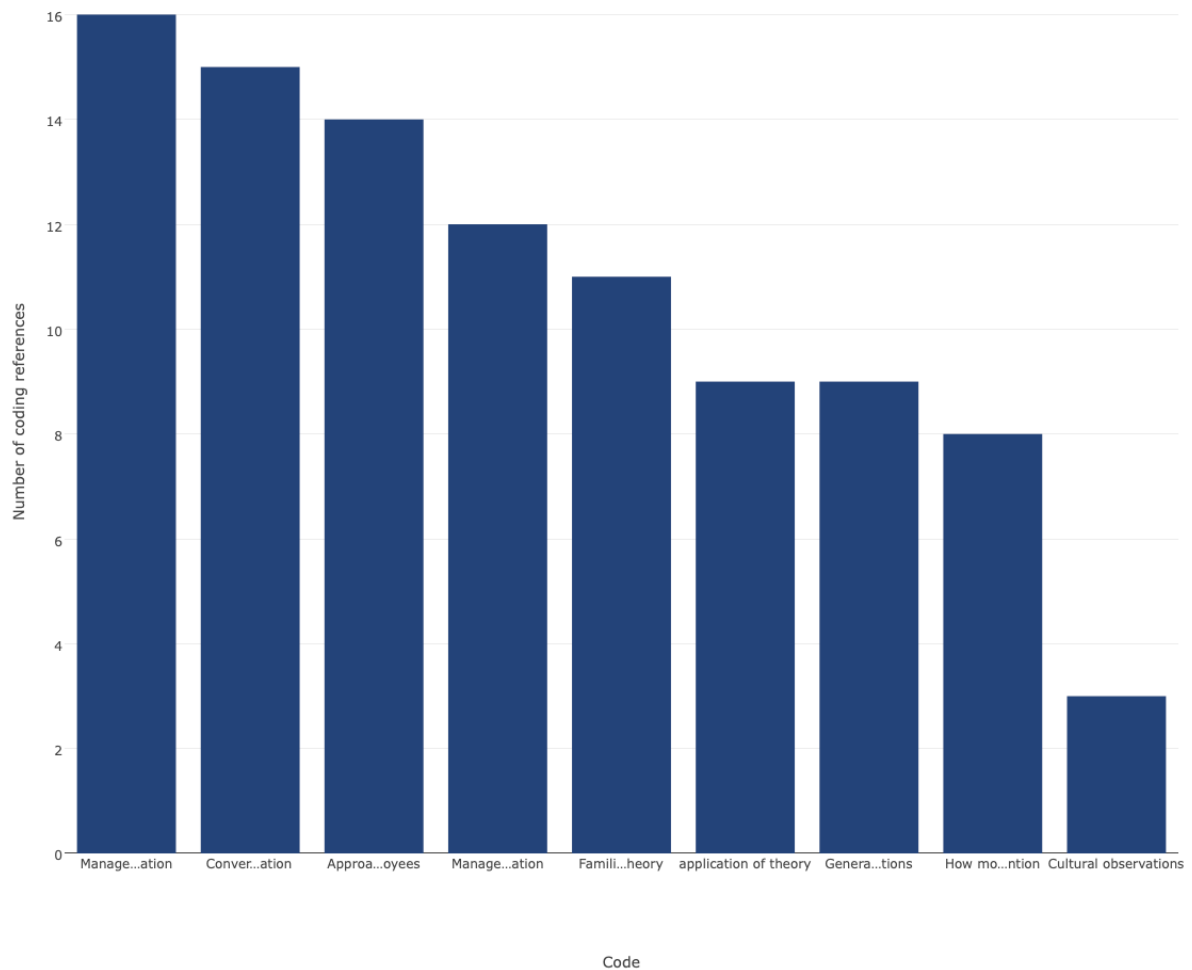


Figure 2: Nvivo Coding Chart

The researcher took considerable time to reflect on the findings of the data and assess which themes were salient in addressing the research objectives and which were peripheral. Salient findings are those which are of greatest significance in addressing the research question and objectives while the peripheral findings are interesting to note from the study but not pertinent in addressing the research question and objectives.

