THE EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ON THE RETENTION AND CREATIVITY OF EMPLOYEES

WANG YI
6317195440

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WANG YI

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Advisor:.....

(Dr. Zhang Li)

Date: 11 / 9 / 2023

.....

(Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit)
Dean, Graduate School of Business Administration

Date: 20 / 9 / 2023

Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand

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By: WANG YI

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(Dr. Zhang Li)

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ABSTRACT

The management of boarding schools always found it difficult to manage the turnover ratio of teachers. Since the last decade, many studies have been emphasizing to highlight the factors which can reduce turnover and help in retaining the teachers working in a school but only a few of them focused on boarding schools. The study was conducted in three cities in China Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen, and the data were collected from boarding school teachers. 30 boarding schools were selected for data collection in all three cities, from which Shanghai has 15 schools, Beijing has 11, and Shenzhen has 4 boarding schools. Questionnaires were distributed among 245 teachers, from which 197 were considered for final data analysis. Therefore, a response rate of 80 per cent was achieved. The whole procedure of data collection took three months, every questionnaire was filled out online and we used SPSS 26.0 to analyze this data. In this study the data analysis strategy and statistical analysis will include; reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multi-regression analysis. The study has been made to address the following objectives, 1. To provide a comprehensive assessment of the effects of strategic leadership on the creative output of employees. 2. To scrutinize the correlation between strategic leadership practices and the retention rate of employees. 3. To evaluate the degree to which strategic leadership impacts the career aspirations of employees. This research has pointed out two important factors which can help in the retention of employees working in a school (i.e., teachers) and make them creative. These factors include strategic leadership and career aspiration. This study has investigated the relationship of strategic leadership with employee retention and employee creativity with mediating role of career aspiration and moderating effect of work-life balance. The results highlighted that strategic leadership could help in the retention and creativity of employees. Moreover, career aspiration significantly mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee creativity and retention.

Keywords: school leadership, educational management, teacher retention, boarding schools, employee creativity

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The primary focus of this chapter is to explain the introduction of variables or concepts under consideration by this research. It has provided the details about the study background, significance and problem behind the research. Moreover, it has explained the research objectives. The problem of boarding school teacher's retention and creativity is explained in the context of strategic leadership.

1.1 Background of the Study

Employee retention is a significant challenge faced by organizations in the contemporary business environment, and the education sector is no exception. In the context of boarding schools, the management of teacher turnover is a crucial area of concern as it directly impacts the quality of education and the overall effectiveness of the school. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), teacher turnover rates have been steadily increasing in recent years, with an average of 16 percent of teachers leaving their positions each year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). This trend is particularly pronounced in boarding schools, which face unique challenges in attracting and retaining qualified teachers.

Numerous studies have examined the factors that influence employee retention and turnover in the education sector, including factors such as compensation, job satisfaction, and organizational culture (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Xu & Lin, 2017). However, the role of strategic leadership in fostering employee retention and creativity has received comparatively less attention, particularly in the context of boarding schools. Strategic leadership is a critical component of organizational success, as it helps to align the goals and objectives of the organization with the skills and capabilities of its employees (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009).

Additionally, career aspiration has been identified as a significant predictor of employee retention and creativity. Career aspiration refers to an individual's desire for career development and advancement (Kanfer, 1990). Employees with high levels of career aspiration are more likely to stay with their current organization, as they believe that it offers them opportunities for growth and development (Yousef, 2017). Thus, it is essential to examine the relationship between career aspiration, strategic leadership, and employee retention and creativity.

The present study aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the effect of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in the context of boarding schools in China. Specifically, we investigate the mediating role of career aspiration in the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention and creativity. We also explore the moderating effect of work-life balance on the relationship between

strategic leadership and employee retention. By examining these relationships, we hope to provide new insights into the factors that can help to reduce teacher turnover and enhance the quality of education in boarding schools.

It is important to understand that the modern academic environment has revolutionized teachers' roles. Nowadays, teachers are pushed to greater standards and responsibilities as they are required to engage and inspire all students in their learning pursuits. In this regard, numerous scholars have suggested that the turnover of teachers is one of the major reasons that negatively affect student learning in schools (Mancuso et al., 2010). A group of scholars found that schools with a high incidence of teacher turnover performed less than expected in terms of student achievements (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001). Additionally, this may imply that higher teacher turnover rates are the result of undiscovered issues inside the institution. In their study, Mancuso et al. (2010) highlight three fundamental factors which negatively affects the morale of school teachers, including "poor school leadership, dissatisfaction with salary and personal circumstances". According to Jacobson (2007), there are various factors that lead to dissatisfaction among teachers, including excessive meetings, time-consuming paperwork, lack of planning time, and shortage of teaching supplies. In their study, Ingersoll (2001) and Darling-Hammond (2003) found that teacher retention appears to be an ultimate issue for the public-school sector. Most college students do not consider teaching as a career option. Consequently, it is found that teachers who are actively teaching are more likely to quit the teaching profession in search of other alternatives (Scherer, 2012).

The idea of boarding schools emerges as an integral part of schooling systems in many countries. In recent times, a surge of interest has been noticed worldwide in policies and programs aimed at adapting boarding schools (e.g., SEED schools) in Washington and Baltimore (Bass, 2014), and the school merger program in rural China (Mo et al., 2012) in order to give quality education to educationally disadvantaged students (Lee & Barth, 2009; Martin et al., 2014). National figures from China's Ministry of Education show that in 2011, 11 million primary school students were boarders, which is 11% of all primary school students and 22 million enrolled in middle schools 43% of all middle school students (Ministry of Education, 2011). Thus, in terms of China, it is imperative to examine the impacts of boarding due to a large number of borders. Similarly, people in China are becoming increasingly concerned about the adaption, health and educational outcomes of boarders (Guo et al., 2021). Generally, it has been observed that the majority of Chinese boarding schools operate on a closed administrative model, which compels students to remain on campus during the weekdays. On the other hand, a semi-closed administrative model allows students to leave the school premises in off times and return back to school to sleep during the week. In view of Chui and Chan (2013) boarding students and teachers face a variety of challenges due to the restricted environment of boarding schools (Chui & Chan, 2015). Moreover, due to limited teaching resources, boarding schools are unable to provide sufficient assistance and direction to students in order to successfully prevent

bullying and victimization (Wang & Zhang, 2010; Wong et al., 2008). Where the students are facing issues, the teachers are also encountering different issues because of which the turnover rate of teachers is very high. Moreover, they are facing issues related to work-life balance, which has affected their overall creativity. This problem in boarding schools can be resolved with appropriate leadership strategies. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the effect of a principal's strategic leadership on teacher's creativity and retention in boarding schools in China.

1.2 Problems of the Study

Leadership is defined as a process in which individual influences different people to accomplish a shared objective (Silva, 2016). Previously mentioned terms, leader, subordinate and common goal are consistently developed from a most recent couple of hundreds of years. Every term added to some presumption and pragmatic testing as a leader and follower terms is supported by "leadership behaviour", "trait theory" and "exchange theory", while "path-goal theory" deals with the goals. The theory of path-goal guides managers or leaders to encourage subordinates towards goal achievement (Dinibutun, 2020). Leadership may be defined as the personality of someone who inspires others to want to mimic or follow them, or who exudes a certain amount of power (Andriani et al., 2018; Hartiwi et al., 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020). Leadership is like an art, ability, or method of persuading a group of subordinates in a formal organisation or followers or admirers in an informal organisation to do anything they want and to be so excited about it that they are willing to sacrifice for it. Leadership may be viewed as a sort of persuasion in the art of cultivating certain groups of individuals so that they would work together courageously to grasp and achieve all of the organization's objectives (Purwanto, 2012). The leadership can play an active role in boarding school management (Fung, 2017; Mukhtar et al., 2021). The most recent generation of school leadership research is focused on finding and investigating the 'paths' through which school leaders affect student development and school effectiveness (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Zheng et al., 2017). Robinson et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analytic assessment of school leadership research in 2008, identifying principal engagement in and assistance for teacher advancement as a high-value, the mediating method by which leaders influence student learning. This unexpected conclusion recommended that researchers should pay greater attention to how school leadership influences teachers' professional learning, a hitherto unexplored area of study (Printy, 2008; Smylie & Hart, 1999; Youngs & King, 2002). Across all leadership models, strategic leadership (SL) has piqued educational researchers' interest (Williams & Johnson, 2013). The concept emphasises how the principal develops schools by creating a productive school culture, encouraging the staff, and retaining and motivating them to be creative (Courtright & Colbert, 2011). Since last decade, many researchers have highlighted the different leadership styles which can help in the retention of employees (Adekanbi, 2016; Rao et al., 2018; Yamin, 2020) and their creativity (Herrmann & Felfe, 2014; Khattak et al., 2017; Sanda &

Arthur, 2017) but currently, there is no study to indicate the perspective of strategic leadership, particularly in the context of boarding schools. On the basis of the discussion given above, it can be concluded that Chinese boarding schools are facing problems including retention of teachers and their resistance towards creativity. Many teachers leave the institutions every year and the turnover of board schools is growing rapidly. Due to the same routine of these schools, teachers feel less creative. Strategic leadership and career aspiration can play an important role in enhancing the retention and creativity of boarding school teachers. Therefore, the first novelty of this research is that it has highlighted the latest or unique style of leadership (i.e., strategic leadership) to analyze its influence on employee creativity, employee retention and career aspiration. Secondly, it's a pioneer in investigating the mediating role of career aspiration and moderation of work-life balance between the relationship of strategic leadership with employee creativity and performance. Thirdly, this study has not only highlighted the business perspective but is also based on educational management as it emphasized on least studied area of boarding schools. On the basis of the problem highlighted in the above context. Following research questions, objectives and hypotheses are compiled.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study is designed to undertake an in-depth analysis of the correlation between strategic leadership and employees' creative capacities, an element that is critical for the acceleration of organizational innovation and success. The research emphasizes the examination of the potential contributions of strategic leadership to employee longevity within the organization, thereby ameliorating turnover rates and fortifying organizational stability. It is also envisioned to elucidate the ways in which strategic leadership can act as a navigator and mentor, fostering professional advancement opportunities for employees and shaping their professional aspirations and growth.

