ARE SUPERVISORY FEEDBACK MESSAGES A MOTIVATIONAL FACTOR TO

ENHANCE EMPLOYEE RETENTION?

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This project is dedicated to:

My Dearest Parents – Ruijie Yang and Xiuying Feng

I would be not who I am today without your love and all the sacrifices you have made

for me over the years

and

My spiritual parents Larry Hynes and Bette Hynes, and my dear friend Selena Ninghao Cao

I could not have done this without your support and encouragement

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Abstract

Employee retention is one of most valuable resources in an organization. Feedback from supervisors provides opportunities to clarify expectations, adjust goal difficulty, improve job performance, and enhance job satisfaction. The present study is intended to investigate the role that supervisory feedback messages play in employee retention decisions. The participants took a three-session survey that aimed to examine their perception of supervisory feedback received through direction-giving messages, empathy-giving messages, and meaning-making messages, as well as the effect that each kind of message had on each participant's retention intent. The follow-up interviews were conducted to explore in-depth insights on the factors motivating the employee to remain in an organization. The results from both quantitative and qualitative phases revealed that positive feedback from supervisors does not necessary motivate employees to keep working in an organization, and negative feedback from supervisors does not necessary motivate employees to quit. These results also revealed that the communicative styles used by supervisors for the direction giving messages, empathy giving messages, and meaning making messages in this study do not influence employees' desires to keep working in an organization. Other motivating factors were also analyzed in this study. Limitations and recommendations for future research were also discussed.

Key Terms: goal-setting theory of motivation, feedback, communication style, employee retention, and employee turnover.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Employees who work at most types of organizations are appraised or evaluated based upon their performance on a regularly basis (weekly/quarterly/annually) with the intent to modify employees' behaviors, adjust task goals, and modulate employees' attitudes. Performance feedback is the process of obtaining, measuring, and analyzing information about the worth of an employee through his/her job performance. This identification, measurement, and analysis provide individuals with useful feedback and coach them to perform at a higher level (Gomez-Mejia 2007). Dickinson (1993) notes that performance appraisals are an important part of organizational life, because they can serve a number of functions/purposes, including solving performance problems, setting goals, administrating rewards and discipline, and dismissal. Therefore, performance feedback is an important instrument in manpower management. This feedback is also beneficial to the accomplishment of the organization's goals and the employee's individual goals, if it is performed appropriately and logically (Hasan Emami, et al 2011).

Employee retention (ER) is defined by Sandhya and Kumar (2011) as "a process in which the employees are encouraged to remain with the organization for the maximum period of time or until the completion of a project" (1778). Employees leave an organization for various reasons, the primary reason being employee dissatisfaction. A report by the Bureau of National Affairs (2013) showed that median rates of employee turnover averaged 0.6 percent of the workforce per month during the first quarter of 2012, unchanged from the fourth quarter of 2011, and barely above the record-low first-quarter average recorded in 2009 (0.5 percent). Hale (1998) stated that 86% of employers were experiencing difficulty attracting new employees and

58% of organizations claimed that they were experiencing difficulty retaining their employees. The combined direct and indirect costs resulting from the loss of professional employees are considerable. Fitz-enz (1997) stated that the average company loses approximately $1 million with every 10 managerial and professional employees who leave the organization.

Having worked at four different organizations during the past five years, this researcher experienced several different communicative styles from supervisors and witnessed various performance levels of colleagues and their tendency to switch jobs frequently. This thesis focuses on what makes some employees perform better than others and what motivates them to stay in an organization.

A prior study has been conducted in another communication related genre (Small Group Communication) to investigate the extent to which characteristics of feedback messages (e.g. valence, content, time, and channel) and sources of feedback message (e.g. self, peer, and supervisor) are important to an employee's motivation. The research was conducted among communication graduate student assistants from a large private mid-Atlantic university. The results indicated that the content of feedback messages (relevance and accuracy) from trustworthy supervisors in an appropriate manner will positively influence an employee's efforts to modify his/her behavior to achieve a more highly desired performance. Results from this research highlighted the significant role of feedback message content in determining employees' motivation to perform better, a role which lays the foundation for the current study. However, the prior research was limited in several ways. First, the relatively small number of participants may have influenced the generalized results. Second, the background knowledge in communication of participants could have been a barrier to their ability to make reflective and

objective judgments. Therefore, this researcher intends to further investigate the motivational role supervisory feedback plays in enhancing employee retention.

A multitude of studies have been done based on the goal setting theory. Those studies investigated the correlation between feedback messages, job performance, job satisfaction, and job commitment. Basically, they could be sorted into three divisions. First of all, various studies have identified the positive effect of a supervisor's motivating language on a subordinate's job performance and his/her self-efficacy (Cote and Gilbert 2009; Garner 2009; Mayfield, Mayfield, and Kopf 1997, Mayfield and Mayfield 2012, Sagar and Jowett 2012, Sullivan 1988). Secondly, some studies have investigated the relationship between a feedback message and an employee's job satisfaction (Muhammad et al. 2013, Sharbrough 2006, Shu-Fang, Vivienne, Wu,et al.2013). Lastly, studies also tested the influence of job satisfaction on an employee's occupational commitment (Iyer and Israel 2012, Kim 2012, Wang et al. 2012).

Only a handful of studies have examined the role of a leader's communicative style displayed through the feedback he/she gives in creating an employee's intention to stay in an organization or in causing employee absenteeism (Mayfield and Mayfield 2007, Mayfield and Mayfield 2009). However, the communicative styles in those studies do not specifically refer to feedback messages from supervisors.

Purpose of the Study

The proposed study will utilize the goal-setting theory of motivation as a theoretical framework for investigating the roles played by feedback-message content and a supervisor's communication style in motivating or demotivating employees to keep working at a particular job for a period of time.

This researcher used mixed research approaches. The purpose of the initial quantitative phase was to distribute questionnaires to participants. The follow-up phase was a qualitative phase through which the participants' in depth perceptions on feedback from supervisors were gathered through interviews. This study specifically examined the content of feedback messages from supervisors in terms of direction-giving feedback, empathy-giving feedback and meaning-making feedback based on data collected from questionnaires and interviews.

Hypotheses

The following are the primary hypotheses of this research.

H1: Positive feedback messages from supervisors motivate employees to keep working at a job.

H2: Negative feedback messages from supervisors demotivate employees to keep working at a job.

H3: Supervisor communication style will influence employees desire to keep working at a job.

Definition of Terms

Managerial communication can be categorized in terms of the following three kinds of speech acts:

Direction-giving messages are those that reduce employee uncertainty and increase his or her knowledge in order to boost employee performance. The speech through which direction-giving messages are expressed is classified as perlocutionary arts. Direction-giving messages are delivered to reduce employee's uncertainty about the relationship between an action and the attainment of a need, value, or goal, and the words in those messages trigger a mental calculation resulting in an employee's intention to expand a specific level of effort. In other words,

"perlocutionary communication by managers helps employees answer the question 'What is or will be the nature of my work environment, given my work behavior and the management's behavior?' " (Sullivan 109).

Empathy-giving messages are those that implicitly and explicitly reaffirm the employee's sense of self-worth as a human being. They are used to validate an employee's affect, compliment an employee's good performance, and commiserate with an employee's personal frustrations. In speech-act theory, the language used to deliver empathy-giving messages is defined as illocutionary arts, which focus on what the speaker is doing while talking. "Illocutionary language between managers and employees makes work a part of the employee's human bonding. It does not reduce uncertainty or foster meaning making: It simply affirms human existence" (Sullivan 109).

Meaning-making messages are "those that facilitate the employee's construction of cognitive schemas and scripts, which will be used to guide the employee in his or her work" (Sullivan 104). These messages are typically used when a leader explains the organizational culture, norms, values, rules, and expected performance that should characterize the uniqueness of that organization. The importance of a meaning-making message lies in its function to facilitate the construction of schemas and scripts in employees (especially subordinates) so that these models direct work behaviors in ways that are beneficial to the organization. The meaning-making messages are categorized as locutionary acts. "Locutionary speech helps the employee construct a set of meanings to answer the question, 'What should I think, feel, and do?' " (Sullivan 109).

Employee retention in this research indicates an employee's willingness to work at a particular job position for a period of time.

Change job in this research indicates position-hopping from one organization to another. In this regard, position shift within an organization is not considered change job.

Significance of the Study

Previous studies investigated and approved the dyadic relationship between feedback messages, job performance, job satisfaction, and job commitment but do not provide evidence about the positive effect of feedback-message content and communicative styles on employee retention. Given the scarcity of studies on the relationship between feedback- message and employee retention, the proposed study will investigate the impact of feedback-message content (positive or negative) and communication style (positive or negative) on motivating or demotivating employee retention. The proposed study attempts to contribute to the knowledge base of the discipline of organizational communication by exploring the influence of supervisory feedback-message content and communicative styles on employee retention. The significance of the study lies in providing communication scholars with evidence of the importance of supervisory feedback messages and communicative styles in organizational communication and offering practical suggestions to human resource management on how to motivate the employee's optimal performance and reduce turnover rate.

Since the proposed study will use goal-setting theory as the theoretical framework, the following chapter will provide a review of the abundant literature on the goal-setting theory of motivation, the effect of supervisory feedback-messages on a subordinate's job performance, the relationship between supervisory feedback-messages and job satisfaction, and the employee's commitment to an organization.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The proposed study will use the goal-setting theory of motivation as the theoretical framework to analyze the role supervisory feedback plays as a motivational factor in an employee's commitment to his or her job position. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section describes the generation and evolution of the goal-setting theory of motivation with the inclusion of literature on the application of this theory to multiple disciplines such as communication, psychology, and business management. The second section of this chapter exhibits literature on the significance of feedback, particularly supervisory feedback, in motivating employees to put more effort into their jobs as well as its significance in promoting better job performance. The third section displays literature with regard to the contribution of feedback to an employee's job participation and satisfaction. The fourth section includes research on the importance of employee retention in achieving organizational goals and analysis of the reasons that employees leave their present jobs.

Goal Setting Theory of Motivation

Goal, from a motivational perspective is defined as a desirable objective. Locke said that the impact of goals comes from the rational nature of people, who generally are calculative and utilitarian (Locke, 1983). "Goal setting is a very useful method of enhancing employee performance" (Griffin and Moorhead 141). "Goal setting theory implicitly and explicitly calls for managerial communications with employees to foster utility, meaning, and binding. When employees encounter these three aspects through hard work, they are likely to keep working hard" (Sullivan, 1988). This theory is widely spread and successful, because goals are the most

important factor in an employee's intent to work hard and long. Goals are more important than

needs, values, situations, or tasks (Locke and Henne, 1986).

Goal-setting theory is used to address the question of why some people perform better on

assigned tasks than others. There are two descriptions of the established research on the subject

of goal setting theory.