The following themes have been identified through the thematic analysis process and will be elaborated on one by one:

Theme 1: Familiarity with Motivation Theory (Salient finding)

Theme 2: Application of Motivation Theory (Salient finding)

Theme 3: Approaches to motivating team members (Salient finding)

Theme 4: Management training (Peripheral finding)

Theme 5: Motivation as a “stay” factor (Salient finding)

Theme 6: Generational and cultural observations on Motivation (Peripheral finding)

The themes will be discussed in order of their relation to the research objectives, recapped once more here:

Objective 1: Explore if, and if so, how do people managers apply the various theories of motivation with their employees.

Objective 2: Explore how people managers motivate their employees.

Objective 3: Explore how important motivation is in the retention of employees.

The peripheral findings will be discussed as interesting observations to the area of research, without informing any of the research objectives.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Familiarity with Motivation Theory

The first objective of the research was to explore if, and if so, how do people managers apply the various theories of motivation with their employees. The trend amongst the ten participants was that the majority of them are unfamiliar with theories of motivation. Six of the ten participants had either no, or very limited, knowledge around theories of motivation.

“I personally don’t have much experience with the theories of motivation.”
(Participant A)

“I’m not very aware of what the theories of motivation are.” (Participant F)

“I’m not formally knowledgeable about the theory although I feel I have a good grasp of what motivates people.” (Participant G)

“To be honest, I’ve never really looked at theories of motivation.”
(Participant J)

Conversely, four of the ten participants have knowledge of theories of motivation, which appears to be through personal research or formal education.

“I’ve done my own research upon becoming a Manager and I’m aware of some key theories such as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, McClelland’s Three Needs Theory and McGregor’s X and Y Theory.” (Participant B)

“I did a module during my degree on Organisational Psychology, which was based around motivation theories and intrinsic and extrinsic factors. We dived into theories like Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory and various other theories.” (Participant H)

“I’ve done a Development and Management course so I’m familiar with some theories such as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and McClelland’s Three Needs Theory.” (Participant I)

This finding allows the researcher to partially answer objective 1 of the research. The finding is that the majority of participants have no familiarity with the various theories of motivation.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Application of Motivation Theory

The second theme is salient in fully addressing the first research objective which was to the first objective of the research was to explore if, and if so, how do people managers apply the various theories of motivation with their employees. The application of theory in practice by the participants was the next theme that emerged through the analysis. The data revealed that the majority of the participants don’t consciously apply motivation theories in conversations with their employees. Either the participant is unaware of theories of motivation or the majority of those who are, don’t consciously apply this theory to conversations with their team members.

“I don’t deliberately sit down and think about which theory I’m going to fit into conversations with my employees today or how to apply a framework to a conversation with team.” (Participant C)

“Perhaps subconsciously I apply theory but I don’t say to myself ‘OK I will apply Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs here’. The conversation is a lot more natural than that.” (Participant H)

“I don’t think I consciously apply motivation theory with my team members but I believe subconsciously I do. All the theory I’ve learned over the years influences my interactions with my team but I don’t consciously think through the theories before having a conversation on motivation with my team members”. (Participant I)

These findings allow the researcher to answer objective 1 of the research in full. The participants for the most part have no knowledge of the various theories of motivation and those that do, do not consciously apply this knowledge in their conversations with their team members.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Approaches to motivating team members

It emerged through the analysis of the data that there are a variety of approaches taken by the participants in how they motivate their team members.

Participant C observed that there is no one-size fits all approach to motivating employees:

“It’s very individual. Some team members are motivated by hitting their targets, others don’t care much about that but are motivated instead by feedback and approval.” (Participant C)

This is the experience of participant E, also:

“I think everyone is different and so I try to understand each individual on a personal level so that I can have a better understanding of what motivates

them. For example, through this I am discovering that work-life balance and flexibility is something that is providing increasing motivation for more team members now than it did in the past". (Participant E)

Participant H observed a need for a custom-fit approach due to our unique experiences along with our different strengths and weaknesses:

"Motivating team members is quite complex. It starts with understanding the individuals and creating a tailored approach. I try to ascertain what motivates that person and then incorporate more of that into their role for them, if possible, e.g. a team member was motivated by successful event planning I allowed them to organise our team events, which was a great motivator for them." (Participant I)

The conversations that the participants have with their team members regarding motivation are informed by various signals. The commonality that exists amongst all participants is that a key element in motivating their team members is the fundamental part of "getting to know" the team member. Becoming familiar with the team member is, in the opinions of the participants, an absolute must in order to cater to the motivations of that particular individual. That fundamental appears to be the only commonality in terms of discussions on motivation with team members. There are stark differences to be observed in terms of the content and frequency of those conversations.