This scholarly pursuit is intended to fulfill the ensuing objectives:

A. To provide a comprehensive assessment of the effects of strategic leadership on the creative output of employees.

B. To scrutinize the correlation between strategic leadership practices and the retention rate of employees.

C. To evaluate the degree to which strategic leadership impacts the career aspirations of employees.

1.4 Significant of the Study

This study has been conducted in the domain of teachers' intention to remain in boarding schools. It has provided several factors that can actually help in the retention of employees. In addition, this study has been completed in an effort to identify strategic leadership as the primary factor that can help in the retention of boarding school teachers. The perception of this teacher provided information to a researcher about

improvements required in retaining the teachers in boarding schools. The study sought to understand whether teachers are willing to quit the boarding school job because it's affecting their creativity and they are unable to manage their work-life balance; it has also explained the specific principal leader style that can influence the teacher's behaviour of retention. The owners and administrators of boarding schools, both will benefit from the findings of this study in order to support all the teachers with building effective strategies for them under the strategic leadership of the boarding school's principal.

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that can help in the retention of employees in the domain of teachers' intention to remain in boarding schools. The study aimed to identify strategic leadership as the primary factor that can assist in the retention of boarding school teachers. To achieve this goal, the researcher sought to understand whether teachers are willing to quit their jobs in boarding schools due to the negative effects on their creativity and work-life balance.

The study was based on the perception of teachers and provided valuable information to the researcher about the improvements required in retaining teachers in boarding schools. The findings of the study showed that specific principal leader styles can influence the behavior of teachers regarding retention. Therefore, owners and administrators of boarding schools can use these findings to support all teachers with effective strategies under the strategic leadership of the principal.

The study has provided several factors that can contribute to employee retention in boarding schools. By identifying strategic leadership as the primary factor, the study has emphasized the importance of effective leadership in employee retention. The study has implications for the management of boarding schools and highlights the need for a supportive environment that fosters creativity and work-life balance. Overall, the findings of this study can be used to develop effective retention strategies for boarding school teachers, which will benefit both the teachers and the school management.

1.5 Scope of the study

The research scope of this study focuses on investigating the relationship between strategic leadership and various outcomes related to employee retention and creativity in boarding schools. The study aims to examine the impact of strategic leadership on employee creativity, employee retention, and career aspirations. It also explores the mediating role of career aspiration between strategic leadership and employee retention, as well as between strategic leadership and employee creativity. Additionally, the study examines the moderating effect of work-life balance on the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention.

The study is conducted in three major cities in China, namely Shanghai, Beijing,

and Shenzhen. Thirty boarding schools were selected as the sample, with 15 schools in Shanghai, 11 schools in Beijing, and 4 schools in Shenzhen. The data collection process spanned three months, during which questionnaires were distributed to 245 teachers. Ultimately, 197 completed questionnaires were considered for final data analysis, resulting in an 80 percent response rate.

The researchers employed various data analysis strategies and statistical techniques to analyze the collected data. These include reliability analysis, which assesses the consistency and dependability of the questionnaire items. Descriptive statistics provide a summary of the data, allowing for a better understanding of the variables involved. Correlation analysis helps examine the relationships between different variables, while multi-regression analysis allows for the exploration of the simultaneous effects of multiple independent variables on a dependent variable.

The objectives of the study are to examine the effect of strategic leadership on employee creativity, investigate the role of strategic leadership on employee retention, highlight the effect of strategic leadership on career aspirations, and explore the mediating role of career aspiration between strategic leadership and employee retention as well as between strategic leadership and employee creativity. Additionally, the study aims to shed light on the mediating role of work-life balance between strategic leadership and employee retention.

Overall, the research scope encompasses investigating the impact of strategic leadership on employee outcomes such as retention and creativity in the context of boarding schools, while considering the mediating role of career aspiration and the moderating effect of work-life balance. The study provides insights and recommendations for boarding school management to improve teacher retention, foster employee creativity, and enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

The scope of this research is broader, and not limited to benefits, it has extended the literature on strategic leadership, work-life balance and retention of teachers working in boarding schools.

Although this study has provided valuable insights into the factors that impact the retention of teachers working in boarding schools, there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the study was conducted in a specific geographical location and may not be generalizable to other contexts or regions. Therefore, the findings may not be applicable to boarding schools in other areas or countries.

Secondly, the study relied on self-report data from teachers, which may be subject to response bias or social desirability bias. The participants may have provided socially desirable responses, leading to an overestimation of the positive aspects of their work

experience or underestimation of negative aspects.

Thirdly, the study did not consider the impact of external factors such as economic or political conditions on employee retention in boarding schools. These factors may have a significant impact on the retention of teachers in boarding schools and should be considered in future research.

Finally, the study did not explore the impact of specific benefits or incentives on employee retention, which is an important factor that has been identified in previous research. Future studies could explore the role of benefits and incentives in promoting employee retention in boarding schools.

Despite these limitations, this study has extended the literature on strategic leadership, work-life balance, and retention of teachers in boarding schools. The findings of this study can be used to develop effective retention strategies that benefit both teachers and school management. Further research is needed to address the limitations of this study and to explore other factors that impact employee retention in boarding schools.

Chapter 2 Literatures Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the review of literature done in past by different researchers on the study topic. It includes a review of strategic leadership and its impact on the retention and creativity of boarding school teachers. After a comprehensive literature review, the study variables and their relationship are explained. Furthermore, the theoretical framework is developed and the study hypothesis is also discussed after the relationship-building of every construct.

2.2 Literature Reviews

2.2.1 Employee Creativity

Creativity and its role in the work environment are getting to be perceived as a basic factor in an absolutely changing overall economy. According to Shalley et al. (2009), in this era of business globalization and market transformation, employee creativity in the shape of innovative ideas, performance, systems, and products/services is considered indispensable for an organization's success. In the past times, innovativeness was characterized by the idea of the inventive procedure in which results were known as innovativeness or creativity. Innovativeness is an exceptionally wide and multifarious term or action, and with the end goal to investigate it, it tends to be characterized in different ways. Creativity includes continuous ordering, disordering, and reordering of activities. It includes effectively separating beliefs, givens, and ethnicities, driving limits and moving out of safe places (Montuori et al., 2006). Hughes (1998) sees creativity as in relation to innovative technology improvements, awareness, rehearses, the arrangement of work, customs, and beliefs. Creativity is simply to provide a new spirit to an organization by acquiring change the existing work settings of an organization.

Increased overall market competition and business survival rivalry in recent times have forced the organization to more focus on creativity and it's turning into an organization's mission. Past research on inventiveness likewise demonstrates that creativity is currently urged to see an 'issue' from a new viewpoint and it additionally includes giving answers for that issue and making an adjustment in past techniques and ideas. Exhaustive and detailed look into creativity proposed inherent motivation as an interior procedure that outcomes in employee inventiveness (Grant & Berry, 2011). As worker creativity is measured as a critical wellspring of novelty for the organization and furthermore gives foundation to competitive advantage. These days' organizations are concentrating more on individual innovativeness. The apparent worth of creativity is an important factor in a hierarchical environment that supports innovativeness advancement.

2.2.2 Employee Work-life Balance Practices

The concept of work-life balance identifies that workers have some crucial family and extra-profession compulsions that play an important role in their professional obligations. The term work-life balance is usually used to explain; flexible working hours, personal leave and company support for family or dependent care (Estes & Michael, 2005). The advantages of this concept allow the employees to create a more significant and less traumatic balance between job obligations and responsibilities at home. Work-life balance programmes cover a multiplicity of involvements such as pregnancy leave for females, emergency leaves for family/dependent care, childcare centres inside working premises, flexible working hours and special person care programmes (Withers, 2001). Several companies also employ particular policies to help their workers in balancing their work-life and lives at home. These programmes might consist of family-friendly working environments, employee welfare programmes, flexible jobs, good working conditions and corporate social responsibilities (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Zatzick & Iverson, 2006).

Extensive research work in the last decade on work-life balance has been promoting its significance as the hottest issue related to the job. Numerous research studies have been made to investigate the impact of work-life balance on the decision to stay with the organization for a long time. Work-life and family life are not all the times well-balanced. This can lead to a clash between these two domains which might cause a possible negative effect on employee turnover (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). The study of Deery (2008), reveals that if there is a divergence between employee work life and family life, it will not only cause job dissatisfaction but also family conflicts as well, which will ultimately lead to job leave intention. Therefore, many employees who are responsible for their home matters, possibly experience a clash in both roles.