E.A. Locke put forward the goal-setting theory of motivation in the late 1960's. He stated

in his pioneering article that employees were motivated by clear goals and appropriate feedback

(Locke, 1968). Goals provide a major source of motivation which, in turn, improves

performance. This theory states that specific and challenging goals along with appropriate

feedback contribute to higher and better task performance. Two aspects of the goal-setting theory

are as follows: first, specific, clear, attainable, and challenging goals indicate what needs to be

done and direct an employee about how much effort is required; second, appropriate feedback on

results modifies employee behavior and contributes to a higher level of job performance, more

employee involvement, and greater degrees of job satisfaction.

"In the original version of goal setting theory, two specific goal characteristics – goal

difficulty and goal specificity – were expected to shape performance" (Griffin and Moorhead

142). Goal difficulty is the extent to which a goal is challenging and requires effort. It is

reasonable to predict that people would like to work harder to achieve more difficult goals as

long as they are willing to accomplish them. However, if the goal is too challenging to be

attained, people may feel discouraged and may not put in any effort since they know that their

efforts will not bring the desired outcome. Therefore, more realistic but still challenging goals

would motivate people to work harder. Goal specificity refers to the clarity and precision of the

goal. Information presented through clear and specific goals is believed to be crucial in the

motivation process, because specific information and directions reduce uncertainty regarding the correction of an employee's need-deficiencies or imbalance. A goal with a specific expectation rather than vague terms is more effective in helping employees to comprehend the exact expectation placed upon them. Evidently, employees seek knowledge of specific and difficult goals to reduce uncertainty, and they tend to do better with such knowledge than when they are given either no goal information or vague information (Locke, 1978; Yukl& Latham, 1978).

"Locke's theory attracted much widespread interest and research support from both researchers and managers" (Moorhead and Griffin 192). Therefore, Locke, along with another scholar, Gary Latham, expanded the goal-setting theory in 1990 by attempting to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between goal-setting and performance. This expanded goal-setting theory is supplementary to the original goal-setting theory. In addition to goal difficulty and specificity, three more principles of goal-setting are included in the expanded model.

First, goal commitment refers to the participative role of employees in setting goals. Employees would work positively to achieve goals that are understood and agreed upon. This does not mean that organizational goals or individual goals set up by a supervisor must be approved by subordinates. It means that those goals should be in line with the employee's understanding. Second, feedback on job performance provides opportunities to clarify expectations, adjust goal difficulty, and gain recognition. The importance of feedback rests in its evaluation of an employee's performance by indicating how well or poorly the employee performed to achieve the goals. Feedback somehow optimizes the employee's behavior and keeps him or her from deviating from the desired track. The last factor in goal-setting theory is task complexity. Taking task complexity into consideration requires supervisors to provide

support to help subordinates accomplish the task assigned by either giving sufficient time or making resources available that are needed to complete the task.

The goal-setting theory of motivation has been applied to various contexts. Scobbie, Dixon, and Wyke (2011) conducted research to explore the development of a theory-based, goal-setting practice framework for use in rehabilitation settings and to detail the component parts of that framework. In their study, causal modeling was used to map theories of behavioral change onto the process of setting and achieving rehabilitation goals and to suggest the mechanisms through which patient outcomes are likely to be affected. The results revealed four components of a goal-setting and action-planning practice framework: goal negotiation, goal identification, planning, and appraisal and feedback. The authors stated in their article that "the goal setting process motivates the patient to make any necessary adjustment to goal-related behavior, and creates an opportunity to enhance self-efficacy through verbal praising of successes" (Scobbie, Dixon, and Wyke 476). The authors made this point through a case study:

> On her next visit, the physiotherapist discusses the action plan with Rosie (appraisal). Rosie did manage to achieve her action plan (action plan attainment), and had to activate the coping plan on two of the three days. The physiotherapist praised her success (feedback-verbal encouragement) which boosted Rosie's confidence. They went to discuss the next action plan in relation to the goal. Further discussion highlighted difficulties Rosie has been experiencing using her right arm to lift heavy object such as the kettle (goal negotiation). Rosie and her therapist then focused on setting a specific goal to address this problem, and continued with the action-planning process (Scobbie, Dixon, and Wyke 475-476).

> The conventional knowledge in management thinking, based on goal-setting theory,

suggests that clearer goals and more challenging tasks at work enhance formal performance and increase organizational productivity and effectiveness at various levels. Locke and Latham (1990) conducted an extensive analysis of 201 past studies in which more than 40,000 individuals participated, and the two analysts concluded that 183 studies supported the relationship between goal setting and job performance.

Vigoda-Gadot and Angert (2007) examined the relationships between goal setting, job feedback, and the employee's formal and informal performance. They developed a longitudinal design based on two points in time and four stages to test a series of hypotheses among student-employees. The researchers used th e organization's internal method of feedback to employees to obtain a personal score for each individual. The feedback scorecard, consisting of 20 close-ended questions, was answered by immediate supervisors and presented to employees at a one-on-one feedback meeting. The feedback included information on both the employee's formal and informal performance. The contribution of job feedback to the explanation of an employee's performance was found to be stronger and more consistent than the one made by goal setting. One of the significant implications of this study lies in the support it lends to the contention that goal setting is incomplete without adequate job feedback. Therefore, managers should consider the positive effect of feedback on formal performance.

Brown and Latham (2000) found that unionized telecommunication employees had high performance and high job satisfaction when the performance appraisal process was applied and when specific high goals were set. Moreover, there are a multitude of studies that testify to the relationships between challenging goals and a high level of performance. A meta-analysis by Zetik and Stuhlmacher (2002) revealed that negotiators who have specific, challenging, and conflicting goals consistently achieve higher profits than those with no goals that were based on

their desired performance. This finding is consistent with the contention of goal-setting theory, which is *the higher the goal, the higher the outcome*.

Furthermore, Latham et al. (2002) updated the high performance cycle that explains how high goals lead to high performance, which in turn leads to rewards. Rewards lead to high satisfaction as well as high self-efficacy, which is an individual's perception of his or her ability to meet future challenges through the setting of even higher goals. High satisfaction is the result of high performance; it can lead to subsequent high performance only if it fosters organizational commitment and only if the commitment is to specific and challenging goals.

Performance evaluation is a necessary and beneficial process, which provides feedback to staff members about job effectiveness and career guidance. The focus of the performance appraisal is measuring and improving the actual performance of the employee, modifying employee behaviors and performance, and thus enhancing the future potential of employee performance. Appraisal is an important instrument in manpower management. If it is performed correctly and logically, it can conduct an organizations to its goals, and its personnel will achieve their interests. Performance appraisals are helpful for analyzing an employee's achievements and evaluating his or her contribution to the achievements of overarching organizational goals. The role played by the feedback to an employee's job performance in job motivation has also drawn the attention of scholars.

Najafi, Leila, et al. (2010) conducted a study which aims to investigate the effect of performance appraisal on an employee's motivation and job promotion in Toyserkan's health system. The researchers hypothesized the meaningful effect of performance appraisal on an employee's motivation and job promotion. In this study, the research population was the official personnel of Toyserkans health system, including health houses, urban and rural health centers,

hospitals and health-care system staff. Data was collected via 37-question questionnaire including 35 closed questions measured by Likert's scales. The research results showed that performance appraisal has little effect on increasing motivation level. The outcome also revealed that performance appraisal has little influence on job improvement.

One year later, a similar study by Hasan Emami, et al. (2011) examined the same subject (the effects of performance appraisal on the employee's job motivation) in Hamedan's health centers. 395 questionnaires were distributed to the official personnel of Hamedan's health center. Data was collected in the same way as the study by Najafi, Leila, et al. (2010). However the research outcome totally contradicted those of Najafi, Leila, et al. (2010). Their research results showed that performance appraisal have some effect on increasing an employee's motivation level and his or her job improvement.

Feedback and Job Performance

Organizational communication ranges from formal and informal means of internal communication to external communication. "A number of researchers have already generated some data about the relationships between communication and job satisfaction" (Downs and Hazen 63). They based their reviews of studies on the communication-satisfaction relationship and produced a common reference – communication satisfaction which "represented a multidimensional, generalized feeling which an employee has toward his total communication environment" (Downs and Hazen 64). Downs and Hazen (1977) conducted their own study and examined significant dimensions of communication satisfaction in three stages. They initially developed, administered, and factor-analyzed an original questionnaire and yielded seven dimensions of communication satisfaction. Two out of seven identify different types of information and the other five identify relationships. Furthermore, the relationships between the

different facets of communication satisfaction and job satisfaction were explored by examining the correlations from the data. They concluded that communication satisfaction is a multidimensional construct and includes eight dimensions, among which the most important communication dimensions that interact with job satisfaction are feedback, relation with the supervisor, and communication climate.

Other research on supervisor's communication with employees has focused first, on providing uncertainty-reducing information regarding tasks, production, performance, goals, innovations, policies, rules, and careers (Penley & Hawkins, 1985) and second on communication that offers encouragement and shows concern.

Feedback is defined as the response one individual gives to the another about the first individual's behavior. Feedback is a central component of human communication, because it can improve the effectiveness of both individual and team performance by providing information about how successful an individual or group has been, and it can give specific suggestions for improvement. Haslett and Ogilvie (1996) indicate that feedback is an essential component of any communication model, and feedback itself can be studied as communication since messages are conveyed through communication. Feedback can be classified as supervisory feedback, peer feedback, and self-evaluation depending on the source of that feedback. "If feedback from some of these sources is blocked, other problems arise" (Haslett and Ogilvie 100). Blockage of supervisory sources of feedback results in higher possible job dissatisfaction, which may lead to a desire to leave an organization.

In addition to source characteristics, feedback as a communication process also involves message characteristics. The valence of a feedback reflects its positive and negative nature.

Positive and negative feedback have significantly different influences on an employee's job performance and team effectiveness.

Understanding dissent messages is important for better addressing dissatisfying circumstances in the workplace, helping organizations better solicit and use employee feedback, and making employees more satisfied and more engaged in the workplace. Garner (2009) studied organizational dissent messages by framing them in terms of employee voice and organizational influence and developed an instrument to measure the content of dissent messages. Factor analyses indicated 11 types of dissent messages. Results further revealed that messages of solution presentation, direct-actual appeal, coalitions, and inspiration were more frequently used to express dissent, while messages of pressure and exchange were less frequently employed.

For decades, leader communication has been identified as a key means for improving worker motivation. Sullivan's (1988) motivating language model briefly predicts that strategic applications of a leader's oral communication have positive, measurable effects on subordinate performance and job satisfaction. There are three types of speech acts conceptualized by Sullivan (1988). First, perlocutionary language is direction-giving and uncertainty reducing. Sullivan predicted that when language minimized a worker's role and task ambiguity, performance and job satisfaction would increase. Second, illocutionary language is an expression of humanity. It occurs when a leader is willing to share his or her emotions with a subordinate and could even be understood as praise by the subordinate about the quality of his or her job. The third speech act is locutionary or meaning-making language. This speech form happens when a leader explains the organization's cultural environment to a worker, including its structure, rules, and values.

