Plan Overview

A Data Management Plan created using DMPonline

Title: Evaluation of the Key Drivers of Employee Retention Among Mid-Career Professionals in the Management Consultancy Sector in the United Kingdom

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Project abstract:

This research project examines the key drivers of employee retention among mid-career professionals within the United Kingdom management consultancy sector. Using an interpretivist qualitative approach, the study explores how organisational practices relating to recognition, career progression, line management, workload sustainability, and wellbeing are experienced in practice. Empirical data are generated through facilitated focus groups and targeted interviews with mid-career consultants and senior stakeholders, alongside documentary review and external benchmarking. The study aims to generate contextually grounded insights that inform evidence-informed organisational approaches to improving mid-career retention within professional services environments.

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Copyright information:

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Evaluation of the Key Drivers of Employee Retention Among Mid-Career Professionals in the Management Consultancy Sector in the United Kingdom

Data Collection

What data will you collect or create?

This project will generate qualitative research data relating to employee retention among mid-career professionals in the United Kingdom management consultancy sector. The primary data will consist of audio recordings from facilitated focus groups and targeted semi-structured interviews conducted with adult professional participants. These recordings will be transcribed to produce anonymised textual transcripts, which will form the core dataset for analysis.

Recruitment for focus group participants will be facilitated through the use of an organisational gatekeeper. The gatekeeper's role will be limited to distributing an initial invitation and information about the study to a defined pool of potential participants. The gatekeeper will not be informed of who chooses to participate and will have no involvement in consent, data collection, analysis, or reporting. This approach is intended to minimise perceived coercion and power imbalance, particularly given the researcher's insider position within the organisational context. All participation decisions will be made directly between the researcher and participants, and informed consent will be obtained prior to data collection.

In addition to primary qualitative data, the project will create analytical artefacts including coded datasets, thematic frameworks, and reflective analytic memos produced during the qualitative analysis process. These materials will document the development of themes and support transparency in interpretation.

Secondary data will include organisational documentary materials relevant to retention practices, such as internal guidance documents, policy materials, and publicly available benchmarking information. These documents will be used solely to contextualise participant accounts and establish organisational and sectoral intent, rather than as standalone datasets, and will not be retained as independent research data beyond the completion of the project.

Administrative data generated for the purposes of the project will include participant consent forms, participant information sheets, and scheduling records. These materials will be stored separately from research data to maintain confidentiality.

No sensitive personal data, special category data, or directly identifiable personal information will be collected. All research data will be anonymised prior to analysis and reporting.

How will the data be collected or created?

Data will be collected and created using secure University-provided digital systems. Focus groups and interviews will be conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams via the researcher's University Office 365 account. With participant consent, audio recordings will be captured using the integrated recording functionality within Microsoft Teams.

Audio files will be stored securely within the University Office 365 environment and transcribed to text for analysis. Transcripts will be anonymised at the point of transcription, with names, roles, and other potentially identifying details removed or generalised. Qualitative analysis will be conducted using a thematic analysis approach, with transcripts systematically coded to identify patterns and themes in line with established qualitative methodologies.

All project materials will be organised using a structured folder system within the University Office 365 account, separating raw data, anonymised transcripts, analysis files, and administrative documentation. Files will be named consistently using a clear naming convention indicating data type, date, and version

number (for example, FG1_Transcript_v1, FG1_Transcript_v2).

Version control will be managed through incremental file naming and dated versions to ensure traceability of changes and prevent data loss. Working drafts and analysis files will be updated sequentially, with earlier versions retained until final analysis is complete.

Data security and continuity will be maintained through automatic backups conducted via the University's centralised, institution managed backup system.

Quality assurance and consistency will be supported through the use of standardised data collection protocols, including a consistent topic guide for focus groups and interviews, iterative review and refinement of coding, and the maintenance of reflective analytic memos. These memos will document coding decisions, theme development, and interpretive judgements, providing an audit trail that supports transparency and academic review of the analytical process.

Documentation and Metadata

What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?

The data generated by this project will be accompanied by sufficient documentation to ensure that it can be understood and interpreted appropriately in the future. As this is a qualitative research project, documentation will focus on providing clear contextual and descriptive information rather than formal disciplinary metadata standards.

Basic descriptive information will be captured for each dataset, including the project title, researcher name, date of data collection, data type (for example, focus group or interview), and the conditions under which the data can be accessed. This information will be recorded through consistent file naming conventions and structured folder organisation.

Additional documentation will describe how the data were generated and analysed. This will include the focus group and interview topic guides, a description of the research methodology, and notes on the analytical approach used to identify themes. Assumptions made during analysis and decisions relating to coding and interpretation will be recorded through brief analytic notes created during the research process.