The work-life balance activities comprise flexible work hours which allow the employees to complete their work hours in flextime, working from home and job sharing with another employee. It also included family leaves such as compassion, parental and adoption leaves. Furthermore, social and financial assistance programmes including on-site childcare and old age benefits are also part of work-life balance practices. These work-life practices can make an organization extra-attractive and enhance retention in particular for those employees who are always in search of an organization that supports the family life along with work life (Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997). The study of Casper and Buffardi (2004), recommends that work-life remunerations are across the world attractive because even those workers who don't require particular benefits offered might perceive that the company will be helpful in other job ears as well. This is also validated by the study of Honeycutt and Rosen (1997), which confirms that all types of employees prefer those organizations which offer flexible work schedules, not just the parents. Particularly, information regarding work-life benefits promotes the insight that the company will be caring about employee's

individual requirements (Casper & Buffardi, 2004). The study of Shea and De Cieri (2011) about attracting and retaining employees, acknowledged a need for the company to provide superior consideration to the work-life balance problem. Though the study respondents were from small to large firms which have proper human resource departments with attraction and retention strategies, the response rate was quite low just 14 per cent. Therefore, we can conclude from the study of Shea and De Cieri (2011), that the sample might not representative of the whole population. On the other hand, Harzing (1997) has argued that in the industrialized world, the response rate of mailed surveys is naturally low and ranges from 6-16 per cent only. The survey study by Dibble (1999) with 448 employees, explored that the third most frequent reason to stay in an organization was flexible working hours. The most comprehensive and detailed survey study from 1862 employees by Ashby and Pell (2001) in the U.S.A, revealed that most of the respondents wanted work with flextime that permitted them to take care of their private apprehension, whereas a considerable number of respondents mentioned analogous motives behind their better working performance. A substantial sample of 1862 employees favouring work-life balance strategies means that this has significant importance in these activities and organizations must, therefore, consider it as a tool to retain and attract potential talented employees. Work-life balance strategies like better training opportunities, work breaks, better working conditions and flexible work hours not only enhance employee productivity but also improve employee retention.

Sarmad et al. (2016) have explored important retention factors inside an organization including skills acknowledgement, excellent working environment, learning, training, career development, flexible working hours and compensation. The external factors which might affect employee retention are job value; work-life balance and top management support (Sarmad et al., 2016). Many changes have taken placed in recent years in working styles. Increasing employee expectations and technology developments are key factors behind these changes. Adema et al. (2017) argued that it is a reality that working parents take a diverse approach while working and caring for their child/family. In recent years a lot of mothers have also started working full-time and are also eager to enhance their educational qualifications which were not seen quite a few years back. This has not simply changed the mother's attitudes towards child care, it has also added more child-care responsibilities on fathers as well, which is not evident historically. Due to these changes, working parents have been forced to find extra time and methods to do their work from outside the office or inflexible working hours, just to balance their work-life and family life. This has also forced organizations to develop new work-life balance strategies for their employee satisfaction. Nowadays, many organizations are allowing work virtually from anywhere their employees. According to the study of Arthur (2001), to accommodate employees for their hectic timetable with their family/child, companies are allowing the option of working virtually from home. This technique not simply accommodates existing workers but also is a valuable promotion tool to attract talented employees who live within remote travelling distances (Arthur, 2001). The organizations have observed a dramatic reduction in absenteeism when they have employed the virtual work strategy. This virtual working environment

allows workers to perform their job duties from their homes even when they are not in good health. This reduction in absenteeism and work not only enhance organizational productivity but also help to get rid of the paid time off required by an employee, which can be set aside for other urgent situations.

According to Adema et al. (2017), a balance between job obligations and family obligations, assists association inside families. Stephenson (2010) established in her study that due to an increase in statistics of working mothers, a greater part of fathers think that they should take extra responsibility and this has increased the significance of a father's responsibility further than an income generator. On the other hand, it is still not easy for dual-working parents to deal with the time required to take care of their children, particularly in the initial times of their childhood. The research study of Zagorsky (2017) shows that even a country like the USA lacked paid maternity/paternity leaves. The research shows that only 12% public sector can avail of such leave after their childbirth. Stephenson (2010) is of the view that it is for organizations to give a flexible working timetable to its employee throughout the initial couple of months after childbirth and also allow them to bring their child with them when they return back to the work. In absence of such flexible timing will results in the loss of some talented employee.

Provision of the on-site child-care option is the most renowned method used by the organization to increase employees' work-life balance and helps in the reduction of work-life conflicts (Messersmith, 2007). Many past research studies found that providing daycare facilities inside the premises of work, reduced employee stress and due to the eradication of stress employees give more time at the work site and complete their work there rather than carrying it with them for homework. Therefore, this develops a healthier sense of work-life balance among employees.

A lot number of workers experience pressure from their bosses to get work done on a strict timetable. Such workers complete their everyday jobs by carrying work to their homes and can't focus on their family obligation other than work. Messersmith (2007) expressed this state of affairs as a "work-life conflict". Mazmanian (2013) has highlighted that almost every human being has a moveable device like a smartphone, laptop or iPad, that they take at all times and receive work emails or messages all the time. This advancement has created a complex situation for the workers to illustrate a line between work and private time. The individuals who are facing this situation are known as "Workaholics" (Gilley et al., 2015). Numerous researchers imagine that workaholics get the majority of jobs done, as they deposit a large amount of time. On the other hand, the research study has revealed that workaholics are characteristically extra fussy about the job that they do, which creates enlarged levels of pressure, and those who experience augmented pressure in the offices also experience additional inconsistency in their private lives (Gilley et al., 2015).

2.3 Theory of Reviews

2.3.1 Strategic Leadership and Teacher's Retention

In recent times, a number of studies have been conducted on school leadership which has highlighted the positive impact of leadership on student achievement. Additionally, it has been found that the actions and leadership of a school principal significantly affect student achievement (Aydin et al., 2013; Kafka, 2009). Therefore, it is essential for school management to effectively address students' needs in order to deal with changing demographics, growing diversity, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic issues, learning skills, and physical and mental challenges of students (Leithwood & Riehl, 2004). According to McKenzie and Locke (2009), the debate over the effectiveness of instructional and transformational leadership is attaining considerable attention. In his study, Hallinger (2003) defined instructional leadership as a leadership approach which mainly focuses on curriculum, instruction and students' academic outcomes as the ultimate focus of the educational environment. Furthermore, Hallinger (2003) suggested that the implementation of both instructional leadership and transformational leadership in the school setting resulted in academic gains for students. Similarly, Bass (1990) has defined transformational leadership as the leadership approach that promotes a healthy work environment and stimulates employees' interests by introducing a workplace vision which enables employees to produce the best outcomes. Thus, we can say that the transformational leadership approach is considered as the most appropriate leadership style due to its ability to produce unexpected outcomes, including meeting the emotional needs of employees, stimulating employees, or inspiring employees (Marzano et al., 2001). The strategic leaders are the one that is least studied in the context of school education and nowadays, the perfect strategy-making trait of a school's principal can make able to retain the teachers of boarding schools.

Hanselman et al. (2011) indicated a negative effect of teacher and principal turnover on the school environment. In addition, Brown and Wynn (2009) indicated principal behaviour as the key factor to teacher retention, including being accessible, establishing trust by knowing teachers, and being proactive. This relationship was emphasized even more by authors such as Maxwell (2007), who stated that "everything rises and falls on leadership". Similarly, Hanushek (2011) describes the role of the principal by saying that "teachers have a direct impact on only those students in their classroom; differences in principal quality affect all students in a given school". Although research on leadership behaviour is not new, there are still no conclusive findings about which leadership behaviours directly affect teacher retention (Glynn & Raffaelli, 2010). Thus, recruiting and retaining highly qualified and professional teachers for elementary and secondary schools is still a critical task for management (Perrachione et al., 2008). Therefore, the strategic leadership of the school's principal can help retaining the teachers working in boarding schools in China.

2.3.2 Strategic Leadership and Teacher's Creativity

At the present time, organizations are operating in extremely viable environments

and quick hi-tech change. With the end goal to manage such change, organisational leaders need to endorse creativity. Different researches on worker creativity or innovativeness identify individual and job distinctiveness that finally outcomes in employee inventiveness. As indicated by Aslan et al. (2011), leadership's role in inventiveness was practically disregarded in the greater part of past research. This study contended that employee features and in addition supervisor attributes connected with worker innovative performance yet in addition relationships between employees and managers are a critical factor of creativity. Subsequently, it is well said that leadership attributes impact worker inventiveness and this impact can occur in two different ways leaders own attributes can influence employee creativity i.e., managers with inventive psychological style and characteristic inspiration encourage employee innovativeness and secondly, correlation among employees and managers can impact worker innovativeness i.e., if there are optimistic relationship then it gives a feeling of independence to employees and they are more open and allowed to analyze new thoughts. According to Elenkov et al. (2005), strategic leadership and employee creativity play important roles in achieving competitive advantage. Such leadership is well-renowned and valued for their capability in looking for new prospects and taking decisions that have an impact on the novelty process.