When questioned about the frequency of conversations around motivation with their team members, participant A takes the following approach:

"Once a month maybe. Actually maybe once a quarter. Unless they're new to the business then once a month. Weekly would be overwhelming."
(Participant A)

Conversely, participant B believed that weekly is an appropriate frequency:

"I have weekly meetings with each team member and in these sessions we

discuss their professional and personal growth.” (Participant B)

Some participants had no set timeframe at all and felt that the conversation would come up when needed:

“I don’t think there’s a set timeframe on it. If I notice a change in them, in their behaviour for example, and something needs to be reassessed it would come up then. So I would say maybe every 6 months or so.” (Participant C)

These findings provide the insights needed to answer objective 2 of the research, which is to explore how people managers motivate their team members. These findings demonstrate that motivation theory is not utilised in those conversation and furthermore, there is no consensus on how conversations regarding motivation are approached with employees. Despite the importance of motivation in the workplace being demonstrated, the approach to discussing this important topic in the workplace appears to be vague.

5.2.5 Theme 4: Management Influence

The next theme that emerged was regarding the influence that people managers have on their team members, in relation to that individual’s motivation. It emerged that participants unanimously felt that as people managers, they have a large degree of influence over their employee’s motivation.

“I think that as leaders, we have a huge influence over someone’s motivation.”
(Participant A)

“It’s very important to establish a connection with the team member. If there is a connection there then yes, I believe the Manager can have a great influence on that person’s motivation.” (Participant B)

“I think as a Manager you can work on steering a team member in the right direction, for example helping them with their development towards a promotion, which in turn influences on their motivation.” (Participant C)

“Yes, a Manager does have a lot of influence on team member’s motivation. I believe in intrinsic motivation, however, if a Manager is negative about things then I believe that has the ability to negatively impact on someone’s motivation.” (Participant F)

“I think motivating your team members is one of the main responsibilities as a leader. If someone isn’t motivated, I’ll feel that I’m to blame for that.” (Participant H)

This is an important finding because as we learned from the literature review, motivation plays an important role in an employee’s decision to stay with an organisation. If that employee’s motivation can be heavily influenced by their manager, then it is worth ensuring that the manager understand how to do that as effectively as possible.

5.2.6 Theme 5: Management Training

Management training is the next theme that was identified. The researcher was curious to understand the participants experience of receiving training on how to motivate team members.

Participants F and B expressed the lack of training received on the topic of motivation.

“Never.” (Participant F), when asked have they and how often they receive training on the topic of motivation.

“Some, I guess, in relation to general leadership and coaching but I do believe that more training is needed for people managers on this topic” (Participant B), when asked the same question.

Given the emphasis that is placed on motivation in academic and professional literature in topics such as leadership, management and company culture. Despite this

emphasis and the importance of motivation, it does not appear that all participants have received adequate training to execute the task of motivating others.

5.2.7 Theme 6: Motivation as a “stay” factor

The final theme that emerged from the thematic analysis was the observations on how motivation is an important factor in an employee’s decision to remain with an organisation. The researcher was keen to understand, from a people managers perspective, the significance of an individual’s motivation on their decision to remain with an organisation. As the research aims to explore and analyse motivation theory as a retention tool, these insights were of particular interest.

“I believe motivation has a big influence on someone’s decision to stay with an organisation, because a consistent lack of it will lead someone to eventually leave.” (Participant A)

“I believe motivation is 80% of the decision to stay or leave an organisation. I’ve seen employees stay because they were motivated and I’ve seen employees leave because they were unmotivated”. (Participant B)

“Yes. Depending on what their motivational needs are, if they are being met then it has a big influence to make that person stay with the organisation.” (Participant C)

“On a scale of 1-10 of how important motivation is in someone’s decision to stay, it’s a 10.” (Participant J)

To answer the research objective 3, the participants unanimously believed that motivation was a significant, if not the most important factor in an employee’s decision to stay with an organisation. This finding demonstrates the importance of understanding an individual’s motivations and ensuring those needs, where possible, are being met by the organisation.