Information about data formats and software used will also be documented, including the use of Microsoft Teams for data collection. All files will be stored in commonly used formats to ensure accessibility.

No formal community metadata standards will be applied, as none are required or commonly used for small-scale qualitative research of this nature. Instead, clear descriptive documentation will be maintained alongside the data within the secure University Office 365 environment to support understanding and academic reuse where appropriate.

Ethics and Legal Compliance

How will you manage any ethical issues?

Ethical issues will be managed in accordance with University ethical guidance for research involving human participants. Ethical approval will be obtained prior to data collection. The study involves adult professional participants and presents minimal risk.

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants will be provided with clear information about the purpose of the research, what participation involves, how data will be used, and their right to withdraw. Participation will be entirely voluntary, and participants will be free to decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research process. Identifiable information will be removed at the point of transcription, and anonymised identifiers will be used in analysis and reporting. Data will be stored securely using University-approved systems, with access restricted to the researcher only.

As the researcher is operating as an insider researcher, care will be taken to minimise power imbalances and perceptions of coercion. Participation will not be sought through line management relationships, and no information will be shared with the employing organisation in a way that could identify individual participants. Findings will be reported at an aggregated level only.

How will you manage copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues?

This research project is undertaken as part of a Master's degree and is not externally funded, commercially sponsored, or conducted in partnership with external organisations for commercial purposes. The project does not involve the creation of patentable outputs or commercially sensitive intellectual property.

Copyright and intellectual property rights in the dissertation and research outputs will be managed in accordance with University policies governing student research. The researcher will retain responsibility for the academic work produced as part of the degree, subject to these policies.

Participants' contributions will be used solely for academic research purposes. By providing informed consent, participants agree to the use of their anonymised contributions for analysis, reporting, and assessment within the University. No identifiable participant data will be shared or published.

Any third-party or organisational materials used for contextual or analytical purposes will remain the intellectual property of their original owners and will be used in line with standard academic practice.

The intention is for the completed dissertation to be made available through the University's repository in accordance with institutional requirements for open access student work.

Storage and Backup

How will the data be stored and backed up during the research?

All research data will be stored using secure University-provided systems throughout the duration of the project. The primary storage location for the data will be the researcher's University Office 365 account, which will be used to create, store, and manage research materials, including audio recordings from Microsoft Teams, transcripts, analysis files, and supporting documentation.

University Office 365 will act as the primary storage environment for the project and will be managed in accordance with University IT and data security policies. Access to all project data will be restricted to the researcher.

All research data will be protected through automatic, routine backups provided by the University's centralised, institution managed backup system.

No additional paid storage services are required, and no third-party cloud storage platforms will be used. The data collected are not highly sensitive, but confidentiality and security will be maintained through controlled access, secure storage locations, and adherence to University data protection guidance.

How will you manage access and security?

Access to the research data will be tightly controlled to ensure confidentiality and data security throughout the project. The data collected include anonymised qualitative research data derived from

adult professional participants and are not highly sensitive, but appropriate security measures will be applied in line with University data protection guidance.

All primary research data will be stored within the researcher's University Office 365 account, which is protected by University authentication controls. Access to these data will be restricted to the researcher only. No one else will be given direct access to the raw data.

All research data will be automatically backed up via the University's centralised backup system.

The main risks to data security relate to accidental disclosure or loss of data. These risks will be mitigated through the use of secure University systems as the primary storage location, anonymisation of data at the earliest possible stage, restricted access, and automatic, routine backups provided through the University's centralised backup system.

Data collection will be conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams via the University Office 365 account. Recorded data will be transferred directly into the secure University storage environment, avoiding the need for data transfer via portable media or unsecured channels.

Selection and Preservation

Which data are of long-term value and should be retained, shared, and/or preserved?

Analytical artefacts generated during the research process, including coded datasets, thematic frameworks, and reflective analytic memos, will be retained only for the duration necessary to complete assessment requirements. These materials will not be preserved as independent datasets beyond project completion and will be securely deleted alongside other working research files in line with the project's data minimisation and deletion plan. The dissertation itself will provide a sufficient record of analytical decisions and findings.

In line with ethical commitments made to participants and University guidance on data minimisation, all raw data and analytical working materials will be deleted once the project has been completed and assessed. This deletion is planned for April 2026, following confirmation that no further academic requirements remain.

The dissertation itself is the primary output of long-term value. The final project report will be retained and made available through the University's repository in accordance with institutional requirements for open access student work. The dissertation provides sufficient detail on methodology, analysis, and findings to support academic transparency without requiring access to the underlying raw data.