With the end goal to explore the degree to which leadership outcomes in inventiveness, more accentuation is given to an inherent inspiration theory that likewise manages the intellectual framework through which this commitment really happens. Such an intellectual system prompts employee innovativeness and energizes steady relationships among leaders and followers which additionally, in the long run, improves natural inspiration among employees. Novelty and inventiveness both are essential for the organization's prosperity and survival (Sebnem et al., 2011). Studies have discovered that strategic leadership assumes an imperative role in an organization, particularly where the condition is vague and for continued existence in such conditions embracing change is obligatory for an organization. At this point, leaders should start the change by taking inventiveness to their organizations. Henceforth strategic leadership adds to creativity.

The tasks of today's principals are becoming increasingly complicated, and include a variety of components that are critical to both the development of all children within the school and the success of those principals, who are sometimes referred to as instructional leaders (Lynch, 2012; Foster, 2007). Besides, Cooley and Shen (2005) argued that the increasing expectations from principals make it practically difficult for them to perform their duties and obligations. In 2013, it was found that principals who led secondary schools carried the most stress and schools where students lack academic outcomes in both English and mathematics (Markow et al., 2013). In his study, Lynch (2012) hypothesized that principals should be highly skilled at managing staff, budgeting, and strategic planning. The strategic leadership style can enable school principals to attain their goals with excellence (Chen, 2008) and help the teachers to be creative.

Johnson (2006) highlighted that an encouraging environment is essential to recognize teachers' efforts and to improve students' outcomes, thus it is essential for schools to provide and maintain a beneficial environment for teachers to keep them in the teaching profession. Moreover, it is necessary for the management to adopt a professional approach while acknowledging faculty's efforts and fostering teachers' innovation for the creative learning of students which ultimately leads to low teacher turnover (Farber, 2010; Kaback, 2006). Tidd et al. (2004) asserted that leadership is solely responsible for encouraging creativity in organizations. An important attribute of quality leadership is their support for employees in overcoming the risk of fear and developing a daily working routine that take the employees to a greater level of creativity. In addition, effective leadership inspires employees and earns their respect and loyalty through intellectual stimulation. Therefore, it is important for leaders to pay attention to each individual employee to make them feel relaxed and comfortable in the workplace (Ng, 2017). In this regard, numerous scholars have attempted to appreciate the effect of various leadership styles on employee creative behaviours (Mumford et al., 2002). For that reason, the transformational leadership style has attained considerable attention from scholars because it promotes creativity among employees. A group of scholars in their study have recognized transformational leadership as the key predictor of creativity (Tsai & Tsai, 2014; Wang et al., 2011). If transformational leadership can help in employees' creativity, then strategic leadership being more proactive can enhance the creativity of boarding school teachers.

Some scholars have found it difficult to describe the teacher's creativity in the classroom (Serdyukov, 2017; Zhou & Luo, 2012). In view of Kagar (2015), teachers' creativity in classrooms is the reflection of previous education and training programs. Andriansen (2010), on the other hand, claims that creative teachers are essential for developing students' creativity. Similarly, Hemaloshinee (2013) highlighted the significance of teacher creativity development. Moreover, he explained that the teacher must possess creative abilities that can be conveyed to and retained by students, which enables them to be more critical when analyzing or solving various problems.

2.4 Research Relevant

The study aimed to highlight the impact of strategic leadership on the retention and creativity of teachers working in boarding schools. Moreover, these relationships were examined with mediating role of career aspiration and moderating role of career aspiration. On the basis of detailed literature analysis, the hypothesized research model of this study is given below (see Figure 2.1).

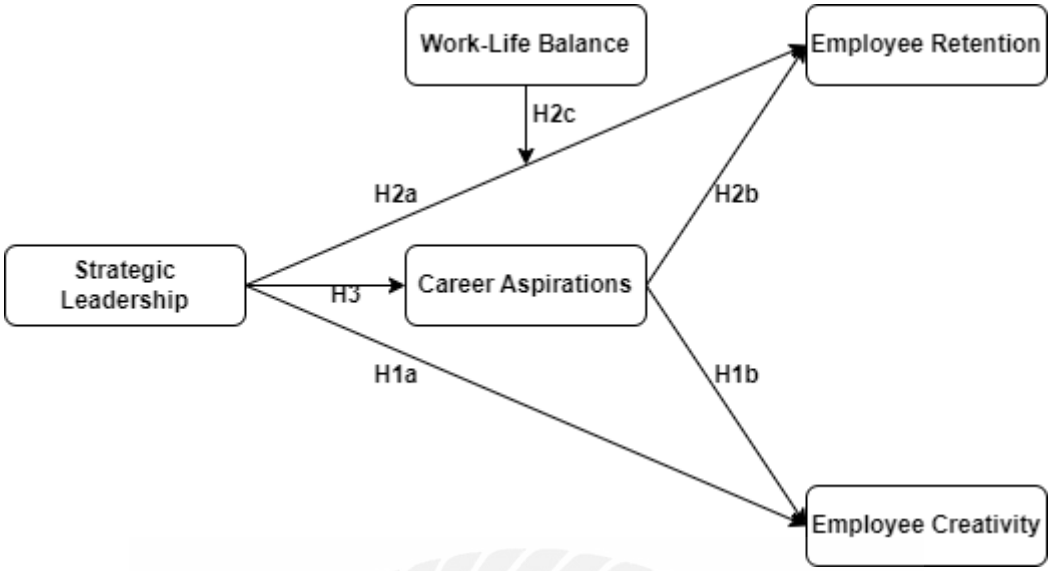

Figure 2.1 Hypothesized research model

Figure 2.1 given above highlights that the model comprises five variables. The detail about study variables is given below:

- Strategic leadership (Independent variable)
- Employee Creativity (Dependent variable I)
- Employee Retention (Dependent variable II)
- Career Aspiration (Mediating variable)
- Work-life Balance (Moderating variable).

2.5 Conceptual Framework

2.5.1 Principal Leadership Structure

There are numerous approaches to comprehending the idea of leadership with various definitions as it relies upon people who characterized the idea as per their research. Basically, we can state the concept of leadership spins around three stipulations, a leader, a follower and a shared objective they need to accomplish. Leaders and followers are interconnected as leaders can't exist without adherents, nor would followers be able to exist without leaders. Good leadership is reflected by the follower's respect. In the meantime, the outcome of influential leadership is organizational effectiveness that outcomes from expanded competence and adequacy of followers (Sesno, 2017).

The position of the principal in the schools must first be determined before defining a principal leadership effectiveness structure. Glasman (1984) recognised two major value viewpoints concerning a principal's legitimate function, as evidenced by writings published in the United States beginning in the early 1950s: The first was educational, while the second was administrative. The former focused on the principal's educational function, which included instructional, political, intermediary, and change

agent aspects. Administrative power, planning and assessment, and management were selected as aspects in the second place (Glasman, 1984). Different leadership styles have been highlighted in different studies on leadership, such as instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Zheng et al., 2017), however, strategic leadership has received the least attention in the domain of boarding schools. Researchers from all over the globe have worked for decades to determine how leadership affects student learning (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2012), but the bulk of studies have overlooked how leadership affects the welfare of teachers working in Chinese boarding schools. When Cansoy (2019) noted, principals must do everything necessary to keep highly skilled teachers inside their facilities, he was stating the obvious. When it comes to teacher retention, the principle has been shown to have a significant impact. Leadership style is one issue that has received a lot of attention in a secular school. A school leader must develop a detailed understanding of modern, effective leadership practices and choose the style that best fits his or her personality, teaching faculty, and the needs of the school, according to Cansoy (2019), and this research dubbed this style strategic leadership.

2.5.2 Strategic Leadership

In today's era leaders or managers are more conscious about their strategic responsibilities rather than anticipated responses from others. Such leaders empower their subordinates to work as a collaborator with them (Ireland & Hitt, 1999). By opposing the traditional management style with different ranks of workers, the focus of the strategic leaders is on constituting such an organizational environment where all employees are treated as partners or colleagues rather than subordinates or followers. In such an environment the leaders or top managers influence the performance of employees as a teacher/guide and encourage them to self-decision making which boosts their confidence and enhances their creativity (Shafi et al., 2020). The strategic leader encourages and inspires people rather than being in command of them, sharing information with others and supporting them to endeavour progressively towards their targets. These types of conduct will ultimately outcomes in the shape of intellectual resources in an organization. Key qualities of strategic leaders that distinguish them from traditional leadership styles are the determination of organizational mission and vision, utilizing key firm competencies, human capital development, upholding and preserving organizational culture, highlighting the ethical practice and launching stability in organizational control (Simsek et al., 2018).

In the current era, the scope of leadership is extended from not only concentrating on organizational internal factors but also incorporating external environment configuration (Duurresma, 2013). As indicated by Glenn Rowe (2001), strategic leaders have profound knowledge about the current circumstance of an organization as well as have the capacity to anticipate the future situation, instigating and accommodating any practicable change required by a joint effort with others for the future of the organization. Without efficient leadership, the organization can't perform highly or even

satisfactorily while confronting different economic challenges.

The term strategic leadership was shaped through many research studies in the 1970s and 80s while investigating the importance of higher management. All the leadership theories are dependent on three basic measurements of leadership which includes charismatic, creative thinker and transformational. Durresma (2013) has mentioned five characteristics of strategic leadership which includes client centricity/central prominence, business growth, managerial innovativeness, and operational efficiency.