5.3 Conclusion

In order to accomplish the research aim and objectives, the findings obtained from the participants who took part in the qualitative semi-structured interviews have been presented and discussed in this chapter. The seven themes described in this chapter emerged through thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's six-step framework and conducting thematic analysis using the online qualitative analysis tool, NVivo, which was used to analyse and code the acquired data. These findings will be critically discussed in the next chapter.

6. Discussion of Findings

6.1 Introduction

This research aims to explore if and how motivation theories are applied in practice by people managers and if/how this is utilised as a retention tool in a modern organisation. The empirical data presented in chapter 5 will be analysed in this chapter in reference to the existing literature with the intention to answer the research aim and objectives outlined in chapter three.

To recap, as outlined in chapter three, the research objectives of this study are as follows:

- Objective 1: Explore if, and if so, how do people managers apply the various theories of motivation with their employees.
- Objective 2: Explore how people managers motivate their employees.
- Objective 3: Explore how important motivation is in the retention of employees.

6.2 Objective 1

Objective 1: Explore if, and if so, how do people managers apply the various theories of motivation with their employees.

In addressing the first objective of the research, which is to explore if/how people managers apply various theories of motivation with their employees, it would appear from the acquired empirical data in this study that motivation theory is generally not applied by people managers in their interactions or understanding with their

employees. The majority of the participants involved in the research study are unaware of theories of motivation, and those who are aware don't consciously apply any particular theory to their conversations with or understanding of their employees.

While several sources in the literature review support motivation theories being utilised in the workplace, the findings from this research did not support this necessity (Udechukwu, 2009; Ko *et al.*, 2014). There was minimal empirical findings in the literature review on whether this knowledge was generally evident or not amongst people managers in modern organisations, however, it has been acknowledged often in the literature that these theories from the 19060's are obsolete as they lack adequate evidence while also no longer fitting in with modern society and behaviours. Several theories have also been critiqued for lacking any practical steps for applying the theory in the workplace, which may contribute to the lack of awareness of the theories.

While in the minority, some participants had an awareness and/or understanding of different theories of motivation. Those who had this knowledge, did not consciously apply these theories in their efforts to motivate their employees. The absence or presence of this knowledge does not by any means indicate how competent or qualified these people managers are and it also does not give any indication as to how equipped and skilled they are at motivating their employees. It may, however, indicate that these theories are non-essential in carrying out the role of managing people in the workplace, a role which requires the people manager to motivate their team members.

In summary, the first objective of the research can be answered by stating that the majority of participants in the study had no knowledge of theories of motivation and those who did, did not apply these theories in their efforts to motivate their team members.

6.3 Objective 2

Objective 2: Explore how people managers motivate their employees

In addressing the second objective of this research, which is to explore how people managers motivate their employees, the acquired empirical data demonstrates that there can be varying approaches to the format, content and frequency of conversations around an employee's motivation. There is, however, a general consensus on the following fundamentals of understanding and garnering an employee's motivation:

- Building a relationship with the employee is fundamental
- Building trust the employee is fundamental
- Having open, two-way communication with the employee is necessary in gaining an understanding of that individual
- Through the above, the people manager will slowly gain an understanding of what the employee is motivated by and from there, they can work with the employee to deliver on as much of that as possible (depending on what is realistic and within the remit of the people manager)

Locke and Latham (2004) argue that there is a strong need for the topic of work motivation to be revisited from the various theories that were offered in the 1960's and 1970's in order to help organisations and employees progress further with the idea of work motivation. Locke offers six suggestions on how the topic of work motivation could be evolved for modern organisations, including requiring self-reflection from employees, believing that individuality means that a blanket theory cannot be applied to everyone (Locke and Latham, 2004). The empirical findings collected from the study would strongly support this view that motivation is personal, dynamic and not an outcome that can be achieved through a blanket approach.