Mayfield and Kopf's (1998) study tested Sullivan's predictions and showed that a superior's use of Sullivan's "motivating language theory" correlates significantly with the

subordinate's performance and job satisfaction. The results provided support for Sullivan's hypothesis that a superior's use of motivating language including (1) perlocutionary or direction-giving, (2) illocutionary or sharing feelings, and (3) locutionary or explaining culture would have a positive impact on employees' productivity and process outcomes including performance and job satisfaction.
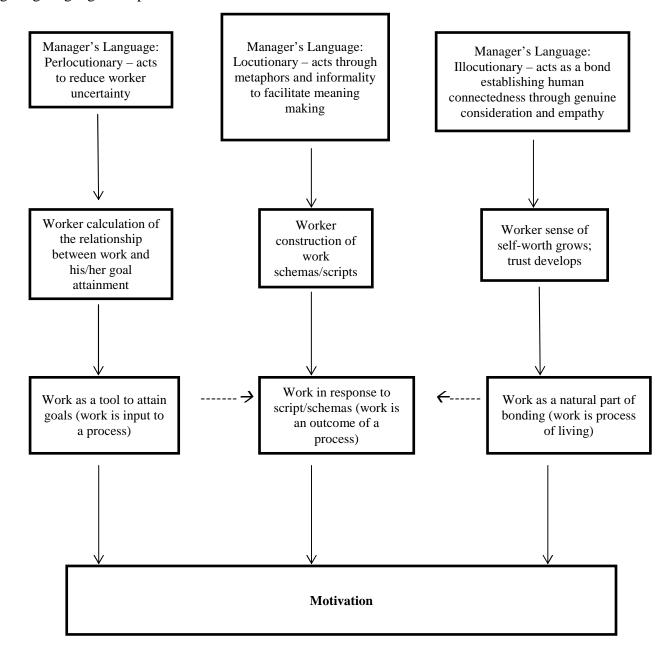
Mayfield's study (2012) further examined the role of a leader's motivating language in effecting an employee's self-efficacy and performance by sampling 151 health care professionals. Self-efficacy is defined as "people's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designed types of performance" (Bandura 395). In other words, self-efficacy is about how an individual regards his or her capability to achieve goals. The concept of self-efficacy is vital to individual motivation, because individuals make their performance decisions based on perceived aptitude and ability. Mayfield, Jacqueline, and Milton Mayfield used partial least squares model to explore the strength and direction of a leader's motivating language with self-efficacy and performance. All the relationships were supported as positive and significant. The partial least squares coefficients indicate that employee self-efficacy is 34% higher with increased levels of the leader's motivating language. The same data analysis revealed that employee performance grew by 20% with higher motivating language, and that employees with higher levels of self-efficacy performed 10% better than those whose self-efficacy levels were lower.

In addition to the workplace, there are other performance-oriented contexts such as school and organized sports where communicative acts play an important role. Optimal performance in these contexts is highly valued and is monitored and evaluated by the instructor and others. Within the sports context, athletes are instructed or coached on how to improve skills

and achieve optimal performance and ultimately achieve success. Sports coaching itself is an instructional communication process in which interactions between individuals, primarily the coach and the athlete are involved (Turman and Schrodt, 2004). Better communicative acts between coaches and athletes will improve an athlete's well-being, skill development, sporting performance, as well as promote the quality of their relationship (Cote and Gillbert, 2009).

Sagar and Jowett's study (2012) investigated athletes' perceptions of coaches' communicative acts in two key interpersonal situations which are lost competitions and making mistakes in training and the impact of these perceptions on the athletes. 324 athletes participated in an open-ended survey. Data was deductively and inductively analyzed. Results indicated that athletes perceived coaches' communicative acts to be both positive and negative, and to impact their motivation, affect, physical self-concept, and learning. Coaches' reactions that were perceived to be positive by the athletes were the expression of positive emotions (e.g., being calm and relaxed, congratulating the athletes, showing positive appearance/outlook), and the provision of post-competition analyses (e.g., giving athletes feedback and instructions on performance), and encouragement and motivation (e.g., supporting, reassuring). Coaches' reactions that were perceived as negative included the expression of negative emotions (e.g., anger, disappointment), hostile reactions (e.g., aggression, blame), and punitive behaviors (e.g., punishment) towards the athletes. The athletes reported that the coach's expression of negative emotions had detrimental effects on them both at interpersonal (made them devalue themselves and feel that they had failed to meet their coaches' expectations) and intrapersonal levels (made them feel like less competent and skillful athletes).

Sullivan (1988), based on the motivational language theory, studied the impact of a supervisor's motivational communicative styles on employee motivation. He developed a

theoretical model to illustrate the process through which managerial speech acts can lead to motivated work and improved performance. The broken lines linking schemas to other mental entities show how these constructions can occur in response to direction-giving and empathy-giving language in supervisor-subordinate communication.

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┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐
│ Manager's       │   │ Manager's       │   │ Manager's       │
│ Language:       │   │ Language:       │   │ Language:       │
│ Perlocutionary  │   │ Locutionary –   │   │ Illocutionary – │
│ – acts to       │   │ acts through    │   │ acts as a bond  │
│ reduce worker   │   │ metaphors and   │   │ establishing    │
│ uncertainty     │   │ informality to  │   │ human           │
│                 │   │ facilitate      │   │ connectedness   │
│                 │   │ meaning making  │   │ through genuine │
│                 │   │                 │   │ consideration   │
│                 │   │                 │   │ and empathy     │
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│ Worker          │   │ Worker          │   │ Worker sense of │
│ calculation of  │   │ construction of │   │ self-worth      │
│ the             │   │ work            │   │ grows; trust    │
│ relationship    │   │ schemas/scripts │   │ develops        │
│ between work    │   │                 │   │                 │
│ and his/her     │   │                 │   │                 │
│ goal attainment │   │                 │   │                 │
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│ Work as a tool  │   │ Work in         │   │ Work as a       │
│ to attain goals │-->│ response to     │<--│ natural part of │
│ (work is input  │   │ script/schemas  │   │ bonding (work   │
│ to a process)   │   │ (work is an     │   │ is process of   │
│                 │   │ outcome of a    │   │ living)         │
│                 │   │ process)        │   │                 │
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│                        Motivation                         │
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Feedback and Job Satisfaction and Job Commitment

Job satisfaction is something that working people seek and is a key element of employee retention, which is possible only by making employees feel comfortable physically and psychologically. Job satisfaction is regarded as the most important factor affecting an individual's intention to stay in his or her current position and the most important factor in the reduction of turnover rates.

Cummings (1983) noted that commitment is a substitute for performance appraisal systems as directive and control mechanisms. A supervisor's communication style derives from three types of language correlated with employee commitment. Sullivan (1988) explained the correlation between commitment and the supervisor's language acts as follows:

Commitment can be the result of a supervisor's uncertainty-reducing information on such things as tenure and long-term rewards. It can also result from bonding communications or from managerial facilitation of employee schemas. Thus, communication can be a rational, calculative, instrumental behavior; an emotion-laden behavior; or a cognitive constructed-meaningful action (Sullivan 112).

Sullivan further explained that "committed employees and managers who generally use perlocutionary discourse will require more uncertainty reduction and, thus will need the information from appraisal and control system" (Sullivan 112). We could say that the supervisor's feedback is plays an integral part in helping the employee decide to remain in an organization, because employees acquire information from job performance appraisals to reduce their uncertainty about job tasks.

Subordinates are most satisfied when they perceive that their supervisors' behavioral approaches exhibit both consideration (relationship orientation) and the initiation of structure

(task orientation) (Castanede and Nahavandi, 1991). Undoubtedly, the supervisor's initiation of structure is vital to the accomplishment of a task, however, this initiation of structure does not reduce the influence of the supervisor's empathetic appraisal of his or her subordinate's job performance. If leaders ignore such empathetic consideration, they may lose the chance to strengthen the employee's commitment that results from increased job satisfaction.

Sharbrough (2006) explored the relationship between the supervisor's use of motivating language, communication competence, communication satisfaction, employees' job satisfaction, and perceived supervisory effectiveness. The study was based on a sample of 136 participating employees surveyed via an interactive internet survey of a 400-person organization. The identification of the specific relationship between the use of motivating language, communication competence, communication satisfaction, job satisfaction, and the leader's perceived effectiveness establishes a direct link between communication, leadership, and job satisfaction.

Salleh, et al (2013) conducted a study to examine the perception of public servants towards the fairness of performance appraisals and its effect on organizational commitment. This study also examined the intermediary effects of satisfaction in these two relationships. The data for this study was obtained through a survey of 425 employees of government agencies. The findings showed that perceived fairness of performance appraisal had influenced the employees' commitment towards the organization through the mediating factor of satisfaction. This study concluded that in order to improve performance evaluation and to be more effective in influencing organizational commitment, satisfaction of the civil servants as well as fair performance management within the organization should be given priority.

Cross-sectional research was done by Wu, et al in 2012 to investigate the relationships between the self-efficacy, professional commitment, and job satisfaction of health-care personnel whose job is to take care of diabetic patients. 202 participants were recruited from three teaching hospitals in Taiwan to complete a questionnaire for data collection. The results indicated that self-efficacy was significantly positively correlated with professional commitment and job satisfaction.

Overall, a multitude of studies have been done that verify the positive influence of organization communication on employees' engagement and commitment to job positions.

Employee Retention

Employees who are content with their jobs are more dedicated and committed to work for the achievement of organizational goals. Unfortunately, the fact is that employees leave their present jobs for various reasons. As the labor market is becoming increasingly competitive, more and more organizations realize the employee retention challenges they are facing. High turnover rates need to be addressed, because the workforce is the most important resource in an organization, and the turnover of the workforce will cause considerable costs such as hiring costs, training costs, productivity costs, and company information costs.

Mayfield and Mayfield conducted a couple of studies on the relationship between leader communication and the employee's loyalty to work. Their study in 2007 used structural equation modeling and investigated the effects of leader communication on a worker's intent to stay. Results indicated that proper leader language use can substantially improve the critical organizational outcome of worker retention. As such, this study identifies potential new paths for requisite leader communication research, training, and development.

It is obvious that employees are not able to perform well if they do not show up for work. Mayfield and Mayfield (2009) examined the relationships between strategic leader language and employee absenteeism. With a structural equation model, two perspectives were measured for the impact of leader spoken language: employee attitudes towards absenteeism and actual attendance. Results suggested that leader language does in fact have a positive, significant relationship on work attendance. However, the results do not provide support concerning the effect of employee attitudes towards absenteeism.

Iyer and Israel (2012) used the second-generation analytical technique of structural equation modeling to examine the relationship between the various components of organizational communication satisfaction and the various components of employee engagement. The results indicate that organizational communication satisfaction has a positive impact on employee engagement.

Kim's (2012) study analyzed the impact of human resource management on state government IT employee turnover intentions. The results of a survey of these employees showed that promotion and advancement opportunities, training and development, supervisory communications, pay and reward satisfaction, and family-friendly policies are all significant variables affecting turnover intentions among state government IT employees. The data strongly suggested that executive leaders, managers of IT departments, and human resource managers need to acknowledge these factors when addressing the issues of voluntary turnover and turnover intentions. In specific, "performance feedback and evaluation by supervisors are important parts of human resource management to direct, train, monitor, and support IT employee's work in support of the mission of a project team, unit, and agency" (Kim 263).