Strategic leaders on one side have the capability to impact peers, followers, and bosses while on another side they keep up adaptability in the workplace by offering rights to employees to contribute to decision-making that improves their personal and also the firm's performance (Carozza, 2019). Strategic leadership plays a critical role when there is environmental uncertainty for the organization. By adopting changes, such leaders bring and support organizational creativity which is necessary for organizational sustainability. They take critical decisions in an unverifiable situation and this vulnerability turned out to be more intense because of the globalized economy (Ireland & Hitt, 1999).

Davies and Davies (2010) discuss how to develop strategic leadership that is likely to be effective. They claim that if leaders sustain the implementation of strategic leadership practices in schools, they must be able to create a framework for understanding strategic leadership. Today's issue in education is that many instructors are leaving the field due to dissatisfaction with the job as a result of test accountability and strict teaching standards (Kohn, 2000). Within the first three years, about 25% of new teachers consider leaving (Marvel et al., 2007). Several school administrators, according to Sawchuk (2012), do not motivate good teachers to stay in the classroom. It is widely acknowledged that the effectiveness of a school's teachers determines how good it is (Stronge & Tucker, 2003). As a result, schools must make every effort to keep their best teachers, as defined by the following definition: "Teacher turnover refers to the fact that teachers either quit teaching or transfer to other schools" (Mecklenburg, 2004). Teacher retention is a serious issue in both public and private schools, especially boarding schools. Boarding schools were thought to have an advantage in terms of educational contexts with formally disciplined study routines and timetables (Bass, 2014; Devine, 2005; Smith et al., 2004). One of the most effective factors of boarding schools was whether or not teaching staff were available inside and outside of the classrooms (Powell & Andrews, 1993). According to Bass (2014), having teachers available to assist boarders when they considered necessary it would be beneficial. The availability of teachers can enhance the creativity of students and resolve their problems, but it's the biggest issue for teachers to maintain the work-life balance. It has been observed that the majority of boarding school teachers are less creative and also in these schools, the turnover ratio is very high. Thus, the strategic leadership of the boarding school's principal can develop strategies to increase teacher retention and make the

teachers more creative.

2.6 Terms and Definition Used in This Study

Strategic Leadership: Strategic leadership is defined as the ability of an organization's leaders to create and execute strategies that enable the organization to achieve its goals and objectives (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2017). In this study, strategic leadership refers to the leadership approach of boarding school leaders in creating and implementing strategies to enhance employee retention and creativity.

Employee Retention: Employee retention refers to the ability of an organization to keep its employees in the workforce (Huang & Huang, 2020). In this study, employee retention refers to the ability of boarding schools to retain their teachers and prevent them from leaving the school.

Employee Creativity: Employee creativity refers to the ability of employees to generate new ideas and solutions that are both original and useful (Amabile, 1988). In this study, employee creativity refers to the ability of boarding school teachers to come up with innovative teaching methods and strategies that can improve the quality of education in the school.

Career Aspiration: Career aspiration refers to an individual's desire for career advancement and achievement (Ng & Feldman, 2015). In this study, career aspiration refers to the motivation and goals of boarding school teachers in terms of their career advancement and growth within the school.

Work-life Balance: Work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals to manage their personal and professional lives in a way that promotes their well-being and reduces stress (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). In this study, work-life balance refers to the extent to which boarding school teachers can balance their work responsibilities with their personal lives.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this chapter is to explain the research methodology that was used to achieve the study objectives. The study objective was to investigate the career aspiration as a mediator between principals' strategic leadership and the behaviours of Chinese boarding school teachers. In this chapter, the research design, target population, sampling method and sampling size, and data collection and analysis methods will be specified, which were adopted in the research.

The research method is quantitative. This is indicated by the focus on investigating the relationship between variables (career aspiration, strategic leadership, and teacher behaviors), and the mention of specific methods for data collection and analysis. Additionally, the mention of a target population and sampling method suggests a quantitative approach.

3.2 Research Design

According to Bell et al. (2018), scientific research can be conducted in many ways and if the research is qualitative or quantitative then the research approaches will be inductive or deductive.

According to Bell et al. (2018) and Saunders et al. (2009), in quantitative research, the researcher draws conclusions based on numerical or logical data, whereas in qualitative research depends on spoken or verbal data. Quantitative research explores the cause-and-effect relationship between two variables while qualitative research explores the ideas used in the ongoing process. In qualitative research data are collected through focus groups and in-depth interviews, while in quantitative research data are collected through structured interviews and structured questionnaires.

In this study, a quantitative research strategy was used as all the variables are statistically measurable and data were collected using a survey/questionnaire.

According to Saunders et al. (2009), in a deductive research approach, the researcher first develops a theory and hypotheses before designing a research strategy to test the hypotheses. While in the inductive approach, the researcher first collects the data and on the basis of data analyses develops a theory.

In this study, the research is based on known theories and study variables are not new, therefore deductive approach was used in this study.

A research design is a structure or framework that guides the researcher on how to

use certain methods in the collection and analysis of the data. The research design is categorized into three types by Saunders et al. (2009): exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. In this study, the exploratory research design was used, and the primary data were obtained using the survey method. Surveying is the best method for this study as it describes the contextual analysis of the target population in a broad and thorough way.

The study data were collected through an adapted questionnaire from the Chinese boarding school teachers.

3.3 Hypothesis

Research hypotheses were developed after a detailed and comprehensive review of the existing literature, which is described below:

H1a: There is a positive relationship between strategic leadership and employee creativity.

H1b: Career Aspiration significantly mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee creativity.

H2a: There is a positive relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention.

H2b: Career Aspiration significantly mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention.

H2c: Work-life balance significantly and positively moderates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention.

H3: There is a positive relationship between strategic leadership and career aspirations.

3.4 Population and Sampling

Churchill (1979) suggested a strategy to develop the scales. Therefore, an investigating tool "questionnaire" was developed to conclude the relationship between principals' strategic leadership, career aspirations, work-life balance, employee retention, and employee creativity. The adapted technique, the survey research method depends upon the use of structured questionnaires distributed to the sample population (Mazzocchi, 2008).

Target Population is the population which possessed the specific or relevant

information which is required for the research and results (Malhotra et al., 1996). The target population of the study was teachers of Chinese boarding schools operating in three cities Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen.

The most crucial decision in obtaining answers to the study question(s) is whether or not to use sampling. In many circumstances, collecting data from every potential element of the population is achievable. The census is a circumstance in which the entire population is researched and the responses from all of the population are collected. On the other hand, in some circumstances or studies, response gathering or data collecting from every potential constituent of the population under study is not practicable. Time limits, money constraints, and the inability to contact or communicate with the entire population are all examples of constraining factors.

The current study utilizes a non-probability convenience sampling approach to collect data as convenience sampling can be regarded as the most common sampling method in quantitative research because it is based on the easy availability and accessibility to the selected samples (Lynch & Baker, 2005). Another reason for the selection of this sampling technique is time limitations.

In this study, a self-administered survey technique was utilized and the questionnaires were distributed to the target population/respondents.

3.5 Sample Size

The study was conducted in three cities in China Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen, and the data were collected from boarding school teachers. 30 boarding schools were selected for data collection in all three cities, from which Shanghai has 15 schools, Beijing has 11, and Shenzhen has 4 boarding schools. Questionnaires were distributed among 245 teachers, from which 197 were considered for final data analysis. Therefore, a response rate of 80 per cent was achieved. The whole procedure of data collection took three months and every questionnaire was filled out online.

3.6 Data Collection

The questionnaire determines the responses of the participants selected by the researcher for the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The inclusion of the relevant material in the questionnaire (observed and determined from the literature study) helps to collect the relevant feedback. It further helps to determine whether there is any significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The selection of data collection technique entirely depends upon the type of research.

Interviews, both organized and unstructured, observations, and data collecting through developed questionnaires are the most common data collection approaches.

When choosing the most relevant and legitimate form of data collection method for the research, the researcher must keep the research objective(s) and question(s) in mind.

Hair et al. (2013) suggested that the researcher must thoroughly assess all available methods before selecting the most relevant and suited method. Furthermore, the chosen approach must be suitable for the goal and research topic. Therefore, the research questionnaire as a research tool, containing pre-defined and structured questions in it and distributed by the researcher in order to record and obtained the information and responses from the target selected samples out of the entire population.

Although in most of the research, the questionnaire technique is most commonly utilized for the collection of primary data this technique is not suitable for exploratory research. In exploratory types of research, this method is not considered suitable for the collection of data as in this type of research more open-ended questions are mandatory. The questionnaire technique is most appropriate and compatible with explanatory and descriptive research. Moreover, this technique also facilitates the researcher to describe and draw the relationship between the research variables. Sometimes the different data collection techniques were invoked together in order to collect the research data (Saunders et al., 2009). The type of this study is explanatory or analytical and it is designed descriptively. Therefore, the questionnaire technique is adopted in this study to collect primary research data from the selected samples.