The literature provides many recommendations on how employees should be motivated. These recommendations include, but are not limited to, aspects such as praise, continuous feedback, development opportunities, remuneration, organisational culture and work-life balance (Fahim, 2018; Ardebili, 2017; Lanier, 2017). The literature demonstrates that a blended approach is most successful in motivating employees, one which can appeal to an individual's personal preferences at any given point in their career (Bussin, 2018; Fahim, 2018). Where possible, those findings are

then used to motivate the employee. For example, if the employee is motivated by career progression, the manager can then coach the employee towards that role through working closely with them to build the required skills for the next role that the employee was interested in. If it emerged that the employee was motivated through consistent feedback and praise, the manager would provide weekly praise to the employee, where appropriate to do so.

In summary, the second objective of the research can be answered by stating that the people managers involved in this study motivate their team members first by putting time and effort into building a relationship with the employee and gaining an understanding of the employee at a personal level of what motivates that individual and maintaining a strong relationship with the employee throughout their employment in order to maintain open, two-way communication where the employee can be honest about what they need to have their needs and motivations met in the workplace. The findings support the research in the view that there are a variety of factors involved in the motivating of any individual. One can glean a check-list like approach to motivating team members (remuneration, feedback, praise, progression), which the findings do not necessarily support. The participants did not reveal any step-by-step process or check-list like approach in their conversations with their team members when discussing their motivation.

6.4 Objective 3

Objective 3: Explore how important motivation is in the retention of employees

The third research objective was to explore how important motivation is in the retention of employees. From the empirical data outlined in chapter 5, people managers believe motivation to be highly significant, if not the most important factor in an employee's decision to stay with an organisation. As outlined in the literature review chapter, the literature on employee retention refers to several key factors that contribute to the likelihood of an employer retaining an employee. The literature supports the changing role of managers in recent years (Kropp *et al.*, 2021) and how motivating and retaining employees is a general expectation of people managers in a modern organisation

(Campione, 2015). Despite this, the literature lacks detail on how this should be approached by people managers in an attempt to understand and meet the motivational requirements of their team members. What questions the manager should be asking, how often they should be having these questions and what next steps they should take with this information in order to get and keep the employee motivated, remain open.

6.5 Generational and Cultural Differences

While not a research objective, an interesting and peripheral finding from the collected data was the observations that people managers made regarding differences in generations and cultures. Several participants observed differences in their team members who were of different generations or cultures and how that differed from other generations or cultures. This empirical finding is supported in the literature review, for example, Song, Wang and Wei (2007) found empirical evidence that supported their hypotheses that culture influenced an individual's motivational priorities.

The literature review provides insights into generational differences regarding their employment trends amongst different generations. 'Baby Boomers' (those born between 1946 and 1964) typically remained with one organisation throughout their career and were motivated by having a reliable income in an unreliable economic climate while Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1976), continued this trend to a degree but it became more likely that workers would move employer (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002).

Research has been carried out on the most important factors in retaining different generations. The literature demonstrates no one resounding finding for what the most important factor(s) influencing retention is, however, there is empirical evidence presented on an ongoing basis to understand the continuously developing preferences of employees in the workplace. A recent study found that strong mentorship and lavish work offices containing plenty of perks to be of greatest importance to millennials (Aruna and Anitha, 2015). While another recent study found that continuous feedback and opportunities for development are most important to millennials (Buonocore, Russo, Ferrara, 2015),

6.6 Research Limitations

The researcher noted several limitations throughout the course of the research. These limitations included; the research method, the sample size of the study, language barriers and time constraints.

The research method presented a limitation to the research as the researcher utilised a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling. This and the set timeframe that was given for the research to be carried out within, meant that the sample size was limited. A greater sample size is beneficial in adding rigour to research findings.

With open-ended questions, not all participants were as articulate with their input which presented challenges when comparing and analysing the findings. Two of the ten participants did not possess complete fluency in the English language, which presented challenges when comparing and analysis the findings.

The research was conducted with ten people managers from one organisation only which is another limitation of this research.

The researcher was thorough when carrying out the thematic analysis of the findings, however, there remains greater scope for interpretation and bias when conducting qualitative research.