The relationships between an employee's intent to stay at a job position and his or her job satisfaction was verified in a study by Wang, et al in 2012. To study the association between demographic characteristics and job satisfaction, occupational commitment and intent to stay among Chinese nurses, the researchers utilized a self-administered survey questionnaire to collect data from 560 nurses working in four large hospitals in Shanghai in 2009. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between occupational commitment and job satisfaction. Age and job position were significantly related to job satisfaction, occupational commitment, and intent to stay. The researchers also made suggestions to improve levels of job satisfaction, occupational commitment, and intent to stay.

There are sufficient amounts of studies that provide support to expectation of a significant interrelatedness between supervisor communication and employee retention. However, the results of those studies do not verify the motivational role of supervisory feedback in reducing employee turnover. London (1999) noted that supportive supervisors encourage subordinates to voice their concern as well as provide positive and informational feedback.

Eisenberger, et al (2002) tested the organizational support theory and investigated the relationships among employees' perception of supervisor support, perceived organizational support, and employee turnover. The results provide a greater understanding of the relationship between perceived supervisor support and perceived organizational support, including evidence concerning the causal direction, the mechanism underlying the employee's generalization of perceived supervisor support to organizational support, and the role of perceived organizational support in the association between perceived supervisor support and employee turnover. The findings of Eisenberger, et al (2002) match those of the study by Malatesta in 1995. Malatesta found evidence for both relationships: perceived supervisor support increased extra-role

performance beneficial to supervisors, and perceived supervisor support increase perceived

organizational support, which, in turn, led to greater improved role performance beneficial to the

organization. With regard to employee turnover, Malatesta suggested that when supervisor

support was low, employees would believe that they could deal with an unpleasant situation by

switching to a new supervisor.

Given the importance of supervisory feedback in retaining employees in their present

jobs, it is reasonable to ask the question: what keeps an employee committed to his or her current

job? "Commitment is critical to organizational performance, but it is not a panacea. In achieving

important organizational ends, there are other ingredients that need to be added to the mix. When

blended in the right complement, motivation is the result" (Ramlall 52). Therefore, the current

study will be devoted to the investigation of the motivational and demotivational impact of

feedback message content (positive or negative) and a supervisor's communicative style (positive

or negative) on the employee's intention to continue working at a job.

Summary

This literature review was divided into four sections and provided a contextual

framework for the present study. The first sections demonstrated the generation, evolution, and

application of the goal-setting theory in various fields of study. The second section presented

prior studies on the relationship between supervisor-subordinate communication and job

satisfaction, focusing specifically on the effect that supervisory feedback delivered through

motivating language messages had on employee job performance. The third section exhibited

literature about the role played by supervisory feedback and communicative styles in influencing

the employee's job satisfaction and commitment. The forth section included findings from

previous studies on factors affecting employee retention intention and turnover intention. This

literature review serves as foundation to the present study, which intends to investigate the role supervisory feedback and communicative styles have in influencing employee retention intention.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The proposed study adopts mixed research methods because this approach has gained popularity by proving the value of combining both qualitative and quantitative research in the social and human sciences. Mixed methods is prevalent "because research methodology continues to evolve and develop, and mixed methods is another step forward, utilizing the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research" (Creswell 203). Creswell further explains the reason that mixed methods is a definite improvement upon using only quantitative or qualitative methods:

> The problems addressed by social and health science researchers are complex, and the use of either quantitative or qualitative approaches by themselves is inadequate to address this complexity. The interdisciplinary nature of research, as well, contributes to the formation of research teams with individuals with diverse methodological interests and approaches. Finally, there is more insight to be gained from the combination of both quantitative and qualitative research than either form by itself. Their combined use provides an expanded understanding of research problems (Creswell 203).

With regard to the timing and weighting of quantitative and qualitative approaches, taking into consideration the relatively small sample of the current research participants, this researcher decided to begin with an initial quantitative phase and follow up with a qualitative phase. Notably the second group of participants (the qualitative phase) were volunteers from the first group of participants (the quantitative phase). Follow-up qualitative approach was weighted over the initial quantitative approach in order to pursue deeper insights into the participants' perspectives.

Quantitative Phase

The results from preliminary research raised the researcher's interest to further investigate the role that the content of supervisory feedback message and communicative style play in motivating employees. The researcher utilized Sullivan's motivating language model, because it has been adopted in several studies (Mayfield, Mayfield, and Kopf, 1998; Mayfield, and Mayfield, 2007). Sullivan (1988) theorized that the latent motivating-language factors could be wholly captured through the measurement of three observable factors: namely, (1) the indicants of direction-giving, (2) empathetic language, and (3) meaning-making language. The researcher examined the effect of latent motivating language factors on employees' job performance, job satisfaction and employees' retention.

The review of literature proved that all measures of motivating language had high levels of reliability (Churchill, 1979). For employees' commitment to stay, attitudes were measured through a seven-item instrument that captures employees' positive and negative feelings about continued employment with their current organization. Positive employee affects were measured by a three-item subscale, and negative feelings were captured through a four-item subscale. Mayfield and Mayfield (2007) have utilized this model to show the effects of leader communication on a worker's intent to stay. They explained the reliability and validity of this instrument by saying "evaluation for scale reliability and validity indicate that the measures sufficiently capture the target constructs" (Mayfield and Mayfield 92). In particular, the measures of positive and negative intent to stay have reliability scores that fall within generally accepted guidelines for behavioral research scales. The negative and positive affect subscales had credible reliability of .77 and .66 respectively (Churchill, 1979).

Participants and Procedures in the Quantitative Phase

The quantitative phase of this study was an anonymous survey in which data was collected in terms of a supervisor's feedback message content and communicative style.

The researcher invited forty voluntary participants from a church in a mid-Atlantic state. People who own and work for their own organization and have less than 18-months of working experience were not considered qualified participants. More than 18-months of working experience at a job position was considered the criterion for qualified participants, because the researcher intended to investigate career-orientated participants in this study, and length of time working at a job position is an indicator of career orientation. Participants who had no authoritative or financial relationship with the researcher were chosen to ensure that they could provide unbiased input.

To ensure a sufficiently high response rate (Appendices I, II and III) and for better explanation of the questionnaires, volunteering participants were asked to complete the questionnaires in an office of the church after Sunday morning service with the permission of the church administration. A deadline for the responses was given to ensure a smooth research process. With the permission of church pastor (Appendix V), the researcher briefly explained the purpose of this research (a verbal script is attached as Appendix VI) and handed out the flyers (Appendix VII) identifying the time and location for the completion of the questionnaires.

Before the participants were directed to start the questionnaires, consent forms were distributed to document the participants' agreement to voluntarily take part in the survey and to verify their awareness of this agreement and their understanding and acceptance of the potential risks in the research. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of each participant, the researcher prepared a common folder on a table in which the participants could place their

completed questionnaires. In the survey consent form, the researcher included her contact information so that she could be reached by those participants who would like to be further interviewed for the second phase. Participants were not asked to reveal their names, the identity of the organization that they currently or had worked for, or any identifying information.

A total of 40 questionnaires were distributed and 21 were returned from respondents on the same day. The response rate was 53 percent. The total sample group varied in age, gender, occupation, and length of time working in an organization. From these questionnaires, the researcher had to discard 5 due to insufficient information and overdue submission, leaving 16 usable questionnaires. The final response rate was 40 percent.

Qualitative Phase

In order to collect detailed data and produce more in-depth research results, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews with a group of participants who indicated their willingness to be further interviewed after the preceding quantitative phase. The qualitative study was in the form of interviews in which participants' personal working experience, particularly their supervisor's communication styles were examined(Appendix IV). As in the quantitative phase, no identifying information regarding names of the participants or organizations was disclosed.

Among 19 respondents, 4 indicated in the survey consent form that they would like to be further interviewed. Two of them were females and two were males. Each interview lasted 20 to 30 minutes. In order to protect the participants' privacy, interviews were not audio-taped nor videotaped, and they were coded F1, F2, M1, and M2. Recording was taken in the form of text (notes) taken by the researcher during the interviews. Interviewees were informed verbally that they were allowed to ask for a break or to withdraw from the interview at any point.

All data was stored securely in the researcher's personal laptop and password protected to ensure that the researcher alone had access to the data. The data, except for the results included in this paper, is to be destroyed three years from the date on which the questionnaires were distributed.

Finally, the researcher used mixed research methods to examine the role of supervisory feedback and communicative style in an employee's decision to keep working at or to quit a job by proposing the following hypotheses:

H1: Positive feedback messages from supervisors motivate employees to keep working at a job.

H2: Negative feedback messages from supervisors demotivate employees to keep working at a job.

H3: Supervisor communication style will influence employees desire to keep working at a job.

Summary

In summary, this section explained the hypotheses of the present study and justified the choice of instrument and procedure. The methodology utilizes a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches and introduces the procedures in each approach. There was a demographic questionnaire as well as questions to scale the participants' perception of supervisory feedback delivered through three types of messages and employees' retention intention. The next chapter exhibits the presentation and discussion of the results.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents (n=11) were male and 42 percent (n=8) were female. The participants' ages ranged widely from 20 to over 50 years. Thirty-two percent (6) of the participants ranged in age from 22 to 33; twenty-six percent (5) of them ranged in age from 41 to 50; and forty-two percent (8) of them were over 50 years old. All participants were Caucasian Americans.

The researcher used a 5-point scale for each statement. These points were 1 (very little), 2 (little), 3 (some), 4 (a lot), and 5 (a whole lot). These designations were used because this research was following the questionnaires adapted in the studies by Mayfield, Mayfield and Kopf (1998), Mayfield and Mayfield (2007 and 2009).Ten statements were used to examine the participants' perceptions of the feedback that was received from their supervisor through direction-giving messages. These statements were coded from D1 to D10, and D refers to direction-giving. Six statements were used to test the participants' perception of the feedback that was received from their supervisor through empathy-giving messages. These statements were coded from E1 to E6, and E refers to empathy-giving. Eight statements were used to test the participants' perception of the feedback that they received from their supervisor through meaning-making messages. These statements were coded from M1 to M8, and M refers to meaning-making. In addition, seven statements (Appendix II) were made available to investigate each participant's retention and turnover intent. Of these seven statements, statements 1, 4, and 6 indicated employee intention to keep working in an organization (S1: I expect to be working for my current employer one year from now; S4: I would like to work for my current employer until

I retire; S6: I can't see myself working for other organization.). In contrast, statements 2, 3, 5, and 7 were predictors of an employee's intention to leave a job position (S2: I would change job if I could find another position that pays as well as my current one; S3: I am actively looking for another job; S5: I would prefer to be working at another organization; S7: I would feel very happy about working for other employers.).