The responses to the questions are basically recorded in two basic ways i.e., self-administrated questionnaires and interviewer-administrated questionnaires. In the self-administrated mode, the responses to the questions in the questionnaires are recorded by the respondent themself. Whereas, in the interviewer-administrated method the responses to the questions are recorded by the expert or the interviewer, immediately after interviewing the target sample respondents. According to Saunders et al. (2009), there are three categories of self-administrated questionnaires. These are internet and intranet-mediated questionnaire, postal questionnaire, and delivery & collection questionnaires. During the research, questionnaires were dropped by hand to the selected respondents and collected later when filled.

To attain a complete and comprehensive understanding of the existing measures for the variables, a detailed and extensive review of available existing literature was conducted and items were adapted on the basis of their validation in previous research studies. The primary data for the research were accumulated through the questionnaires, from the selected sample. The questionnaire would have six sections, and the detail of every section is as below:

In Section 01 general information regarding the respondents will be asked, like gender, age, profession, education etc. (Demographic details).

The Section 02 of the research questionnaire will carry the relevant items of the

study variables, and the respondents will be invited to record their response according to their understanding by rating the Likert scale 1-5.

Operationalization, according to Iacobucci & Churchill (2006), is the way to define the mechanism for measuring constructs by defining items. All these items should be in line with the theory upon which they are based. Adopting an idea, construct, measure, or item that has been validated and publicized in earlier studies saves time and money, and enables the researcher to correlate their results with past studies. Accordingly, this approach was used and the research constructs and items were adapted from previously validated studies.

The construct of strategic leadership was measured with a 5-item measurement scale adapted from the study of Nthini (2013). The construct of career aspirations was adopted from the study of Kim et al. (2016) and measured with an 8-item measurement scale. Work-life balance was measured with a 3-item measurement scale adapted from the study of Haar et al. (2014). Employee retention was measured with an 11-item measurement scale adapted from the study of Kyndt et al. (2009). The construct of employee creativity was adapted from the study of Zhang and Bartol (2010), and measured with a 13-item measurement scale.

3.7 Data Analysis

In this study, the data analysis strategy involves several statistical analyses that will be conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The first analysis is the reliability analysis, which is used to assess the reliability and consistency of the survey questionnaire. This analysis will be used to evaluate the internal consistency of the survey items and to ensure that they measure the same construct.

Descriptive statistics will also be used to summarize and describe the data collected in this study. These statistics include measures such as mean, median, standard deviation, and range, which provide a general overview of the data and the distribution of responses.

Correlation analysis will be conducted to investigate the relationship between the variables of interest. This analysis will be used to explore the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variables, such as strategic leadership and work-life balance, and the dependent variable, which is teacher retention.

Finally, multi-regression analysis will be used to examine the extent to which the independent variables predict the dependent variable. This analysis will allow us to determine the unique contribution of each independent variable to the prediction of teacher retention while controlling for the effects of other variables.

The use of SPSS version 26 is essential for conducting these statistical analyses. This software allows for efficient data management, analysis, and visualization, making it an essential tool for researchers in the social sciences. The results of these statistical analyses will provide valuable insights into the factors that impact teacher retention in boarding schools, which can be used to develop effective retention strategies.

3.8 Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Scale

The reliability analysis refers to the degree to which a scale fabricates the result which is consistent if the measurement frequency is measured. The reliability analysis can be described as "when the systematic deviations in a scale are measured and appraised, through determining the relationship between the scores measured by different administrations of the scale, the higher association, and more consistent results represent the higher reliability". The method used to evaluate the quality of information-gathering tools employed to collect research data is called reliability. Furthermore, reliability is a basic requirement for the outcome or result of a study to be generally acceptable. Hair et al. (2013) concluded that the outcomes of a study are viewed as substantial or valid if the measurement methodology should be checked and analyzed. Moreover, this methodology should be reliable and the reliability represents the repeatability of the results.

It is strongly recommended that the validity and reliability of your research data should be checked before you go for further analysis (Shook et al., 2004). The data reliability can be divided into two critical techniques, i.e., test-retest and alternative form reliability. In test-retest reliability, the same study is repeated again, within the same conditions the outcomes must not differ from the previous result and should be equal to the previous study results. If this is so, we can claim that our collected data is reliable. Furthermore, the similarity between both research results can be verified and measured with the help of computing the coefficient of correlation between these two results, the higher correlation between the results shows higher reliability (Mazzocchi, 2008). While in alternative reliability, the modification in measurement scales that were used in the previous study has been made then the data again got collected.

Chapter 4 Results of the Study

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents results and interpretation of the primary data that was collected to achieve the study goals.

The general and detailed information about the respondents of the research, like their positions, education attained, and gender is placed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Respondents' profile

Demographic Characteristics	***Frequency***	***Percent***	***Cumulative Percent***
Gender			
Male	102	51.8	51.8
Female	95	48.2	100.0
Age			
Below 25 Years	83	42.1	42.1
26-33 Years	18	9.1	51.3
34-41 Years	59	29.9	81.2
42-49 Years	33	16.8	98.0
50 years and above	4	2.0	100.0
Experience			
Less than 1 Year	28	14.2	14.2
1-3 Years	36	18.3	32.5
4-6 Years	81	41.1	73.6
7 Years and above	52	26.4	100.0
Qualifications			
Graduate	125	63.5	63.5
Masters	72	36.5	100.0

N=197

The table shown above highlights that the majority of respondents were male (i.e., 102) and aged below 25 years (i.e., 83). Moreover, the majority of teachers were having 4 to 6 years of experience and possessed master's degree.

In this study, the data reliability was assessed by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951), if the outcome value is closer to 1, higher reliability will exist. If its outcome value is less than 0.60 it will represent weaker internal consistency and reliability. Generally, as recommended by (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) the value of at least 0.70 or greater of internal consistency in social sciences the result of the reliability analysis of the study is summarized in Table 4.2. The table shows that the values of

Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each variable are good as its more than 0.700.

Table 4.2 Reliability statistics

Variables	***No of Items***	***Cronbach's Alpha***
Strategic Leadership	5	0.885
Career Aspirations	8	0.929
Work-Life Balance	3	0.751
Employee Retention	11	0.944
Employee Creativity	13	0.879

N=197

4.2 Description of Statistical Variables

The descriptive statistic has been classified into two main categories. These are the estimation of central tendency and measurement of dispersion. The central tendency was discussed in the first segment, including the mean, median and mode. The arithmetic mean represents the average value of the data it divides all the summed values of the data and divides this total with the number of items in the data. The main distinctive feature of the mean is it computes and involves all the values of the data. Therefore, it is considered to be the most appropriate average among all. The mean values of the study variables are shown in Table 4.3, which demonstrates that all mean values are more towards the agreed side.

The data normality is checked with the values of Skewness and Kurtosis. According to Bryne (2010), for data normality the Skewness values must lie between -2 to +2 and Kurtosis values should be between -7 to +7. Table 4.3 confirms data normality as all values for Skewness and Kurtosis are well within the well-defined limits. The values for strategic leadership, career aspiration, work-life balance, employee retention and employee creativity are -0.24, -0.44, -0.49, 0.82 and 0.01 respectively.

Table 4.3 Descriptive statistics

Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	S. D	Skewness	Kurtosis
Strategic Leadership	1.60	4.40	3.28	0.88	-0.24	-1.44
Career Aspirations	1.13	5.00	3.60	0.92	-0.44	-0.89
Work-Life Balance	1.00	5.00	3.55	0.91	-0.49	-0.41
Employee Retention	1.36	4.91	2.80	0.92	0.82	-0.58
Employee Creativity	2.08	4.62	3.43	0.78	0.01	-1.48

N=197

KMO and Bartlett's Test is commonly used to test the sampling adequacy. According to Hair et al., (2006) if the KMO index value is higher than 0.80, then there

will be good sampling adequacy. Results shown in Table 4.4 show good sampling adequacy as the KMO index value is 0.876, which is higher than 0.80. Furthermore, significant results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity confirm the suitability of factor analysis.

Table 4.4 KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.876
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	9381.314
	df	780
	Sig.	0.000

N=197

The component loadings values show correlations among different variables and their items. This ranges from -1 to +1 and values near -1 or +1 explain the high correlations. The component values of the study have correlation values greater than 0.5 as shown in Table 4.5. The SL highlights strategic leadership, CA is career aspiration, WLB is work-life balance, employee retention and EC is employee creativity.

Table 4.5 Component matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
SL1	0.514				
SL2	0.598				
SL3	0.625				
SL4	0.555				
SL5	0.742				
CA1		0.531			
CA2		0.611			
CA3		0.536			
CA4		0.677			
CA5		0.548			
CA6		0.587			
CA7		0.634			
CA8		0.597			
WLB1			0.674		
WLB2			0.543		
WLB3			0.595		
ER1				0.727	
ER2				0.727	
ER3				0.721	
ER4				0.504	

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
ER5				0.596	
ER6				0.579	
ER7				0.482	
ER8				0.760	
ER9				0.703	
ER10				0.673	
ER11				0.732	
EC1					0.565
EC2					0.570
EC3					0.660
EC4					0.572
EC5					0.525
EC6					0.538
EC7					0.669
EC8					0.596
EC9					0.728
EC10					0.610
EC11					0.695
EC12					0.615
EC13					0.763
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.					