6.7 Recommendations for Future Research

While a myriad of research has been conducted on generational differences in the workplace, the observations made by the participants on generational and cultural differences would be worthy of further research specifically in the context of how people managers motivate their employees in a modern organisation. The researcher doesn't suspect that the findings of objective 1 of this study would be significantly different if the same objective was to be studied in regards to specific generations or cultures. Objective 2 and objective 3, however, would be interesting to research to understand if people managers have different approaches to different generations

when trying to motivate them and how important motivation is as a 'stay' factor amongst different generations. The researcher did not set out to understand how remote, in-office or hybrid working environments could influence how people managers influence their employees. The impact that the physical working environment has on an individual's motivation, and the people manager's ability to influence the employee's motivation was mentioned numerous times by participants throughout the interviews. While a lot of research has been conducted over the past two years on the impacts of remote working on various facets of the workplace, the researcher recommends conducting research on this specifically in the context of motivation and how this impacts a people manager's ability to motivate their employees.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided a discussion of the empirical data to answer the three research objectives of the study. Each objective has been satisfied in light of the empirical findings while highlighting the limitations of this research and providing recommendations for future research were also provided. A conclusion of the research will be provided in the next and final chapter.

7. Recommendations and Conclusion

7.1 Recommendations

The recommendations as a result of this research are as follows:

- Greater structure and a practical framework for how managers should approach motivating their team members within the confines of that organisation would potentially support managers in their approach to, and their success in, motivating and retaining their employees. This would likely fall under the Learning and Development remit in the organisation. The cost of this would not be significant for any one organisation to develop and while the direct benefits may be difficult to measure, the guidance would be appreciated by people managers who are contesting with a large volume of other responsibilities in their role, too.

- Training would be beneficial in supporting people manager's understanding of different drivers of motivation and how they can work with the employee to help them meet those motivational needs. As above, this would be a small cost to the organisation and would fall under the Learning and Development team. Training, to some degree, on leadership and effective management typically exists in modern organisations and so including a training on employee motivation, the role it plays in retaining an employee and how to approach this with team members should not be overly difficult to create and include.
- Greater guidance is needed for people managers on how they should adequately meet this additional expectation on them, to motivate and therefore retain their employees.

7.2 Conclusion

Healthy employee retention figures are critical to organisational success. There are a myriad of factors that can influence an employee's decision to leave or stay with an organisation. Furthermore, people managers are now expected to both motivate and retain their employees.

Through qualitative analysis, this research has provided a contribution to this topic from people managers who work in a modern tech organisation in Dublin. The experience of these people managers varied in parts but presented general consistencies in relation to the research objectives.

Various theories of motivation are still taught at present in modern universities and training courses to aspiring professionals despite the fact that many sources in the literature deem many of the theories to be obsolete and lacking sufficient empirical evidence to be considered reliable. The findings from the research indicate that these theories are not relevant or necessary to achieve success in a modern organisation.

Employee motivation is highly important to the success of the organisation and to the likelihood of retaining a given employee. The approach taken by people managers to

motivating their team members varies significantly. There is consensus amongst the participants that building a relationship with the employee is the first fundamental aspect of attempting to motivate the employee, however, detailed steps in terms of frequency and next steps were not evident when the participants were asked about this. The lack of consistency in the participants approach highlights the need for a modern framework that can support people managers in their attempt to motivate and retain their employees, particularly given the growing importance of these.

There is a lack of training provided to people managers on the topic of motivation in the workplace and how, as people managers, they can influence it. The findings demonstrate that the participants are of the opinion that they have the ability to heavily influence their employee's motivation, yet they have received no training to that end. Given the opportunity that organisations have to motivate their employees through people managers, it is recommended that a framework outlining the recommended approach, frequency and next steps should be provided to managers in order to support them in their efforts to motivate employees and thus improve retention rates.

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Appendix 1: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Title: An Exploratory Analysis into the Application of Motivation Theory as a Retention Tool:
A Case Study

Question 1	To what extent are you familiar with the various theories of motivation?
Question 2	Do you deliberately apply theories of motivation in your conversations with your team members? If so, how? If not, why?
Question 3	How do you motivate your team members?
Question 4	What informs your approach to motivating your team members?
Question 5	Is it within your remit/ability to respond adequately to the motivational requirements of your team members?
Question 6	What differences do you observe, if any, between the motivational requirements of different generations?
Question 7	How often do you discuss and reflect on an individual's motivations with them?
Question 8	How often are you trained on ways to motivate your team members?
Question 9	To what extent do you think an individual's motivation has on their decision to stay with an organisation?
Question 10	To what extent do you as a leader, feel you can influence an individual's motivation?