The research used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software package to run the statistics. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the relationship between the participants' perception of feedback received from their supervisors in terms of direction-giving messages, empathetic messages, and meaning-making messages. The instrument reliability was proven with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.926.

Perception of Supervisory Feedback and Communicative Styles

When asked to respond to the statement "(supervisor) gives me useful explanations of what needs to be done in my work," approximately 49 % indicated that they received little or very little "useful explanations of what needs to be done," and 42% indicated that they received a lot or a whole lot of "useful explanations of what needs to be done." The least popular response with 11% was "very little," whereas the most popular response was "little," which received 37% of the responses.

The second statement with regard to supervisory feedback through direction-giving messages was "(supervisor) offers me helpful direction on how to do my job." The most common selection was "a lot," which received 26% of the responses. The least common selection was "very little" with only 5%. Generally, 49% of the respondents said that they received a lot or a whole lot of "helpful direction on how to do (their) job," however, 26% said that they received very little or little "helpful direction on how to do (their) job."

The next statement was "(supervisor) provides me with easily understandable instruction about my work." There were 9 (47%) out of 19 respondents who indicated that their supervisors provided a lot or a whole lot of "easily understandable instruction about (their) work," while 7 (37%) out of 19 respondents indicated that they received very little or little. Among these 19 respondents, 6 of them replied that they received a lot of "easily understandable instruction about (their) work" which made it the most common selection. On the other hand, only 1 respondent indicated that he or she received very little "easily understandable instruction about (his or her) work."

In regards to the statement "(supervisor) offers me helpful advice on how to improve my work," the same number of respondents chose "a lot" or "a whole lot" as those who chose "little" or "very little" with 37%. The same equal split was returned for the sixth statement "(supervisor) gives me clear instruction about solving job-related problem."

The participants then responded to the statement, "(supervisor) gives me definition of what I must do in order to receive rewards." The majority of the participants, 37% responded that their supervisor gave "little" "definition of what (they) must do in order to receive rewards," while "a whole lot" was only chosen by 5% of the respondents.

The last four statements: "Offers me specific information on how I am evaluated"; "Provides me with helpful information about forthcoming changes affecting my work"; "Provides me with helpful information about past changes affecting my work"; and "Shares news with me about organizational achievements and financial status" were also used with regard to supervisory feedback delivered through direction giving messages. There was no significant difference between the number of responses indicating "little" or "very little" and "a lot" or "a whole lot" for the above mentioned statements. When asked about "specific

information on how (they are) evaluated" in the seventh statement, 32% of the respondents said that they were offered some "specific information on how (they are) evaluated," whereas only one respondent replied that he or she was provided "a whole lot" of "specific information on how (he or she was) evaluated." Interestingly, answers to the ninth statement "(supervisor) provides helpful information about past changes affecting my work" were distributed unevenly. The most common selection was "some," which was 42%, whereas 5% indicated that they received "a whole lot" of "helpful information about past changes affecting (their) jobs."

Statements 11 to 16 were used for participants' perception of the feedback that they received from their supervisor through empathy-giving messages. When asked to respond to the statement "(supervisor) gives me praises of my good work," 42 % of the participants indicated that they were given "little" or "very little" praise, and 47% indicated that they were given "a lot" or "a whole lot" of praise. The most popular answer choice (26%) was "a whole lot." The least popular response (11%) was that the subordinates received "some" praise.

In regards to the statement "(supervisor) shows me encouragement for my work effort," 37% selected "little" or "very little," whereas 47% chose "a lot" or "a whole lot." The most selected response was "a whole lot," receiving 26% of responses. The least selected response was "little" with 16%.

In responding to the statement, "(supervisor) shows concern about my job satisfaction," 21% of the participants indicated that their supervisor showed "little" or "very little" concern about their job satisfaction. Conversely, 37% of the participants indicated that their supervisors showed "a lot" or a "whole lot" of concern about their job satisfaction. The most popular answer was "some," which received 42% of the responses, while, the least popular answer was "very little," which received 5% of the responses.

The next statement was "(supervisor) expresses his/her support for my professional development." The most popular response was "some," which received 37% of the responses. The second most popular response was "a lot" with 32% of the participants. However, "little" was the least popular response with only 5%.

Participants were also asked to respond to the statement, "(supervisor) asks me about my professional well-being." "Little" or " very little" were chosen by 32% of the participants. "A lot" or "a whole lot" were selected by 37% of the participants.

The final statement on the participants' perceptions of supervisory feedback that tested the influence of empathy-giving messages was the statement, "(supervisor) shows trust in me." The majority of the participants, 58%, said that their supervisors showed "a lot" or "a whole lot" of trust in them. The answer choices "little" or "very little" were chosen by 32% of the participants. The most selected response was "a whole lot," receiving 42% of the responses.

The last eight statements were designed to test the participants' perceptions of the feedback that they received from their supervisors through meaning-making messages. The seventeenth statement was "(supervisor) tells me stories about key events in the organization's past."Among five answer choices, 53% of the respondents indicated that their supervisors told them "little" or "very little" stories. Thirty-two percent of the respondents said that they were told "a lot" or "a whole lot" of such stories. The least selected response was "a whole lot," receiving only 5% of responses.

When asked to reply to the statement "(supervisor) gives me useful information that I couldn't get through official channels," the majority of the participants said that they were given "a lot" or "a whole lot" of useful information. "Very little" was the least selected answer with a response of only 11%.

The next statement was "(supervisor) tells me stories of people who are admitted in my organization." The most popular response was "a lot," which received 32% of the responses. The answer "very little" only made up 11% of the responses and was the least popular response.

The participants were also asked to respond to the statement, "(supervisor) tells me stories about people who have worked hard in this organization." Forty-two percent of the respondents said that their supervisors told them "little" or "very little" of these stories, whereas 21% of the respondents indicated that they were told "a lot" of the "stories about people who have worked hard in this organization."

When asked to respond to the statement "(supervisor) offers me advice about how to behave at the organization's social gatherings," the participants who chose "little" or "very little" did not differ significantly in number from those who chose "a lot" or "a whole lot," These responses received respectively 47% and 37% of the responses.

Participants' responses to the statement "(supervisor) offers me advice about how to 'fit in' with other members of this organization" were significantly distributed. The majority of the respondents said that they were offered "little" or "very little" of such advice. These comprised 63% of the responses, whereas only 11% of the respondents said that they were offered "a whole lot" of this advice.

The next statement was "(supervisor) tells me stories about people who have been rewarded by this organization." The majority of the respondents expressed that they were told "little" or "very little" of such stories. Only 53% gave these responses. Only 26% of the participants were told such stories: "a lot" or "a whole lot." "A whole lot" was the least popular response with only 5% of the responses.

The last statement was "(supervisor) tells me stories about people who have left this organization." Forty-seven percent of the participants indicated that they were told "little" or "very little," while only 16% of them said that they were told "a lot" or "a whole lot."

Based on statistical analysis, figure 1 and 2 indicate that the mean feedback score was 2.9 which is close to the code response 3 (some) representing respondents' moderate perception on feedback received from supervisors. Table 1 demonstrated that 10 out of 19 usable respondents (52.6%) revealed that their perception on supervisory feedback through direction-giving messages, empathy-giving messages, and meaning-making messages was above a mean score of 3. Since these 24 statements, which were categorized into direction-giving messages, empathy-giving messages and meaning-making messages, were all stated in a positive tone, it is reasonable to infer that the majority of the participants agreed that they received positive feedback from their supervisors through these three types of messages.
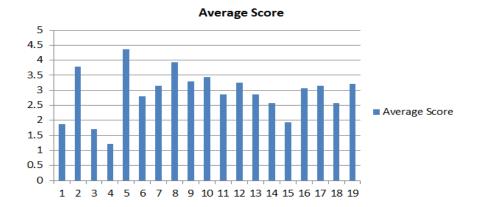
Figure 1: Average Score of Participants' Perception on Supervisory Feedback
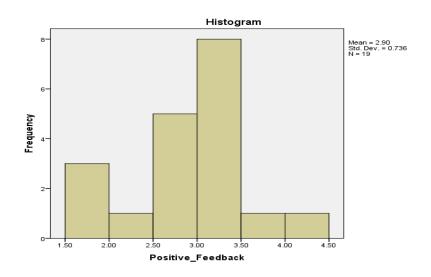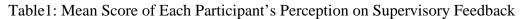
Figure 2: Participants' Perception on Positive Feedback

Table1: Mean Score of Each Participant's Perception on Supervisory Feedback

Participant	Mean
1	1.88
2	3.79
3	1.71
4	1.21
5	4.36
6	2.79
7	3.14
8	3.93
9	3.29
10	3.43
11	2.86
12	3.29
13	2.86
14	2.57
15	1.93
16	3.07
17	3.14
18	2.57
19	3.21

In order to test each participant's intent to keep working in an organization or quit, seven statements were made available for them to choose. They were asked to choose the statement that best described their feelings about their current work situation.

Employee Retention Intent

Among the seven statements, the responses from statements 1, 4, and 6 were indicators of employee retention intent. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents chose the statement "I expect to be working for my current employer one year from now." Eleven percent selected the statement "I would like to work for my current employer until I retire." Eleven percent of the respondents chose the statement "I can't see myself working for any other organization."

Employee Turnover Intent

Conversely, employee turnover intent was indicated by the responses from statements 2, 3, 5, and 7. Twenty-one percent of the respondents chose the statement "I would change jobs if I could find another position that pays as well as my current one." Five percent selected the statement "I am actively looking for another job." Twenty-one percent selected "I would prefer to be working at another organization." Sixteen percent selected the statement "I would feel very happy about working for another organization."

The data was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis to test the proposed hypotheses. The statistical analysis for the first hypthsis revealed there was no significant relationship between positive feedback from supervisor and employee retention intent (p=.822) as can be seen in the table 2 below. Therefore positive feedback from a supervisor does not motivate an employee's decision to keep working in an organizaiton. Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Table 2: Correlations between Positive Feedback and Employee Retention

Model		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations		
		Beta	T	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)		1.588	.132			
	Positive Feedback	-.057	-.229	.822	-.057	-.057	-.057

The assumption was that positive feedback from a supervisor would negatively affect employee turnover intent, meaning that if employees are consistently and positively appraised by their supervisors, they are less likely to resign from their current job. But, based on the statistical analysis, there is no significant linkage between positive feedback from a supervisor and employee turnover intent (p=.342) as showing in table 3 below. Therefore positive feedback from a supervisor shared no relationship with employee turnover intent. Hypothesis 2 was also not supported.

Table3: Correlations between Positive Feedback and Employee Turnover:

		Positive Feedback	Turnover
Positive Feedback	Pearson Correlation	1	.238
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.342
	N	19	18
Turnover	Pearson Correlation	.238	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.342	
	N	18	18

Supervisory communicative styles are manifested through the feedback messages that they give to their subordinates. Hypothesis 3 was about the relationship between the supervisor's communicative styles and employee retention intent. The effect that each type of feedback message had on employee retention intent was analyzed respectively. See table 4. The statistical analysis indicated that there was no significant linkage between supervisory direction-giving feedback messages and employee retention intent (p=.887). Thus, supervisory direction-giving feedback messages do not motivate employees to keep working in an organization. The statistical analysis also showed that there was no significant relationship between supervisory empathy-giving feedback messages and employee retention intent (p=.247). Furthermore, there was no

significant linkage between meaning-making messages and employee retention intent (p=.462).