The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.6. Results indicate a significant positive relationship between all study variables. Moreover, there is no multicollinearity exists in the data as all the correlation values are less than 0.85 as recommended by Kline (2015). The values for strategic leadership, career aspiration, work-life balance, employee retention and employee creativity are 1, 0.479, 0.429, 0.423 and 0.625 respectively.

Table 4.6 Correlations

	SL	CA	WLB	ER	EC
Strategic Leadership	1				
Career Aspirations	.479**	1			
Work-Life Balance	.429**	.689**	1		
Employee Retention	.423**	.250**	.161*	1	
Employee Creativity	.625**	.494**	.473**	.623**	1
N=197; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

Regression analyses were conducted to test the study hypotheses, and significant beta values indicate acceptance of hypothesized relationships. Regression results shown in Table 4.7 show that there is a significant positive effect of strategic leadership on employee creativity (β =0.423, P<.001). Moreover, there is a significant and positive direct impact of strategic leadership on employee retention (β =0.625, P<.001), and career aspiration (β =0.479, P<.001). Therefore, hypotheses H1a, H2a, and H3 are accepted. All the values in the table highlight that strategic leadership is the most important factor which can influence career aspiration, retention and creativity of teachers working in boarding schools in China.

Table 4.7 Test of hypotheses (direct effect)

Relationships	***Beta***	***Std. Error***	***t***	***Sig.***
H1a: Strategic Leadership → Employee Creativity	0.423	0.068	6.521	0.000
H2a: Strategic Leadership → Employee Retention	0.625	0.049	11.193	0.000
H3: Strategic Leadership → Career Aspiration	0.479	0.065	7.618	0.000

The indirect or mediation effect is tested using the Hayes process macro, and the results are shown in Table 4.8. Results indicate that career inspiration significantly mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee creativity (β =0.181; P<.01, CI=0.094 ~ 0.289). Furthermore, results also reveal that career inspiration significantly mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention (β =0.107; P<.05, CI=0.047 ~ 0.174). As a result, mediation hypotheses H1b, and H2b are accepted. The presence of career aspiration can better explain the relationship of strategic leadership with the retention and creativity of teachers working in boarding schools in China.

Table 4.8 Test of hypotheses (indirect effect)

Relationships	***Indirect Effect***	***S. E***	***LLCI***	***ULCI***
H1b: Strategic Leadership → Career Aspiration→ Employee Creativity	0.181***	0.031	0.094	0.289
H2b: Strategic Leadership → Career Aspiration→ Employee Retention	0.107**	0.032	0.047	0.174

*****P<.01, *P<.05***

In hypothesis H2b, we have predicted that work-life balance positively moderates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention. The moderation results are shown in Table 4.9. Results show that employee retention will be high when there is high strategic leadership (β =0.424, P<.001), however, in presence of high

work-life balance, this positive relation becomes stronger (β =0.639, P<.001). With low strategic leadership and work-life balance, employee retention will be lower (β =0.155, P<.01). Therefore, hypothesis H2b is also accepted.

Table 4.9 Conditional effect of strategic leadership on employee retention at values of the moderator (work-life balance)

DV: Employee Retention	Boot IE	Boot SE	BLL CI 95%	BUL CI 95%
-1 SD	0.155**	0.06	0.087	0.248
Mean	0.424***	0.07	0.253	0.537
+1 SD	0.639***	0.05	0.409	0.769

Note: ***p <.001, **p <.01; IE: indirect effect; BLL: boot lower limit; BLL: boot upper limit; CI: confidence interval

Figure 4.1 also shows significant interactions "for high and low (Mean + SD) values of the moderator." It shows the slop test which reveals that in the presence of high work-life balance and high strategic leadership, employee retention will be higher.

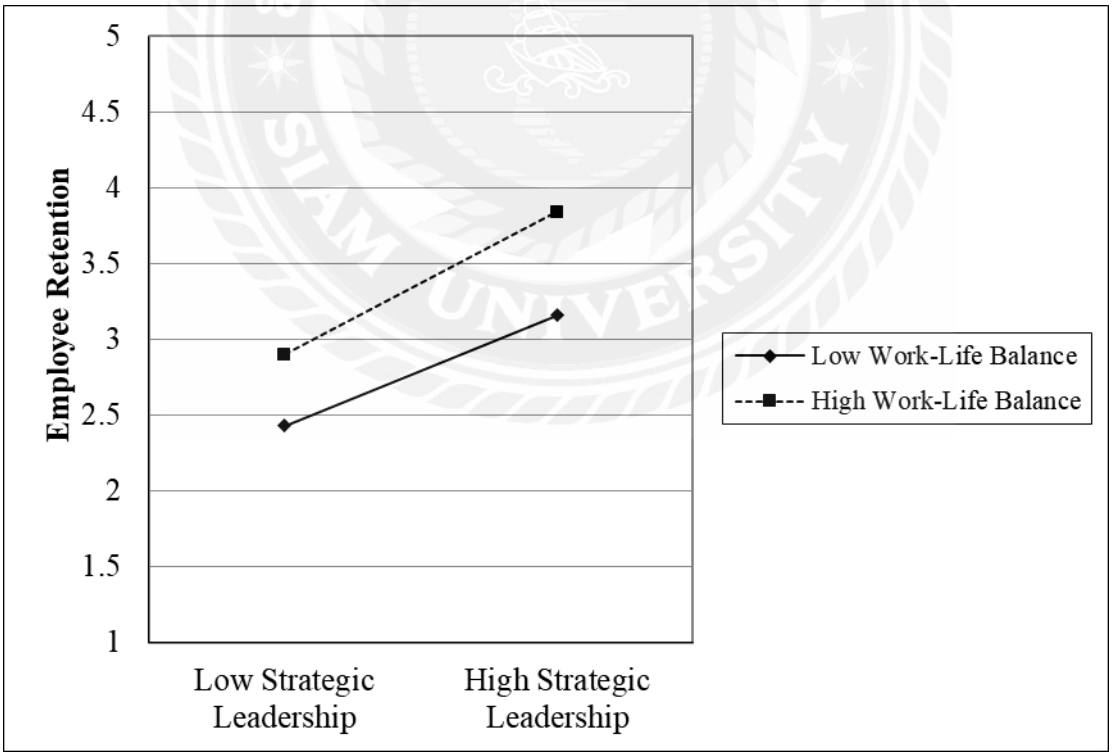

Figure 4.1 Slop test

4.3 Results of the Study

Table 4.10 shows the summary of hypotheses, either accepted or rejected.

Table 4.10 Summary of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	*Statement*	*Results*
H1a	There is a positive relationship between strategic leadership and employee creativity	**Accepted**
H2a	There is a positive relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention	**Accepted**
H3	There is a positive relationship between strategic leadership and career aspirations	**Accepted**
H1b	Career Aspiration significantly mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee creativity	**Accepted**
H2b	Career Aspiration significantly mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention	**Accepted**
H2c	Work-life balance significantly and positively moderates the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention	**Accepted**

The table shows the results of every hypothesis developed for this study. All the hypotheses including the hypothesis showing mediating and moderating relationships are accepted. H1a, H2a and H3 highlighted the relationship of strategic leadership with employee retention, employee creativity and career aspiration respectively.

To answer the research question which is to investigate the impact of strategic leadership on the employee's creativity, employee retention and career aspiration, three hypotheses were formulated (i.e., H1a, H2a and H3 respectively). The results reveal that H1a, H2a and H3 are accepted. The study results demonstrate that strategic leadership is extremely important as it not only controls the performance of human resources, but it also enhances the creativity of teachers which helps the boarding schools to achieve a competitive advantage. The finding of this study is supported by past studies by Boal and Bullis (1991), Boal and Hooijberg (2001), and Ireland and Hitt (1999). All these past investigations acknowledged the noteworthy correlation between strategic leadership/management, performance, and creativity of employees/followers.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

In boarding schools, the retention of teachers and their creativity always remained a major issue. Every year, many teachers leave the schools, and it has been observed by previous studies that the creativity of teachers suffers due to the same routine in boarding schools. This research has proposed a solution to resolve this issue and highlighted some important factors that strongly influence retention and creativity. Strategic leaders and career aspirations can lead to employee retention and creativity. Therefore, this research has found that strategic leadership can positively influence teachers' retention and increase their creativity. Career aspiration can strongly mediate the relationship between "strategic leadership and employee retention" and "strategic leadership and employee creativity". In addition, the work-life balance, moderates the relationships between strategic leadership and employee retention.

5.2 Discussion

In this chapter, the effect of strategic leadership on teachers' retention and creativity has been examined. It also examined how the relationship between strategic leadership or strategic educational management along with career aspiration can contribute to increasing the creativity of teachers and enhancing their retention in boarding schools in China. The comprehensive discourse of this relationship and the results of investigations is given below:

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of strategic leadership on employee creativity and retention in the Chinese boarding schools operating in three cities including, Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen. The outcomes reveal that there is a significant effect of strategic leadership on the creativity and retention of teachers. The researcher has found that employee creativity is significantly influenced by strategic leadership/management in the educational management sector. Furthermore, it is also found through comprehensive empirical and theoretical analysis that there is a significant impact of strategic leadership on employee retention. To fulfil the study objectives maximum efforts are made to answer the research questions.