This approach balances the potential academic value of the research with ethical responsibilities to participants and proportionate data management for a small-scale qualitative study.

What is the long-term preservation plan for the dataset?

This project does not involve the long-term preservation of a research dataset. The primary qualitative data generated for the study, including audio recordings, transcripts, and analytical working files, will be retained only for the duration necessary to complete assessment requirements and will then be securely deleted in line with ethical commitments and data minimisation principles.

The dissertation itself is the only output intended for long-term preservation. The final project report will be retained and preserved through the University's repository in accordance with institutional policies for MA level research and open access student work.

As no datasets will be deposited in an external repository, no repository costs are anticipated, and no additional time or resources are required to prepare data for long-term sharing or preservation.

Data Sharing

How will you share the data?

The primary qualitative research data generated for this project will not be shared beyond the University assessment process. These data include audio recordings, transcripts, and analytical working files that were collected under assurances of confidentiality and are not suitable for open sharing.

The main output intended for sharing is the completed MA project report. The dissertation will be made available through the University's institutional repository in accordance with institutional requirements for open access student work. This will enable potential users to discover the research through the repository catalogue and associated indexing.

The underlying research data will not be deposited in an external data repository, and no persistent identifier will be sought for the dataset, as the data will not be preserved or shared. No mechanisms for handling individual data access requests are proposed.

The dissertation will be made available following completion of assessment and any standard institutional embargo period, where applicable.

Are any restrictions on data sharing required?

Yes. Restrictions on data sharing are required to protect participant confidentiality and the organisational context in which the data were generated. Participants did not consent to the open sharing of raw or processed qualitative data, and disclosure could risk deductive identification.

As a result, raw data and analytical working materials will not be shared and will be securely deleted following completion of the project and assessment. No period of exclusive use is required beyond the assessment timeline, as the data will not be reused or shared.

No data sharing agreements or non-disclosure agreements are proposed, as data will not be made available to third parties. Restrictions on sharing are minimised by making the dissertation itself openly accessible, providing transparency of findings and methodology without compromising confidentiality.

Responsibilities and Resources

Who will be responsible for data management?

The researcher will be solely responsible for all aspects of data management throughout the project. This includes implementing, reviewing, and updating the Data Management Plan, as well as ensuring compliance with University policies, ethical approval conditions, and data protection guidance.

The researcher will be responsible for all data management activities, including data capture, anonymisation, documentation and metadata creation, data quality assurance, secure storage and access control, and the secure deletion of data at the end of the project. Responsibility for the management of the final dissertation, including its deposit in the University repository, will also rest with the researcher.

This project does not involve collaborative partners or multiple sites, and therefore no division of data management responsibilities or consortium agreements are required.

What resources will you require to deliver your plan?

No additional resources are required to deliver this Data Management Plan. The project will make use of existing University-provided infrastructure and services, including Office 365, Microsoft Teams, and University-managed storage systems.

No specialist technical expertise, additional training, hardware, or software beyond standard institutional provision is required. The project does not involve the use of external data repositories, and no repository charges or data preparation costs are anticipated.

The researcher has the necessary skills and access to institutional systems to implement the Data Management Plan without additional resource requirements.

Planned Research Outputs

Report - "Evaluation of the Key Drivers of Employee Retention Among Mid-Career Professionals in the Management Consultancy Sector in the United Kingdom"

The primary and sole research output from this project will be a MA level Project Report submitted as part of the MA in Business Management. The report will present the full account of the research undertaken and will include the following key elements:

- An introduction outlining the research context, rationale, aims, and research focus.
- A critical review of relevant academic literature relating to employee retention, psychological contract, organisational commitment, embeddedness, career development, and wellbeing within professional services contexts.
- A methodology chapter detailing the interpretivist research paradigm, qualitative research design, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and limitations.
- A findings and analysis section presenting empirically derived themes from focus groups and interviews, interpreted through relevant theoretical frameworks.
- A conclusions and recommendations chapter that synthesises findings, addresses the research aim, and translates insights into evidence-informed organisational recommendations.
- Appendices containing supporting materials such as ethics documentation, research instruments, and project management artefacts where appropriate.
- A full reference list prepared in accordance with APA 7 standards.

The completed Project Report will be made available through the University’s institutional repository in line with University requirements for open access student research outputs.

Planned research output details

Title	DOI	Type	Release date	Access level	Repository(ies)	File size	License	Metadata standard(s)	May contain sensitive data?	May contain PII?
Evaluation of the Key Drivers of Employee Retentio ...		Report	Unspecified	Open	None specified		None specified	None specified	No	No