It is reasonable to conclude from these findings that supervisory communicative styles do not

influence an employee's desire to keep working in an organization. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was

not supported.

Table 4: Correlations between Communicative Styles and Employee Retention

		Employee Retention
Direction Giving	Pearson Correlation	-.036
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.887
	N	19
Empathy Giving	Pearson Correlation	-.287
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.247
	N	19
Meaning Making	Pearson Correlation	.185
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.462
	N	19
Employee Retention	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	19

Although these proposed hypotheses were answered by the data gathered from

quantitative stage of this study, the researcher further interviewed four respondents who

voluntarily took part in the interview so that the research was able to acquire in-depth insights

into the relationship between supervisory feedback messages and employee retention as well as

insights into motivating factors for employee retention.

The four interviewees were coded F and M indicating female and male and were

numbered by sequence. The first female interviewee was coded F1. The second female

participant was coded F2. The first male interviewee was coded M1. The second male

interviewee was coded as M2. They worked for different organizations and in differing positions.

This researcher asked two questions in the interviews: "Did you supervisors' communicative styles influence your decision to leave a job? Please explain" and "Did your supervisors' communicative styles affect your decision to keep working at a job? Please explain." All the interviewees indicted that they were working and had been working in the organization for over three years. Seventy-five percent of the interviewees had a resignation experience. One interviewee said he or she did not have any resignation experience. All of the interviewees indicated that they were evaluated on their job performance on a regular basis. One interviewee explicitly said that he or she was evaluated once a year. All of the interviewees were satisfied with the communication they had with their supervisors.

When asked the reason for resigning, none of the interviewees claimed that it was due to any dissatisfaction over communication with his or her supervisors. Fifty percent of the interviewees attributed their resignation to personal reasons. One said that "I was not allowed to teach those kids about Jesus and even not allowed to use Christmas tree which I think those kids are supposed to be taught. I guess I just can't put up with that. I mean that is against Christian principles."Another interviewee explained, "I resigned from that job because I was planning to go on a mission's trip with my wife and the preparation required lots of time and efforts which I was not able to spare from my job." And another interviewee explained, "I quit because my boss sold the dealership to another dealer. As you know the new dealer has their own team and they would not take over us as employees."

It is reasonable to draw the conclusion based on the resignation experiences of the four interviewees that supervisory communicative style was not a motivational factor when employees made the decision to keep working in an organization or to quit. Various elements

factor into an employee's decision to stay or leave, for example, personal needs proved primary in this study.

Discussion

Several conclusions may be derived from the present study. The following section is to analyze the results in terms of goal-setting theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and organizational commitment.

Goal Setting Theory

Although H3, which was about the influence of supervisors' communicative style on employee retention intent, was not supported by the findings from this study, participants' perceptions on each type of feedback message are worth analyzing.

Appendix VII demonstrates that messages in direction-giving language, empathy-giving language, and meaning-making language were perceived differently. The mean score of direction-giving feedback messages was 2.89. The mean score of empathy-giving feedback messages was 3.06. The mean score of meaning-making feedback messages was 2.53. These findings indicate that the supervisors were relatively willing to establish relational bonding with their subordinates in this study. Once relational bonding is established between supervisors and subordinates, subordinates are more likely to consider the supervisors credible and thus are more willing to accept and accomplish a task assigned by that supervisor. In goal-setting theory, acceptance and implementation are two important factors. An example was given by the interviewee coded F1. She said her supervisor made efforts to initiate a friendly relationship with her and treated her as a friend rather than as a subordinate. She further explained that this sound relationship helped her to see the supervisor as reliable when she (the subordinate) was evaluated, and as a result she considered her supervisor's feedback as more credible and

acceptable. Interviewee F2 expressed her satisfaction with the supervisor by saying that her supervisor was quite supportive of her career development. She felt that the supervisor was available to help whenever she needed.

It is significant that statement E6 which is "(supervisor) shows trust in me" in empathy-giving feedback messages stood out from the other five statements with a highest mean score of 3.5. This finding illustrates that the supervisors were more likely to express their trust in their subordinates. Trust from supervisors is the foundational level of supervisor-subordinate bonding. Interviewee M1 validated this point by saying that he felt closer to the supervisor when he was considered trustworthy to receive and accomplish a task.

The mean score of direction-giving feedback messages was 2.89, which is a little lower than the mean score of the overall feedback: 2.9. Statement D1 which says "(supervisor) gives me useful explanations of what needs to be done in my work" scored the highest mean scale of 3.1875. This indicates that supervisors were more likely to provide useful explanations for reducing subordinates' uncertainties over goals, tasks, and needs-expectations in this study. The informational instructions from supervisors are crucial to setting up clear and specific goals for subordinates to achieve.

Goal specificity is another key element of the goal-setting theory. Logically, a specific goal could only be communicated to the employees through precise and concise messages. Interviewee M1 gave an example by saying that he received feedback from his supervisors, and this feedback was very helpful in telling him what he had done correctly and what he was expected to achieve afterwards. With the instructional information, he was able to modulate his behaviors and adjust his work schedule in order to accomplish the assigned task. When responding to the question "how do you see your supervisory feedback send through diction-

giving messages?" interview F2 said that the supervisor told her what objective she was expected to achieve for each new semester at the beginning of that semester. She further explained that the supervisor's directional instruction served as an effective map for keeping her on the right track.

Given that meaning-making messages are a presentation of an organization's culture environment such as structure, rules, and values, they are usually indirectly and implicitly conveyed through stories. Meaning-making messages are used to help employees understand acceptable work behaviors in an organization. While the mean score of meaning-making feedback messages was the lowest one among the three types of feedback messages, the reasons could be attributed to the nature of the participants. Mayfield, Mayfield, and Kopf (1998) indicated in their study that a leader's use of meaning-making messages are valuable to the organization that is in need of cultural change and are also beneficial to new employees during their organizational entry. Human resources management usually provides new employees with training in order to help them understand the shared values of the organization. Employees taking their first steps into an organization desperately need to know which actions are considered acceptable and which are considered unacceptable. This kind of knowledge is conveyed through stories and other symbolic means in meaning-making language. Since all of the participants in this study had over 18 months of work experience, they were not in a stage of organizational entry when they were recruited for the study. This fact could explain why they did not perceive as many meaning-making messages as do people who are in an organizational entry stage.

As indicated in the results section, no significant linkage was found between the supervisor's communicative style and employee retention intent. This finding contradicts the Mayfield and Mayfield's studies (2007, 2009) in terms of the effect that a leader's

communication has on an employee's loyalty to work. Mayfield and Mayfield concluded that leader communication does have a positive, significant relationship on work attendance (Mayfield and Mayfield, 2009), and proper leader language can substantially improve the critical organizational outcome of worker retention (Mayfield and Mayfield, 2007). The reason that the present study produced contrasting results is that each of three types of feedback messages was tested separately. However if three types of feedback messages were considered in a whole, the desired outcomes such as productivity, job satisfaction, and loyalty to an organization might be revealed.

Since there was no evidence found in this study to support the motivational role that supervisory feedback plays in employee retention and turnover intent, the researcher sees the necessity to further discuss other factors that motivate employees to stay or to quit. The following section will include an analysis of other factors affecting employee retention and turnover intent from the perspectives of employees and employers.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Perspective of Employees)

The best-known needs theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, assumes that human beings have an innate desire to satisfy a given set of needs, and these needs can be arranged in a hierarchy of importance with the most basic needs at the foundation of the hierarchy (Griffin and Moorhead, 86). Maslow also explained that human beings work to achieve unmet needs at the lower levels before attending to those at the higher levels. Based on Maslow's theory, it is reasonable to infer that employees make decision to quit due to their unmet needs. Since each employee typically occupies unique situational contexts, each one has different needs for the manager to satisfy. Therefore employees quit for various reasons.

Employees who newly enter an organization with little work experience may have different needs than those of seasoned employees. It is easier for first-time employees to be content with the simple satisfaction of basic physiological needs such as food and shelter. But employees who have worked in an organization for several years might expect their higher-level needs such as career advancement to be satisfied. Therefore a lack of advancement opportunity could exert a strong influence over their desire to quit. Additionally, employees may make the decision to quit based on significant life events such as marriage, child birth, or the loss of the loved ones.

Given the fact that the participants in this study varied from ages 20 to over 50, it is reasonable to assume that they each experienced different stages of life and had differing needs to be met. Therefore their decisions to resign may have been due to the unmet needs specific to their particular life stage. When asked to share his resignation experience, interviewee M2 said that he had to quit, because his family decided to go on a mission's trip which required a great amount of time in preparation. He further explained that although he valued the bonding he had experienced with his supervisors and other colleagues, he had to choose to leave. His example adequately demonstrates that employees leave their jobs for various reasons, among which supervisory communication satisfaction is only one.

This point of view is also supported by the studies of communication scholars (Kim, 2012; Ting, 1996). Kim's study (2012) on 3,775 state government IT employees revealed that promotion opportunities, training and development, supervisory communications, pay and reward satisfaction, and family-friendly policies are all significant variables influencing employee turnover intentions. Furthermore, Ting (1996) found that the lack of advancement

opportunities has a significant effect on decreasing job satisfaction and leads to turnover of the federal, white-collar workforce.

The previous section discussed the reasons that employees make their decision to quit from the employee's perspective, which is due to their personal unmet needs that are explicitly explained by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The following section will further analyze these factors affecting employee retention: motivation factors an hygiene factors.

Motivation Factors in the Dual –Structure Theory

The dual-structure theory identifies several factors that contribute to job satisfaction. These factors are considered to be the sources of motivation. They are achievement, recognition, growth possibilities, career advancement, responsibility, and the work itself. These factors lead to employee job satisfaction. Employees who are contented with their jobs are more likely to be devoted to them.

When asked about what made her decide to stay or to quit her job, interviewee F2 who has been working as a substitute teacher for several years said, "I mean she (the supervisor) makes me feel that my efforts are recognized and valued. Plus the fact that both of us have the loving hearts for kids and we all enjoy working with them." This example is solid evidence that motivation factors lead to job satisfaction and commitment. Employees who are recognized and valued by their supervisors are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and therefore are more willing to keep working in that organization. In addition to motivation factors, there are also several hygiene matters that could influence employee dissatisfaction and therefore are worthy of close attention.

Hygiene Factors in the Dual-Structure Theory

Several factors have been identified as sources of dissatisfaction when they are perceived to be inadequate. These factors are called hygiene factors. Hygiene factors include company policy, job security, personal life, working conditions, interpersonal relations, supervision, and so on. The dual-structure theory asserts that the absence of hygiene factors leads to dissatisfaction. However, when hygiene factors are considered acceptable, employees are not necessarily satisfied (or positive); rather, they are simply not dissatisfied (Griffin and Moorhead 91).