The first hypothesis of this study was designed to analyze the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention. The strategic approach adopted by leaders or effective strategies of leaders can help in the retention of teachers working in the boarding school in China. Since last decade many studies are highlighting the different leadership styles which can help in the retention of employees (Cloutier et al., 2015; Mwita & Tefurukwa, 2018; Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015) but none of them indicated which style can actually help in retention of teachers. Therefore, this research

has highlighted that the strategic leadership style is the best as it can actually help in the retention of employees. Similarly, the second and third hypotheses of this study were designed to highlight the role of strategic leadership on employee creativity and career aspiration. The findings indicated that strategic leadership can significantly and positively influence on creativity and career aspiration of employees. Hirst et al. (2009) highlighted that leaders have the capability to make employees more creative. Similarly, several studies in different contexts have highlighted that transformational leadership can help in making employees more creative (Jyoti & Dev, 2015; Mittal & Dhar, 2015; Shafi et al., 2020; Tse et al., 2018).

The hypothesis highlighted the mediating role of career aspiration between strategic leadership and creativity and retention. The results highlighted that career aspiration is a significant mediator and the presence of career aspiration explains the relationship of strategic leadership with employee creativity and retention. Roslan et al. (2019) focused on the concept of servant leadership and highlighted that career aspiration can reduce employee turnover. This turnover reduction can be done by making strategies to enhance employee retention.

5.3 Recommendation

In underdeveloped countries and emerging economies like China, strategic leadership has been widely studied for its impact on employee creativity and performance. However, to date, there have been no studies that have specifically investigated the impact of strategic leadership on the retention and creativity of teachers in the context of educational management or leadership within Chinese boarding schools. As such, this study is unique and its findings will make an important contribution to the existing body of knowledge on strategic leadership style and its impact on employee creativity, retention, and career aspirations within the Chinese boarding school system.

The findings of this study will be of great benefit to educational leaders and policymakers in China who are interested in improving the quality of education and the well-being of teachers in boarding schools. By better understanding the impact of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity, these leaders can develop more effective management strategies that promote a positive work environment, foster employee motivation and engagement, and ultimately improve student outcomes.

In particular, the study's findings on the relationship between strategic leadership and employee retention are significant, given the high turnover rates and recruitment challenges faced by many Chinese boarding schools. By implementing strategies that support employee retention, such as providing professional development opportunities and creating a supportive and inclusive work culture, schools can reduce turnover and ensure continuity of instruction and student support.

Moreover, this study's focus on the impact of strategic leadership on employee creativity is also highly relevant in the context of the Chinese boarding school system, which places a strong emphasis on academic achievement and innovation. By fostering creativity and innovation among teachers, schools can enhance the quality of instruction and better prepare students for the challenges of a rapidly changing global economy.

In conclusion, this study is an important and timely contribution to the literature on strategic leadership and its impact on employee retention and creativity in the context of educational management in Chinese boarding schools. Its findings have practical implications for educational leaders and policymakers seeking to improve the quality of education and support the well-being of teachers in these settings.

The findings of this study are highly relevant to the top management of Chinese boarding schools, as they provide valuable insights into the impact of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity. Based on the study results, school administrators can formulate well-organized management strategies that enhance employee retention by addressing factors such as work-life balance, job security, and career development opportunities. By creating a positive work environment that supports employee well-being and career growth, schools can improve employee morale and reduce turnover rates.

In addition to enhancing employee retention, the study findings also highlight the importance of promoting employee creativity in Chinese boarding schools. By fostering a culture of innovation and creativity among teachers, schools can gain a competitive advantage over their competitors and improve student outcomes. The study suggests that strategic leadership plays a critical role in creating such a culture, by providing teachers with the support, resources, and autonomy they need to be creative and innovative in their work.

Overall, this study presents essential implications for educational management in Chinese boarding schools. Its findings can inform the development of policies and practices that support employee retention, creativity, and career development, and ultimately improve the quality of education in these settings. Furthermore, the study's secondary data can serve as a valuable resource for potential researchers, providing a starting point for future studies on the impact of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in the context of educational management.

5.4 Further Study

The scope of this study is limited to boarding schools in China, which may not necessarily represent the situation in other countries. This means that the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other educational settings beyond boarding schools

in China. Additionally, due to limited time and resources, a relatively small number of respondents were selected for data collection, which could potentially limit the accuracy and representativeness of the results.

To obtain more comprehensive and reliable results, further research is required that covers all major cities in China. A larger sample size would provide more robust statistical analyses and increase the validity of the research findings. This would allow for a more accurate understanding of the impact of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in Chinese boarding schools as a whole.

Furthermore, the data collection method employed in this study was limited to a questionnaire. Although this method can be useful in gathering large amounts of data quickly, it may not necessarily provide detailed and nuanced information. Therefore, future studies could incorporate more in-depth interviews with employees and school administrators to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives and experiences.

Overall, while this study provides valuable insights into the impact of strategic leadership on employee retention and creativity in Chinese boarding schools, its limitations suggest that further research is needed to fully understand this complex issue.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Please mark (X) in front of chosen option

Gender: Male **(_____)** Female **(_____)**

Age: Less than 25 years (_____); 23~33 years (_____); 34~41 years (_____); 42~49 years (_____); 50 years and above (_____).

Education: Undergraduate (_____) Graduate (_____) Maters (_____) Others (_____).

Work Experience: Less than 1 year (_____); 1~3 years (_____); 4~6 years (_____); 7 years and above (_____).

SECTION 2

2.1. Strategic Leadership

Please mark (X) in the chosen box. The ratings are: Strongly agree = 5; Agree = 4; Neutral = 3; Disagree = 2; and Strongly disagree = 1

School's strategic direction is determined (developing long term vision of the corporate intent)	5	4	3	2	1
School's resource portfolio is effectively managed (financial capital, human capital, social capital and organizational culture)	5	4	3	2	1
Effective culture is emphasized (core values, symbols and ideologies shared and that influence how business is conducted)	5	4	3	2	1
Ethical practices are emphasized (acting ethically when doing what is necessary to implement the corporation strategies)	5	4	3	2	1
Balanced organizational controls are emphasized (strategic and financial controls)	5	4	3	2	1

2.2. Leadership aspirations

Please mark (*X*) in the chosen box. The ratings are: Strongly agree = 5; Agree = 4; Neutral = 3; Disagree = 2; and Strongly disagree = 1

I hope to become a leader in my career field.	5	4	3	2	1
I do not plan to devote energy to getting promoted to a leadership position in the organization or business in which I am working.	5	4	3	2	1
Becoming a leader in my job is not at all important to me.	5	4	3	2	1
When I am established in my career, I would like to manage other employees.	5	4	3	2	1

I want to have responsibility for the future direction of my organization or business.	5	4	3	2	1
Attaining leadership status in my career is not that important to me.	5	4	3	2	1
I hope to move up to a leadership position in my organization or business.	5	4	3	2	1
I plan to rise to the top leadership position of my organization or business.	5	4	3	2	1

2.3. Work-Life Balance (WLB)

Please mark (*X*) in the chosen box. The ratings are: Strongly agree = 5; Agree = 4; Neutral = 3; Disagree = 2; and Strongly disagree = 1

I am satisfied with my WLB, enjoying both roles	5	4	3	2	1
Nowadays, I seem to enjoy every part of my life equally well	5	4	3	2	1
I manage to balance the demands of my work and personal/family life well	5	4	3	2	1

2.4. Employee Retention

Please mark (*X*) in the chosen box. The ratings are: Strongly agree = 5; Agree = 4; Neutral = 3; Disagree = 2; and Strongly disagree = 1

I'm planning on working for another company within a period of three years.	5	4	3	2	1
Within this company my work gives me satisfaction.	5	4	3	2	1
If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at the possibilities within this company.	5	4	3	2	1
I see a future for myself within this company.	5	4	3	2	1
It doesn't matter if I'm working for this company or another, as long as I have work.	5	4	3	2	1
If it were up to me, I will definitely be working for this company for the next five years.	5	4	3	2	1
If I could start over again, I would choose to work for another company.	5	4	3	2	1
If I received an attractive job offer from another company, I would take the job.	5	4	3	2	1
The work I'm doing is very important to me.	5	4	3	2	1
I love working for this company.	5	4	3	2	1
I have checked out a job in another company previously.	5	4	3	2	1

2.5. Employee Creativity

"To what extent do you think the following statement is characteristic?" (1 "not at all characteristic," 2 "a little bit," 3 "neutral," 4 "characteristic," 5 "very characteristic").

In our school employees:

Suggest new ways to achieve goals or objectives.	5	4	3	2	1
Come up with new and practical ideas to improve performance.	5	4	3	2	1
Searche out new technologies, processes, techniques, and/or product ideas.	5	4	3	2	1
Suggest new ways to increase quality.	5	4	3	2	1
Are good source of creative ideas.	5	4	3	2	1
Are not afraid to take risks.	5	4	3	2	1
Promote and champions ideas to others.	5	4	3	2	1
Exhibit creativity on the job when given the opportunity to.	5	4	3	2	1
Develop adequate plans and schedule for the implementation of new ideas.	5	4	3	2	1
Often have new and innovative ideas.	5	4	3	2	1
Come up with creative solutions to problems.	5	4	3	2	1
Often have a fresh approach to problems.	5	4	3	2	1
Suggest new ways of performing work tasks.	5	4	3	2	1