The results from the present study indicated no significant linkage between supervisory feedback and employee commitment to an organization. Although the participants reported receiving positive feedback from their supervisors, they did not see the feedback as a key factor in their decision to stay or quit. Interviewee F1 related her resignation experience in a way that could be explained by the effect of company policy on employee turnover intention. She said that the school she worked for did not allow its employees to teach biblical stories. She emphasized that "they don't even allow me to present Christmas tree in the classroom during Christmas season which I think are what the kids are supposed to be taught." She said she had to quit because "it's (the school policy) just against my Christian principle."

Job security is also important to employee turnover intention. When asked about the reasons the participant resigned from his previous job, interviewee M1 demonstrated that the absence of job security has a definitive effect on an employee's decision to quit. He reported that he worked for an automobile dealership for over 5 years and had to leave, because "my boss sold the dealership to another dealer, and you know usually they (the new dealer) have their own team." Not wanting to take the risk of being laid off, he decided to resign, though he indicated

that he had worked for his entire life at automobile dealerships. It is clear that expected loss of a job is an important matter to employees when they encounter organizational change. Employees would rather voluntarily quit a job than be fired so that they can take the initiative to look for another job.

Additionally, personal issues such as significant life events play an important role when employees are deciding to stay or to quit. Interviewee M2's resignation example demonstrates the effect that an employee's personal life can have on his or her decision to resign. The interviewee shared his resignation experience by saying that he had to choose family life over work, since he and his family had decided to go on a mission's trip, which required a great amount of time in preparation. They made this decision even though the interviewee valued the bonding he had with his supervisors and peers. This illustrates the fact that when an employee feels he or she must to choose between family life and work, his or her personal values will determine his or her decision to stay in the job or quit it.

In general, employees only become committed to an organization when they are being motivated to continuously devote themselves to it. There are several factors that trigger employee motivation. In this regard, managers can adopt a variety of strategies to cultivate an environment where organizational commitment is enhanced by redesigning jobs, allowing greater involvement, providing valuable feedback, setting goals, and creating alternative work arrangements. A study by Paris and Terhaar (2011) examined the predictors of nurse job dissatisfaction and intent to leave. They concluded that good communication is one of the important factors in increasing nurse satisfaction and decreasing turnover. The significance of their study is in developing a performance improvement project through which a healthy practice environment is cultivated. A healthy practice environment is characterized by an engaged

nursing staff who are endowed with appropriate power for practicing in an collaborative way. Such an environment is associated with favorable outcomes such as a stable and satisfied workforce.

Summary

The findings did not approve the hypotheses in this study. This researcher further analyzed other factors affecting employees' decision to stay or to quit. These factors included personal needs, recognition from the supervisors, the work itself, job security, company policies and so on. Since the hypotheses were not supported, the following chapter is to provide limitations in this study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five

Limitation and Recommendation for Future Research

Limitations

Although the researcher has attempted to ensure accuracy and legitimacy in terms of the selection of sample, instruments, and research procedures, as in any research, there were limitations. Glesne (2011) said that part of demonstrating the trustworthiness of qualitative data is being aware of and acknowledge the limitations of the study. The limitations of this study lie in three areas.

First and the most importantly, the sample size is limited. Convenience sampling was used to recruit the participants from the church the researcher attends. Therefore, the samples were not representative of general populations in many organizations. Statisticians take margin of error (fraction) into account when specifying an adequate sample. Fowler (2002) stated that "the sample size decision, however, like most other design decision[s], must be made on a case-by-case basis, with the researches considering the variety of goals to be achieved by a particular study and taking into account numerous other aspects of the research design." (35) Future studies on this topic should attempt to increase sample size so that results could reflect a wider range of individuals. It is possible that that data from a larger sample might reveal differing conclusions. Strategies to increase the range of participants are discussed below in the section on recommendations for future research.

The second limitation is with the participants themselves. Given the fact that the research was conducted in a church, the participants were more likely to perceive the research topic from a Christian viewpoint. As indicated from the interviews, two of the interviewees who were satisfied with their supervisors' communicative styles and still resigned, reported that they felt

compelled to make their decision because "(it was) against my Christian principle" and "preparation of the upcoming Mission trip requires a lot of time which I'm unable to spare from my previous job." Thus, the sample could have included participants from a more diverse work force. A variety of responses from diverse participants would produce results that are more reflective of the discipline of organizational communication as a whole. It would be of value to study whether or not Christian perspectives would have a particular effect on employee retention intent within a broader population.

Another limitation is related to the questionnaire itself. The questionnaire was adopted from the studies by Mayfield, Mayfield and Kopf (1998), Mayfield and Mayfield (2007 and 2009). They intended to investigate the correlations between a supervisor's use of Sullivan's (1988) motivating language and the subordinate's desired outcomes such as performance, job satisfaction, and loyalty to one's supervisor. However, several respondents in this study disclosed their confusion about the code of response used in the questionnaire. They were not sure about the precise amounts intended in each category: "1 very little," "2 little," "3 some," "4 a lot," and "5 a whole lot." The ambiguity of the terms might cause a misunderstanding about several or all of the statements. Therefore, in order to eliminate the ambiguity, communication scholars could adopt the more popular 5-point Likert scale through which respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series of statements. The format of the 5-point Likert scale is 1 representing strongly disagree, 2 representing disagree, 3 representing neither agree nor disagree, 4 representing agree, 5 representing strongly agree.

Recommendations for Future Research

Even though goal-setting theory was a valuable asset to the present study, there are other theories that could be utilized for future studies relating to role of supervisory feedback and communicative styles in employees' turnover intention. For example, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory could be used in future research to investigate this topic. Maslow's pyramid has been used in several studies examining an employee's job satisfaction and his or her turnover intention due to dissatisfaction. Paris and Terhaar's 2011 study is one of them. They concluded that good communication is one of the more important factors for increasing nurse satisfaction and decreasing turnover. They developed a performance improvement project through which a healthy practice environment can be cultivated in order to increase engagement, empowerment, and effectiveness. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory conceptualizes human needs as a pyramid with five levels in ascending order, ranging from physiologic needs at the base, through safety, belonging, and esteem, to self-actualization at the apex of the pyramid. Maslow posited that people are innately motivated toward psychological growth and self-development. Therefore, future researchers could investigate how satisfaction of each need of the pyramid could influence an employee's intention to keep working in an organization.

Another theory that could be adopted to study the employee's motivation to remain in a workplace is the Dual-Structure Theory. The Dual-Structure Theory, originally called the "two-factor theory," was developed by Frederick Herzberg. His study was based on interviews with approximately 200 accountants and engineers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and concluded that there are certain factors that would directly motivate employees to be willing to devote more time and effort to their assigned tasks. These factors are called motivation factors and are intrinsic to the work itself. Motivation factors such as achievement, recognition, and

advancement are primary causes of satisfaction and motivation. There are also certain factors that demotivate the employees to work hard. These are called hygiene factors. They are found in the environment surrounding the job rather than within the job itself. Hygiene factors such as supervision, interpersonal relationships and job security are typically present when an employee has become dissatisfied with his or her job. Jack et al. (2013) examined how mental health workers in Ghana perceive their jobs and what drives them to work. They explored factors motivating mental health workers to seek and remain in mental health care positions. They discovered the factors that influenced respondents' choices to enter and remain working in mental health care. Among these motivating factors, lack of positive or negative feedback on work performance stood out.

In addition to alternative of theories, future researchers could consider using a different instrument and research procedure to examine supervisory feedback messages. Instead of using a closed-ended questionnaire as in the present study, future research could use an open-ended survey as used in the study by Sagar and Jowett (2012). The advantages of open-ended surveys are various. Open-ended surveys offer respondents an opportunity to answer in detail, both qualifying and clarifying their responses to complex issues. Such surveys also permit a potentially unlimited number of answers through which unanticipated findings can be discovered. Future research could also put these open-ended questions in a situational context such as supervisors' reactions after employees fail an assigned task and supervisors' reactions after employees achieved an assigned task in a timely manner.

This study utilized a mixed research method composed of a quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative interview, and during the interview, participants were asked to give examples of how their supervisors' communicative styles influenced their decisions to continue or quit a job.

Future research could break this question into several smaller questions. For example, researchers could many questions like these: "Describe how your supervisor evaluates your job performance"; "Give examples of how your supervisor behaves"; "What did he or she say?"; "Describe how it made you feel"; "Describe the worst conversation you have had with your supervisor"; and "To what extent does your supervisor's communicative style (direction-giving, empathy-giving, meaning-making) motivate you to continue working in an organization and please explain using a detailed example". Asking smaller and specific questions could keep the responses of most participants focused on the same core issues.

Given the importance of the qualitative stage in which participants were interviewed, it is necessary for future researchers to consider steps to ensure rigor in data analyses. Sagar and Jowett (2012) adopted effective strategies for obtaining trustworthiness and credibility in their study. Their strategies utilized a collaborative approach in discerning this trustworthiness and credidiblity, an approach that would serve future research effectively. For example, peer debriefing could be used in the analytical process. Through collaborative approach, interpretive bias could be minimized. Another way to ensure unbiased data analysis is to maintain a reflexive journal which reflects a researcher's biases and values. The reflection of researcher's bias would be helpful for minimizing and eliminating biased interpretation of participants' responses.

The literature review indicated a number of previous research studies relating to this particular research. This study is not perfect, but it does provide insights into the field of organizational communication by exploring the influence of supervisory feedback message content and communicative styles on employee retention. Several limitations of this study make suggestions necessary for future research. To overcome such limitations, future study could repeat the study using a different and larger sample from a variety of organizations. The size of

the sample could be enlarged through making the questionnaire available both on paper and online. Another way to recruit more participants would be to use the snowballing method.

Demographic studies of job satisfaction have found that job satisfaction is greater for nursing personnel who are older, work longer, and occupy a higher-level position (Lu, While, & Barriball, 2007; Tsai et al., 2007; Wang, Chang, & Chu, 2006). Although a limited amount of demographic information was collected in this study, it was not used in the statistical analysis of the results. Therefore demographic information such as the participant's age and length of time working in an organization should be considered for further exploration.

It is also necessary for future research to consider the type of work being done as one of the independent variables, because it is likely that different professional groups will have differing demands for communication especially communication with supervisors. And this communication could come in the form of feedback-giving. Numerous studies on health care professionals (Jack et al, 2013, Paris and Terhaar, 2011, Scanlan and Still, 2013) indicate that health care professions constantly work under great pressure and are therefore more likely to "burnout." Thus it is likely that they will seek to escape this frustrating situation by quitting.

Future studies could also examine gender difference as an independent variable. Within the field of interpersonal communication, females are considered more relationship-oriented, whereas males are considered more task-oriented. Therefore, meaningful results could be obtained, if the participant's gender is added as one of the variables.

Additionally, the cultural background of each participant could be included as a variable in the study of the relationships between supervisory feedback messages and communicative styles on employee retention decisions. For example, the differing thinking processes of people

from individualist and collectivist cultures could produce in them significantly different perspectives on the feedback that comes from supervisors and the communicative styles they use.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the role that supervisory feedback messages and communicative styles play in motivating employees to remain in a workplace. The goal setting theory was chosen for this study as the theoretical framework, because its validity has been tested and demonstrated in a large number of studies.

The methodology for this study included a quantitative phase and qualitative phase. The data collection occurred from September to October 2013 in a church located in a Mid-Atlantic state. The survey was composed of three sections: a demographic questionnaire, a motivating-language-scale questionnaire, and an intent-to-stay scale questionnaire. Afterword, interviews were conducted based on the consent of the interviewees. The participants in quantitative phase included 11 males and 8 females between the ages of 20 and 60.

The quantitative data from the survey was entered into SPSS to test for a significant correlation between supervisory feedback and employee retention intent. The results for H1 revealed that positive feedback from a supervisor does not necessary motivate employees to keep working in an organization. The results for H2 indicated that negative feedback from a supervisor does not necessary motivate employees to quit. The findings for H3 demonstrated that supervisory communicative styles characterized with direction-giving messages, empathy-giving messages, and meaning-making messages do not necessarily influence an employee's desire to keep working in an organization.

Though there was no significant linkage between supervisory feedback, their communicative styles, and employee retention intention, qualitative interviews did provide

insights into the motivating factors of employee retention and turnover intention. They revealed that the supervisor's motivating feedback conveyed through direction-giving messages, empathy-giving messages, and meaning-making messages influenced an employee's acceptance and commitment to a goal. Specifically, subordinates are more likely to accept a task when the supervisor uses direction-giving language to reduce the uncertainties about performance expectations and when the supervisors are considered trustworthy and in a sound relationship with the subordinates. Furthermore, the subordinates are more likely to commit to the accomplishment of a task when they whole-heartedly accept the organizational culture evident in meaning-making communication with their supervisors.

In addition, factors motivating or demotivating subordinates to keep working in an organization were further analyzed from the perspectives of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the dual-structure theory of motivation. This analysis suggests that the employees in different life stages have distinct needs and that these needs when unmet could be an important factor in leading them to quit their jobs. Furthermore, while there are motivation factors that lead to employee satisfaction, there are also hygiene factors that lead to employee dissatisfaction. In this study, reorganization and the work itself were identified as influences upon an employee's decision to stay at a company. On the other hand, job security, company policy, and personal life were discovered to have a direct influence on an employee's desire to quit.

In conclusion, this study provides vital information contributing to the growing understanding of the role that supervisory feedback plays in employee retention intent. It also provides findings that foster an improved understanding of employees' perceptions about supervisory feedback through three types of motivating messages and the factors affecting employee turnover decisions.

The employee's commitment level to his or her organization is integral to job satisfaction, desired job performance, and the accomplishment of individual and organizational goals. Many factors influence employee commitment, and supervisory feedback though it is not a significant motivating factor still plays an role. Therefore, it is crucial that communication scholars continue to explore the relationship between supervisory feedback and employee retention intent, especially as it relates to employee turnover decisions.

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Appendix I

Motivating Language Scale

The statements below indicate how different ways that your boss might talk to you. Please

choose the answer that best matches your perceptions. Be sure to make only one answer for each

question. Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 respectively represent the scale from a whole lot to very little.

1. Very little

2. Little

3. Some

4. A lot

5. A whole lot

<div align="center">DIRECTION-GIVING LANGUAGE</div>

1) Gives me useful explanations of what needs to be done in my work.

    1   2   3   4   5

2) Offers me helpful directions on how to do my job.

    1   2   3   4   5

3) Provides me with easily understandable instructions about my work.

    1   2   3   4   5

4) Offers me helpful advice on how to improve my work.

    1   2   3   4   5

5) Gives me good definition of what I must do in order to receive rewards.

    1   2   3   4   5

6) Gives me clear instructions about solving job-related problems.

    1   2   3   4   5

7) Offers me specific information on how I am evaluated.

    1   2   3   4   5

8) Provides me with helpful information about forthcoming changes affecting my work.

    1   2   3   4   5

9) Provides me with helpful information about past changes affecting my work.

    1   2   3   4   5

10) Shares news with me about organizational achievements and financial status.

    1   2   3   4   5

EMPATHETIC LANGUAGE

11) Gives me praise for my good work.

    1   2   3   4   5

12) Shows me encouragement for my work efforts.

    1   2   3   4   5

13) Shows concern about my job satisfaction.

    1   2   3   4   5

14) Expresses his/her support for my professional development.

    1   2   3   4   5

15) Asks me about my professional well-being.

    1   2   3   4   5

16) Shows trust in me.

    1   2   3   4   5

MEANING-MAKING LANGUAGE

17) Tells me stories about key events in the organization's past.

1   2   3   4   5

18) Gives me useful information that I couldn't get through official channels.

1   2   3   4   5

19) Tells me stories about people who are admired in my organization.

1   2   3   4   5

20) Tells me stories about people who have worked hard in this organization.

1   2   3   4   5

21) Offers me advice about how to behave at the organization's social gatherings.

1   2   3   4   5

22) Offers me advice about how to "fit in" with other members of this organization.

1   2   3   4   5

23) Tells me stories about people who have been rewarded by this organization.

1   2   3   4   5

24) Tells me stories about people who have left this organization.

1   2   3   4   5

Appendix II

Intent to Stay Scale

Please place an X in the brackets by the answer that best describes your feelings about your current work situation.

1. I expect to be working for my current employer one year from now.
2. I would change jobs if I could find another position that pays as well as my current one.
3. I am actively looking for another job.
4. I would like to work for my current employer until I retire.
5. I would prefer to be working at another organization.
6. I can't see myself working for any other organization.
7. I would feel very happy about working for other employer.

Appendix III

Please place an X to the answer that best describes you.

1. Do you own an organization and you work for it?
   o   Yes
   o   No

2. How long you have been working for the organization?
   o   Under 18 months
   o   Over 18 months

3. What is your gender?
   o   Male
   o   Female

4. What is your race?
   o   Caucasian American
   o   African American
   o   Latino American
   o   Others

5. How old are you?
   o   22-30
   o   31-40
   o   41-50
   o   Over 50

6. Indicates the type of your occupation

7. Do you want recommend your friends to take part in the survey

Appendix IV

Interview Questions

1. This study is about supervisors' communicative styles. Did your supervisors' communicative styles influence your decision to leave a job? Please explain.

2. Did your supervisors' communicative styles affect your decision to keep working at a job? Please explain.

Appendix V

Institutional Review Board
Liberty University
1971 University Blvd. Suite 1837
Lynchburg, VA 24502

Re: Yali Yang
      Student ID: L24587833
      IRB application number: 1609
      School/Department: Communication Studies

This letter is in response to Yali Yang's request to do interviews of qualified participants from Grace Church. She has our permission to do so in connection with her graduate thesis. If there is additional information that is needed please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mark Fesmire
Pastor
Grace Church
e-mail: mfesmire@graceefc.net

Appendix VI

Verbal Script

Good morning everyone,

First of all, let me introduce myself. My name is Yali Yang, a graduate student from communication department of Liberty University. I'm planning to graduate this December and now I'm working on my thesis. In this regard, I would like to ask for your participation in my study and I highly appreciate your help.

Please allow me couple of minutes to explain what is my study about, the procedure and the possible risks and benefits you might encounter as a participant in my study. My study is to investigate the role of feedback message content and supervisor's communications style played in motivating or demotivating employees to keep working at a particular job position for a period of time.

Anyone with more than 18 months work experience are more than welcome to take part in this study which includes two stages. First of all, you will be asked to complete three questionnaires which will take you less than 20 minutes. I will leave my contact information at the end of the survey consent form and you can either email me or call me telling me that you would like to be further interviewed. Secondly, you will be interviewed about your supervisors' feedback upon your agreement. The interview will be individually conducted face to face or over the telephone. <u>Please note that interview will not be either video or audio recorded so your privacy is protected</u>. The interview will take you less than 30 minutes.

The risks are no more than participants would expect to experience when going about their everyday activities. For the survey, questions with regard to participants' demographic information will be asked. However, participants will not be asked to disclose any identifying information. During the interview, participants will be asked questions regarding conversations with their supervisor and their turnover experience. If this memory is painful or uncomfortable, the participants are not obligated to talk about it. Discontinuing the interview at any point during this study is permissible. Participants may choose to omit responses to questions during the interview that are too personal or uncomfortable. Participants will be anonymous when completing the survey.

There are no direct benefits to participants. However, participants' reflection on supervisory feedback and communication style will help organizational management to learn to motive employees job performance and commitment to an organization and in turn reduce turnover rates and achieve organizational goals.

Above all are about my study, please feel free to ask any question. If you would like to participate in this study, I'll hand out the flyer informing you of where and when you will meet to complete the survey and interview. At the same time, you will be asked to sign the interview consent form.

Once again, I appreciate your support and participation in my study. I hope you all have a blessed day.

Appendix VII

SPSS Data

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Direction Giving Messages		
D1: Gives me useful explanations of what needs to be done in my work.	3.1875	1.22304
D2: Offers me helpful directions on how to do my job.	3.1250	1.14746
D3: Provides me with easily understandable instructions about my work.	3.0625	1.12361
D4: Offers me helpful advice on how to improve my work.	2.8125	1.16726
D5: Gives me good definition of what I must do in order to receive rewards.	2.6875	1.01448
D6: Gives me clear instructions about solving job-related problems.	2.8750	1.14746
D7: Offers me specific information on how I am evaluated.	2.7500	1.00000
D8: Provides me with helpful information about forthcoming changes affecting my work.	2.9375	1.28938
D9: Provide me with helpful information about past changes affecting my work.	2.7500	1.06458
D10: Shares news with me about organization achievements and financial status.	2.6875	1.07819
Empathetic Messages		
E1: Gives me praise for my good work.	3.0625	1.61116
E2: Shows me encouragement for my work efforts.	3.1250	1.58640
E3: Shows concern about my job satisfaction.	3.1875	1.16726
E4: Expresses his/her support for my professional development.	2.8750	1.31022
E5: Asks me about my professional well-being.	2.6250	1.31022
E6: Shows trust in me.	3.5000	1.71270
Meaning-Making Messages		
M1: Tells me stories about key events in organization's past.	2.3750	1.20416
M2: Gives me useful information that I couldn't get through official channels.	2.8750	1.08781
M3: Tells me stories about people who are admired in my organization.	2.9375	1.28938
M4: Tells me stories about people who have worked hard in this organization.	2.5000	1.03280
M5: Offers me advice about how to behave at the organization's social gatherings.	2.6250	1.58640
M6: Offers me advice about how to "fit in" with other members of this organization.	2.1250	1.08781
M7: Tells me stories about people who have been rewarded by this organization.	2.3750	1.08781
M8: Tells me stories about people who have left this organization.	2.4375	.89209